THE DISSERTATION AS PRAXIS:
AN ENCOUNTER WITH LIBERATORY METHODOLOGIES
AND THE EMERGENCE OF AN EDUCATOR

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School
of The Ohio State University

by

Paul R. Marienthal, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

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Dissertation Committee:

Professor Seymour Kleinman
Adviser

Professor William Taylor
College of Education
Co-Dissertation Director

Professor Patricia Lather
College of Education

Professor Eugene Holland
Department of French and Italian/
Department of Comparative Studies

Approved by

[Signature]

Adviser
Health, Physical Education, and Recreation
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And finally my deepest gratitude to Bill Taylor, without whom this document, and I, would be very different.
VITA

Born, September 2, 1949, Chicago, Illinois.

1970-71, Instructor, Stanford University.

1971, B.A., Stanford University.

1988-89, Adjunct Faculty, New College, San Francisco, California.

1988-89, Adjunct Faculty, John F. Kennedy University, Walnut Creek, California.

1989, M.A., Antioch University, San Francisco, California.

1989-92, Graduate Teaching Associate, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1992, Ph.D., The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATION


1981, Founding member of Men at Play, an improvisational dance troupe.


1991, "Postmodern Conditioning," (puppet show and monologue) in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Ph.D., The Ohio State University.

FIELDS OF STUDY

Health, Physical Education and Recreation.

Educational pedagogy, emphasizing somatic studies, with Professor Kleinman.

Research methodologies, with Professor Lather.

Educational leadership issues, with Professor Taylor.

Poststructural social theory, with Professor Holland.
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INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader,

You are probably an academic of some kind, a Colleague or a Student. Picking up research documents for the first time perhaps you leaf through them quickly. Or you open them to the table of contents. Maybe you are a research theorist, and you pick out a spot about 3/5 from the back, open up to it and say to yourself, "Okay, how does this CHAPTER III stack up." Whatever your mode of encounter with dissertations, this time you probably said to yourself, "What the hell's going on here! 19 chapters! Where the hell is the Lit Review?" Maybe you added, "Oh god, an escapee from Comparative Studies," or "Holy shit, another postmodern amok in the print shop."

My committee member Bill said it beautifully the other night when I introduced him to my proposed format, "Oh, you're inviting us to look over the shoulder of someone sorting through final vocabularies." Yes, Bill's comment is a good place to start. And there is much in this statement to unpack. The traditional academic hope is that dissertations contribute to the Grand Narrative, and


Hey, who are you?

Name's Reader and I'm, well, a reader! Not a high powered scholar like some of you, but I have my natural curiosity. I'm not Socrates, but I keep my ears open. I read what I can, trying to expand my horizons. Doonsebury teaches me a lot, but not quite enough. So I'm always on the look out for more serious kinds of writing I can follow.

But what are you doing in my dissertation?
You addressed this to me less than a page back. Is your memory that short? It was very invitational. I saw this serious book with a "Dear Reader" right up front, and I said to myself, "What a nice gesture, it's written for me."

Well hey, look, I started this out with "Dear Reader," but that was just a literary device. Kind of a generic friendly way to open. I didn't really think much about it. Who knows what these things look like once they've hit the university's Margin Police and a cheap printer. It was just a way for me to remember I was writing to human beings out there. I only meant it as a kind of distant friendly gesture, and

Well I look pretty friendly don't I? And now you have an interested party right on the premises.

Yes, but it's my task in this dissertation to synthesize a wide range of challenging theoretical material pertaining to theory and practice. It is going to require all my concentrated intellectual capacities. I'm not sure I can take the time for you.

Look, you seem pretty committed to a personal kind of thing, if you know what I mean.

Well, yes, but .. hmmm, you know, as I think about it a little I can see some advantages to having you here. Let me think. Yes, listen to this. It's in Richard Rorty's Contingency, irony and solidarity. Here on page 186, and I quote, "What the passage does is to remind us that the ironist--the person who has doubts about his own final vocabulary, his own moral identity, and perhaps his own sanity--desperately needs to talk to other people, needs this with the same urgency as people need to make love." Isn't that great Reader. I know just what he means. In that light I can see your participation as a

Whoa! Whoa! You're already off again into ironists and final vocabulary. You want us to get any of this theory you have to slow it down a little and give us a chance to get on board. Give us a little

**YooHoo! OH YooHoo!!!!**
Oh my god. And who are you!

**I'm Professor Theory, and so pleased to meet you both. I see the problem right off. Mr. Marienthal, you are trying to produce a serious research document, and Reader here, at your unwitting invitation, has entered your text. I take it from the tone of your first page you sincerely want to make your insights available to a wide range of people but you get lost so fast in the intricacies. Oh, and wonderful intricacies they are, such lovely tangents, such subtle twistings. But if Reader is to really get it, some coaching will be needed. Perhaps I can be of assistance.**

Oh boy. How?

**Well, I am on sabbatical myself from a major research institution. I have some time. I took a little peek at your table of contents. Intriguing. I don't understand it yet, but I wouldn't mind taking a little journey through it myself. Perhaps I can accompany Reader and be of assistance with this new and challenging material.**

Can you handle it? Have you been around?

**Well I'm not Socrates either but Theory does get around.**

You should know that this dissertation is not focused solely on theory. I am trying to fill another gap in the literature. There is a lot of talk in the academy, as you know, about the relationship of "theory" and "practice." And, this discussion quickly raises issues of what is "public" and what is "private," what is "personal" and what is "political." My university even publishes a journal called Theory Into Practice. But it seems to me that most of the talk remains confined to the shiny linoleum hallways, and fails to really make it onto the streets or even into the classrooms. So, I am looking at several questions here. First, how can I construct and lead a theoretically sensitive life? Second, how does my classroom reflect that theoretical sensitivity and conscious lived experience?
**You are trying to turn some of the big talk into action. It's an excellent intention. So how about this. If I were to handle the theoretical background material with Reader, mightn't that free you up to explore this working relationship of theory and practice?**

Well, that's a fascinating prospect. You seem to understand the essence of my project. And it looks like I've already run into a terrible dilemma. I am interested in pushing the edges of the theory/practice connection, but without some background Reader simply can not keep up. And my guess is I'll leave others behind too.

Yeah, you left me in the dust on the first page for chrissake.

**Go ahead and tell us a little bit about your plans for this document so Reader and I can get started.**

Okay. Okay. The format itself is quite simple really. The document is divided into three parts. In PART I I tell stories, stories about my own life, stories about other people's lives, stories about the world. I use the word "stories" very broadly. Some will be dense description. Some will be simple narrative. Some will be journal entries. Some will be lengthy case histories. In other words, be prepared for a mixture of textual experiments.

Yeah, that sounds great. Experiments. I always wanted to do science. And I love stories. But what are you getting at?

I want to show how I have used a rich variety of attention to my daily activities, observations of other people's lives, and pursuit of scholarship as sources of theoretical juice. I want to demonstrate that my values didn't drop out of the sky whole, that my beliefs have historical origins, and have developed within particular lived contexts. Basically PART I shows the wide range of sources I have used--from lived experience to language games--for building a particular theoretical viewpoint about what kind of a human being I want to be, and what kind of a world I want to make.
**Okay, in PART I you are constructing your theoretical case history. And perhaps you are also reminding each of us that our lives have theoretical implications too. But where does practice come in?**

My life experience for the past twenty five years has covered a lot of ground. I have been a musician, stained glass maker, clinical counselor, dancer, basketball coach, house builder, cook. Many of these activities involved teaching, and I have considered myself an educator for years. But though I have always considered myself thoughtful, those twenty five years were a wild mix of being and postulating and acting. I never really stopped to fully organize my educational beliefs and practices. At thirty nine years old I wanted to focus on what it is I have been doing all these years. I wanted to describe and refine and extend, so I returned for a doctoral degree to consider this thing called "education" in depth. For me this process always includes both thinking and acting. So, PART II chronicles an educational experiment in the classroom, an application of my recent understandings. It is a report of my work as the co-teacher of a graduate level course in the College of Education at OSU.

**Ah, this is where theory and practice meet! And let me take a guess. I'll bet in PART II you also show us how this application, this acting in the classroom, flows back into your beliefs, your theoretical viewpoints. Action and reflection, the essence of praxis.**

Excellent Professor. In PART I I'm sharing how one particular person, in this case me, sorts and chooses from final vocabularies, and adopts or rejects them. PART II reveals how I enact that final vocabulary in the world. And you are right, it is the flow of belief into action, and action back into belief, that fascinates me. I am examining the deeply contingent nature of life, and celebrating the choice-making possibilities that provides. I am fundamentally fascinated by the redescription process, and want to demonstrate how it can feed our lives if we maintain a contingent and energized attitude.

Whoa Whoa. O.K. and Whoa again! Professor Theory, I think you better step in right
here. I was doing pretty well with actions and beliefs, but what the hell is this contingency thing? And redescription? And what is a final vocabulary anyway?

**Mr. Marienthal, I like what you're attempting here. Why don't you just forge ahead with your storytelling. Reader and I will take a break, go have some lunch, and get started on basic theory. We'll begin with Richard Rorty and contingency, and meet up with you in a few chapters.

Okay. Good Luck!

HHHHHHHEEEEE

EEEEEeeeeEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

EEEEEEeEEEEeeeeeEEEEEEEEeeeee
eeereyyyyyyyyyyyyYYYYYYYYY

WRITER

HEYYY WRITER WRITER

And who the hell are you!!!!!!!!!

#I'm the POET, and you are all so bogged down in meaning. I'm around to keep us close to the sounds, the sounds, round mounds of sounds. Hey I like the trip you've started, but the sounds, the sounds, like . . .

"O WORDS"

Om
Oh my
Oh no

shalom
booe
hello.
"O" words,
office
offal
orifice.

Oh Words!
honor
homage.

Names of things
names of names.

Is there something
other than a name
for the hollow
above my belly.

Names for naming,
onomatopoeia
and oxymoron are
two such complicated names
for the same trick
but neither of them
just do it.

But could their rich O's
make the difference?

I get it. I get it. What the hell, let's all just get on
the fucking keyboard and Go!

If you think you're with the program, hop on with us and
we'll all ride out together. If you are feeling a little
queasy, if you're a colleague and used to a little more
formality, if you're just wondering what's going on here,
or if you'd just like to hear this explained in a more
academic tone of voice, see Endnote 2.
Endnotes


2. The research dissertation traditionally consists of five chapters:

   #1 An introductory chapter laying out the research problem.
   #2 A comprehensive review of the literature relating to the research problem.
   #3 A description of the research methods and research design of the particular project.
   #4 A delineation of the data, including explanations and conclusions.
   #5 A final chapter which includes new theory, implications for the world, speculations for further work and so on.

   You may recognize the format above as a mirror of traditional scientific method: state a problem--devise a means to explore it--explore it--report about it--reflect a little about it--move on to the next problem. This so-called scientific method and the writing that accompanies it has its roots in Enlightenment Rationality. Basically this means that for purposes of prediction and control, observer bias, in other words human fallibility, is to be systematically eliminated from the calculations. Science and scientific writing in this positivist mode is designed to ferret out the big answers about the Cosmos free from capricious human limitation. Research in this mode attempts to leech out human contamination. The objective of this inquiry is finding Universal Truth.

   I am not going to elaborate the inexorable breaking down of positivism in the 20th Century. It has been amply, generously, and voluminously documented by a host of theorists, philosophers and social critics: Albert Einstein in physics, Gary Zukav and Thomas Kuhn in the philosophy of science, John Dewey and Richard Rorty in analytic Philosophy, John Clifford and Rosalie Wax in anthropology, Carol Gilligan in psychology, Michel
Foucault in social criticism, Ludwig Wittgenstein in language theory, and on and on and on ... 

In a nutshell these people say there is no such thing, especially when dealing with human beings, as totally unbiased observation. It is not possible for an observer (literary, scientific, therapeutic ...) to remain hermatically sealed outside the event. The "observer" is as much a participant in the system as the "observed." There simply is no such thing as "objective distance."

This realization has had a monumental effect on the conduct of inquiry, especially in the human sciences. No longer can field workers go off to jungles or schools or ghettos to produce and collect unbiased field notes about the natives, return to the neutrality of their offices or studies, and produce unerring accounts of the way it really is out there. Many people have come to recognize that what is chiefly being reported in any research document is the life-values of the researcher. In fact, even if the natives seem to be the subject of the report, they may actually be nowhere in sight. Human science researchers must find ways of accounting for, and foregrounding the researcher's presence without allowing that presence to dominate and obscure everything else. This means finding a way of telling one's own story, and the other's story, at the same time.

The attempt to solve this extremely tricky dilemma has produced a wide range of textual experimenting in recent years. Writers use a wide range of literary devices in order to somehow mirror the depth and complexity of the interactions that happen in formal inquiries. Written research now appears as poetry (Daphne Patai), in multiple fonts (Morton and Zavarzadeh), in constructed dialogues (Michael Mulkay), and so on. These experiments foreground the complexity, richness and irony of observers observing observers being observed by the observed observing! (You get the point.)

I am also experimenting with text. You have already come across characters and poems. And you may run into a few more surprises along the way. Here are a couple of things that may be useful to know up front:
Regarding the use of multiple voices

One of the aims of this dissertation is to make a lot of complex theory available to an audience that normally does not encounter it. I am employing multiple voicings to help me do this. Each voice marks a place on a continuum from least to most theoretically challenging. Basically this is a range of complexity and readability:

Assistance Needed for Theoretical Accessibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>most</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>least</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reader</td>
<td>Professor Theory</td>
<td>The Academic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reader represents the collective voices of my closest friends: a rabbi, an artist, a massage therapist, and my older sister. They all have the desire and capacity for understanding complex theory, but they also have commitments that prevent them from reading Foucault 'til they drop. (Which is also true of many academic colleagues.) I want to share with them what I do and why I do it.

Professor Theory is modeled after Mr. Wizard, the 1950s TV scientist who introduced me to gravity. Professor Theory is the conduit between the expert and the novice.

The Academic is the voice of scholarship. This voice can be found in the Endnotes. This is the voice of someone who does read Foucault 'til she drops. Does placing the Academic voice in the Endnotes like this mean I have relegated theory to the back of the bus? Well, yes, to a certain extent I am choosing to foreground experience, and background theory, because experience is so often trivialized in academic settings.

Notes on the use of "I" and "you":

One of the results of the revolution in the human sciences is that research relationships are seen as far more complex than previously construed. The following are no longer easily identifiable social positionings in research situations: (1) the clear eyed observer,
(2) the un-self-conscious researched, and (3) the universal reader.

It used to be that the researcher was a nameless, faceless, god figure who spoke in disembodied omnipotent tones. "I" never appeared in the work. Ideally there wasn't supposed to really be an I there at all—just a perfect observation machine. But the dissolution of clear cut boundaries between observer and observed means the researcher must now be accounted for as an actor in the research. And therefore the researcher must be accounted for on the page. This has raised all kinds of dilemmas in the writing of human science inquiry.

When "I" speak, who is really speaking: I the doctoral student, I the educated white man, I the theorist, I the confused bumbler, I the skeptic? Here we have the dilemma of multiple cultural roles. (Each of these roles is now called, in the jargon of the day, a "subjectivity.") When I write "I" on the page who is really speaking?

Perhaps I simply need to identify roles clearly and acknowledge who is speaking—the educator, the doctoral student, the researcher, and so on. But there really is a deeper issue at stake. It is not merely an issue of sorting.

When you hear a musical instrument you know where the sound comes from—the bell of the instrument, the throat of the singer, or the body of the guitar. When you see a film you know if the camera has replaced a particular character's eyes or whether the camera is "god" floating in the sky. But voice is very complicated when it hits the written page. Where is the source of an "I"? Inside the head, the gut, just past the skin, hovering around in the area? Textual "I's" can be located almost anywhere. "I" can include the whole territory and be god-like, or "I" can be deeply embedded inside the core of a character.

Sensitivity to these sources/locations of voice is one of the important ways of placing and controlling emphasis in a text. It is one of the things that makes writing so subtle and nuanced. Powerful and inappropriate central personas can suck the energy down into them like a black hole, leaving all the other participants merely shadows. Or, an identity meant to be comforting or expert can be lost in third person obscurity. How we name characters, including the "I," is primary business in telling people's stories.
This research document plays with I-voicings. There are several different "I's" in the text. One of them is "the theoretically sensitive writer." It is the job of this persona to both understand theory and wrestle with written applications. It is the voice I am now writing in. Because many of the theoretical puzzles in this dissertation actually involve writing/representation dilemmas, this may be the trickiest voice to pull off. Another "I" participates in the action. These two seem different from one another. One is involved in the stories, while the other muses about communication dilemmas. I think you will come to see that this is a subtle, and perhaps unnecessary distinction. Perhaps if we look closely enough, theorizing is also a form of personal story telling.

This dissertation also has a Narrator, an all-knowing seer who tells stories about everyone. This is certainly one of my voices, and I take responsibility for the narrator's words. The narrator is an unacknowledged "I." I distinguish the narrator from I-the-one-who-writes because the narrator is involved with the telling of events, the description of scenes. The I-writing voice is engaged with timeless abstract writing problems --if such a thing exists.

The Poet is another incarnation of "I." The Poet is around to challenge the use of language. The Poet also reminds us that language may only be sounds--beautiful and evocative, but merely sounds nonetheless.

And who is the reader, this "you?" It has become clear in recent years that readers interact with the text to produce meaning. I therefore acknowledge your presence here. Each of the you's who reads this work will understand the text differently.

Regarding format and reader friendliness:

This document is not meant to baffle you. I have not veered from the traditional five chapter research format just to be annoying. That would just be an impressionistic cheap shot. The paradoxes and dilemmas to be addressed in this document are real enough. There is no need to soup them up with an obscure presentation.

Both the research and the production of this document proceeded along a bumpy ever-twisting path. The
code word these days for my style of research is "emergent." This means I planned only the next thing to do. I was constantly adjusting the direction and scope of the project. In fact, I was constantly discovering the very topic. Making tidy statements and neat theoretical formats would misrepresent the process as it really occurred. These past six months have lurched along through fits and starts. This is the way it works for me:


It was messy. Complications intruded at the strangest times. And what's more, this document was part of that process. This text is a part of that boiling and bubbling and chanciness. So this caroming use of dialogues, Endnotes, and poems makes this document lurch along like the course itself--telling stories and spilling theory out the edges. That's the way it was for me.

So, I won't be surprised if this turns out to be a challenging read for you. I hope it is also a fruitful one.
PART I

BUILDING A THEORETICAL VIEWPOINT
CHAPTER I

Professor Theory and Reader Do Language

Reader: Professor, will you start with this thing called "contingency." It seems very basic to Paul's project.

Professor: Okay. According to Rorty our culture and our personalities are the products of time and chance. Very much like Darwin's theory of natural selection, our personal makeups and our world views emerge from random, fortuitous encounters with new ideas that fascinate us or happen to work better for us than previously held ideas. If someone hadn't just happened to hand Paul a copy of Contingency, irony and solidarity in the Leisure Studies hallway three years ago we probably wouldn't be here now. CONTINGENCY is the name Rorty gives to this condition of being dependent upon chance or accident.

Reader: You mean there are no absolutely true or just or accurate accounts of the world?

Professor: Rorty follows in a long line of scientists, poets, artists and philosophers over the past four hundred years who have dismantled the whole notion of Truth. Like many of his contemporaries, he sees absolutes of any kind, whether religious, scientific, psychological, or artistic as remnants of a time "in which the world was seen as the creation of a being who had a language of his own." Rorty's type of thinker does not believe such a being exists, or ever existed.

Reader: Then Rorty wants to de-divinize the world.

Professor: Yes, completely. As far as he's concerned there are no originary or everlasting
Truths in the universe. There is no divine voice or intention. In fact, he sees the whole pursuit of Truth at best a waste of time, at worst the creation of damaging, fundamentalist, fascist dead ends.

Reader: So is Rorty one of these New Age people who says we actually cause the world, "We create our own reality?"

Professor: Oh, no Reader. Rorty is very clear that the world exists independently of human visions. "Truth" is not in the world. It is a part of language. The world goes around. People make sentences that describe it.

Reader: I think I'm following you. Maybe it will be clearer if you tell me about his view of language, and why it's so important.

Professor: Yes. Rorty's assertions are based on a particular viewpoint of language and it's primary importance in human affairs. For starters, when we de-divinize the world, we give up the notion that there is something intrinsically true either inside or outside of us. We stop seeing ourselves with a discoverable core. We stop seeing ourselves filled with a romantic muse or the breath of god. We also stop believing the world around us is driven by divine forces or cosmic rationality. And, most importantly, when we give up the notion of absolutes, we also give up the futile attempt to accurately express an inner world or represent the outer world with words.

Reader: So what is language if it isn't expression of an inner life, or a representation of the outer world?

Professor: Because language does not express or represent a reality, we must stop seeing it as a fixed intermediary between us and others. We forget this sometimes when we encounter people in our own culture. We think we are "speaking the same language" and "explaining the way things actually work." I think most people regard words as if they are inviolable things. Seen this way language is a little like a jigsaw puzzle. Snap pieces together in tidy
patterns, and voila, there is communication—a combination of accurate representation and expression.

But Rorty, influenced by a colleague named Donald Davidson, doesn't buy this account of language. He thinks we use language to try to make sense of a situation so that we can predict and control what's going to happen. We use words as a way of building personal theories about how people will act. Davidson calls this "passing theory."

For instance, go to a foreign country where the language is completely unfamiliar. When you meet up with a native, you quickly find that you are trying to make sense of her utterances and grunts, and determine how her sounds and writing link with her actions. In fact, you each do this so that you can predict what's going to happen next, but you do not share puzzle pieces called words.

You both still manage to build a concept of what you think the other person's actions and utterances will be. You both will be building theories about the way the world proceeds which includes the other person. But you are not sharing a perfectly managed communication medium.

It really is no different in our home environment. It may look like we have some kind of linguistic consensus with our neighbors, but the best we can really do is take a good guess at each other's intentions based on the sounds we all make. We aren't exchanging perfectly formed puzzle pieces. We are each using sounds to make sense of what is happening. This is a much more fluid and chancy view of language than the common sense jigsaw version. I think of Davidson's "passing theory" a little like ships "passing in the night." We get close, we indicate things to each other, but we never tell it like it is.

Reader: But if language is not a dependable, fixed thing, how do we determine what words to use?

Professor: Each one of us, at any juncture in our lives, has a set of words we use to describe
the world. Depending on our life experiences we may use the words associated with Christianity, or philosophy, or humanism, or science, or the ghetto, or some combination of all of these. We have open ended flexible words like "love," "gorgeous," and "foul." We have more rigid terms like "crucifix," "ethics," and "the Boston Celtics." Rorty calls this complex mixture our FINAL VOCABULARY.

Reader: And so we each have a unique final vocabulary. What difference does that really make?

Professor: Ah, great question. That brings us to the crucial part of the discussion, the power of contingency. Rorty contends that the way we talk determines who we think we are. And who we think we are determines how we act. This is crucial, Reader, so I'll say it again. How we talk determines who we think we are, and who we think we are determines how we act. Therefore, how we talk ultimately determines how we act. Grasp the significance of that. It means if we change how we talk, we ultimately change the way we act. That means world changing starts with speaking differently.

Reader: And when and why and how do we learn to speak in a different way?

Professor: This is where contingency really operates. We constantly come into contact with other people's vocabularies--through conversation and through reading. If their words strike us as fascinating, if they let us accomplish something we could not do before, we appropriate those words and alter our own vocabulary. Our vocabulary changes. And our new way of speaking ultimately changes our actions. This process is called REDESCRIPTION.

Reader: So "final vocabulary" is a misleading term.

Professor: Yes, it would be better to call it "our most recent vocabulary." But, there is a reason Rorty calls it "final." We'll get to it in a moment.
Reader: I think I see the powerful implications here. If I can get people to speak differently I can change the world.

Professor: Exactly. And there have been a small number of people whose redescriptions have been so potent, so attractive, and have provided such novel ways of talking that they have altered the very way the world is looked at. Newton's "gravity" and Saint Paul's "agape" are examples of redescriptions that changed whole cultures.

Reader: But some of Newton's theories have been discredited recently.

Professor: Reader, remember that there are no Everlasting Truths in Rorty's world. Newton, and Saint Paul, Galileo, Yeats and Hegel were not explaining the world the way it is. They were inventing ways to describe it. This is key. Don't mistake the description for the thing itself. They were creating metaphors, marvelous new ways of talking about the world. And this is an on-going process, a constantly renewing personal and social event. It is this eternal invitation to change that attracts our Paul to Rorty's own redescriptions of language and philosophy.

Reader: But why do some people go to all the trouble to change the way they talk?

Professor: This is a huge and currently volatile topic Reader. Put succinctly, Rorty believes that many people have a primal need to shape themselves, and not to be shaped by outside forces. This is such an important and controversial topic I think we should save it.

Reader: Okay. We can discuss motivations later. But how did Galileo and Newton begin new vocabularies if there weren't words there to use?

Professor: Again let's look to contingency. At the level of living organisms we now know that random x-rays scrambling DNA molecules shot things off in the direction of worms and fishes and buffaloes. Natural selection is a fabulously intricate web of niches being
created and filled. The process is fueled by chance collisions of molecular particles. The world didn't need long skinny things. Perhaps square rigid ones would have done just as well, but the square ones just didn't happen to be produced by the x-rays.

Perhaps some kind of ray zapped through Galileo's or Newton's brains, scrambled some neurons, and out popped new ways of looking at the world. More likely these new metaphors were "the result of some odd episodes in infancy--some obsessional kinks left in these brains by idiosyncratic traumata." Either way, it is all very CONTINGENT stuff.

Reader: But everyone isn't Galileo!

Professor: That's right. Some people invent vocabularies that no one else has use for, and their new descriptions evaporate quickly. Most people are not that inventive. In fact lots of people in the world strongly resist redescription altogether. They look for existing language that can be useful, and hold on for dear life. Again, this is a question of motivation, and we'll get to it later.

But no matter how potent a metaphor may be it soon dies or is killed off into literalness and sifts downward into common usage. According to Rorty most sentences are just dead metaphors. But that doesn't make them trivial. Even the "dead," "literal" ones are powerful cultural agents. For instance, armies marched across continents to the Holy Land around the thousand year old metaphor of "resurrection." Whole continents have organized themselves around the Enlightenment metaphors of "freedom" and "democracy." Are these metaphors still sparking creative juices?

Reader: Okay. I think I have a handle here on CONTINGENCY, FINAL VOCABULARY, and REDESCRIPTION. Paul mentioned one other concept, IRONY. It also sounded very basic to his project.

Professor: Keep in mind the term "final vocabulary." We talked about it being the accumulation of our encounters with language.
In that sense it is our cumulative vocabulary, and might be better called something else. But there is a sense in which it is final too. It is our last, best justification for our actions. There are confrontations in the world. There are differences that require resistance. Rorty is committed to a world of verbal negotiations. He is an intellectual who wants to eliminate, not exacerbate, suffering in the world. He believes in conversation and negotiation. He says that beyond our words "there is only helpless passivity or a resort to force." So, if we are going to mount an effective resistance to tyranny without resorting to physical force, we must sometimes consider having the last word.

But some people know, no matter how fascinating, justifiable, or ingenious their viewpoints, there will always be a way to redescribe and change their vocabulary to make it look good or bad. These are people who know that their words will change over and over again in their lives. Even as they defend or justify a position, they weigh and reconsider it. This puts them on shifting ground at all times. It is life without a rigid foundation. It can be exciting, poetic and alive. It can also be terrifying. Rorty calls people who are interested in living like this IRONISTS.

Reader: This sounds like the opposite of common sense.

Professor: Yes. Ironists are people who are trying to upend the normalizing status quo. They are people who cherish innovation, and are willing to live with uncertainty. It is a position with magnificent possibilities for discovery, but, it is also a position full of doubt. Here is the way Rorty puts it: "The ironist spends her time worrying about the possibility that she has been initiated into the wrong tribe, taught to play the wrong language game."

Reader: That sounds like a hard way to live. Maybe that's why there are so many fundamentalists and so few ironists. But you know, I don't hear too much uncertainty in Rorty's own viewpoints. And I'm also curious about how all of this really operates in people's lives.
Professor: Hmm, those are fascinating observations, Reader. Talking about sorting through Hegel, Nietzsche and Proust, some of his heroes, Rorty says, "we do not care whether these writers managed to live up to their own self images. What we want to know is whether to adopt those images. . . . We redescribe ourselves, our situation, our past, in those terms and compare the results with alternative redescriptions which use the vocabularies of alternative figures. We ironists hope, by this continual redescription, to make the best selves for ourselves that we can."

Reader: It sounds like he works the whole thing out in language. How does he account for people's real life situations? Is it always enough just to alter our final vocabularies?

Professor: I think you've just made some good points, Reader. Rorty talks about a great deal about a return to narrative, but there isn't any in Contingency, irony and solidarity. It just isn't Rorty's strong suit.

Reader: This must be why Paul is telling stories in PART I.

Professor: Yes, Paul is making a reductive move. He is heavily employing the notions of contingency, final vocabulary and redescription, but he is primarily concerned with how this all looks in real life, with real people. Let's move on and see where he takes us in the next chapter.
Endnotes


3. Rorty, p. 73.

4. Rorty, p. 17.

5. Rorty, p. 73.

6. Rorty, p. 75.

CHAPTER II

The Way Of The Pig

I suppose if I had grown up on a farm and regularly seen my food pulled up out of the ground and blood run, Mrs. Argabright's visit to our classroom wouldn't have shocked me.

It must have been 1957. I was in the 3rd grade at the UCLA laboratory school, UES. Mrs. Argabright was the school nurse. She did the regular children's nursing things, gave us polio booster shots, and held our little testicles while we coughed. She must have visited our classroom regularly, doing biology demonstrations, discussing the body, helping us with nutrition. I knew her very well, but I remember only one of those visits. Perhaps because it shaped my world view forever.

That day she took quite a while to set up all the apparatus. She carefully unwrapped from gauzy cloth a large glass beaker, a long glass tube, and a shiny metal stand with an arm. The arm had a ring for holding the tube. The equipment was lovely, especially the glass beaker and the tube. I had seen this kind of equipment in horror movies, and on TV. I had some in a toy chemistry set, but these were huge. The tube was longer than my arm. And they were spotlessly clean. Something about the thinness of the edges, and the almost iridescent clean hard surfaces gave them a magical quality.

As she worked she explained that the day's demonstration was on osmosis. She was going to demonstrate osmosis using a semi-permeable membrane. What a magical set of words that was, "semi permeable membrane," still a religious incantation for me:

membrane
membranous
membranominus
semi permeus membranominous
and the blood and the blood and the blood nominous
She must have drawn lines and pictures and arrows on the board showing membranes, holes, gaps, passages of fluids from one medium to another. She must have explained that semi-permeable membranes are very selective, allowing certain substances or molecules to pass through the membrane in one direction, but preventing the passage of those same molecules back in the other direction. In fact, she must have explained that semi-permeable membranes allow entirely different substances and elements to pass through them in either direction. Mrs. Argabright was introducing me to the deep intelligence of our tissues. This all must have been very clear to me, but I don't remember it because out of the pocket of her white nurses coat she pulled an actual pig's bladder.

Now my mother was not a great cook. Frequently in response to our queries about dinner my mom responded, "We're having real good hamburgers"--the "real good" attached to "hamburger" like white on rice. This, I suppose, is the way she handled the cooking dilemma in her psyche. (My brothers and sisters can still get a rise by declaring, "We're having real good toast for breakfast.")

"Meat" was a substance that either came in clear plastic wrap, white wax-papered packets exactly nine inches long, ends tucked in nicely and sealed with a piece of matching white paper tape, or made neat red and silver designs behind the cold glass in Mr. Merts' Store.

Mrs. Argabright pulled an actual pig's bladder out of her pocket, unwrapped, unsealed. This was part of an actual animal. And not only that, it was from inside the animal. I didn't know exactly what a bladder was, but the translucent and veiny skin of it made me know that it had come from deep inside the animal. I want to say she might as well have gutted a squealing beast right before my eyes, but that isn't true. It wasn't dramatic. But whatever she did, for me she had evoked The Pig.

I do not remember the itinerary of the experiment, when she rubber banded the pig's bladder to the bottom of the glass tube, when she stirred the salt into the beaker of water, when she added the dye turning it a beautiful bright purple, or when she clamped the metal arm around the tube and lowered the pig's bladder into the fluid.
She must have done all these things, and explained them all very well, because I have known from that day on exactly what osmosis is about: areas of variable density or pressure, separated by a selectively porous barrier, powerfully seeking to homogenize with each other.

At some point in the process of mixing and clamping and pouring it came to be that the long glass tube filled with fresh water was suspended upright by the metal arm, held like a giant straw, in the beaker filled with salty purple water. The Pig's bladder, rubber-banded to the bottom of the tube, now bulbous, was submerged in the purple fluid and separated the two bodies of water.

Perhaps there was silence. Perhaps Mrs. Argabright went on explaining the salt water/fresh water differential, the attraction of the salt through the membrane into an area where no salt existed, the dangers of eating raw salt and drawing fluids out of our cells into the stomach. It doesn't matter. All I remember is that at the moment purple fluid started to rise in the tube I knew exactly what I was: a bag of water.

At that moment I learned that it is only thin membranal magic that keeps me I. I am basically bags of fresh water and salt water seeking each other out, flowing elegantly into each other, small oceans and lakes doing what oceans and lakes do, mix and evaporate and settle and combine. At that moment I learned that I am fundamentally a site of moving fluids and gases. That is wonderful. That is magic. That is enough.

From that moment on I have never feared the dissolution of my body. Oh yes, I like it when all the parts work and I can play. I hate the prospect of ceasing to function well. I am in no hurry. But it has been utterly clear and satisfying to me since that moment that one day I will go the way of The Pig.
Endnotes

1. The University Elementary School was run by the UCLA School of Education as an educational laboratory. Its roots were in the progressive education movement started by John Dewey at the University of Chicago. The emphasis at UES in those days was on social studies, and the curriculum was heavily experiential. When a topic was under investigation, for instance African culture, the students made African clothes, built African huts, and cooked African food.

2. Were all the students at the University Elementary School little boys?" asked one of my feminist proofreaders, slightly alarmed. "No," I answered, "but was there something about the little girls that needed checking out?"
CHAPTER III
Professor Theory and Reader Do Bodies

Reader: Wow that pig sure redescribed Paul!

Professor: We don't really know how Paul conceived of himself before this moment. But can you imagine how experiencing himself as small lakes and rivers and oceans flowing into each other opened up an entirely new way of looking at the world. When he began experiencing everyone and everything as part of this big swirl of fluids and gases, it made him feel very connected with the ground, and with other people. It is almost a spiritual outlook, isn't it?

Reader: Do you think Paul has offered it here as the basis of a de-divinized spirituality? I also notice that the redescription here was not preceded by a shift in language the way Rorty lays it out in Contingency, irony and solidarity.

Professor: Remember Rorty is a philosopher and a wordsmith. His underlying contention is that language shapes actions. And he clearly wants to affect the world. In fact, Rorty's vision is extremely utopian. He says his kind of people "include among [their] ungroundable desires their own hope that suffering will be diminished, that the humiliation of human beings by other human beings may cease." In Chapter I we saw how he makes a strong case for language being central in the world-changing process.

But Paul knows that there are powerful change mechanisms other than language. As he said in "The Way of The Pig," there is a lot of intelligence in our tissues. He wants to extend the notion of redescription to include
awareness and change at the level of muscle, bone, blood and nerves.

Poet: Ah, Professor and Reader. I'm fascinated by the discussion. May I offer a poem here, and perhaps bring words and sounds and flesh together for a moment?

Professor and Reader: Please do.

Poet:

Kissing is not part of a language game
When I kiss you
I am not making dead sentences
that fit the pattern
"I love you"
When I kiss you
I am placing my wet lips
on the back of your neck

Kissing is not part of a language game
When I kiss you
I am not inviting you
to ask me
what I mean
I am putting my wet lips
on your cheek

Kissing is not part of a language game
When I kiss you
I am not asking you to determine
if it is true
I am simply putting my warm lips
on yours

Reader: Thank you Poet, that's lovely. Yes, I see how language can get in the way of noticing and honoring our primary bodily experiences.

Professor: It's important to know that Paul strongly shares Rorty's values about creating freedom and eliminating cruelty. But his primary encounters with the world are athletic and artistic--full of movement, sinew, making. He is interested in life practices that manifest in visible change. He is driven to understanding and dealing with concrete barriers to the realization of universal freedom. So, though he agrees with Rorty that
"cruelty is the worst thing we do," it looks like he wants to go deeply into the world of flesh for solutions to that cruelty.

Reader: So, are there other thinkers who can help us out here?

Professor: Yes, in particular Michel Foucault demonstrates how power permeates culture and controls BODIES. He calls this the "micropractices of power." In books like Power/Knowledge, Discipline and Punish, and The History of Sexuality, Foucault details how architecture, language, interior design, and time management have all been used to infiltrate and manipulate bodies and behaviors.

Reader: Can you give me a concrete example?

Professor: In Power/Knowledge Foucault discusses an 18th Century prison design called the "Panopticon." Here is the way he describes it.

The principle was this. A perimeter building in the form of a ring. At the centre of this, a tower, pierced by large windows opening on to the inner face of the ring. The outer building is divided into cells each of which traverses the whole thickness of the building. These cells have two windows, one opening on to the inside, facing the windows of the central tower, the other, outer one allowing daylight to pass through the whole cell. All that is then needed is to put an overseer in the tower, and place in each of the cells a lunatic, a patient, a convict, a worker or a schoolboy.

Reader: Yes, with the lighting from the back like that, one person in the darkened central tower could easily see people's silhouettes, and thereby monitor them closely in their cells at all times. The inmates are captured by the overseer's gaze.
Professor: It is the reversal of the dungeon principle where darkness actually affords the prisoner some protection. It's ironic, the life giving force of light turns back on itself in betrayal. Yet the real "advance" was that a very few people could control many. The Panopticon model found its way into the design of factories, hospitals, prisons and schools. People could then be monitored by other people, who were monitored by yet other people, who were monitored by still others. This chain of surveillance was a key for organizing and manipulating the large work forces it took to run the factories and institutions of the industrial revolution.

Reader: That's frightening.

Professor: Not half as scary as the deeper implications of Foucault's critique. You hit on it when you used the word "gaze," one of Foucault's key terms. According to Foucault surveillance has become so pervasive and sophisticated in modern capitalist cultures that people don't actually have to be watched to be controlled. In a process currently called "introjecting," they take culture's "eye" into themselves and do self-surveillance. It is the way people actually monitor and control themselves. They "gaze" themselves.

Reader: But some people think it's good for people to take a "look at themselves."

Professor: Reader, "gaze" is not benign or enlightened self-reflection. Gaze means believing cultural authority so thoroughly that the very core of a person has been subjugated. Imagine someone alone in their room having an urge to make faces in their own mirror, but stopping themselves because it "might look stupid." That's gaze at work.

Reader: That sounds pretty discouraging.

Professor: Yes, Foucault is quite pessimistic, and he is sometimes criticized for offering no hope. But while other's corroborate his observations, they do not share his pessimism. For instance, a couple of wild Frenchmen, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, write about
this cultural control of bodies in Anti-Oedipus. They call it "coding," and they
describe how cultures "colonize" and "territorialize" people's bodies. They contend
that culture--through all kinds of overt and covert coercive tactics--programs and shapes
bodies for talking, walking, dressing, kissing, eating, shitting, laughing!

Reader: It sounds like the culture kind of uses people's bodies like writing tablets.

Professor: Exactly. In fact Deleuze and Guattari actually call this "inscribing" the body.
They trace its history from primitive cultures in which the body was actually written on with
tattoos and scarification, to modern capitalism which codes just as powerfully, but without
leaving such obvious markings. The current value on thin, hard bodies is an example of
modern cultural coding.

Reader: Yes, people seem to be very susceptible to cultural messages. They cut their hair certain ways. They burn their skin to make it darker. They even put jelly filled balloons in their breasts to make their chests bigger.

Professor: But most importantly, Deleuze and Guattari point out that capitalism has the
capacity to decode and recode. Unlike the tattooing or scarification of primitive cultures, the modern body is created as a site to be rewritten over and over again. You see this in the rapidity with which fads come and go --fads that affect not only what people wear, but the way people actually talk and walk and eat and touch. Even silicon jelly balloons can be removed when little breasts become fashionable.

Reader: They see the body as a kind of plastic to be molded by cultural forces. It sounds kind of creepy.

Professor: For Deleuze and Guattari there is something both awful and thrilling about the decoding and recoding capacity of capitalism. Though it captures people horribly, it is also flexible and mutable. Their hope is that somehow capitalism will stretch itself in some
unpredictable way that will ultimately destroy its own capacity for controlling and manipulating. They don't want to contain capitalism. In fact, they say that the ingenious qualities of decoding and recoding mean that capitalism has the capacity to expand infinitely. It will cover the earth. They want to crank it up, push it beyond itself.

Reader: It seems as if bodies have been manipulated in some way for a long time. What would Deleuze and Guattari rather see?

Professor: Good question Reader. In order to understand their position on social formations, you have to be aware of their unique conception of the body. They want us to stop thinking of people as whole, solitary, autonomous units driven by completely self-referenced personalities. They want to dissolve the boundaries of individualization that have gotten so rigidified in this century. They are particularly critical of Sigmund Freud's work. Deleuze and Guattari see Freud's program as the valorization of the romantic, fetishizing of individualism. Freud's Oedipal family, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is a factory of neurotic repression.

The Anti-Oedipus is an unrelenting repudiation of Freudian psychoanalysis, and the rigid, repressed bounded individualism created by the oedipal myth. Deleuze and Guattari conceive of people in somewhat the same way as Paul—as bags of swirling liquids and gases mixing freely in an energy activated world. They use the metaphor "desiring machines" to describe the human organism. They conceive of bodies as many distinct parts that suck and squeeze and couple with other parts. Organisms are desiring machines looking for compatible "machines" to join up with. Here is the way they describe it in the opening of Anti-Oedipus.

It is at work everywhere, functioning smoothly at times, at other times in fits and starts. It breathes, it heats, it eats. It shits and fucks. What a mistake to have ever said the id. Everywhere it
is machines--real ones, not figurative ones: machines, driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with the necessary couplings and connections. An organism-machine is plugged into an energy-source-machine: the one produces a flow that the other interrupts. The breast is a machine that produces milk, and the mouth a machine coupled to it."

Reader: Wow. Pumping and Sucking Everywhere! It sounds like these guys mean this literally. It's a pretty wild looking world they're proposing. Does anybody say something about this situation I can actually use now?

Professor: Deleuze and Guattari have a very far reaching vision of world change, and it's true the Anti-Oedipus itself doesn't really give concrete prescriptions. It is an opening foray into "de-territorializing" people's bodies. Their book is a powerful anti-fascist statement. They attack the way power--at micro-levels--impinges on people's physical desiring. But their thinking is complex, and not easily applied.

Reader: Are there other thinkers who are more accessible?

Professor: Another philosopher of the body, Don Johnson, lays it out in clear language. Like Foucault, Johnson exposes the cultural influences on flesh. In Body he also shows how people have been systemically alienated from their personal authority, and made dependent on experts. But Johnson, in his book, writes about the way in which our bodies are captured by everyday activities. He demonstrates how our chairs and sitting create certain responses. He exposes high-heeled shoes and fancy clothing as factories of normalization. He says people in modern industrial cultures are alienated from their own sensory awarenesses, with disastrous consequences. And, unlike Foucault, Johnson is willing to offer an alternative.
Ironically he calls his alternative "the technology of authenticity." He says, "the fundamental shift from alienation to authenticity is deceptively simple: it requires diverting our awareness from the opinions of those outside us toward our own perceptions and feelings." Authenticity means giving up the opinions of others and returning to our own perceptions and feelings.

Reader: Is that possible in a world where people's bodies have been so territorialized and colonized by the culture itself?

Professor: Good question. Most people undergo a lifelong education of alienation from their own bodily authority. The idea of returning to the primacy of our senses is easy enough to grasp, but it turns out that recovering the ability to really see, and touch, and smell and hear is a long and arduous process. Most people just do not know what's happening in their bodies or what they feel most of the time. Many people are literally numb to feelings in their limbs or backs or internal organs. And worst of all, they depend on outside opinion to tell them what they are experiencing. That is the key. Consumer culture depends on people needing outside forces to tell them what they are feeling, what they should be feeling, and what they can do about it.

Reader: What does Johnson suggest as a counter approach?

Professor: Johnson is part of a movement called "somatics." There is a group of people who are dedicated to helping themselves and others recover their bodily authority. There is a wide range of somatic practices—from sensory awareness to movement analysis to massage.

Reader: Oh I've heard of things like that--the Alexander Technique, the Feldenkrais Method, Rolfing, dance therapy, right?

Professor: Yes those are all somatic practices. But the important thing for Johnson is that people find their own authority. In Body he does tell the story of Matthias Alexander,
Moishe Feldenkrais and Ida Rolf, the somatic pioneers who generated the methods you've just mentioned." But Johnson particularly promotes people's recovery of their own sensory awareness and their movement patterns.

Reader: Are these somatic techniques ways to recover ourselves?

Professor: Reader, in a culture that idolizes the notion of expertise, there is a great danger of turning every good idea, every new impulse, into a Method. That Method then just becomes a new Authority. This has happened with many of the most innovative somatic practices. For instance, extremely politicized organizations have cropped up around the work of Feldenkrais and Rolf. They both made wonderful personal discoveries based on their own particular experience. And then cults sprang up around their work. In our market-crazy culture there is such a rush to create panaceas. Johnson's book Body is a cautionary tale about the danger of the obsession with experts.

Reader: I understand Johnson's cautions about seeking outside expertise. Does that mean he wants us to abandon all organized forms of practice? Are there no teachers in the world we can learn from without subjecting ourselves to territorialization?

Professor: Good questions Reader. Deleuze and Guattari might say there are no forms worth following. Once we've accepted an authority we are doomed. But Johnson respects many forms of practice, for instance massage, yoga, even sports. He just wants us to see them as ways of "tapping into otherwise unknown depths of [our bodies] rather than an outer form into which [we] attempt to force [our bodies]." He basically encourages people to discover and develop their own practices. We may use a form that excites us, but the point is to recover our own idiosyncratic kinds of movements. Forms should be used as clues, not norms.

Reader: How would I know when I was being my own authority or when I was forcing myself into a mold? Especially if I've spent my whole life being inscribed on in the first place. How
would I know when I was being authentically myself?

Professor: That is an excellent question, and a difficult one to answer. Let's go back to Johnson. All of the "technologies of authenticity" he describes are based on the belief that it is possible to increase the awareness of one's own internal organismic responses. For example, in Charlotte Selver's somatic awareness work "she merely teaches students to pay attention. During a session a group might spend an hour just getting up and sitting down, noticing the sensory data present in that simple act: shifts in weight, muscular tension, breathing rate, emotional reactions, the quality of surfaces and atmosphere." In other words, the point is to notice and respond to the deeper organic rumblings in our flesh, to become attuned to an inner sense of knowing.

Reader: But how do we know that even those "deep organic rumblings" aren't just socially produced and prescribed sensations?

Professor: Some people claim they feel a warm glow in their gut when they are being authentic. Others say they feel a satisfying emptiness. Others experience a spontaneous sense of enlargement and connection with cosmic forces. Others relax. There is no simple answer to this. Ultimately we can not know if our responses are really "ours." Maybe we can never fully liberate ourselves from cultural dogma, but it looks like it is possible to have more personal choice about our own body functions and expressions.

Reader: And this can be learned?

Professor: Johnson, and Deleuze and Guattari for that matter, would say there is a deep intelligence in our tissues. If we can outwit authoritarian bondage, it is possible to let that intelligence flourish. And when it does we just know it. And yes, it is possible to create situations to promote this.

Reader: Is the recovery of our senses such a big deal?
Professor: I think there are some powerful short and long term consequences to Johnson's return to authenticity.

In the short term, when we valorize our senses we stop seeing the brain as the source of all being. "The technology of authenticity suggests that the mind is in every cell; no part has superiority, not brain, not penis, nor vagina, nor heart. Power is dispersed." The effect of this realization for a lot of people is to stop the frantic search for outside authorities to fix them and direct them. People who engage in this work often regain the capacity for acting powerfully in the world. They also find the inner resources to resist being colonized.

In the long run we can only speculate. Breaking down the hierarchical "brain at the top" model could have far reaching effects on cultural organization. Perhaps if enough people really experienced this, the corporate model we are so familiar with might lose its attraction. Perhaps people would even act to change it.

Reader: Is Johnson suggesting that the technology of authenticity could be a powerful political force?

Professor: Yes, I think so. Johnson contends that reawakening inner impulses not only promotes an individual's sense of well being, it also reconnects people to the environment and other people. I think he makes the leap that a population which was responsive to each other at the level of organic functioning would act to end the suffering of its members. He contends that alienation, from the self and from others, promotes exploitation. Universal sensual authority would at least bring into question oppressive regimes.

Reader: Those seem like big claims. How does he know this? Also, it sounds like Johnson comes to some different conclusions than Deleuze and Guattari. Where do all these ideas come from?
Professor: More good questions Reader. We're beginning to move into the issue of social bodies aren't we? Let's move on and see if Paul addresses this in the next chapter.
Endnotes


2. Rorty, p. xv.


CHAPTER IV

The Warehouse

The City of Seattle wraps itself around bodies of water. The central one of these is a small oval lake two miles long and a mile wide. It is called Lake Union. Downtown bulges off the south end of the lake; Queen Anne Hill with its two enormous TV towers rises to the west; Capitol Hill, the gay center, grades gently to the east; and Wallingford, a family neighborhood of wooden houses and flowered stone walls, sits to the north.

When Seattle was a logging town, a fishing town, a stop on the way to the Alaskan gold fields, Lake Union, like most urban waterfronts in the early part of this century, was given to industrial projects: boat yards, lumber mills, a massive natural gas refinery, railroad tracks, concrete storage facilities, and support industries like welding and saw works. The largest coal driven electricity-producing turbines in the world are in a generating station which sits unobtrusively near the St. Vincent De Paul outlet store near the south end of the Lake. These turbines, big as semi-trucks, painted in layers of blue enamel a quarter of an inch thick, whirl almost silently.

In order to move supplies and products in and out of the central city, a canal was built linking Lake Union to Puget Sound. The Sound is the largest waterway of its kind on the Earth. Geologically it sits twenty feet below Lake Union so that a ship lock had to be included in the canal construction to prevent the lake from draining into the sea. A fancy restaurant was built overlooking the locks so that on Sunday mornings you can eat brunch and watch the yachts, heading from the Lake to the Sound, strangely disappear to sea level inside the odd enclosure. The whole effect is a little like watching high society rubber ducks sink helplessly to the bottom of a draining tub.
The War helped Seattle grow "out" of its water/forest based economy into an industrial/service economy. For example, most of the world's passenger jets are constructed at the Boeing plant just north of Seattle. The road from the city to the Whidbey Island Ferry goes past the plant and its three humongous doors, one painted bright blue, one painted bright red, one painted bright green. Each of these doors is the size of a cathedral, and the building that contains them is so large it is impossible to look at both ends of it at the same time. The doors take a half hour to open, and the space inside is big enough to contain a small town. The rows of half-built 747's look like toys for the town's kids.

Currently, Lake Union, like most of the scarce scenic inner city spaces in America, is being colonized by the upwardly mobile. The brutish old natural Gasworks has been painted bright primary colors and turned into a children's playground. Old brick factories transform into restaurants with nautical themes. The unstable hills below Queen Anne are being condoed with stacks of whitewashed boxes containing cute porthole windows. For fifty bucks you can take a fifteen minute luxury flight around the city in a pontoon plane that takes off and lands softly behind the mellow fern bars lining the Lake.

About twenty years ago, just before the yuppie outbreak, Bob Wiginton bought an old warehouse being used as a welding shop--a concrete shell with a wooden overhanging upper floor. He converted one small area at the top of the long narrow stairs into a living quarters, moved in and ran a small electrical space heater 24 hours a day. He quickly began to accumulate stuff inside and outside.

A lot of it was big stuff, rusted machinery, defunct vehicles, fifty-gallon barrels, so he organized a business collective to deal with it. Rainbow Recycling quickly expanded into a program for helping the city deal with its own increasing quantities of reusable waste. The collective negotiated contracts with supermarkets to set up glass collection facilities. These stations consisted of a dozen fifty gallon metal drums painted brown, white and green into which different colors of glass could be sorted by conscientious customers. When the barrels were full one, of the Rainbow members crushed the bottles in the barrels with a huge pipe to condense the mass, lifted the barrels onto the back of a truck, drove to Northwest Glass in the south end, and sold the
"cull" for the going price per ton. It was bone crunching work.

In 1980 two members of the collective, a lesbian couple, purchased all the other members' shares, and moved the glass recycling headquarters to a small shack in Wallingford. This gave Bob a break from crushing glass, and time to think about what he was going to do with the Warehouse and its always increasing accumulation of stuff.

* * *

Driving north out of downtown on Westlake Avenue along Lake Union you will pass Shipper's Yuppie Watering Hole Restaurant, its jaunty flags flying, then the white on rice SeaFoam Condos, designed to look like a mediterranean coastal town. You will round a curve and see the large signs for Indigo Marine and Sea Ray Yachts. Then up ahead, framed by the majestic Aurora Bridge, you will see an ancient air raid siren on top of an antique steam roller on top of stacked aluminum planks, next to a defunct electrical substation on top of an old brown truck; spools of used telephone cable stacked two stories high; forests of bent pipes and ladders and scaffolds; a "loading dock" so crammed with old gym lockers, industrial leftovers, motors and gears and crane parts, that "loading" simply doesn't apply anymore; huge sandblasting pots; hosing of many thicknesses and lengths, ready for fires, for drains, for water, for oil, for gas, for sewage; all of this amidst piles of metallic and wooden things, barrels, tires, pallets, tubing, machinery, units, cars, objects, objects, objects . . . long planks from the roof of the loading dock disappear over the edge of the Warehouse roof, and there's no telling what might be up there. The initial effect of the Warehouse is daemonic excess. The sidewalk for the stretch in front was subsumed long ago. The overhang seems almost to jut over the street, as if it wants to consume the roadway itself.

If the Warehouse were located in the South End of Seattle with all the other manufacturing plants, Bob would be known as the Junk Man. People would go to him whenever they needed exotic pieces of equipment or materials: chains, gears, ball bearings, drills, pipes, pulleys, spokes, spoons, spools, sponges, stainless steel, brass, bibs, aluminum, tungsten, taps, tapes, copper, hydraulic forklifts, forks, or gloves without fingers.
Every once in a while someone actually gets out of their car and braves it across the street. Every person who actually comes in ventures through the front door slowly, gasps or laughs. The inside of the Warehouse, even more than the outside, has a special quality of excess that is magical. The whole volume of the space seems alive with mechanical skeletons and industrial hormones: from the ceiling flowings of huge steel chains and hooks; open barrels full of thick hydraulic fluids; walls of assorted pipe ends like weird sausages aging; cans and jars of copper and aluminum rings and chips and rods and clips and nuts and pins; containers of oil draining into other containers of oil draining into other containers of oil. Narrow passage ways filled with stacks of little jars full of precious little machined parts; boxes labeled "misc switches," barrels of over-used leather gloves with the finger tips missing. Gears and knobs and levers hanging and dangling. Switches for what, for lights, where? Underground passage ways, secret trap doors? Safety masks everywhere. Toxic, what?

People sometimes pull up in front of the Warehouse and ask Bob, "Do you have a copper X or a stainless steel Y?" Bob answers politely, "Sorry, this stuff isn't for sale."

Basically Bob just moves the stuff around. Eventually he dismantles pieces of machinery at random and salvages the metals. He uses bits and pieces of lumber as he slowly works on the living spaces inside the Warehouse over the years. But for the most part it is a permanent collection. Bob does not take the winter off and go to Baja. He is outside on his forklift in rain, snow, hail, wind making all these groupings, pilings, stackings, aggregates, randomnesses, heapings,leanings, hangings, juttings, boxings, endings, rustings, loadings, slabbings . . . visible.

* * *

Bob has a love/hate relationship with the City. Besides the long term service contract with Nuts n' Bolts, many of the big items at the Warehouse--substations, steam rollers, forklifts--come from City surplus or salvaged City buildings. Usually this stuff is sold at sealed bid; and Bob occasionally participates in these auctions. But often he just gets a call from the City clerk, a woman named Gladys, who says, "Hey Bob, we need to get Lot #92 off the yard today. Come on down this afternoon and it's yours for eighty bucks." This is
how Bob acquired a hundred ten foot by three foot solid oak doors.

A couple of years later the Fire Inspector cited Bob for storing the doors in one of the old trucks. This is the hate part. The City Council has attempted on many occasions to pass laws targeted at the old trucks Bob leaves in the public access strip across from the Warehouse. The traffic cops intermittently plaster towing notices on the windshields saying the vehicles have to be moved within 48 hours. Then Bob has to find someone to come down in the cold or rain to pull old trucks with chains up or down the parking strip. Bob has become an expert at City legal affairs, and can usually point out how laws will affect everyone else in the neighborhood too. Once the City actually towed all the trucks. But Bob pointed out their legal miscues and the City had to tow them all back.

* * *

Recycling is the core of Bob's life. A few years ago he started a new company with his mate Susan, and at this time runs a good sized recycling business out of an office upstairs in the Warehouse. He employs nine people, owns two large hydraulic lift garbage trucks, and does an expanded version of the Rainbow Recycling gig. His company, Nuts n' Bolts, contracts with the City to haul bottles, cardboard, newspaper and glass from apartment complexes.

The Northwest is simply more conscious than other parts of the country of the need to deal with solid waste responsibly. Consequently there are whole manufacturing plants designed for paper retrieval and glass remelting. The city of Seattle is committed to recycling on a large scale and contracts with private hauling vendors to provide that service. Bob has a deal with the City through the year 2000. The City pays him a nominal fee by the ton to pick up reusable materials at building complexes and haul it to industrial recycling depots. Nuts n' Bolts makes a decent return because it also keeps the revenue from the sale of the materials.

He often stops at dumpsters to retrieve cans of expensive and toxic paints, clothing or lumber or rope, spools of wire, brass door hardware, brushes, gloves, umbrellas, boxes of nails, hammer heads, slightly injured tools, furniture, chain, and on and on and on. Often these are new items, unopened containers of supplies,
dumped for convenience. Bob doesn't eat out of dumpsters, but he dresses out of them!

He constantly reaches into the wasteful guts of the city and puts it on display. The Warehouse is the constantly flowing lower digestive tract of a city split open. When people talk about the Warehouse they often say, "You mean the place with all the shit coming out onto the road!!"
Endnotes

1. This spelling of "daemonic" comes from Camille Paglia (1991). Sexual Personae: Art and decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson. New York: Vintage. "Daemonic" refers to a Dionysian upheaval, an excess. This is quite different than "demonic" which is an invocation of Satan.
Chapter V
Professor Theory and Reader Do Collectivities

Reader: That's a powerful story. Bob is quite a person. And the Warehouse is quite a scene. But how does all of this figure in our theoretical discussions?

Professor: In the first few chapters we explored how individuals are formed and changed through language and body practices. In CHAPTER I we saw how changing vocabularies plays a role in personal redescription. In CHAPTER III we examined how cultural forces find their way into peoples' bodies. The story of Bob and the Warehouse thrusts us up against another level of questioning. What is the nature of the individual in relationship with the collective?

Is Bob an isolated human being fighting for his own survival, or is he actually part of a larger organism seeking internal harmony? Is Bob a unique and strange character, or is he simply a product of his times? And given these widely differing possibilities, what are his rights, responsibilities, and relationships in the world around him?

There are a lot of different opinions about what human beings are and about the way they ought to regard each other. The Warehouse itself can be viewed as Bob's idiosyncratic self-making desires, or as his selfless effort at shaping public awareness. Depending on the filters you choose, Bob can come off looking like a self-absorbed creative genius, an impositional narcissistic asshole, a socially conscious hero, a capitalist dupe, or some combination of them all.
Reader: There must be a lot at stake theoretically in these choices. How will we decide?

Professor: There are no easy explanations Reader. A thorough discussion would take in the bulk of social criticism for the past four hundred years. The twists and turns of Marxism alone would take us to the end of the dissertation. But there are some basic strains of thought embedded in these questions. Put simplistically the dilemma comes down to these questions: What is the nature of public and private activity? Should we get involved with each other or should we just leave each other alone?

Reader: I guess we need to decide what a human being really is in order to make a choice about behavior. What are the options?

Professor: Let's start with humanism.

In the Renaissance transition from feudalism to mercantilism, and finally to full scale capitalism in the 19th Century, a particular conception of "Man" emerged. Built on the primacy of reason, the "humanist" agenda posited that the "way the self's categories and word schemes are given to it by the culture is secondary to its psychological and political essence, an ideational and moral capacity that grounds man's freedom of thought and action." In other words, there emerged a rational humanist subject possessing a primordial core that originates and flourishes independent of influences from the society, and secures freedom of thought and action. And most importantly for our purposes, that central core necessarily contains a moral component that compels people to act ethically towards one another.

The humanist conception of individual subjectivity allowed widespread ownership to operate, through clear, binding, and widespread agreements about the way people were to regard each other. There was certainly a dark side of this. As we know, ownership was hardly universally dispersed. Also, the centering of "man" in the cosmos opened the floodgates to the unrestrained exploitation of the Earth's
resources. The Earth and the natural world were viewed as separate from the lofty human psyche, and therefore simply a resource to be plundered. The bright side of the humanist tradition was that at least the rhetoric promised "autonomy, reciprocity, mutual recognition, dignity and human rights."

The operative term here is rights. And the humanist search went into discovering the nature of the human core, enumerating its rights, and refining political forms reflecting those rights. Let me say that again because this remains the central social project of Western democracies. The goal of humanism is the universal experience of autonomy, reciprocity, and dignity, based on inalienable rights.

There were those like Rousseau who thought the human core was basically decent, and framed rights as privileges. There were those like Hobbes who thought the core was basically bloodthirsty, and framed rights as protection. Either way humanism was striving for overtly normative political solutions to social organization. The French and American Revolutions both were built on and fueled along the basic humanist principles of equality, freedom and brotherhood that derive directly from the notion of the central core of the human being, and the moral imperative to insure human rights.

Reader: It all sounds very logical and orderly.

Professor: It was the heyday of Reason, but like most social movements, humanism also generated a capacity for critique that turned back on itself. The rational, humanist project created science as we know it. Technology was transforming the earth and lifestyles. Men—and I use this word purposefully—were feeling their oats, and laying their hands on the world. But this spirit of inquiry got people thinking in other ways too.

Around the time of the French and American Revolutions, there was a revolt by the literary and artistic communities against the hyper-rationality of the era. These Romantic poets
and artists remained attached to the idea of the human subject with a central inviolable core, but for them that core was Imagination not Reason. There was a shift away from art as imitation, the concept that had dominated art under the influence of the Church. Romanticism was a revolt against the notion that Man was simply a reflection of God. The Romantics turned inward. The focus for them was on self-making, not culture making. The bottom line here was man the self-creator. Many of the romantic figures led extremely volatile lives, self-consciously nurturing their own eccentricity.

Reader: How does this all apply to Bob?

Professor: I think Bob can be viewed as a romantic humanist. The self-absorption and the extremely idiosyncratic nature of his project has a distinctly Romantic self-making air about it. While acknowledging others, he strongly asserts his property rights as an owner. Bob clearly thinks there are some standards about what human behavior should be. And, in the humanist tradition, he's not reticent about trying to change people—-their attitudes and their behaviors—-to fit this view of correct human behavior.

Reader: Is there some other way to see it?

Professor: This is a complicated question. As I said, the humanist tradition is still very much alive. The American Constitution is fundamentally a humanist document. There have also been some potent critiques of the humanist program. Let's go back to the 18th Century.

Freed from the omnipresent binds of the Church and oppressive monarchies, people searched for the sources of creativity, spirituality, and the self. Starting with Hegel in philosophy, a powerful shift happened. People began to realize that historical circumstances powerfully shape peoples' lives. By the middle of the 19th Century some potent thinkers had seriously undermined the notion of the free, rational being with an inviolable core.
Karl Marx, following Hegel, demonstrated that "the self is the effect of class structures. All of our seemingly independent feelings and actions are shaped by our social positions. What we are capable of being is not a matter of freedom; it is rather a range determined by the axioms of our placement in the distribution of social power."

Sigmund Freud undermined the notion of the universal "man" and grounded the formation of psyches back into the contingent and idiosyncratic. He did claim there were basic instincts, but he showed that how each person manifests those instincts is based on the particular circumstances of the individual's life.

Freud also demonstrated that the chance events and influences that determine lives remain buried as impulses deep in the mind. It is in the subconscious, that part of our being which operates underneath our awareness, that people recombine events into idiosyncratic self-organizing behavioral modes. The kind of orderly logic that the humanist agenda depends on was devastated by this facet of Freudian theory.

Reader: Hasn't there been a lot of criticism of Freud's work in the past thirty years?

Professor: Yes. And we will get to some of it a little later, but the contingent nature of the unconscious is not the piece that comes under fire. He is criticized for the way in which he applied this understanding to produce a totalizing, and many think catastrophic, picture of human development. Deleuze and Guattari, for instance think Freud's great developmental scheme, the Oedipus Complex, simply recreates and feeds capitalist authority formations. Maybe we'll talk about this some more later.

Reader: And what were Freud's views of collective behavior?

Professor: According to Freud, life experiences buried in the subconscious, leak out as culture. Art, architecture, and social
relations are the loves and rages and fears of
our lives transformed into social action."

Reader: I guess as far as Freud was concerned, we
can't help but be enmeshed in our social world, we are our social world.

Professor: Another German, Friedrich Nietzsche,
contended that the deepest self was a formation
of language and rhetoric. The humanist "I" is
"a delusion created by discourse."
Nietzsche
represents a collision of historicism and
romanticism, a hope of self-making with the
realization of the historical shaping of the
persona. He recognized the weight of cultural
determination, and terrified at its power,
balked at it. He articulates most
emphatically, in fact you could call it a full
blown obsession, the fear of being subsumed by
the culture.

Nietzsche is the chief spokesman in
Western philosophy for the cause of self
description. For him "the process of coming to
know oneself, confronting one's contingency
... is identical with the process of
inventing a new language--that is, of thinking
up some new metaphors. For any literal
description of one's individuality, which is to
say any use of an inherited language-game for
this purpose, will necessarily fail." In
other words, it was not enough for Nietzsche
just to have control over himself and the way
he thought of himself. He considered it
imperative to actually invent a way of talking
about himself that had never been thought of
before. One of Nietzsche's followers, Martin
Heidegger, was so obsessed with self-
description that he invented his own words.

Reader: This is certainly a different viewpoint
than the humanists.

Professor: Yes, Nietzsche thought the humanist
program was just a poor attempt to justify
socially normalizing behaviors.

Reader: How did he view social responsibility?

Professor: In his desperation to remain a self-
maker, he proposed a kind of person, the Strong
Poet, the "Overman," who was driven to make himself free of social influences. It is the task of the Strong Poet to follow his or her impulse at all cost, and let the culture fall in line behind his or her isolated genius.

Reader: This is a real statement about "do your own thing," isn't it?

Professor: Nietzsche says there is no central core of the human being. The human subject is a construction based on language formation. To make the self takes courage and determination, and a willingness to stand apart from others.

Reader: This could have some strong social consequences, couldn't it?

Reader: This is a call for personal anarchy really. Nietzsche wanted society to leave him, and other Strong Poets, completely alone.

And I think it's ironic, in lieu of his individualism, that Nietzsche's writings were so pivotal in a totalitarian regime just thirty years after his death. The Nazi's took his conception of the Overman and distorted it into the Aryan "Superman." I think Nietzsche would have been horrified.

Can you see the Strong Poet at work in Bob? How he simply goes about the business of making his Warehouse. We know he has gotten plenty of resistance from his neighbors. He's been at war with the City. From a Nietzschean-Romantic standpoint that is both understandable and tolerable. He has a vision of himself and his environment that simply absorbs him, and in some ways protects him from the enmity of his fellow citizens. Rain or shine, he continues to fashion his world to his own specifications.

For most of the twenty years Bob has owned the Warehouse he has moved his stuff alone. Hundreds of tons of materials and machinery—shaping and reshaping. Literally describing and redescribing his environment as he sees it. I doubt that there is another place like it on the Earth. As a locus of recycling it is perhaps unique. It might even be said that Bob is inventing a kind of recycling language of
his own. At the least the Warehouse is an example of an individual willing to push his own vision to extremes.

Reader: Okay. So now we have two radically different viewpoints on Bob: a humanist vision of respect for binding social rights, and a romantic vision of self creation at all cost. How do we know which is right, which we should follow? And more importantly, how do we know which is good?

Professor: Before we make any value judgments I need to introduce you to one other important movement, Pragmatism, that started toward the end of the 19th Century. It is important for several reasons. First, it is an American contribution, and therefore may be of particular help with the Warehouse. Second, it offers us a way to honor the richness of artistic expression without completely disengaging from socially responsive projects.

Perhaps it was the lure of conquering vast landscapes that shaped early American psyches. I don't really want to get into it, because I find our national policies, especially the genocidal march across this continent in the 19th Century, so disturbing. Suffice it to say that America grew up on the strength of a deeply embedded practicality. We were a country of rugged individualists who got the job done. Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Self Reliance" was the most influential American philosophical treatise of its time, and the title speaks for itself.

Remember, humanism was based on the primacy of the Rational. The assumption was that a principled approach to the world would yield true, right, and morally correct evaluations of the world. And most importantly for our discussion, rationalism was a basis for evaluating human conduct. The task before philosophers and planners was simply to discover key timeless principles.

But then the romantics said, "Pish tosh" to the rational, the point of life is emotion and self expression. "To hell with social organization." Henry Thoreau went to Walden
Pond and communed with nature in isolation. His was a romantic act. Did it change his world?

Well you can see the great dilemma here. The rationalists, with support from scientists, developed programs for getting things done. Just look at what happened to America in the 1800s. A whole continent was colonized and industrialized. But the purely rational is dry, forbidding, and often heartless. Again, look at what happened to America in the 1800s. The romantics, on the other hand, knew how to reach deeper spiritual and emotional states, but they turned their backs on social projects.

There was a split between emotion and rationality. In America this was resolved by conceding the physical world to capitalists and engineers, while the artists and poets went to museums or to the woods.

Reader: How did the pragmatists propose to solve this dilemma?

Professor: They accepted the reasoned methodologies of science, and adopted empiricism, but instead of treating the world as if it were a dead object to be plundered at will, the pragmatists accepted all of human life as their domain. Emotion and creativity were considered empirically valid, primary experiences. This was the great pragmatic leap. Mind, body, spirit, nature, and meaning were all regarded in the same contingent shifting picture. The pragmatists did not pit mind against spirit, or body against emotion.

The pragmatists didn't turn their backs on the humanist project. They extended it and brought it into contact with rich, unpredictable daily life. Pragmatism used the scientific method to combine experimentation and creativity.

Reader: Wow. Empiricism and emotion together. What kind of a world and what kind of human conduct did the pragmatists promote?

Professor: The most influential of the pragmatists was John Dewey. A contemporary of Nietzsche
and Freud, Dewey concurred with theories of contingency. He understood that truths didn’t exist. He knew that "truth" was a social construction.

But for Dewey, creating, theorizing and acting in the world all turned out to be the same process. And it is identical to science. He saw the solving of any problem, whether it was an aesthetic or practical issue, as a process of experimenting—reflecting—theorizing—hypothesizing—imagining consequences—experimenting—reflecting—theorizing and so on and so on. Endless cycles of experimentation and reflection. This was life. This was art. This was science.

Reader: So what makes Dewey different from Nietzsche? Is it that he used a different method for making metaphors? Did he just use science instead of language?

Professor: No. There is a much deeper division between them. Nietzsche wanted societies to honor the Strong Poets and fall in behind their isolated genius. He was an anarchist. Dewey's pragmatic position, on the other hand, was based on creating free and just societies. The pragmatic impulse was conceived as a social form. That is the point. It is about action in the world. Plain and simple, the pragmatists wanted to effect change in the world, not based on an inviolable human core, but based on a recognition of constant personal and social flux.

Dewey acted powerfully in the world. He was a philosopher, a professor, a founder of progressive education, a social activist. His intentions were always aimed at collective progress. His primary goal was the promotion of widespread liberalism—which meant equal opportunity for experiencing. Here is a statement from his Moral Principles in Education:

I can only say that the introduction of every method that appeals to the child's active powers, to his capacities in construction, production, and the creation, marks
an opportunity to shift the centre of ethical gravity from an absorption which is selfish to a service which is social."

Dewey was intent on shaping society along the lines of a liberal democracy. And it was everybody's job to participate in the social project. Dewey was a fellow citizen.

Reader: How did he come to such a different conclusion than Nietzsche in the face of contingency?

Professor: Some circumstances of Dewey's life drew Dewey into a rich commitment to community. He saw contingency as an opportunity for communal expression. I don't know why.

But Dewey, like Nietzsche, also deeply honored the arts. He felt strongly about the wonderment of self-fashioning. One of his great books is called *Art as Experience*. In it he writes at length about "consummatory experience," those deeply personal epiphanies that come in primary making experiences. However, he concluded that even consummatory experiences were valueless unless they were brought into the public sphere.

This is the heart of Deweyan pragmatism. Personal, emotional experiments have consequences in the world."

Reader: So what does a Deweyan world look like?

Professor: Unlike the humanists who were looking for a transcendental self floating free of the body, Dewey ultimately honors experimentation, reflection, and *public service*. The pragmatic normative behavior is inquiry in the service of community. A Deweyan world is one full of people experiencing, feeling, creating, but all in an effort to respect and nurture public bonds.

Reader: Pragmatism seems like a variation of humanism, a softer one based on contingency. What happens when we look at Bob in this light?
Professor: I think the thing we could point to here as a pragmatic consequence is Bob's passion for community. There is no question that at times Bob is self absorbed in his own world in a romantic way, but it is also clear that Bob has a real investment in cleaning up the environment, treating his neighbors well, and educating the public about the dangers of overflow waste.

Humanist ideals account for Bob's reasons for treating his neighbors well, but it is the pragmatic impulse which integrates the moral imperative with the emotional outflow. Pragmatism privileges the emotionally satisfying component of active engagement. Even Bob's frustration plays a part in his commitment to community. Perhaps it is his anger which is so critical in fueling his social responsiveness. He is not just filling a slot in the industrial landscape. He passionately responds to the contingent needs of modern industrial land use and materials abuse. He really wants people to understand and find ways to honor the environment. It is quite possible to see his work, rage and all, as a practical and loving communal act.

Reader: Wow. This is quite a different filter to look through. Bob as a committed and passionate pragmatist. Okay, so there's certainly a wide variety of recommendations here regarding social behavior. Can we make some decisions now about possible life choices?

Professor: We're now going to look at one more viewpoint which has powerful implications about public versus private activity. This is a contemporary critique that packs some punch.

Poststructuralism has its roots in postwar France, and takes the notion of contingency to extremes. The poststructuralists assume that culture goes all the way down. In other words, people's vocabularies, beliefs, and practices are completely contingent upon social forces. There is nothing that even vaguely hints at a human nature. The human being simply uses and reacts to what is in her environment. There is nothing underneath. Unlike the humanists, and even the pragmatists, these thinkers say there
simply is **nothing** below social context. Human beings do not have a central core. Period. Human beings respond to the beliefs and demands of their daily lives as it comes at them physically and in language.

**Reader:** How does culture get so deeply embedded in our lives?

**Professor:** No one knows for sure. The mechanisms of cultural coding have been under study in many fields for years. One place to start is with a concept called "object relations theory," which came out of the psychoanalytic tradition.

Freud was the first to take note of a particular capacity humans have for creating something like "images" of people and either endowing objects with that image, or simply holding that image in our minds.

In the forties and fifties, researchers doing careful observations noticed that infants have the capacity to hold an image of a thing inside themselves, even when that thing is not present." For infants that thing is necessarily the image of a parent. Remember, or imagine, the desperation infants have for contact with the care-giver. To make a long story short, human infants have the capacity to conjure up in themselves the image of the mother or father, and hold on to it as an operative component of their psyches.

Infants, and adults for that matter, also have the ability to project desires outward onto other people.

**Reader:** Are these things so important?

**Professor:** Yes. It means through projection and introjection humans are able to create a parent to be an "object" in their own minds. This is the root of symbolic capacities, and its effects are far reaching. This symbolic, metaphoric capacity is the root of language, the capacity to endow a sound with the force of the thing itself.
Reader: So the culture, through metaphors and language has access to our deepest psyche.

Professor: Yes, the key word is "representation." We are susceptible to the way culture exploits things and people and situations through metaphor and symbol. It is a capacity of the human psyche to substitute representations for experience that opens a pathway from the exterior into our interior.

Reader: Are there other ways culture gets into us?

Professor: Remember Don Johnson and his discussion of the body and the way culture actually shapes bodies through its physical practices.

Reader: Right, through chairs and toilets and shoes and on and on.

Professor: Deleuze and Guattari call this "territorializing," literally making the body the territory of the culture. Our modern culture does it through clothes, postures, work, and on and on, right down to proper sitting and shitting. Wilhelm Reich said it beautifully. Writing in fascist Germany during the thirties he said something very close to, "the body is the first art work of a culture."

Reader: So it is the creation of representations and their ultimate affect on bodies that concerns us.

Professor: Yes keep this concept in mind. And it is the poststructuralists who have been particularly articulate about the way cultural representations are exploited. I introduced you briefly to Michel Foucault in CHAPTER III. He has given us a whole new way of looking at power in the modern era that has strong implications for social conduct.

He contends that during the rise of modern industrialism, the age of humanism, a distinctively modern kind of power developed. Earlier despotisms and monarchies exercised power from the top down. Power was visible and capricious and operated through opulent
displays like torture and public executions. Other representations of power were also clear -- big houses, conspicuous displays of property, and so on.

Capitalist industrialization reorganized European life in such a way that for the first time in history the management of large numbers of people on a daily, hourly, momentary basis became essential. In the disciplinary institutions, the prisons, mental hospitals, and schools, a variety of "microtechniques" were developed that later would become part of macro-practices that would allow the control of populations.

Reader: What are some of these microtechniques?

Professor: We have talked briefly about the most potent of these techniques, "the gaze." Remember the Panopticon allowed a whole prison population to be easily surveilled and controlled. That design was widely dispersed.

According to Foucault gaze comes in two forms: synoptic and individualizing." Synopsis means "summary." Synoptic gaze, as it occurred during the rise of industrialism, meant a kind of surveillance that allowed a sweeping glance of prisoners, or mental patients, or school children, or factory workers. It was operational through architectural and spatial design, like the Panopticon, and allowed large groups of people to be surveilled continuously.

This kind of spatial ordering also allowed groups of people to be visibly ordered by rank. Modern industry/bureaucracy thrives on complex webs of authority that must be exercised at all times. The spatial designs that promoted synoptic gaze allowed a whole chain of command to be made constantly visible.

Reader: And what is individualizing gaze?

Professor: "Rational man" was the core of humanism. It was a turn toward science, toward reason, and ultimately toward the kind of prediction that is so fundamental to traditional science and technology. And this turn toward
rationality in the 18th and 19th Centuries, coupled with the growing importance of "man," turned "man" into the object of his own inquiry. "Foucault claims that this visibility succeeded in constituting the individual for the first time as a 'case,' simultaneously a new object of inquiry and a new target of power." And the point of studying "man," just as the point of studying "the cosmos," was to control him.

Reader: Gaze isn't an obvious or dramatic kind of control, is it?

Professor: That's Foucault's point. In the Panopticon it's fairly omnipresent, but in scientific, medical, and educational settings, the same thing happens in less overt ways. It is a relentless objectifying intrusion into people's lives.

Reader: Why is this so important in our discussion, and how is it particularly modern?

Professor: Remember our discussion in CHAPTER III, about the way humans internalize the gaze. Once a population has accepted into their deep psyches the existence of a higher authority, an authority they turn back on themselves, they have been fundamentally pacified and captured. In this way modern power manages to be everywhere, with everyone, at all times. Foucault thinks this kind of normalizing is part and parcel of the humanist project. It is the way workers are controlled in great numbers without overt display.

Reader: Wow. That's scary. And that's different from earlier forms of power?

Professor: Pre-modern power depended on display. Power was congealed in the name of the King or army or the State. It was repressive and had to be exercised. But power in the modern world is everywhere. "As the description of panoptical self-surveillance demonstrated, it is even in the targets themselves, in their bodies, gestures, desires, and habits. In other words, as Foucault often says, modern power is capillary. It does not emanate from some central source but circulates throughout
the entire social body down to even the tiniest and apparently most trivial extremities." 15
Ultimately this has produced a modern world of "docile bodies," whole populations of people susceptible to the manipulations of external authority. Foucault claims modern society is fundamentally "disciplinary," and produces these "docile bodies."

Reader: Does Foucault really show how this happens?

Professor: Foucault's primary achievement consisted of exhaustive studies on just these mechanisms of the "micro-physics" of power. In Discipline and Punish he shows how the "disciplined body" is actually produced. For example, he talks about "body-object articulation." 16 This is a discussion of how bodies are put into alignment with machines and ultimately become interchangeable with them. It is part of the whole industrialization of the body which depends on, and simultaneously creates, docile bodies.

Discipline defines each of the patterns that the body must have with the object it manipulates. Between them it outlines a meticulous meshing. "Bring the weapon forward. In three stages. Raise the rifle with the right hand, bringing it close to the body so as to hold it perpendicular with the right knee, the end of the barrel at eye level. . . .At the third stage, let go of the rifle with the right hand, which falls along the thigh, raising the rifle with the right hand, the lock outwards and opposite the chest, the right arm half flexed, the elbow close to the body, the thumb lying against the lock, resting against the first screw, the hammer resting on the first finger, the barrel perpendicular ('Ordonnance du 1 er Janvier 1766. . . , titre XI, article 2')." This is an example of what might be called the instrumental coding of the body. It consists of a breakdown of the total gesture into two parallel series: that of the
parts of the body to be used (right hand, left hand, different fingers of the hand, knew, eye, elbow, etc.) and that of the parts of the object manipulated (barrel, notch, hammer, screw, etc.); then the two sets of parts are correlated together according to a number of simple gestures (rest, bend); lastly, it fixes the canonical succession in which each of these correlations occupies a particular place."

This is a detailed description of the way a body and a rifle are made to operate interchangeably. It is this kind of activity that factory work demands. Bodies and machines made interchangeable, and thus finally predictable and controllable.

Reader: Yes, I see the alienation of the modern docile body project here. This has some implications for the way to think about power in general, doesn't it?

Professor: Yes, it means that anywhere there is asymmetrical power in a relationship, in other words, when someone has more authority that is accepted by another person, there is power happening. Foucault calls this the productivity of power. Modern power, therefore, is productive rather than prohibitive. It is based on the way people co-construct the world. The person who assents to exploitation is also participating in the production of power. It is not based on higher authority saying "no."

Reader: Hmm, I'm so used to thinking of power as something someone at the top has and wields over people lower on the ladder.

Professor: Foucault, I think, has shown us how pervasive power is in modern culture.

Reader: So it's not necessarily something someone is overtly doing to someone else.

Professor: No. And for this reason Michael Ryan has suggested we adopt the concept of "force"
in place of "power." "The advantage of this description is that it draws attention to the mobile and flexible character of the interchange. While the concept of power suggests a stabilization of domination, the concept of force permits a description of the flows of tensions within unequal social arrangements."'

A whole kind of humanist rhetoric is obsolete in Foucault's world. The capillary nature of power undermines all "the liberationist politics that presuppose that power is essentially repressive."'

Power/force starts with surveillance. This ultimately leads to the installations of "truths." It is all based, not on shows of physical strength, but on having information. Foucault calls this conflation of information-truth-force "power/knowledge." Those in control of the information, those who create the "truths," have the power. He calls this congealing of information and knowledge "regimes of truth." Modern humanist cultures are regimes of truth.

Reader: It sounds like Foucault just has distaste for any kind of surveillance and probing of people's inner lives.

Professor: Yes. He targets all kinds of humanist projects that promise liberation and merely deliver surveillance instead. He singles out psychoanalysis as the kind of asymmetrical power coupled with the surveillance aspect that is particularly insidious. The paying client actually participates in his or her own victimization.

Reader: Isn't psychoanalysis also called the talking cure? Does that figure in Foucault's thinking?

Professor: Interesting you should raise the issue of language again. Foucault has some particularly startling things to say about how language is complicit in social control. In The History of Sexuality he gives us some concrete ways of seeing language at work in the power structure. On page 11 he says,
What are the links between these discourses, these effects of power, and the pleasures that were invested by them? What knowledge (savoir) was formed as a result of this linkage? The object, in short, is to define the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains the discourse on human sexuality in our part of the world. The central issue, then . . . is not to determine whether one says yes or no to sex, whether one formulates prohibitions or permissions, whether one asserts its importance or denies its effects, or whether one refines the words one uses to designate it; but to account for the fact that it is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said.

Foucault is talking about the humanist strategy of turning behavior into rational discourse for the purpose of controlling that behavior, and ultimately controlling people. The History of Sexuality demonstrates that the silencing of discourse about sex is a myth. As far as Foucault is concerned sex gets talked about incessantly. The disaster is that sex has been turned into a discourse at all. In fact, Foucault contends that "sex" was a linguistic invention in the first place. Turning it into a language game gave some power elements of the culture a potent entry into behavioral control.

Foucault exposes how late capitalism uses innovative ways to intrude into peoples lives, to insure its regular labor force, and preserve its hierarchical structure. For instance, he contends that "sex" was a bourgeois invention. Pleasures used to just exist. And then in the 19th Century these particular pleasures were catalogued, monitored and turned into a discourse. "Normalcy" and "deviancy" appeared
for the first time. Foucault is not concerned with the specifics of deviancy or normalcy. That isn't his point. Standards change contingently. Yet Foucault counts it as devastating that a whole realm of pleasure was colonized by turning it into a vocabulary in the first place. Sex is just sex, but as "sex" it can be monitored and controlled.

Reader: And it certainly has been.

Professor: Even the language of resistance, as far as Foucault is concerned, supports the repression. He shows how the assumed "sexual repression" of the 19th Century was actually a myth. Sex had just turned into language. Sex was constantly talked about and argued over. The languages of "recovery" and "liberation" were just parts of the restraining rhetoric. By entering into the conversation either for or against sexual freedom, people participated in their own monitoring and control. This is how deep Foucault believes normalizing power regimes operate. Penetration into the deepest areas of people's desire may be based on "refusal, blockage, and invalidation, but also incitement and intensification: in short, the 'polymorphous techniques of power.'"

Reader: Can you give me an example of this in contemporary culture?

Professor: In 1991 a documentary film called Truth or Dare was made about Madonna, the current queen of uncensored desire. Her explicitly sexualized concert tour was plastered across the big screen. It had an explicitly anti-censorship message.

Reader: Foucault certainly must be against censorship.

Professor: I think you would have to say that Foucault is beyond censorship into anarchy, but that isn't the point. When I watched Madonna doing her thing on the screen I had a weird Foucauldian kind of reaction to it. I wondered, "If we're all in here watching this, then we sure aren't out there doing it." I had the sense that somehow all of her sexual energy had been neatly captured by the big money media
purveyors. I understood *The History of Sexuality* better at that moment. People were paying all these dollars to watch this woman do it for them. This, of course, is only one way to look at it. I'm sure some people saw the film as incitement, but when the film was over, I certainly didn't feel any charge or excitement around me.

Reader: According to Foucault, then, simply entering the conversation reproduces the repression.

Professor: This is a key to Foucault's anti-humanism and anti-liberalism. He demonstrates how even liberal discourse, when it is based in normative principles, is still part of a power machinery. In fact, it supports the power machinery by continuing the fundamentally repressive conversation. "Thus, there is no foundation, in Foucault's view, for critique oriented around the notions of autonomy, reciprocity, mutual recognition, dignity, and human rights. Indeed, Foucault rejects these humanist ideals as instruments of dominations deployed within the current disciplinary power/knowledge regime."**

Foucault's position is diametrically opposed to humanism.

Reader: I can see that. He must consider any kind of normalizing behavior intrusive.

Professor: Yes, and I think he even opposes pragmatism, though it relies heavily on contingency and change. Foucault simply cannot support the omnipresence of the socializing intentions inherent in the pragmatic impulse.

Reader: How does the Warehouse look from a Foucauldian viewpoint?

Professor: For starters, if you believe that humans are social constructions "all the way down," then it is possible that Bob is simply a cog in the capitalist gears. In fact, Bob's recycling might just be the thing that keeps capitalist exploitation grinding. This is recycling seen as the next great co-opted resistance--like "sex" in the 19th Century. Even Bob's
righteousness and anger might just be part of the obligatory humanist political debate that solidifies cultural norms over and over. Perhaps Bob's seemingly dogged individualism, resistance to the City's authority, and his wonderful pragmatic impulses are simply necessary components of the bourgeois conversation.

Reader: So even open and honest communication situations don't satisfy Foucault.

Professor: No. In fact the liberal concept of consensus-making which has gathered support in the past twenty years scares him most. At the point where there is completely uncoerced free speech, and everyone comes into agreement, we will, according to Foucault, have internalized the current regime of truth so thoroughly that totalitarianism will have prevailed perfectly.

Reader: That's pretty discouraging. Is there no way to resist in Foucault's world? It looks paralyzing. How is it possible to operate at all in his poststructural world? Is there no way to resist oppression without in turn making it worse?

Professor: I think you are right to sense Foucault's pessimism. It is sobering, but he has a great deal to say about the way collective behavior proceeds. He is especially astute about modern industrial settings.

Reader: What are Paul's real concerns?

Professor: Paul wants to determine how education functions in modern culture. Whom or what does it serve? Is education self-making, community making, both, or something else altogether?

Ultimately Paul wants to decide if he, as an educator, is serving or exploiting people. He wants to know if he is imposing normalizing/repressive behaviors, or if is he promoting self-expression. Is his liberal rhetoric only a disguise for some invasive program that even he can't detect? He wants to know what should be included in his courses of study. He wants to know how he should present that material. He wants to know if students
should be asked "personal" questions in "public" settings. He wants to know how he should act as a person who is given considerable authority over others by his social positioning. He wants to know what his rights are as a teacher. He wants to know what his students' rights are as people. He wants to know if there are such things as rights.

Bottom line here is, Paul wants to know how he should act as an educator in the world.

We've looked at humanism, romanticism, and pragmatism. We've looked at Nietzsche's self-making, and Foucault's mistrust of totalizing projects. These are different, sometimes conflictual viewpoints about involvement in the world. Some of these theories advocate intense public activity. Some advocate intense private activity. Some think they are distinctly different. Some think they are intertwined.

Reader: Has anyone addressed this clearly?

Professor: Yes. It is topic of debate for many people. I think the opposing viewpoints of Richard Rorty and Nancy Fraser are particularly rich and clear.

Rorty doesn't think Nietzschean privatism and Deweyan social advocacy are compatible in a single vision. He says, "... there is no way to bring self-creation together with justice at the level of theory. The closest we will come to joining these two quests is to see the aim of a just and free society as letting its citizens be as privatistic, 'irrationalist,' and aestheticist as they please so long as they do it on their own time--causing no harm to others and using no resources needed by those less advantaged."

Reader: So Rorty's solution to the dilemma is to completely split public and private pursuits.

Professor: Yes. In other words, public activity should be an open forum in which policy is made
to determine how best to preserve the privacy of each person.

Reader: What makes this different than Nietzsche's program?

Professor: Unlike Nietzsche's anarchism, Rorty is an open advocate of public debate and public decision making. He thinks it is important to participate in the public forum. He just thinks it should be limited to organizational matters.

Reader: And Fraser?

Professor: Nancy Fraser asks, "Is it really possible to distinguish redemptions that affect actions with consequences for others from those that either do not affect actions at all or that affect actions with no consequences for others?" 

Fraser says that, "the social movements of the last hundred or so years have taught us to see the power-laden, and therefore political, character of interactions that classical liberalism considered private. . . . Women's movements, as illuminated by feminist theory, have taught us that the domestic and the personal are political." She wants to break down these distinctions between the public and private.

Her contention is that Rorty's public/private split has dire consequences for both private and political domains. By limiting poetizing and theorizing to the private sphere, "both culture and theory get depoliticized." "As theory becomes pure poiesis, politics approaches pure techne. Moreover, as theory is made the preserve of pure transcendence, politics is banalized, emptied of radicalism and of desire." In Rorty's world, public discourse gives up its radical voice, its artistic voice, its transcendent voice.

And what happens to poetry and the arts? Creativity gets deposited squarely in the private domain. Thus, the poet, the seer, the seeker, and prime makers of the world lose their mandate for world shaping.
Reader: It sounds like a world of dry public encounters protecting disenfranchised artists. What does Nancy Fraser want?

Professor: She wants to strike a balance between community needs and personal desires. One paragraph in particular is worth quoting in full here. She writes,

Contestation . . . should encompass struggles for cultural hegemony, the power to construct authoritative definitions of social situations and legitimate interpretations of social needs. This broad sense of contestation allows for a politics of culture that cuts across traditional divisions between public and private life. It allows also for the possibility of radical democratic social movements: broad, informally organized, collective formations wherein politics and poetry form an unbroken continuum as struggles for social justice shade into the unleashing of creativity."

Politics and poetry form an unbroken continuum as struggles for social justice shade into the unleashing of creativity. Can you see Bob here? The melding of the personal with the political. In this light the Warehouse can be seen to occupy a place on a continuum—it is both politics and poetry at the same time. In fact, that is the genius of the Warehouse, the seamless way in which it is a powerful personal and public expression at the same time. I think Rorty is just wrong.

Reader: Yes, I see the validity of Fraser's critique, but I can also see Rorty's desire to protect private expression. Fraser's world runs the risk of damping real flights of fancy. Her world would not be over privatized or over communalized, but maybe it would be personally bland.
Professor: Yes, that is the poetic fear. It is hard to know what's is right or possible.

Reader: And Professor, there are so many ways to think about public and private experience, but a question keeps coming up for me.

Professor: Yes, what's that Reader?

Reader: Everyone is making claims about how people should or shouldn't interact with each other, but I haven't heard what really drives people in the first place. Why should I believe Fraser or Nietzsche or Rorty or Dewey? Certainly they all have their opinions about social conduct, but what are the motivations that drive all this? Can I presume that Foucault doesn't think there are any generalizable motivations at all? But if that's true, why is he so hot and bothered?

    Yes, I guess that's my question. Why is everyone so hot and bothered by their own viewpoints? What makes it all tick? I don't think any of these theories are going to impress me until I have a better sense about what really fuels people.

Professor: Ah. Excellent Reader. I think you're right. I haven't really given you any real reason to believe one of these theories over another. Right now they're just word games. You need to know what the "motor" is that drives these theories. I think Paul is about to discuss it.
Endnotes


3. My feminist proofreader blanched at "brotherhood." But I am speaking here of an historical moment when sexism was, in fact, rampant. This inherently exclusionary term reflects the attitudes of that era. "But, do you need to perpetuate the damage?" asks my friend. This is tricky. If I drop all the sexist references do I run the risk of over-sanitizing the document? When do we need to forget, and when do we need to remember?

4. Ryan, p. 150.

5. In the Anti-Oedipus Deleuze and Guattari demonstrate how the modern family unit reproduces capitalist formations: the absent/producing father figure, alienation, and so on. See especially Part 2.

6. "Sublimation" is Freud's term for this process of channeling urges into acting/making/creating.

7. Ryan, p. 150.


10. I debated about the use of "experience" versus "experiment" here. In Dewey's pragmatism the two are nearly conflated.


14. Fraser, p. 23.

15. Fraser, p. 24.


19. Fraser, p. 19.


22. Fraser, p. 56.


25. Fraser, p. 102.

26. Fraser, p. 103.

27. Fraser, p. 104.

28. Fraser, p. 107.
CHAPTER VI

The Gym

Estep

Life cannot go on without the mutual devouring of organisms. If at the end of each person's life he were to be presented with the living spectacle of all that he had organismically incorporated in order to stay alive, he might well feel horrified by the living energy he had ingested. The horizon of the gourmet, or even the average person, would be taken up with hundreds of chickens, flocks of lambs and sheep, a small herd of steers, sties full of pigs, and rivers of fish. The din alone would be deafening. To paraphrase Elias Canetti, each organism raises its head over a field of corpses, smiles into the sun, and declares life good.

(Ernest Becker)

STEVE KRULEVITZ, HAROLD RABINOWITZ AND PAUL MARIENTHAL drove into town and immediately went in search of the courts. They rode past the Downtowner Motel on their left, the Greyhound Station on their right, and slowed to a roll as they drove under the banner stretched across Main Street. Each in their private reverie read,

Kalamazoo, Home of the

U.S. National Boys

Tennis Championships

77
Kalamazoo was the Shangri La of their boyhood consciousnesses.

* * *

Paul was a tennis player. Now that didn't mean going out to the local park once in a while to volley a few around with the guys and gals. He was a Tennis Player, and that meant heading to the park five or six days a week, forty to fifty weeks a year.

Most children grow up belonging to Family, to America, to the Overland Avenue School, perhaps to Holmby Street or Mr. Powell's homeroom. To kids, the privileges of membership are unconscious, the benefits often fragile fabrications.

"Holmby's better than Thayer 'cause it has more hills--

--nah nah na nah nah."

The dues are unspecified.

The tennis world is a rich subculture of dense intrigues and intricate customs. It has its own places, its own language, its own dress code, and its own status-making apparatus. It was said that tennis in America was run for twenty-five years by Perry T. Jones out of a little shabby office with a torn screen door cramped under the old green wooden stands across from the coffee shop at the Los Angeles Tennis Club. The dirty blinds were always three quarters shut. There was never a light on in there. Perry's secretary's name was Dolores Cook. She was heavy. She sat in the dark. The color of her dress was called "midnight blue." She never moved.

Sitting in a corner, usually alone, eating a sandwich, waiting for his next match, Paul kept an eye out for Perry. Once in a while at the big tournaments Perry'd shuffle out through the broken door wearing baggy grey flannel trousers, hanging loose from gray suspenders around an undefined middle, his penis long forgotten. Thin white hair in lines on his spotted head. No visible muscle in his upper body, so that it looked like the starch in his high collars kept his head on top of his neck. Loose skin on the back of his hands, uneven yellowing finger nails, baggy eyes, he seemed the last person on earth to have the final say on who would represent the United States for the Davis Cup. In the
warm summer season the LATC had a kind of plantation feel, and whispers preceded Perry down the shaded walkways,

"Hey, Perry's coming."

"Watch out for Perry T."

People's shoulders bowed slightly when he came near. He touched his favorites, like Paul's arch opponent Don Lutz, lightly on their arms. He made people leave the center court if he didn't like the color of their shirts. Paul always wore his "approved whites" when he played tournaments at the LATC. And he won his share there. But Perry and Paul didn't have a conversation until Paul's last year as a Junior Player when he won the City High School Championship. Perry presented the trophy, but Paul towered over him (and knew he would live longer.)

"Paul, you've always played well, and you deserve this cup."

Paul was surprised Perry knew his name.

So, by the time he was fourteen, Paul was a member of an alternative society which catered to athletically gifted children. (Thirty years ago this was one of the few places where teenage girls showed their legs and guts at the same time.) At tournaments the players were housed and fed in the most scruptious homes on the coast, nothing to do but impress the patrons' children, swim in their private pools, and wake up to be chauffeured to their next matches. The tournaments were often played at elegant clubs. Paul spent many Fourth of July's eating prime rib and watching fireworks explode over the Pacific from the bluffs of the La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club. The players had privileges to use the game rooms and the pool. (Their biggest complaint was the off-limits on the putting green!)

But there were dues to be paid in this world. Just like at the ghetto gym. In your face, lose, you go home. No ocean. No fireworks. No silver cup. No girls in white lace panties. Lose in the first round and you're gone before the first barbecue. Parents fed the pressure, often hysterically. Eleven year old girls yelled at their fathers to bring fresher cans of water.

And those men popped up out of their seats like fishing corks surfacing. Mothers trailed kids right onto the
court pleading, "Just tell me what I can do so we can win." Patty Moneghan brought three or four rackets to big matches because she'd invariably smash a couple of them against a net-post or umpire's chair screaming, "JESUS CHRIST PATTY."

(They were probably Catholic.) In those days rackets were wooden and splintered dramatically. She once shattered one over her shoe. Then she bit the ball and almost got it stuck in her teeth. Her folks sat through all this, loudly whispering strategy to her through the fence.

But there were also elegant triumphs, lovely displays of power, grace, skill, tenacity, humor, and warmth. The equipment is alive and responsive. Gut strings are really lamb's guts. A tennis ball can be driven with a humming reverberation starting in the hand and moving through the spine and legs, or touched lightly exciting only the fingers. Bellies throbbed warmly when a lob was lifted with topspin over a straining opponent and the ball leapt away when the spin grabbed the rough court surface. And there were moments of interpersonal ecstasy, girls falling into each other's arms over the net after matches, sighing into each others red, used faces.

Everyone got the message that tennis was a big deal, and winning was a reason for life. But the impact went even deeper than having status in a subculture. In their adolescent years, when kids are awash in an egoless gray tide, floundering in the giant breakers of "who am I," drowning in the dark piss of their own ennui, the successful tennis players developed complex and confident personas and selves. They weren't alienated visitors in the larger culture. They had genuine practices, physical and emotional anchors. They Were.

(A night game at Hami High, Number 1 ranked basketball team in the City, Sidney Wicks future NBA All-Star rams and jams and ties the score with seconds to go, the ball comes in-bounds to Paul in the corner, Sid bears down on him like a landing jet, an erupting earthquake, a hungry pterodactyl. Paul turns to the ref, and because he'd asked at the last break if they had one left, calmly calls timeout, pfffff goes Sid. Paul's team wins on a free throw. It was an easy call, Paul knew exactly when and where he was in the world.)
Their minds and hearts and flesh melted into the brash and charged and archaic and voluptuous tennis world. Why shouldn't they have? What else was happening at fourteen years old!

But Paul had never been to a National Championship. His father is a Holocaust survivor. As a child in Germany he'd seen a playmate, a little girl, deliberately drowned in the local pool by other children. It was enough for him that his kid had something safe to do in the summers. Sure, sports were a big deal for Paul's father. After his escape from the Nazis he was adopted by an elderly childless couple in Chicago. He became American playing baseball, and eating redhots at Wrigley Field. He was also a runner, the Chicago City half-mile champion. (The heroes in Paul's house when he was growing up were Miguel Siguieros, a Mexican revolutionary artist; William Shakespeare, a playwright; and Sandy Koufax, THE PITCHER.) Paul and his father still buy a couple of burritos and sit in the cheap seats when they really need a safe place to talk. But, with many children to feed, sending Paul from San Diego to Seattle to play tennis covered enough territory and used enough of the family resources to satisfy his father. So at seventeen Paul had never played in a National Championship.

Paul's folks also paid extravagant, genuine, deep, and wild homage to the humanist principles of balance and brotherhood. They smothered their prodigious hopes and wants for their children in the liberal syrup of "good sportsmanship" and "playing to have fun." They never fully entered the tennis world with Paul. His mother never even really learned how to keep score. They sent him off saying the simplest good thoughts. They drove him to the station on Fifth Street in Santa Monica and put him on the Greyhound with twenty bucks and a, "Good luck, have a good time." They gave him freedom and responsibility and opportunity. They didn't stop to notice there was a dark side to the game.

* * *

The Red, White and Blue flowed as soon as they entered the Kalamazoo College grounds. Workmen were lining the roads with bunting. Giant scalloped ribbons hung on the trees. Harold and Steve and Paul parked the car and approached slowly on foot. Across a lush green inner courtyard they could see the terraced concrete banks of the tennis stadium. They passed a chapel. The door was open. Someone was playing Bach beautifully on
the organ. They were a week early, and there were dozens of workers still stretching colored banners and flags from poles atop the high gray walls. They passed through the outer gates. Inside the main entrance was a man on a ladder painting names in black onto a white wooden drawsheet the size of a billboard.

* * *

Drawsheets at most tournaments are laid out on standardized eight and a half, by eleven inch forms. Two of these might be taped together for big tournaments like the Southern California Sectional's or the Pacific Southwest's. In the first hours of a tournament, the lesser players cluster tightly around the posted draw searching the dense left column to see who will send them home to Bakersfield or Pasadena or Santa Barbara--before the first barbecue. Sometimes a hand will come up out of the mass and tentatively trace a path a couple of columns rightward toward the middle rounds. You might hear a few words passed quietly around in the huddled group, hope-laden secrets: "If I can just get by . . ." "Some guy from up North upset him bad last week in La Jolla . . ." "I'd just like to get to the round of 16's once this year . . ." 

The seeded players waited for the pack to disperse. They didn't have to strain to find their names. They were written in bold print, and because of the geometry of drawsheets there were only three or four places on the familiar grid where they could be located: top, bottom, or in the middle. (Also, timing a look at the draw is an ingredient of mystique.) The intrigue for the seeded players surrounded whose "half of the draw they were in," who they were projected to meet at the end of the week in the quarter and semi finals.

* * *

The drawsheet at Kalamazoo is an elaborate wooden structure, fifteen feet high and twenty feet wide. Harold and Steve went to test the speed of the courts. Paul sat and stared at the man painting names. He knew he would not be in one of the seeded positions, he had no national standing. Still, he sat and watched until the man had lovingly stroked each of the fourteen letters of his name onto the structure.

* * *
The day before the tournament began, Holly Borowiak arrived. She flew in from San Francisco to watch her brother Geoff play. Paul's older sister sometimes watched him play in the finals of a tournament if it was on a weekend when their father could drive her there. (Basically she went to flirt with the guys from Santa Barbara and Pasadena.) But, their father could barely afford to send Paul to Kalamazoo, much less family supporters. Holly was nineteen. This was 1965. Her black hair touched down on the top edge of her butt. And she wore a great little yellow halter top and no bra. She enthroned herself in the middle of the stadium like a queen bee dispensing nectar. The tennis players buzzed around her in constant motion, offering her food and drink and lotions. (They were the ones with the straight blond hair and the great tans.) Paul wanted to get close to her too, but the year before he had grown an inch-a-month, a full foot, and gone from four foot eleven to almost six feet tall. He was kind of stretched out with no visible muscles, bony shoulders, big flapping ears and curly dark hair (which was not cool in 1965). He had about as much chance of getting close to Holly then as he has of getting close to, say, Sigourney Weaver now.

And then, of course there were hundreds of Midwestern fans. They were hard to see sometimes. They wore only Tennis Association approved pastels and blended in with the concrete. They sat in evenly spaced rows like library stacks filled with pink and beige books. And they moved from court to court like that, whole sections reshelved on the next court over. It was like being watched by one dull eye all the time.

* * *

The day before the tournament began, Harold, Steve and Paul were summoned by Rolla Anderson, the Tournament Director. Rolla sat behind his desk, hair flat-topped, shirt buttoned to the chin, hands clenched on the desk, and let them approach,

"I just got a call from the Downtowner Motel. You boys apparently have been there for a week and made quite a mess."

Well Paul was never the neatest kid in the world, and Harold had a towel fight with Steve after a great afternoon practice session. But nothing was damaged.
"I'm considering removal of your names from the draw. We just can't have uncivilized behavior in this tournament."

On the holiest day of their calendar, Yom Kippur, The Day of Atonement, Jews ask God to write their names into the Book of Life for another year. Paul's inner ear heard Rolla Anderson say,

"Removal of your names . . . there's just no place for three dirty Jews in my world."

* * *

Paul's first opponent was a tall dark boy from Georgia. Southerners, like Californians, could practice all year around, and were to be feared. Most of the courts in the South are made out of red clay which promotes slow and precise play. The balls get puffy hitting the rough dirt and tend to pop up in the air and wait patiently to be stroked. There are no cheap winners. Every point is an extravaganza. Footing is tenuous. The overall effect is one of sliding freely and swinging hard into a cloud of pink dust. (The Southerners also had a dressing quirk that went along with summers full of titanic humid battles--they tied their sneakers loose and wore no socks. It seemed they all had red stripes tattooed around their ankles.)

Paul's smallness as a boy, coupled with a lack of adequate coaching, prevented him from learning the aggressive serve-and-volley style of play so associated with the Californians. After all, until he was sixteen he practically had to hit his serves up to get them over the net. He played like a displaced curly headed Southerner. Return it, return it, and keep returning it 'til the other guy shanks it or pukes first. Paul was just too steady and quick for the Georgian. He kicked his butt.

(In the second round he played a boy from Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania for Christ sake!)

In the third round Paul drew a seeded player, Mike Estep. The year before, Mike had come within one shot of winning the National Boys 16-and-Under Championship at Kalamazoo. Mike missed an easy high forehand volley for match point and finished Number 2 in the Nation. (He would later coach Martina Navratilova through the height of her career.)
The year before had been a good one for Paul too. He had beaten the Number 4 boy in the country three times, the last time effortlessly. He had beaten the Number 5 boy in their only meeting. (This was Holly’s brother Geoff who would win it all the next year.) This gave Paul four wins and no losses over boys in the Top 5 in the country.

Players of this caliber routinely went "East" to the National Tournaments from the time they were ten years old. (The National 10's, 12's and 14's are played in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Kalamazoo and Chattanooga!) But Paul hadn't been to a National's because his father is a Jewish intellectual. Paul was the Number 1 ranked player in Southern California, home of the three previous Junior Champions at Kalamazoo, but it had never occurred to his father to send him across the country to play tennis.

Paul was a potent unpredictable force ready to explode in the middle of the party. His style and tenacity made him particularly dangerous to the big hitters. Nobody wanted to play him, especially Mike Estep, who was a wound up tight-as-a-ball Texan.

The night before the match, Estep and Paul sat in the cafeteria with the other thirty players left in the draw. Everybody knew where their opponent was sitting. Everyone knew what their opponent was eating. Mike was surrounded by Floridians, loudly bantering. Paul sat at the end of a table alone, quietly chewing.

"Hey Mike, you ready?"

"Yeah Yeah," he squealed.

They made brief eye contact.

"Yeah Yeah," he squealed.

He dropped a spoon.

* * *

Paul had played in Texas before. When he was fourteen, he won a trip to a tournament in Houston. In the middle of August the temperature was a 100 degrees with 90% humidity. At the hospitality desk, the organizers issued everyone four coffee cans filled with
kerosene and water and told the players to put the feet of their cots in them so bugs wouldn't crawl over them at night. Confused at first, Paul understood when he turned on the light and the whole floor moved toward the wall.

In the semi-finals he played a boy named Woodward Blocher III. Woody was about as wide as he was tall, and wore a cowboy hat out onto the court. During the match Woody's friends sat up in the stands heckling Paul,

"Hey Jew-boy. Why don't you go back to California."

"Hey Jew-boy, if you married a nigger would you have babies that were black on one side and white on the other."

"Hey, hah hah hah hah."

The air turned chalky. Paul thought he would suffocate. He didn't know then that he could answer them.

* * *

As a boy in Germany during the 30's, Paul's father had survived for several years on or under the streets. For several months he and some other children inhabited the sewers of Dortmund. Perhaps the Nazis knew of their subterranean existence, appreciated their humiliation and allowed them to subsist. The children came out after dark and foraged for food. Once his father lingered into the light and was caught by a troop of Nazi Youth marching in formation through the streets at dawn. The boys held him face down in the gutter, arms up against the curb. The scout master stepped down with his heels, the way you would shorten kindling for a fire, and cracked both of his father's wrists.

Another time, Paul's father burrowed through some hedges, and from his hiding place in the brush watched the Baron Gottfried von Kramm, a hero of the Reich, preparing to defend the Wimbledon Title. After that experience, whenever he was near a tennis club he would find a way to conceal himself in the landscape and observe the intricate rituals of the court. He longed to be in that inner sanctum of white flannel, white lines, white balls, and soft white skin.

Paul's father married young and immediately began having children. Because he had not had one as a boy, family held a powerful promise for him. Paul's parents
bore children for more than twenty years. His father worked his butt off for all the kids. And in the miraculous way some of the tortured do, he chose life. They all had a ball. There was plenty of wrestling and hugs and music and food in the home. But in the swirl and action of the animated circle, Paul's father failed, or chose not to address, the considerable issues of his own youth.

The tennis subculture, then, had both an intoxicating and dreadful appeal for Paul's father. This dark son he sent out onto center court to meet the large blond ones activated his deepest yearnings and terrors. At the tournament matches he sat in the stands, sometimes in the middle with the other fathers, talking too loudly, sometimes alone in a far corner.

His terrified feelings and terrifying memories lived a subterranean life, and never made it the surface of his mind where they could be washed and healed. (Driving Paul to high school one morning Paul's father entered an intersection at the same time as a brash kid headed for UCLA. Neither would back up and let the other go by, so they got out of their cars. "Hey, Old Man," the kid approached menacingly. There were three or four seconds of violent action. Then Paul's father dropped the unconscious kid back over the hood of his car, and drove Paul to school, in silence.) He passed on to Paul the dreadful and potent mix of rage, terror, alienation, and toughness of his own childhood. He trained Paul to deal with the "Texans" and anyone else who faced him. When he could, he drove Paul to and from tournaments across Southern California. They talked court strategy and presence. As it turns out he actually knew very little about the game. But he sure knew attitude!

"Always be fair," he said. "Never cheat. Never make a bad line call. Win or lose, congratulate your opponent at the end of the match. But never let him know how you're really feeling. Look him in the face, and find out what's there. But don't ever let him really see you."

Paul played in silence. He often had images of dying on the court, body parts, starting with his arm, darkening, shriveling and dropping to the cement. But by the time he was twelve he could be on the court for many tension packed hours without making a single utterance, not even a loud breath.
** * **

Mike Estep was short and compact, and he crushed the ball. He had all the shots in the game—serve, angle volleys, drop shots, overheads, backhand drives. He played constantly at the cutting edge, always choosing the most daring and explosive maneuver.

Paul, on the other hand, was a retriever. Remember, he'd been small, at fifteen years old not even five feet tall. He never learned the California Power Game. (Years later when he finally got big, all he wanted to do was bang bodies on the basketball court, and the Stanford basketball coach would call him "the best six foot center he'd ever seen.") His power on the tennis court was relentlessness. If necessary, he would run through a match on the next court to return a shot. He climbed up back fences to return high smashes. He loved to play in death-heat, fog, or cold. Ugly conditions that demanded toughness always worked to his advantage. (On the afternoon he beat Geoff Borowiak, a wet wind was blowing so hard off the San Francisco Bay that on one lob over his head Geoff turned and raced to the baseline, only to have the ball stop in midair and blow back onto Paul's side of the court.) And yes, Paul had one weapon. If you gave him a short forehand, he stepped up to it, drilled it deep, and the point was over.

The first set pitted Estep's all-court brilliance against Paul's formidable forehand. This was crisp, accurate, classic tennis. The balls really zipped. Estep's body sparkled. He was the most agile and dazzling athlete Paul had ever matched up against. One point ended with Estep crushing an overhead smash over his shoulder, back to the net, sprinting to the baseline. But Paul was as rooted in his ability to defend as Estep was in his brilliance to aggress. The first set went into overtime. They were both charged and hitting winners. Yet, in the end, Estep's volleys pierced Paul's forehand. Paul couldn't really trade power blows with Mike. Mike won the set 7-5. Estep's body relaxed. Perhaps Mike thought he'd subdued the stranger.

Remember, though, as the child of a Survivor, Paul had learned some tricks. So, in the second set he decided to throw up a little different stuff! He took the pace off his shots, all the pace. He hit twists and spins and odd angles and mixed speeds. Estep would wind up and crush it, and Paul'd throw it back up like some shredded parachute fluttering out of control.
Softer and softer. Weirder and weirder. Paul hit a serve underhanded, and one "lob" about two hundred feet straight up. It was the finest shot of his whole tennis career. Everybody who was watching just looked at the ball going up—and there were whole conversations about it before it descended.

But, ah, the softness, the softness. The Softness. Ah, hitting it here. Hitting it there. Ah. And you know what. The softness. And you know. Little shots. Little shots. Estep's body began to contract. His whole body began to contract.


* * *

For the third and final set players are awarded new balls. Paul collected the used ones and went off to the tournament desk for replacements. Rolla Anderson, shirt buttoned, palms down on the desk, watched him approach. Paul said, "I'd like new balls, please."

Rolla answered, "What were the scores of the first two sets?" Remember, he wasn't exactly rooting for Paul.

"Well, Mike won the first set 7-5, and I won the second set 6-0." No response. He gave Paul the balls.

Estep was a boy who'd been within a single point of the National Championship the year before, and he'd just lost a set in the Nationals Six to Zero.

Like a chant, a hush and murmur followed Paul through the stadium as he returned to the court,

"Estep"

"Estep"

"6-0"
"Estep"
"6-0"

"6-0"

Whole sections of those Midwesterners shifted toward their court. The tennis players came over and crowded in close to the fence. Paul was ahead three games to one in the third set. Mike's body, it's hard to believe, was getting smaller and smaller and smaller and tighter. They both stood three steps inside the baseline lofting the ball to each other like ten year old novices. The amazed faces of the tennis players pressed in, eyes framed by the wire of the fence, doglike, slobbering on themselves at the weirdness of this match. (And Paul in the cage.) Paul was within one point. He had the advantage to go ahead 4-1. Maybe Estep's body might have just disappeared. Bam. Gone.

"I'm sorry Rolla, I don't know where Mike is. He was here a minute ago. After I hit my serve, he was gone!"

The Point began. Paul continued to throw up stuff and Mike returned it with his quivering arm. Finally, Estep hit a very, very short one, and for a moment Paul remembered he was a seventeen year old boy. He did what he had done a thousand times before on a short ball to his forehand: moved forward, crushed the ball hard to the backhand, and attacked the net.

Estep hit the smallest, weakest, kiss-assed little return Paul had ever seen. A dead sitter to Paul's high forehand volley. Estep stopped still, slightly doubled over, racket hanging loose at his side. Paul raised his racket to kill him off.

* * *

There are single sharp-quick moments that change people's lives forever. Everyone has them. Everyone can remember some of them. A fraction of a second. A choice. Life was going that way. And now it is going this way instead.
A ranking in the National Top 10 meant an automatic berth on the Junior Davis Cup Team. Paul's travel and equipment expenses for the coming year would be paid for by the United States Lawn Tennis Association. (With the passing of Forest Hills it is now simply the USTA. There are no lawns left!) At Christmas he would be flown to Miami for the Orange Bowl International Junior Championships.

***

OUT. OUT. OUT.
AHHHHHHHHHHH OUT.

(The same volley Estep had missed for the Championship the year before.)

Perhaps these moments only fruit because some deeper knowing and feeling has already fertilized the soul. Yes his father made him tough. But his father is also a dedicated and nurturing educator. He has spent his life teaching theater arts in a largely minority State University, making a difference, to his students and to himself. Paul was raised with care and kindness, and schooled to bear that kindness on his brothers and sisters, on his community, and on his world. By 1965 Paul had been fully indoctrinated with both the hysteria of Dodger Madness and the oceanic warmth of the Beat Generation. He was both a survivor and a seeker.

When they traded sides after that game, and Mike was back in the match, they both stopped at the side of the court, wet, steaming, close, and looked in each other's faces. And Paul has wondered his whole life whether that was a moment of transcendence or whether that was a moment of abject failure. Was it the moment when he triumphantly turned away from four thousand years of internalizing oppression and interrupted the relentless grasping for the right to exist? Was it the moment he chose hoping and caring? Or was it the critical moment he failed to resist the oppressor's rage and pain and doomed himself to endlessly deposit that darkness in the nooks and crannies of his own life? Perhaps both.
It was the most complex moment of his life. There was so much grief and fear in Estep's face, the face of the enemy suffering. Bearing down on him, emotional survival at stake, a rumbling in Paul answered, "No." But you will lose your membership in this, your world. "And still, No." Paul contracted away from Estep, unable, perhaps, at seventeen, with both their guts so exposed, to separate Estep's humiliation from his own.

From that moment on Paul was never a tennis player again in the same way he had been. His inner ear began to close against the voice that says, "Boy, what you do is who you are, you must win to be." And so at that moment he made the choice for becoming Nothing.

* * *

Some new synapse in Estep must have also opened in that moment. Some ancient ritual stiffness broke apart. He accepted Paul's redefinition of the game. His flesh reignited. He met lob with a higher lob, crazy backspin with a crazier chopshot. Paul came to love him for this. And he was good.

When the match ended, Estep, the victor, sat down at the side of the court and wept softly into his open hands. The crowd, perhaps stunned by the unorthodox and emotional spectacle they'd witnessed, silently parted and let Paul pass through them. He walked to the dorm, put his things into a bag, went down to the Greyhound Station and took the next bus West.

He got to Chicago about three in the morning still in his wet sweaty clothes. He found a two dollar hotel in the Loop, and laid on the old sheets listening to city noises until dawn. He's never been in Chicago since. Riding home, slumped into a back corner of the bus, riding across Kansas and Oklahoma and Texas and Arizona, he decided never to feel that alone again. He got to Santa Monica about three days later. When he got off the bus his father was waiting. They stood close and looked in each others' faces. His tennis career was over, but he didn't know how to tell his father.

And fifteen years later when Paul had become a counselor, and resolved to a life of introspection and healing, his Dad visited him in Seattle. They drove thirty miles north to Edmonds for a ballgame. They
always thrill at the green field, the smooth brown dirt, the sun going down, and all those clean white lines. There are only cheap seats in the minors, so they picked out a good spot in the bleachers down the first baseline, opened their burritos, and finally talked about their lives together in the tennis world.

"Do you think old Perry T's dead yet?"

"Maybe they just sealed up that little cold office and carved his name into that broken screen door."

They laughed. And in the seventh or eighth inning they finally got around to Estep. With his gaze out on left field Paul said,

"I spent those three days on the bus ride home from Chicago squeezing my eyes shut trying to cry. But I couldn't get any tears to come out."

This was still hard for his father, who slumped against the bench behind them and sighed,

"When you got off the bus it was obvious to me that you were changed. Something had happened. But I didn't know how to ask."

Paul looked out to center field,

"You know, I still need to cry."

His father leaned forward.

Edmonton won 4-2.

* * *
After that match with Estep, Paul continued to play tennis for several years, but he'd obviously "lost" something." Most of his continued play came as part of the Stanford tennis team. He stopped entering individual tournaments.

In the twenty years since his undergraduate graduation he has competed in a lot of team sports--basketball, soccer, fast-pitch softball--sometimes at quite a high level. And for the last fifteen years he's been a serious squash player. But though he is an "A" caliber player, in all that time he's played in only one small local tournament.

And so it has been clear to Paul for a long time that sports is more than just "getting some exercise," or "blowin' some steam." Sports has been a primary site for gathering data about his world and himself. Playing has been a perfect milieu for personal redescription.

When he came to Ohio State in 1989 he discovered a small but tight knit squash community. He found one special partner, a scientist named Karl. Karl is an entomologist who dissects fly brains and uses the DNA he extracts for experiments with complex proteins. Karl plays hard, all the time, on every point. He is the perfect control subject, dependably obsessed with high performance. As Karl puts it, "It wasn't pretty, but it's a win." He has helped create a perfect laboratory for Paul, an opportunity to experiment with personal and social construction--a wonderful opportunity for redescription.
Squash Journal

Entry #1, October 1990 through May 1991:

Wanting to play well so badly in this first match with Karl after coming back after my knee injury. My head literally splitting open trying to withstand his intensity. My god that guy is so focused and fired up. He can be frightening. My head throbbed. Very painful. Karl has that warrior grimness I remember so well in Dickie Bohnstedt.

Entry #2, April 10

For five years all those small nagging small injuries that kept me out for three, four, five months at a time. Then a fully torn cartilage in my knee and a major operation. But I've been able to play for almost a year without injury. Maybe it just took a big one to cure me!

Haven't yet beaten Karl in the 6 months we've been playing, but each week the match gets closer. I will win soon. I wonder how that will affect our relationship.

Entry #4, April 26

Today when we came out I was aware of what had happened last week--finally beating him. But we didn't acknowledge it.

Today Karl went up 7-1 in the first game. Maybe I was resisting my new found "presence," or my new found power of concentration. Maybe I was taking care of Karl, maybe I was assuming some relaxed omnipotent thing was going to happen, but presto, he'd won 9-1!!! "Pretty inauspicious beginning," I said. Was I embarrassed after winning last week? Atoning in some way? Did I feel guilty?

In Game 4 we both had leads: 4-3 Karl, 5-4 me, then 7-5 Karl. I was tired. It was over a hundred degrees on the courts. (I'd already changed shirts three times.) I said to myself, "It's okay if I lose, it's 'justice' or 'right'." Some fatal acceptance. I won last week, now it's his turn. But I didn't stop playing. I hung tough.

I DID IT. I DID IT. I DID IT. I DID IT.
I hung tough enough. What a satisfying old memory. A kind of fullness (is the best word I can think of.) Not an insipid, bloated kind of namby-pamby fullness. A fullness that is muscular and precise. I won the game 9-7.

At some point he missed a shot and I jumped a little joy. I remember this movement from my tennis days when an opponent would hit the shot out. It gave me a sense of height. A little stature. Lording it.

I won the fifth game 9-3. We came off the court in silence. It was awkward for me. I realized I had no language for being a winner. I guess it's been so long or something, or I've changed. I didn't know what to say or how to be, having played so well, and with so much heart.

Later I realized that I wanted something from Karl. I wanted something more from the loser. I wanted him to celebrate how far I've come in these seven months. Instead I took care of him. I said something insipid in the locker room, something kind of apologetic, like, "Well, I guess I was hitting pretty well today." It all left me feeling pretty isolated. Left alone with my joy.

Entry #8, May 21

Karl appeared while I was playing George, and watched my match from above. I unraveled. Later I realized he reminded me of my father sitting in the stands. Old Ghosts.

My fear is that if I don't win enough they won't let me stay in "the club." My wins are hedges against my losses.

Entry #10, May 30

THE MOMENT. There it is! That existential cutting point. Kill or be killed.

Playing George, ahead 7-4. High volley. I remember the exact moment within the stroke itself when I contracted. Instead of driving the point home, and "killing him," I pulled away, didn't let the full movement happen.
Wow, this downward movement, "smashing," is the same in all racket sports. It's the KILL. (It's also the one I missed against Estep.)

Afterward George perceptively said, "Ah, it's easier for you to lose than to win." Yes, I have learned how to control the contact with The Other after a loss. I can contain my own humiliation. But when the other guy loses, his pain is out of my control.

Last time I beat Karl badly he threw his shit into his bag and vanished before I was even off the court.

Entry #14, June 7

All us Ohio State guys went to Westerville and played the suburbanites. We're all kind of dark skinned—Egyptians and Pakistanis and Indians and Jews. I like that.


Sat in the whirlpool after the match with a new friend from their team, Tom Durfee. Talked about winning and losing and alienation. Short and sweet. I'm learning to let it drop when someone's heard enough. Just getting people to think about it a little. Seems to be my "job."

Entry #15, June 12

When I start flopping all over the psychic map, play great for a game and then blow ten straight points, I tell Karl it's "old ghosts" that are getting me. (He's a wonderful mirror. He never wavers. He goes like a madman on every point.) He doesn't quite get it. "Old ghosts" just sounds to him like "having good days and bad days."

Entry #15, June 12

I felt quite neutral toward Karl after beating him today, as in "thanks for the great game see you next week."

Is winning always a social act?
Entry #18, September 20

Some Native Americans have a tradition of asking an animal's permission before killing it. Hmmmm

Entry # 24, September 25

Mal,

Happy Birthday!!

I love the way you play, and I love the way you run the local squash tournaments. I just wish you didn't end up having to do all the work.

* * *

I want to share a few thoughts. I'm lying here a little paralyzed—not knowing quite where to start, thinking maybe we could get together and talk. Here's the basic topic:

The Secret Internal Life of Men.

I really wanted to win this little local tournament you put on for all of us regulars. I wanted it so much that I got paralyzed. Lost all my delicate touch. Wound up, all I could do was hit drive after drive.

You know against Denny in that last game when I was down 0-5 I had this thought just before the point, "This pain of competing is too overwhelming, I'm going to walk off the court and never play a tournament again." I actually quit "forever" right in the middle of the next point, but I don't think anyone noticed because Denny blew an easy shot. If he'd even just blooped it up there I wasn't going to move for it. He'd have won the last three points without a fight. I'd already quit.

He let me back in it. And at that point, drained, I stopped wanting altogether and decided just to do what I was capable of at that moment, which was slow it all down and just get the ball back. No hard swings.
Nothing. It's an old trick of mine. Denny unraveled. Maybe my sudden lack of desperation got to him!

Mal, maybe the other players in town don't have so much turmoil going on in them. But I have to believe that there is a lot of feeling going on, fears and wanting and disappointment and joy and thrill that doesn't get acknowledged and honored.

Here's a thought. Sports—especially the way men do it in our culture—is RITUAL KILLING. I experience it this way. And I am very conflicted about it. Mal, last week in our practice session before the tournament, at 7-4 (that seems to be the critical score for me, 7-4 my favor), the moment came, when inside my head I was forced to ask,

"Am I willing to kill this guy?"

I have somehow learned to deal with the humiliation of losing better than the starkness of killing. Is it the guilt?

Am I the only one troubled by any of this? Is everybody able to just let it go? I wonder if there is a way we could acknowledge some of this.

I am not necessarily talking about major encounter groups, but maybe we could all gather before the tournament started for fifteen minutes and recognize each other—somehow make space for more thrill and more pain. So we don't go around with such Stone Faces on. Personally I need permission from my opponents that it's ok to beat them. Not that they wish it, but a recognition that we've ritually entered the arena, we're looking forward to all possible outcomes, there's a lot at stake, and nobody is going to die.

I bring this up because I think you'll understand it, and you might go, "Hmmmmmm."
When we got together Mal's first impression of this letter was, "Guys aren't going to talk about this. They've buried it in their beer."

On the other hand, after his initial shock Mal talked for a half hour about his own experiences. He has moved a lot, often to places where there are no other good players. He's seen his friends climb in the rankings while he withered in Iowa. He talked about the beginnings of arthritis in his knee. There was a lot of closeness between us at the end of the conversation.

Yet I wonder if I'm just using all of these players to deal with my own hurts. What gives me the right to drag them into this turmoil?

Entry #29, October 1

The man passing from the Battlefield to the Court must be devirilized (Paglia, 183.) Think about that Paul.

Entry #26, October 2

I'm going to Pittsburgh!!!

My first traveling tournament in twenty years!

I stopped eating fat. Lost five pounds. One vice is Ritz crackers. It works out to 1 gm of fat per cracker, which equals 9 fat calories per cracker. So I can eat roughly 30 Ritz crackers and stay within my limit for the day.

I purchased three packages of XXL t-shirts at Burlington Coat. First time I've ever seen them in a regular store. Must be because of the beer guts here in the heart of it all. I dyed them all pale

I should be working on my dissertation, beginning to tighten and formulate and write and analyze. Instead I've spent the last month working out, riding the stationary bike, playing squash.

Then I realized this is my dissertation. That's the whole point. The intersection of theory and practice. Walkin' the talk.

The desire to please my committee members may be self-limiting. I may know more about this then they do. Yes, of course I do.
pink. Very nice. Then I shortened them so they don't bind over my hips when they get soaked in sweat. Very custom. Karl likes the pink. Subtly macho here in the heart of it all.

But is it Okay to win. I can imagine how I'll pooh-poo it if I win. Be humble, when what I want to do is yell, "HAH!!"

Yes. WIN WIN WIN

Entry #30, October 2

Bill and I have called off class for this Friday. He's going to Pittsburgh with me. To watch? To support? Last week in class he just disappeared into a corner. Will he know how to reach out. Ah, that's a thing that doesn't happen much here in Ohio. Reach. Even Bill's shape works against reaching. (He does reach out with a plate of food. He does reach out with his voice and words. What do I want? Contact.)

Why do I think I need someone's permission and support?

Entry #31, October 2

blah on the call with Kris about Winnicott, object relations, and questions of hate/competition/killing.

The subject says to the object: "I destroyed you," and the object is there to receive the communication. From now on the subject says: "Hullo object!" "I destroyed you." "I love you." "You have value for me because of your survival of my destruction of you." "While I am loving you I am all the time destroying you in (unconscious) fantasy. (Winnicott in Eigen, pg. 189.)
My opponents don't really die after all!! In fact, I fall in love with them. Do they fall in love with me too?

Entry #32, October 3, 10:00 p.m.


We got to the club a couple of hours ago. I tried to be cool, but I haven't had to look for my name on a draw sheet for a long time. I was excited and scared. But shit. If I win my first match tomorrow I'm going to have to play the #1 Seed an hour later. Some guy named G. EDWARDS. Edwards doesn't even have to play in the first round. Yeah, of course, the #1 seed always gets the free ride in the first round. So, we drive three hours from Columbus to get my ass kicked by some fresh stud on the first day.

It's not fair. It really isn't. Blah Blah Blah on life and fairness!!!!

So one fruitful attitude to take here is just remember to give it all I have at every stage. I don't have to make connection with these guys. And, I don't have to hate them either. It's about engaging the task and trusting that that is enough.

But there's a feeling of capitulation in this. It's not the unpredictability that's unsatisfying. It is the act of giving up control. It feels like an act of giving up, rather than enter into it.

Something here about childhood rage. How do guys go out there and seemingly play real hard and not freak out?

There's a missed opportunity here for noticing the capriciousness and unpredictability of it all. Could we celebrate the insecurity of it all? Could we revel in the insecurity of the cosmos? Yes, that's it. Dionysus. YES YES. Not only are there winners and losers, but there's Death and Mayhem. Hmm. So what we do is channel our energy into Appolonian finite games. Maybe I'd rather be doing ecstatic dances than playing squash. Maybe I'm still trying to make my flute be a saxophone.

Kris. I love you.
Entry #33, October 4, After Dinner

REALITY CHECK!!! REALITY CHECK!!!! REALITY CHECK!!!

So in my first match in the morning I beat the hell out of Joe C., a nice guy from Cleveland. Turns out he's an astronaut in training. Not much of a player. I tried to conserve my energy for the big match later with G. EDWARDS, the #1 seed.

About 2 o'clock Joe says to me, "Are you going to watch Goldie Play at 2:30?" BINGO!! Immediate Recognition. Holy shit, G. EDWARDS is Goldie Edwards, a woman! A hell of a player to be sure. A former national women's champion. But she's fifty eight years old. And she's playing in two events. So she's playing one of the best young players in the whole region a half hour before she plays me! Talking about having my conspiracy theory blown to hell.

This woman must be crazy!

What a laugh on me. WHAT A LAUGH!! Damn that's funny. Maybe I can let go of the "tournament-committee-conspiracy-against-me-theory" forever.

Entry #34, October 5, 8:30 a.m.:

How delicious to be playing on the last day of the tournament.

Fabulous moment, that last point against Goldie.

I got paralyzed for a moment in the third game after winning the first two. At 6-1 my favor I, what, how to describe it, couldn't thrust the knife in. Lost 8 straight points and the game. Wow.

I let it go for the 4th game, and just let myself play. Ah. On that last point of the match she hit a great low shot, but I grounded myself. I saw it all the way. Picked it up a fraction of an inch above the varnish. Hit it exactly where I wanted it. Ah. Best shot of the day. I went to the floor for victory.

So my semi-final match today is against somebody named J. HENSE. I wonder who he is?
Entry #35, October 5, 10:00 p.m.

J. HENSE turned out to be a perfectly coifed salesman type from Baltimore. Even his genitals were perfect. HENSE crushes everything. No finesse.

I just had no fascination with this guy. No feel for him. I didn't really hate him. Maybe that was the problem. Remember Winnicott. There was just no contact. And I simply didn't have any interest in revving up.

Bad aesthetics.

Entry #36, October 7

Dear Karl,

You have been really terrific about sharing my struggles with me--so I'd like to fill you in on the latest.

Pittsburgh was terrific--especially for the Ghost situation. I realized it had been twenty years since I've gone and played a tournament with strangers. As you know winning and losing had built up such a charge in me that sometimes it paralyzed me on the court--when that "critical moment" floods in. Something really shifted in Pittsburgh.

And it was utterly shocking--AESTHETICS BEAT ME!

There was a clear moment in the third game of my losing match against a guy named HENSE when I said to myself, "Winning isn't the primary issue for me at this moment. I just don't like the way this match looks."

So I lost in four to this hardballer from Baltimore. But it was O.K. It was fine to lose. Fine in the sense that I didn't question my right to be alive! I wasn't willing to go into desperation mode to beat him. It feels liberating. It might not spell good things for my tournament career--but it was very freeing for me as a person. I realized that I valued the movement, the grace and charm and excitement and intricacies of the game more
than the competition stuff. I realized that the old ghosts were just that, "OLD." They are from childhood. THEY DON'T HAVE TO BE MINE NOW!!

So what does this mean? It means I'm going to experiment with my style. I'm going to play more elegantly, softer.

I have a little anxiety, especially as I make a transition, that you'll just beat my butt off. And weird, but true, that will be just fine with me, as long as I'm really doing my experiment. But it might be boring for you. And if it is please say something. I'll understand if you want to play other people instead.

Paul

Entry #46, February 3, 1992

I have now beaten Karl four times in a row--bad.

Entry #55, March 25, 1992

I have not lost to Karl since before Christmas.
Endnotes


2. No question I lost something in terms of my willingness to compete in these kinds of situations. But I use the quote marks here because it is obviously not clear whether, in the long run, over the distance, I really lost or gained in these life events. Read on.

3. Dick's legs were quite bowed, and it was rumored that he had had polio as an infant. Perhaps overcoming this what made him such a fierce competitor. Like me, he was also quite cool. In eight years I never saw him mad.

In my first year of tournament play I lost eleven times to Dick. I always had the suspicion that the tournament committee somehow conspired to make me play him in the tough rounds--the quarters and the semis. By the time we were eighteen we had played nearly forty times. One year I won all five of our matches. But no question Dick had the upper hand overall.

Our matches were gritty encounters. I dreaded them. Silent staredowns. I wanted to be friends with Dick badly. But somehow we never really connected. The year I was #1 I lost only one match in Southern California, to Dick in the Sectional's, 15-13, 9-11, 10-8. The match took over four hours to play.

Dick was part of the tennis in-crowd. Sometimes that caused me pain. For instance, at sixteen years old I rode home from Vancouver Canada in the back seat of a Chevy, with Dick and Janet Mohr, a gorgeous young tennis player from Arcadia. I watched them neck for four days.
CHAPTER VII

Professor Theory and Reader Do Motors

Reader: Playing, winning, losing, dancing, traveling, humiliating, gloating, crying. What's this all about?

Professor: Remember we ended CHAPTER IV wondering about the "motors" in people's actions.

In previous discussions we have looked at the human subject with the decent, or evil or romantic core, creating laws and structures to insure inalienable rights. We looked at poststructural subjects who are "socially constructed all the way down," and presumably have their motivations programmed in by their culture.

We have been introduced to Richard Rorty, Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, Nancy Fraser, and John Dewey. There is a wide range of thinking about human motivations among these people.

Reader: Are there any clear positions?

Professor: Yes, it was a primary question for Nietzsche whose "will to power" is based on animal-organic drives. And I think Nancy Fraser comes close with her advocacy of "contestation." But you know Reader, I'd like to introduce you to a pair of contemporary thinkers who speak directly to the issue. They stake out opposing, and particularly fascinating positions.

One will be a men's version, the other will be a women's version. Each will be partial.
Reader: Aren't all stories partial?

Professor: Yes, that is one of the great messages and reminders from the women's movement. It has forced us to see the partialness of our stories. Rorty also echoes this.

Reader: So, what is the men's story.

Professor: We'll start with a short introduction on another of the Frenchmen, George Bataille, and move to one of my favorites, an American named Ernest Becker.

In *The Accursed Share* Bataille writes, "solar radiation results in a superabundance of energy on the surface of the globe." Reader, this is a simple but profound concept. There is a potent fuel and it doesn't come from "inside our heads." Human beings are not the initiating force in the cosmos. Action/being on this planet is EXCESS SOLAR ENERGY randomly playing on the surface of the globe.

Reader: And what happens to this excess energy?

Professor: First, "the living organism, in a situation determined by the play of energy on the surface of the globe, ordinarily receives more energy than is necessary for maintaining life: the excess energy (wealth) can be used for the growth of a system (e.g. an organism); if the system can no longer grow, or if the excess cannot be completely absorbed in its growth, it must necessarily be lost without profit; it must be spent, willing or not, gloriously or catastrophically." In the end excess energy must be spent.

Reader: Ah, so there is a great pressure to EXPEND EXCESS ENERGY. What does that mean?

Professor: The excess energy filled the seas with life, pushed organisms up onto land, into the air and finally resulted in animal life on the planet.

And, sexual reproduction can be looked at as one way of expending energy. The organism extends itself and creates new life which also
then consumes, grows and reproduces, and so on
and so on.

Reader: Are there other ways of expending great
quantities of energy besides proliferating?

Professor: Many. They are all variations of eating
and death. And it's important to remember that
"eating brings death, but in an accidental
form. Of all conceivable luxuries, death, in
its fatal and inexorable form, is undoubtedly
the most costly. The fragility, the
complexity, of the animal body already exhibits
its luxurious quality, but this fragility and
luxury culminate in death. Just as in space
the trunks and branches of the tree raise the
superimposed stages of the foliage to the
light, death distributes the passage of the
generations over time. It constantly leaves
the necessary room for the coming of the
newborn, and we are wrong "to curse the one
without whom we would not exist."

Reader: So death is fundamentally growth producing,
and we should not be upset by it?

Professor: There is a pressure in the ecosystem to
consume energy, and death just turns out to be
one of the ways to do it. I can't say why some
originary organism didn't just get bigger and
bigger and live forever, consuming ever greater
quantities of energy. Perhaps evolution is
moving toward an immortal energy-consuming
monster. Who knows? What we can say is that
given the superabundance of energy, ever more
complex ways of consuming have appeared on the
planet. The development of complexity requires
change through reproduction and death.

Reader: Ah. This all reminds me of CHAPTER II,
"The Way of The Pig." Bataille must agree with
Paul about the deeper comfort of existing in a
Big Energy Stew. Bataille reminds us of the
great luxuriant exuberance and plays of cosmic
life. Death is simply another factor.

Professor: And that brings us full force to Ernest
Becker and "Human Motor Story #1." Becker is
an American sociologist with a background in
psychoanalysis. His "motor" of human conduct
starts with the same realization as Bataille. In *Escape From Evil* he says,

> Man is first and foremost an animal moving about on a planet shining in the sun."

The next sentences are quite pungent. We've already encountered them at the beginning of CHAPTER VI. I think they are worth repeating.

> Life cannot go on without the mutual devouring of organisms. If at the end of each person's life he were to be presented with the living spectacle of all that he had organismically incorporated in order to stay alive, he might well feel horrified by the living energy he had ingested. . . . To paraphrase Elias Canetti, each organism raises its head over a field of corpses, smiles into the sun and declares life good."

Reader: Wow. That's telling like it is.

Professor: But very few organisms on the planet are as content or enlightened as George Bataille about being ingested. It turns out that organisms have a huge investment in "continuing to experience physical stimuli, to sense one's inner pulsations and musculature, to delight in the pleasures that nerves transmit.""

Organisms are desperate to hold on to their capacity for life. They don't want to give up the Great Stomach Project. In the case of human beings, that desperation has some particularly catastrophic consequences, because they KNOW THEY'RE GOING TO DIE.

Reader: That's hard to swallow sometimes!

Professor: Hmm. So here's Human Motor Story #1.

> Humans transcend death by creating meanings for life which surpass the stomach project. They create elaborate and intricate symbol systems "to provide the promise of indefinite duration." "This is how man assures the expansive meaning of life in the face of
the real limitations of his body; the 'immortal self' can take very spiritual forms, and spirituality is not a simple reflex of hunger and fear. It is an expression of the will to live, the burning desire of the creature to count, to make a difference on the planet because he has lived, has emerged on it, and has worked, suffered and died."

In a nutshell, each of us goes to a lot of trouble to PROVE OUR SIGNIFICANCE in the hope of transcending final destruction.

Becker doesn't want to denigrate possibilities for loftier sentiments. He says, "as a creature he is most attuned to the living miracle of the cosmos and responds to that miracle with a fineness and a nobility that are in themselves wondrous."

But most attempts at attaining purity are motivated by trying to gain spiritual points. And the bottom line is that "for most men faith in spirituality is merely a step into continued life, the exact extension of the organicic stomach project."

Transcendence is culture specific. For some people, transcendence comes in the assurance of a life after death. For some people transcendence lives in the promise of a stone monument in the village square. For others, it is the prospect of having a stretch of freeway or a bridge with their name on it. The point is whatever the culture has fabricated as the symbol of immortality, that will be the sought after prize by that culture's members. In some ways the story is remarkably simple. Cultures all value certain things and create "hero systems" that reflect those values. Whoever succeeds best in the given hero system ends up with the "immortality."

Reader: There is a powerful assumption of inequality, even injustice in this story, but I guess people have always recognized differences in personal merit, haven't they?

Professor: You're absolutely correct. Power is the issue. Certainly the mechanisms for securing power have changed over the course of human history, but the motivations may be disturbingly unchanged for thousands of years.
There have been cultures that rewarded hunters and warriors. There have been cultures that rewarded physicists and chemists. But something has always been rewarded. And the ultimate benefit is the same: the promise of prolonged significance.

Reader: And why did culture happen this way? It must serve the whole community in some way.

Professor: The Hero not only transcends culture, the Hero also pulls culture along. Others get to identify with the Hero.

Reader: Touch a little of his immortality?

Professor: Yes. And so a culture's hero system serves everyone." The culture confers immortality, and then allows others to grab onto the coat tails. The culture defines the hero, and the hero in turn defines the culture.

Reader: It's ingenious, but it ends up with an awful lot of followers doesn't it?

Professor: Yes, wonderful observation Reader. It turns out that not everyone is suited for the hero role, but everyone seems to have a fear of dying. And so, according to Becker, in order to cope with the anxiety of organismic extinction, people create authorities and heroes to rule over themselves. It is a kind of voluntary mystification that seems to assuage primal terror.

Reader: This would go along with Foucault's notion that power doesn't come from the top down.

Professor: Yes, put bluntly, "men fashion un-freedom as a bribe for self-perpetuation."" Now you can see Reader, the study of inequality, its primitive origins and implications, is fascinating and controversial. Marxists disagree with this analysis completely, but let's not get into it here. What we need to remember in order to proceed with our present project is that, as hero or hero-worshipper, "each organism is in a struggle for more life and tries to expand and aggrandize itself as much as possible."" Each
organism preens itself on the specialness of the life that throbs within it, and is ready to subordinate all others to its own continuation."

Remember what Becker claims is the basis for organismic satisfaction?

Reader: From incorporating other organisms.

Professor: Yes, and because humans have a capacity for symbolism and representation, all kinds of things count as incorporation. "Man can expand his self-feeling not only by physical incorporation but by any kind of triumph or demonstration of his excellence."" In fact, anything that reduces an opponent pumps up the aggressor organism. This includes "taunting and humiliating adversaries, or torturing and killing them.""

And in turn men will do almost anything to avoid being "diminished" by another organism." In other words, because "he is also and especially a symbolic organism this struggle against being diminished is carried on at the most minute levels of symbolic complexity. To be outshone by another is to be attacked at some basic level of organismic durability. To lose, to be second rate, to fail to keep up with the best and highest sends a message to the nerve center of the organism's anxiety: 'I am overshadowed, inadequate; hence I do not qualify for continued durability, for life, for eternity; hence I will die.'""

Reader: Eat or be eaten, physically or psychically. This is Becker's motor. It sounds brutal, but I can certainly see it still strongly at work. Is that the whole story?

Professor: No. Now the story gets juicier and thick with paradox. And this is why the Squash Journal is complex, and why Paul struggles with contact and closeness so hard.

In order to continue with the next insight we will have to delve a little into primitive culture and the nature of ritual. There are two things we need to examine.
First: "The fact is that primitive man imagined he could transfer life from one thing to another, that he could, for example take the spirit-power that resided in the scalp of an enemy and, by proper dancing and chants, transfer that life from its former owner to the new one. Or, in the famous totemic increase ceremonies of the Australian aborigines, primitive men imagined that by going through the motions of imitating animal births they could increase the number of kangaroos, emus, grubs in the world." In other words, Reader, "ritual is a technique for giving life." Ritual was the world-making technology of its time. We tend to laugh at primitive ritual as superstitious magic, but it functioned just like our technology. There was no doubt in people's minds that a rain dance produced rain. Because we now "know" that isn't true we underestimate the intensity of the primitive's investment in it. We discount the similarity it has with our own investment in newer machine-based technologies. The bottom line is that ritual produced life.

Second: So far, I've painted a pretty bleak picture of life. Every organism, overtly or subtly, is trying to incorporate his neighbors. You might ask how any social structure could survive at all given that kind of internal pressure.

Becker says, "the fundamental imperative of all ritual is that one cannot do it alone; man cannot impart life to himself but must get it from his fellow man." This is a recognition that life-forces and energy require interaction. It was a way of recognizing one's own dependence on outside forces. Primitive humans had a certain humility.

Primitive cultures had to organize themselves in such a way that people had ample opportunities to ritually interact, because it was in this ritual interaction that everyone's life was created. In response to this need for ritual life giving, primitive cultures did an amazing thing. It was a stroke of genius. They divided up into what is called "moiety" organization in anthropological texts. It was a tendency to see the whole cosmos in binary
terms: night/day, cold/hot, sun/moon, dark/light, birth/death and so on. The familiar yin/yang principle is one of these dualisms.

That binariness permeated their whole world, and was the basis for social organization. This penchant for seeing dualities, nearly universal in primitive cultures, was infused into kinship systems and tribal organization. Basically society was organized around oppositions. Individuals literally belonged to "sides" or "teams." Sometimes populations were divided into clans. And sometimes these sides were intimately bound to totemic forces. A person might belong to the "bears" or the "frogs." The key is that in some way, societies were divided into competing factions.

You see, once everyone was divided into "teams" there was a ready-made way to collide and interact. This provided a constant source of life-giving confrontation, "for men divide themselves into two groups in order that they may impart life to one another, that they may intermarrv, compete with one another, make offerings to one another, and do to one another whatever is required by their theory of prosperity."  

FOR MEN DIVIDE THEMSELVES INTO TWO GROUPS IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY IMPART LIFE TO ONE ANOTHER

Do you see the significance here? Primitive cultures according to Becker, were basically set up as endless contests. And it is precisely these contests that provided the possibility for life. Contesting and life were synonymous.

This may well be the basis of all team competitions. Johan Huizinga, an important Dutch scholar, and many other people writing about culture and play seem to think so." It certainly is fundamental to Paul's conception of his own sports playing. It is a way of
conferring life on those around him, and being confirmed in his own aliveness.

Reader: Okay. So I understand that men could confer life on each other, and they organized society so that they could contest each other, and in doing so win/confer expansion. But it still looks like the winners are going to decimate the losers totally and utterly. How did cultures survive with the starkness of constant incorporation and humiliation in the air?

Professor: And now we come to the deepest part of moiety organization. People understood, if only at the gut level, that continued self-expansion required the well being of the whole community. In other words, transcendence, playing the hero system, required having a healthy community to transcend. If one or two people, or half of the society, decimated the other half, there would be no game at all, no competition in which to prove the self. And so along with the intricate one-up-manship games, equally complex codes developed which protect and insure everyone's sense of self-expansion. These are the intricate customs around greetings and salutations and compliment-giving we play out on a daily basis. They insure that those around us will continue to participate in the hero system. Organisms, for all their desire to ascend, understand at the cellular level that the communal organism must be preserved too.

Reader: Does this still go on?

Professor: By all means. Erving Goffman, a contemporary sociologist, has done elaborate and detailed studies of the way we protect and nurture each other in infinite small ways. Goffman calls these micro actions "face work." It is the way we greet and part, and address each other to impart well-being. It has to do with the way we look or don't look in each other's eyes, the way we touch or don't touch each other at odd moments. We do this partly to protect everyone's sense of well being, even as we vie for prominence. It is complex and tricky business.
Down at the playground or in the gym there is a brutal epithet that gets hurled on the court, "In your face." Shooting a ball, at the moment of release, a confident offensive player may say to his defender, "In your face." What is really being said here is, "I own your face. Your face is mine." It is a symbolic scalping. In light of Erving Goffman, the use of "face" here is doubly significant. This isn't about helping your opponent to "save face." This is about seizing your opponents face. This is about organismically incorporating your opponent.

Poet: Hey Reader and Professor, let me give you a little lesson in score keeping at the playground, and you'll get the flavor of what's at stake. It goes like this:

"My ball. My Ball. 13-11."
"Travelin' Man, travelin'."
"No Man. it's 11-11."
"No Way Man. It's 14-10."
"What. Are you crazy. It's 12-9."
"No way Man."
"My Ball. 14-8. Give it here."
"No way. It's 11-9. My ball."
"Travelin Man', travelin'."
"My Ball. My Ball. Give it here."
"No basket, 13-12. Travelin' man."
"Say What, it's 11-10."
"You traveled, Man. No way. 13-7. No basket."

Professor: Thanks, I think you got it. And you might even see this happen on the final basket of a game. A player dribbles up court, wheels and turns, and just as he releases the ball
yells, "In your face sucker." When the ball goes through the net, the shooter, having won the game, now openly taunts the loser by saying, "Get off the court mother," "Get out of here," "You're gone." The winner takes absolute possession of the court, which for all intents and purposes is the world. And this includes the other guys face. It is primal incorporation. There is real humiliation inflicted.

But Reader, and this is very important, invariably within minutes you will also see those same players making up on the sidelines. No matter how bitter the argument was about the score, or how rough the play, or how deep the humiliating wounds, you will hear something like, "Hey, Bro, nice shooting man." There will be a lot of connective hand slapping. At the visceral level everyone knows you can't really kill the opponent, because that would end the game, yours included. It is necessary to do this placating face job in order to preserve the opportunity for you to have continued access to a significance-making apparatus. If you humiliate the guy too badly, he won't come back, and the game ends.

Reader: So Professor, it looks like there's a lot at stake in the basketball setting. And I gather that it is no different on the squash court. I guess it is an example of that constant and deep need to contest for self-expansion while also imparting life to one's fellow beings.

Professor: Yes, that is what sports is for Paul. The repeated reassertion of self-expansion that is the hedge against death, along with building a sense of interpersonal solidarity.

Athletes know they cannot outrun death. Today they might run the world record, but death keeps coming. There is no ultimate victory. Athletes all know this. There is no "last" championship. That's why you will often hear one of the newly crowned champs in a TV locker room interview, even as the champagne spraying goes on behind him, say something like, "Next year we're going to make it three in a row." Well, it could be four or five or
ten in a row. It doesn't matter. There is always a future victory to boast about and point toward. Everyone knows this. Sure, there is a moment of satisfaction. While eating a big meal there is a real feeling of filling, of contentment, of satiation, but the organism knows it will be hungry again and again and again and again . . .

And the athlete knows there is no final scalping of the other guys face. There will be, and there must be another opponent. So you will also invariably hear something like this during the interview, "I have to hand to them, they were really tough. You never know how it would have come out on a different day." This statement is face work. The new champ has to make sure there's a worthy opponent for next year's contest.

So the sports scene is the collision of two very primal impulses, the need to overcome and humiliate the next guy, waged against the need to protect and soften and share with him.

Reader: So in this view Paul's sports playing can be seen as a way of participating in a kill-then-heal cycle. How important is this discussion of sports playing to our general discussion about human motivations?

Professor: Reader, I'm not going to do an extended discussion of the meaning of sport in culture. That is an entire dissertation of its own. What is important to understand is that what goes on at the gym has everything to do with the relationship of ritual and play, and is intimately bound up with making culture. Johan Huizinga's elegant and moving essay, Homo Ludens, sums it up beautifully. The title means "Man the Player," and Huizinga claims that,

"Primitive, or let us say, archaic ritual is thus sacred play, indispensable for the well-being of the community, fecund of cosmic insight and social development but always play in the sense Plato gave to it--an action accomplishing itself outside and above the necessities and seriousness of everyday life."
In this sphere of sacred play the child and the poet are at home with the savage."

What goes on in the modern gym carries all the implications of this statement. Huizinga beautifully points out that the world is made through play. In Paul's case, squash, as a technology for eating each other, for transcending each other, and for giving life to each other becomes the productive ritual. It is savage and poetic at the same time.

For men divide themselves into two groups in order that they may impart life to one another, that they may intermarry, compare with one another, make offerings to one another, and do to one another whatever is required by their theory of prosperity.

And that's Story #1.

Reader: I take it that Story #2, the women's story, opposes this in some way. Is Becker's account inadequate? Is it wrong?

Professor: Reader, one of the primary insights of the women's movement of the past thirty years has been that women's voices simply have not been heard. One of the bottom line principles of women's studies programs has been the recovery of women's history and women's contribution. Listen to what Susan Griffin has to say about it,

Reader: So we don't want to perpetuate women's invisibility?

Professor: It is very important to recognize and include the much silenced voice of women in this discussion. We are now zeroing in on the fundamental motivations of human behavior. In light of the women's movement, from Carol Gilligan to Andrea Dworkin to Adrienne Rich, it is painfully obvious that we haven't gotten the whole story yet.

Reader: I did notice, for instance, that every pronoun in Escape From Evil is male.

Professor: And it may be that Becker really is only discussing male behaviors. He may well simply be perpetuating the big silence about women's experience. We don't know his intention here regarding gender, because he doesn't take it up. In fact, there isn't a single specific reference to women in the book. Yet this doesn't immediately invalidate his viewpoint. It says that Becker isn't sensitive to gender difference.

Reader: So the point here is not to discount Ernest Becker.

Professor: No. Becker is a brilliant scholar. His insights are exciting and moving. And even if his insights are male and sexist, they reflect his sexist world beautifully. We don't have to dismiss his work. We need to remember that his story is partial. It only tells one story about the motivations of the human organism, and the development of culture.

Reader: And I assume feminists consider women being silenced virulent and catastrophic for society.

Professor: Yes. And Paul doesn't want to perpetuate the silence. He understands that Becker's viewpoint only gives him one of many filters through which to view his own experience.

But still the point isn't to replace Becker's theory with a women's theory of motivation. The point is to offer alternative vocabularies, recognizing there may be
fundamentally different ways of being in the world. The male dominant version Becker articulates may only be one of many possible stories.

Reader: Where do we start?

Professor: Becker's background is deeply embedded in Freudian psychoanalytic theory, and as I've said earlier, right or wrong, Freud's work has exerted enormous influence on 20th century Western assumptions about human conduct. It is not possible or necessary to do a thorough job of explaining psychoanalytic life-views at this time, but we can briefly touch on some critical assumptions, assumptions that come under fire when we begin listening to women's voices.

The psychoanalytic canon says, "the idealization of separation and the idealization of the phalus go together... The father and his phalus intervene to spring the child from the dyadic trap, the oneness with mother, forcing the child to individuate." In this scenario it is male, phallic, separating/dividing that creates individuals. The phallus is the motor of human development.

Reader: And I guess Becker, without ever saying it, assumes that individuality is the proper destination. His whole thesis is based on the individual's desire to transcend death.

Professor: Yes, a whole developmental and world view spins from this valuing of phallic inspired separation. Freudian psychoanalysis assumes that infant development proceeds from a state of oneness with the mother in infancy to separateness and individuation in adulthood. Transcendent individuation in this cosmology is the final attainment of being.

Reader: How does female experience fare in here?

Professor: Very poorly. For starters, without penises females lack the essential motivator of desire and power. Thus, the stereotype of the undifferentiated female, without a source of desire, latching on to the powerful male
thrusting penis. In this view, history itself is basically phallic, fueled by male interests.

Reader: And those interests, as we've seen in Becker, are fundamentally about men overcoming men.

Professor: In literature, for instance, the story goes this way. Great poetry is basically the result of poets "outstripping" the poets that came before them. It is very much about Sons overcoming Fathers." Remember Nietzsche? His whole life was obsessed with overcoming his forefathers. He was openly disdainful of women, and basically dismissed them. In philosophy the canon has been Rorty overcoming Heidegger overcoming Nietzsche overcoming Hegel and so on back to Plato. Very male stuff.

Reader: I can see this male Beckerian viewpoint manifested all over the Squash Journal. It even includes the ghost of Paul's father.

Professor: What is at stake in our discussion here, Reader, is this phallocentric reading of human psyches and human behavior--penises valued as the source of action, desire, transcendent individuation. Female experience has been referenced for such a long time against the father/phallus norm.

Reader: Women were looked at like attractive sailboats floating in the water, no motor, waiting for the phallic wind to blow them to safety. What's an alternative?

Professor: Jessica Benjamin, a feminist psychoanalyst, offers an extremely different and potent account.

Briefly, a critical feminist psychoanalytic theory offers the following answers. We argue that individuality is properly, ideally, a balance of separation and connectedness, of the capacities for agency and relatedness. We rely on infancy research that suggests that the self does not proceed from oneness to separateness, but evolves by simultaneously differentiating and
recognizing the other, by alternating between "being with" and being distinct. . . . We maintain that the vital issue is whether the mother herself is able to recognize the child's subjectivity, and later whether the child can recognize the mother. Thus, we dispute the necessity of the patriarchal mode of separation."

Two things are important here. One, separation is not necessarily based on the male intervention. And two, human development is not necessarily a smooth ride from oneness to separateness in the first place.

Reader: Doesn't Becker in his discussion of moiety culture and face work, imply the importance of connection? Certainly he describes organismic confrontation, but there is life-giving in his world as well.

Professor: Yes, Reader, but face work and moiety organization in his view is basically in service of SEPARATION and TRANSCENDENCE. The feminist viewpoint shifts the full focus onto CONNECTION.

Reader: You have made a fairly stark distinction.

Professor: For right now let's look at it that way. We can soften it later if we have to.

Reader: So what are the implications of shifting from separation to connection as a primary human motivator?

Professor: We shift from obsession with IMMORTALITY to concern for COMMUNITY.

Reader: But Becker recognizes the need for preserving the collective.

Professor: Again, Reader, the collective in Becker's scenario is a foil for personal transcendence. The female story places relationship and community at the top of the priority list.
Reader: How does she explain this difference?

Professor: Benjamin, who has worked with countless women, theorizes that women have a profound sense of interiority and inner spaciousness that may be different from men.

Reader: Is she trading the womb for the phallus as a motor of human development?

Professor: Many feminists do think the womb creates an essentially different experience for women than men. Benjamin stops short of this claim, but she has theorized a counterpart to the phallic mode of development. She calls it "intersubjectivity." "First, the intersubjective mode refers to aspects of the self that each individual brings with her from infancy—agency and receptivity toward the world. While this self needs the other's response to develop, it exists a priori, before the response. It requires response and recognition, but is not called into being by them."30

This opens up a powerful new way of looking at things. The infant is seen as a source of its own desire. Real relationship becomes possible and critical.

Reader: How is this different than the phallic mode?

Professor: There is a shift here from development based on overcoming or being separated by others in the environment, to development based on being with others in the environment.

Reader: I guess because that is a subtler response to the world and has been overlooked.

Professor: I think it needs to be stated more strongly than that. Throughout history, the privileging of connection rather than competition has been suppressed, often violently. The whole notion of cooperation as the prime-mover in a culture seriously undermines the primacy of transcendent hero systems. And women, who have invariably expressed that notion, have been silenced for millennia.
Reader: How does it look in recent times?

Professor: Recent industrial cultures depend on a kind of thrusting, acting and doing mentality. Capitalism must continue to grow in order to exist. And thus, there is a mania for action in industrially developed cultures. Feminists trace that obsession with "doing" to male desires for contestation/dominance.

Reader: And what happens to the individual in the intersubjective mode? Does the individual cease to matter?

Professor: No, no. This is the really important piece of Benjamin's work. She is saying that it is precisely this holding of the active alive space between people that creates independent selves. "Receptivity, knowing or taking in the other, becomes a mode of activity in its own right." And Benjamin "assumes the paradox that in being with the other, I may experience the most profound sense of self." This is a developmental viewpoint based on privileging the primary importance of relationship, not organismic incorporation.

Reader: How was this notion conceived?

Professor: In the 1950s D.W. Winnicott, working from Melanie Klein's ideas, made voluminous observations of infants in early childhood. According to Benjamin, Winnicott observed the,

... space that contains and a space in which we create. This space begins between mother and baby—he calls it the holding environment—and expands into what he calls the transitional area, the child's area of play, creativity, and fantasy. The transitional space is suffused with the mother's protection and one's own freedom to create and imagine and discover. The central experience to which Winnicott refers is being and playing alone in the presence of the other; to be truly alone with oneself paradoxically requires this sense of the other's being there."
Reader: What does this look like in the world?

Professor: It is the kind of interaction we see all the time when a child yells, "Mom, look at me."

And, do you see the contrast to Foucault here? The infant requires the other person's active presence and attention in order to experience the self, alone. The Other is not perceived as oppressive. The Other is an essential part of becoming wholly a self. "Given safety without intrusion, the infant can be in a state of relaxation—that well-known inward gaze—where its own impulses or drives are experienced as coming from within and feeling real."

Reader: This is a completely different kind of "gaze" than Foucault talks about.

Professor: It is still gaze absorbed within, but it is beneficial. In fact it is absolutely essential for infant development.

Reader: This sounds like a pretty soft way of looking at things. All this holding and gazing. Does it completely discount interpersonal conflict? How does Benjamin account for anger, rage and the desire to overcome people around us that Becker talks about?

Professor: Excellent question. Remember our brief discussion of object relations theory in CHAPTER III? We discussed how an infant has the capacity to hold onto an image of another, to create that other as an "object" in their mind. Winnicott thinks a critical moment in the development of a person is when she learns to differentiate herself from others. Paradoxically, that comes when "one destroys the object in fantasy and discovers that it still exists in reality; it survives, setting a limit to the power of fantasy and self." In other words, Reader, the hate and rage we direct at the important person/objects in our life literally creates us. We come to know ourselves in relation to, and mirrored by the people we cannot destroy.
Reader: How is that different than the primal motivations of organismic incorporation that Becker foregrounds? This sounds very much like the description of moiety cultures set up for contestation and face work.

Professor: Ah, this is the key. In Benjamin's intersubjective world, the raging and hating and anger is not seen as an individual act of aggression directed outward for the purposes of overcoming the Other. It is seen as an inter-relational act in which people interact intimately to produce a sense of otherness in each of them. Benjamin points us toward the profound interconnectedness of organisms. She shows us that individuation is intimately bound up with active recognition of otherness.

I think this is precisely the kind of paradoxical middle ground of conflict and creation that Nancy Fraser evokes with her use of the word "contestation." It is confrontive, but not destructive. It is certainly not death-dealing.

Reader: Becker must realize this too, otherwise he wouldn't talk about face work.

Professor: Again, let's not make this too black and white. After all, both Becker and Benjamin are psychoanalysts, and they obviously share some common theory.

Reader: So what is it that Benjamin is really offering?

Professor: Her viewpoint gives us a way to privilege and honor the primary importance of developmental schemes which have been traditionally associated with, and trivialized as female lack. These are the intra-subjective and inter-subjective aspects of experience.

Reader: And how does that create a different motivation?

Professor: Perhaps organismic desperation for prolonged stomach life, and resultant aggressive behaviors, aren't complete explanations of human motivation. Perhaps we need to honor the primary need for
intersubjectivity, innerness, holding. In order to tell a more complete story maybe we need to include the profound notion that the self can only be created and renewed while in relationship with an Other.

Reader: And how does this change the Story? It sounds like Becker understood this notion of intersubjectivity. Isn't it the basis for the moieties?

Professor: Okay. We've painted it pretty black and white. Now let's shade it to gray. Yes, Becker understands the need for relationship, just as Benjamin recognizes rage. They both know that the human being comes to terms with the paradox of connection and separation through relationships, and through rage.

Reader: So what's the difference in their viewpoints?

Professor: They privilege different parts of the story, and that has great consequences in the world. Let's take a look back at the Squash Journal and see if we can pick it up.

Take a look at Entry #24. Paul sent that long letter to one of his opponents, Mal, detailing his own conflicts with the situation, and asking for Mal's support. Mal's initial response was, "Guys aren't going to talk about this." But Mal and Paul sat there for an hour and did talk about it. That must have been a huge change, especially for Mal, to really have another man listen to his own frustration and pain. But Paul bypassed the significance of this in one sentence. He kind of tossed off that "there was a lot of closeness between us at the end of the conversation." These moments are simply not the ones that catch our male attention.

Reader: I have to admit I kind of ignored it.

Professor: And I wonder which moments in the Squash Journal will attract men or women differently. For instance, considering all the intensity surrounding Mike Estep, all the rage and fear and anger in that situation, did you notice
that Paul came to "love him" for his response in their match.

Reader: I missed that one too."

Professor: There are many moments in the Squash Journal that touch on the intersubjective. And there are many moments lurking just under the surface. After all, Paul is a man. And even though he's aware of this to some extent, he still fails to fully acknowledge the importance of the connections.

Reader: How would this look in the world?

Professor: Well, maybe the sports page could get a little thinner and we could add a section called "Massage!"

Reader: I'm still concerned with Becker and his potent analysis. The feminists are offering a pretty radical explanation of things. What is the historical basis for all this?

Professor: Okay. Let's now take a full stab at "Human Motivation Story #2." This is the women's version. We'll delve back into a discussion of primitive culture for some background, but this time we'll take a woman's version, sensitive to the primacy of intersubjectivity.

Rianne Eisler in The Chalice And The Blade paints quite a different picture of archaic social organizations than Ernest Becker."

Reader, it is pretty well understood at this point that, almost universally, archaic religions were goddess based. The Great Mother was the focus of the primitive world. There was a tremendous recognition of Female Fertility. The female/fertility nexus was the primary spiritual focus.

Reader: This must have lead to female dominated cultures.

Professor: Reader, you're using language that comes straight out of the male book of Becker. Eisler does not come to that conclusion. And that is essential for our purposes.
She cites the relationship between mother and child as paradigmatic. It is a relationship of asymmetrical power, but there is mutual and equal valuing. In other words,

... analogizing from this different conceptual framework, we can see that the fact that women played a central and vigorous role in prehistoric religion and life does not have to mean that men were perceived and treated as subservient. For here both men and women were children of the Goddess as they were the children of the women who headed the families and clans. And while this certainly gave women a great deal of power... it seems to have been a power that was more equated with responsibility and love than with oppression, privilege, and fear."

Reader: What are some details that indicate a prominent female presence rather than the Becker dog-eat-dog world?

Professor: We have to remember that women's voices have been silenced for a long time. And this has been true in archaeology circles too. When the woman's viewpoint re-enters the picture, some startling reinterpretation happens. In recent years, many sites and much data has been reevaluated.

For instance, it had been assumed for a long time that cave paintings were more or less exclusively hunting depictions. Many stick figures appear to be holding spears and weapons. And in the case of one particular kind of spear, a more thorough investigation showed something startling.

All other evidence showed that a particular kind of harpoon called biserial didn't appear until the late Paleolithic or Magdalenian age—even though scholars kept 'finding' them in 'sticks' thousands of years earlier in the wall painting of prehistoric caves... Why would Paleolithic artists want to depict so
many hunting failures? . . . If the
sticks and lines were in fact
weapons, the pictures had them
chronically missing their targets."

Then a man named Alexander Marshack used a
microscope and examined bone objects with these
"harpoons" engraved on them, and discovered
that, not only were the barbs of this supposed
harpoon turned the wrong way, but the points of
the long shaft were also at the wrong end."

Reader: So what were these things if not harpoons?

Professor: Here's what Eisler writes:

As it turned out, the lines easily
conformed to the proper angle of the
branches growing at the top of a long
stem. In other words, these and
other engravings conventionally
described as 'barbed signs' or
'masculine' objects were probably
nothing more than stylized
representations of trees, branches,
and plants."

Reader: Wow. Some pretty serious misreading has
gone on.

Professor: That's the point. Some pretty serious
misreading of a lot of things has been going on
for a long time. And much of it has gone into
the creation of an extremely phallocentric
viewpoint of historical and contemporary
development. Becker's may be one such
misreading.

Eisler devotes a chapter to the
sophisticated Minoan culture,

"... a society in which 'the whole
of life was pervaded by an ardent
faith in the goddess Nature, the
source of all creation and
harmony.' In Crete, for the last
time in recorded history, a spirit of
harmony between women and men as
joyful and equal participants in life
appears to pervade."
She goes on to chronicle the destruction of this goddess based culture by the warrior culture of the upper Greek peninsula. She then documents the history of phallocentrism and its rise to dominance based on war, the blade, phallic action. But this history is not the point of our discussion. What is important for us is to note the alternative to Becker's organismic incorporation theory of motivation.

Reader: Eisler's book gives a story to Jessica Benjamin's insights.

Professor: Yes, Minoan culture seems to have been deeply intersubjective in nature. There was an honoring of relationship that perhaps has not been experienced again in Mediterranean/European culture.

Reader: I see that the women's viewpoint offers an extremely different fundamental reading of historical and contemporary views of human conduct.

Professor: Becker's urgency of incorporation appears to be only a partial discussion of human motivation. Perhaps there is an equally powerful urgency toward relationship and cooperation.
Endnotes


3. Bataille, p. 34.


8. Becker, p. 3.


11. At this sentence my feminist proofreader disagreed loudly (to put it mildly).


15. Becker, p. x.

16. Becker, p. 11.

17. Becker, p. 11.

18. Becker, pp. 11-12.


29. Benjamin, p. 82.

30. Benjamin, p. 93.


32. Benjamin, p. 92.

33. Melanie Klein and D.W. Winnicott were psychoanalysts who attempted to modify and rectify Freud's overtly phallocentric developmental schema.

34. Benjamin, p. 94.

35. Benjamin, p. 94.

36. Benjamin, p. 93.

37. I have obviously set this chapter up to express the male dominant position, and then critique it. I assumed the first half of the chapter would be dominated, to some extent, by male language. I considered that part of the set-up. But, when my proofreader--a woman sensitized to gender issues--read this chapter aloud to me I winced. I was startled at the sheer volume of my own male dominant
language. As I said, this was a set-up. But even I am startled by the extent of it.


39. Eisler, p. 28.

40. Eisler, p. 4.

41. Eisler, p. 5.

42. Eisler, p. 5.


CHAPTER VIII

The Postmodern Museum

In the 1970s, the French built a museum in the heart of Paris called the Beaubourg. It is a glass and steel monster. All of the ventilation ducts, all of the water pipes, all of the electrical conduit are prominently visible and painted bright colors. Like the Warehouse, it is conspicuous for its contrast to the environment around it. It sits among ancient and elegant Parisian architectural antiquities.

In 1985 the Beaubourg mounted an expensive exhibition. Fifty people under the direction of French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard worked for two years, and transformed an entire floor of the museum into a technological explosion. It was designed as "a gigantic metallic maze, divided by gray gauze screens into sixty-one 'sites'; these sites were arranged consecutively along five adjacent pathways. For the most part the sites consisted of small installations of various cultural artifacts; technological representations and electronic devices, and were titled by the ideas or conditions that they were intended to represent or demonstrate."

"The visitor entered the maze equipped with headphones that furnished a sound track synchronized with the sites. . . . In this manner one confronted an extraordinary array of things taken from hospitals, factories, research centers, libraries, and museums of all sorts--from Paris' Musee national d'art modern to the Center of Creative Photography at the University of Arizona. IBM and astrophysics laboratories were credited along with well known artists."

"The sixty-one sites of 'Les Immateriaux' fell into five sequences; the principal pathways that ran throughout the maze. . . . Essentially, each pathway was to demonstrate a different kind of artificial extension or replacement of the body (e.g., the way in which scientific instruments exceed the senses in the
apprehension of atomic particles). One was also advised in the catalogue that the five paths or chapters had two sorts of linguistic structures, corresponding, on the one hand, to aspects of communication (from where, to where, how, by means of what, and concerning what messages are sent) and, on the other, to five keywords with prefix mat-. . . . They all concluded in a site called 'The Labyrinth of Language'--a world of word-processing, of language stored, analyzed, composed, recomposed, and otherwise manipulated by electronic devices. In the world of 'Les Immateriaux,' everything starts in the body and ends in language."

"There were video, film, slides and photographs--commercial and artistic, anonymous and signed, old and recent. There were robots, an elaborate photocopier, the first display of a holographic movie, and of course computers--lots of them. . . . At several computer consoles positioned throughout the show one could read the meditations of thirty illustrious Parisian intellectuals and writers on fifty alphabetized and cross-referenced words such as Author, Desire, Meaning, Mutation,, Simulation, Voice, and Speed. 'Les Immateriaux' boasted many great names; but not only were things not classified by such proper names, one was told (explicitly by Derrida in a text set near the beginning of the show) that 'authorship' itself was in question."

"'Les Immateriaux' was a phenomenologist's nightmare; everywhere one was shown the replacement of the material activities of the 'lived body' with artificial ones, or with formal or immaterial languages. One entered a world of simulation of the body: eating and sleeping (represented by a fast-food display and the Japanese sleeping cell), but also thinking and seeing (the computers and scientific instruments.) There were filmic and video simulations of movements and memories, and even a display in which 'human' skin was fabricated. . . . The show suggested that life and death are subject to technoscientific intervention and redefinition."

The exhibition dealt with the uncertainty of life in what is called the "post-modern" or "post-technological" age. "What sort of drama was it? It was not narrative; it was not even disruptive in a Brechtian sense. It was electronic. The headphoned masses milling through the maze were part of it. When they made music with the motion of their bodies or composed poetry on a computer, there was no effect of 'distance' or 'alienation.' One
could not 'participate' in the theater because one was already a part of it.""

Finally, "Les Immateriaux" was about the primacy of language in the postmodern world. "According to Lyotard, language theory not only survives the electronic revolution, but also provides it with its order. 'In essence,' he explains, 'the new technologies concern language' (primarily the language of artificial intelligence.) Further, as language determines our 'whole social bond (lien social)' the new technologies also concern our 'being-together.' This reasoning provided the show with its project: to illuminate how the electronic world is rooted in language, and how we are bound to one another within it.""
Endnotes

1. This chapter is a textual experiment. You will find that it consists almost entirely of long quotes which I have chosen not to set them off in a standard manner. Does that mean I am trying to fool you into thinking this is my prose, my description?

Absolutely not. But I do resonate with the postmodern notion of the reader as an active participant in the "textual experience." And in response I am playing with the rigid ownership of ideas.

I did not attend the museum exhibition that is described in this chapter. I can not claim first hand experiential knowledge of the event. But I resonated to John Rajchman's writing. It called out for inclusion in this document.

But why don't I just indent the long quotes? Again, I am doing some postmodern playing. By appropriating Rajchman's writing and displaying it as "my" text, I am saying, "at some point in this process perhaps this became mine too in some way." This is my way of interrogating the general notion of ownership. Please regard it as an experiment.


3. Rajchman, p. 106.


5. Rajchmnan, p. 106.


CHAPTER IX

Professor Theory and Reader Do Tools

Reader: What a fascinating event.

Professor: In the past forty years, the wild proliferation of media and technology, has certainly taken the discussions of social organization in startling directions. We've discussed pragmatism, poststructuralism, romanticism, humanism, and feminism. But, according to Lyotard and his buddies, the Age of High Technology has reshaped the world completely. It is a postmodern world. The age of big social organizations and big brute machines has passed. The cutting edge is no longer the ability to create big mechanical objects. According to the postmodernists, people with power will be people who have access to INFORMATION.

Reader: I can see Foucault's influence here, that connecting point of power with knowledge.

Professor: Yes. These folks see a world of wildly proliferating pathways of information. The industrial world is turning into a data world. KNOWLEDGES and DATA are becoming the critical commodities.

Reader: And knowledge these days seems to be created, stored, and transmitted by televisions and computers.

Professor: Yes. Lyotard sees our world dominated ever increasingly by knowledges created in a world of hyper-science and hyper-technology. The media explosion now reaches everywhere in our lives. In fact, media creates us.

Reader: Wow. Say more about that.
Professor: For starters Lyotard and other postmodernists imagine that information and images can be made free of the body.

Reader: How?

Professor: Words and data and images are so plentiful and omnipresent that they have somehow escaped any reference to real things or people. Descriptions and ideas and symbols float free of any real object.

Reader: What are the implications of that?

Professor: Information now travels routinely at the speed of light. And as images and data become all powerful, the concern with bodies and flesh blurs into the background altogether. Imagine how that shapes the postmodern conception of the individual. Lyotard and his contemporaries cease seeing distinct human organisms. For him, people occupy places in extended webs of information complexes. They conceive of the world as if it were the inside of a telephone switching station.

Reader: Do humans act something like computer terminals in this landscape?

Professor: That's close. A "person" in this postmodern vision is a kind of nexus point of colliding informational pathways, cross switches and intersections. Lyotard calls these "nodal points." Knowledges of all kinds come flying through the wires, excite us in unpredictable ways, and leave residues. These residues change and accumulate again and again. People are accumulations of transient data.

Reader: It sounds a little like Deleuze and Guattari's bubbling vision of body parts and desiring machines.

Professor: Yes, exactly. Bodies and flesh and knowledges move in a kind of hyper-technological soup fueled by desire. There are no FIXED IDENTITIES. The idea of personality is obsolete. Each of us becomes a kind of mobile, flexible, unbounded site of conjunctions. They call these shifting
conjunctions "subjectivities." We are endless shifting subjectivities.

Reader: Yes, now I see what's going on with the "Les Immateriaux" exhibit. After two years of work, overwhelming displays of words, electronics, images, sounds, and reproductions existed. But there were NO PERSONS in the exhibit.

Professor: Right. One of the chief postmodern philosophers, Jacque Derrida, was quoted in a text near the entrance of the exhibition, that very little in the vast show was attributable or classifiable by proper names. In fact he said "that 'authorship' itself was in question." As Rajchman describes the exhibit, "it all starts from the body and moves to language." The postmodernists see the world as language--written or transmitted, but not spoken. That is key. It is language that can be pumped through computers.

Reader: People aren't easily crammed down wires.

Professor: People! I think Lyotard's exhibit not only dissolved the whole notion of "people," but in some ways it dissolved the materiality of things altogether. Sure, there were gadgets, and screens, and neon lights, but the real juice in that exhibition was fleeting images. When electronic technologies are working, the machines almost "disappear," leaving language residues and emitted light. Lyotard's exhibit dissolved bodies and materiality and created energy. A lot of energy.

Reader: That sounds frightening.

Professor: And there is something very exciting and vibrant and expanding about it. Think of the possibilities for stretching ourselves to make all kinds of new connections. The Postmodern vision--accessibility to vast quantities of information--opens fantastic vistas.

Reader: Imagine the kind of people we could be if we could handle data like computer networks.
Professor: Also think of how it alters Becker's assumptions about power based on organic incorporation. In some ways this conversion of personality into electronics obliterates physical differentiation altogether. For all practical purposes electrons are electrons. Everyone could have equal access to data, and equal opportunity to alter the network. Exploitation based on ethnic, racial, gender, or age difference could be eliminated.

Reader: But is it possible, and do we want to eliminate the individual from the equation altogether?

Professor: You are asking if a postmodern world is a world in which the individual ceases to exist, and is that good? Reader, you're beginning to raise the BIG COSMIC QUESTIONS.

Do our skins really mark a boundary of some kind, or is that sense of separateness an illusion? It's interesting that many ancient belief systems like Buddhism and Hinduism incorporate the same questions.

Does the universe have an organization to it? Or, is it just bumping along contingently, taking the next twist and turn at whimsy?

If the universe has an organization are we necessarily aligned with it, or can we actually get out of alignment?

Is the cosmos moving toward complication or simplicity? Are boundaries breaking down leading to a great homogenous soup, or are things getting continually more diversified?

These questions have been asked for thousands of years by philosophers, theologians, scientists, psychologists, politicians, artists, poets, and parents.

Reader: These aren't questions with easy answers.

Professor: You're right Reader. And I'm not going to answer them now. But we must recognize that these questions ultimately bear on the way we organize our personal and collective lives. Are we going to promote unity, difference,
consensus, anarchy, or something else altogether? Are we going to opt for Nancy Fraser's notion of contestation with a commitment to balance personal and private pursuit? Or, are we going to promote Nietzschean anarchy and self discovery? Whose theories reflect/promote/shape the best kind of world?

Reader: Is there a best kind of world?

Professor: We know that John Dewey is going to answer these questions differently from Michel Foucault. We know that Freud came to different conclusions from Gilles Deleuze.

Reader: We already know we're going to get very different set of recommendations from humanists, and pragmatists, and poststructuralists about the way we should organize our lives. Perhaps all we can do is look at all the alternatives we have to choose from.

Professor: Right Reader. In this chapter we have been talking about postmodern hyper-technology. Let's look at one powerful alternative.

Everyone is not ready to give up on the notion of humans as individual organisms possessing some autonomy and integrity. Alongside the postmodern surge into hyper-science in the past forty years there has also been a movement to re-awaken primal human experience. Remember the deep intelligence of our tissues that Paul wrote about in "The Way of the Pig?" That notion of "deep intelligence" is critical in this discussion. Let's return to Don Johnson. We talked about his work in CHAPTER III.

Johnson thinks there is some underlying organization in the cosmos and that organization can be regarded and respected. No, this is not necessarily a metaphysical presence or "god." He isn't interested in recreating a new highest authority, at least one that imposes on people's bodies, but he is interested in reinvesting in the sensual, materiality of the Earth as it exists and has existed. In other words, the movement of
energy and matter on the Earth has some intrinsic shape and integrity that is beyond the control of human intelligence or action. Humans ARE NOT in charge. They DO NOT create the Earth. They participate in it. The Earth is a given, in all the senses of that word.

Reader: So there is an underlying structure to explore?

Professor: Certainly, and Johnson favors all kinds of investigation that uncovers the deep intelligence of the Earth, and the deep intelligence of tissues.

Reader: What makes Johnson different from a scientist?

Professor: I think Johnson would consider himself a scientist. Just as Dewey and the pragmatists considered themselves scientists. The difference comes in the use of data, and the nature of their scientific practices. We talked about some of those practices in CHAPTER III.

Reader: And what is the point of those practices?

Professor: For starters Johnson's work advocates maximizing awareness—both sensual and cognitive. Johnson wants people to re-find and experience the organic rumblings in their own flesh, to find and follow their own organic impulses. He also wants them to study history and politics, and identify oppressive social policies and formations.

Reader: That sounds a lot like Deleuze and Guattari.

Professor: To some extent that is true. Johnson, Deleuze and Guattari are all primarily interested in freeing people's bodies from totalizing doctrines and rigidifying social organizations. But Deleuze and Guattari have a radical program for eliminating the individual. As Foucault writes in the preface to The Anti-Oedipus,

Do not demand of politics that it restore the "rights" of the individual, as philosophy has defined
them. The individual is the product of power. What is needed is to "de-individualize" by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combinations. The group must not be the organic bond uniting hierarchized individuals, but a constant generator of de-individualization.

Deleuze and Guattari respond to the omnipresence of power in modern social structure by proposing a break down of individualizing boundaries, which could free organisms for all kinds of diverse combinations and recombinations, sexual and otherwise.

Reader: These are very different conceptions of the environment. Deleuze and Guattari must not think the world has much of a set organization.

Professor: From a human standpoint I think it's fair to say that they see the world as constantly in deep flux. The one thing they see as constant is desire. They want to unleash desire. How that manifests is without preset definition.

Reader: And what does Johnson see?

Professor: Though he is interested in breaking down social constraints and freeing the body, Johnson is interested in the integrity of individuals' boundaries. He wants to seek a balance of individual bodily impulse and social responsiveness. Paradoxically he thinks breaking down rigid socializing of bodies opens up the possibility for alive consensus making. Johnson wants to reinvest in the individual as a site of flexible responsiveness to the sensuality of the Earth.

Reader: Kind of a cross between the pragmatist commitment to just social projects and the postmodern commitment to personal desire. How does he want people to proceed with this project?

Professor: He has quite a different agenda from Foucault or Deleuze and Guattari, or any of the
poststructuralists. Johnson's program is a balance between social awareness and personal awareness. He wants people to become educated about how their lives and therefore their bodies have been shaped by cultural forces. And he wants them to rediscover their sensual alignment with the Earth.

He sees the Earth and its cycles as a common reference. He therefore is interested in intersubjectivity leading to consensus of some kind." Unlike the humanists he doesn't posit a rigid human core. But he does think that the Earth has some intrinsic organization that requires flexible, but consensual, understanding. The poststructuralists aren't interested in consensus at all. They consider consensual moves totalizing and fascistic.

Reader: And what does Johnson base his practices on?

Professor: I think two words that loosely describe Johnson's project are "awareness" and "presence."

Reader: Are these hard words to define?

Professor: Keep in mind the "intelligence in the tissues," knowing that this refers to something that is deeper, or other than language altogether. And yes, these are hard words to define, but since we are having a conversation let's take a stab at definitions.

"Awareness" refers to the ability and capacity to understand and identify the forces at work in a situation. Awareness is holistic, meaning that at any given moment it is possible to see, feel, taste, touch, and hear the environment, including the physical realities and the relationships of people in it. And most importantly, awareness includes an analysis and understanding of the histories of the environment and people in it. Awareness therefore has rational, sensual, cognitive, emotional, and historical components.

"Presence" is a state of sensually attuning to one's environment. It is a state of being in which resistance and power drop away, and there is complete alignment with the
surrounding environment and forces. Being and action become one thing.

Developing the capacity for moments of attunement have been a part of religious practices for millennia. This has been popularized in common usage by the phrase "the zen of x, y or z." We all experience these zen-like moments. Standing on street corners, working in kitchens, catching balls, writing letters, touching friends. Moments in which everything in the situation lines up in effortless expansion. Some people describe these moments as a warming in their bodies. Some people describe them as an emptying.

Reader: Presence sounds wonderful Professor. I recognize those moments you are talking about, but I'm a little confused. It sounds like awareness is about context, and presence is about transcending context. How are these two things related, and are they compatible or contradictory? It sounds like when we are being aware we can even recognize and notice ourselves in the picture. But presence sounds like we lose track of ourselves in some way?

Professor: Reader, you're touching on some of the deepest and trickiest questions that can be asked about the human condition.

If our attention is engaged in the acts of evaluating, thinking, remembering--basic components of awareness--aren't we necessarily excluded from fully surrendering to environment as it exists in that moment? And conversely, if we are totally aligned with the immediate sensual qualities of the environment, aren't we necessarily disconnected at that moment from global understanding and history?

In other words, in moments of awareness we even recognize and notice ourselves noticing. In moments of full presence it appears we give up our ability or desire to monitor ourselves altogether. We just enter the flow completely.

Reader: That sounds like a positive thing.

Professor: Yes, it can be. And many people have dedicated their lives to promoting these
moments. Many religious practices, including Eastern and Western mysticisms, tout this flow with the environment as the highest kind of attainment. The point is to achieve states of being, either in motion or stillness, in which the body/mind/self/world are indistinguishable. The altered states achieved from these kinds of practices are often credited as the sources of artistic expression.

Reader: Are there any drawbacks to the pursuit of presence?

Professor: There are some frightening implications in here too. If states of presence are necessarily disconnected from context, what keeps a person's actions accountable to socially constructive concerns. At the mild end this "do your own thing" taken to the max can become a kind of self-absorbed exploitation of other people. At the extreme end all kinds of atrocities have happened.

There are innumerable accounts of killers seemingly enraptured by the letting of blood, totally "present" to the slow trickle of body fluids leaving other people's veins. "The Silence of the Lambs," a movie made in 1991, has a character in it with a powerful capacity for presence. That character is also a merciless killer.

And presence is such a powerful and altered state of being that it is associated in psychoanalysis, in literature, in many religions with death--the total absence of being. Obliteration. Emptiness.

This issue touches many aspects of our life. For instance, there is a moment in the male orgasm, a fraction of a second just before ejaculation, when the mind goes utterly blank. It is so brief that many people have never noticed it. Is it a moment of ecstatic presence and union? To me it seems like a moment of profound disconnection with context. What are the implications of this moment of presence and transcendence in the sex act? If, at the exact moment of climax there is profound emptiness, does that mean sexual union is a moment of death rather than contact?
Reader: Are we certain that awareness and presence are incompatible? Isn't it possible that transcendence and union are the same thing? That, for instance, this moment you talk about in orgasm is really a heightened sense of contact, perhaps almost universal or cosmic in scope?

Professor: There are many possibilities. As I said these questions have occupied many people for a long time. I have only given one viewpoint.

There are others who contend that presence can only happen with awareness. This group of people believes that a person must have a mastery of the total environment and context before a full surrender can even be close to happening.

Reader: That would change the picture of the murderer you talked about wouldn't it?

Professor: Certainly. These people would say that the murderer can't be fully present when he kills because he would have to ignore others' pain and suffering. They would say the murderer's kind of presence is only narcissistic self involvement cut off from real states of presence.

Reader: I see this gets complex. It begins to touch on the sources of cultural and personal values. The question about what kind of lives should we lead isn't so easy to answer. Should we dedicate ourselves to presence or to awareness?

Professor: To tell you the truth Reader, I can't tell you what is right here. It has been debated for a long time. Some religious practices revolve around the development of presence in isolation, and adherents contend that reaching transcendent states is a kind of gift to the community. Other people say that presence can only be reached in service to others.

I don't really know, but it is important for you to recognize that the dilemma here is underneath many of our earlier discussions.
For instance the public versus private debate of Rorty and Fraser turns on the presence and awareness question. Rorty wants to privilege moments of transcendent presence. And he doesn't think that those moments are necessarily compatible with social awareness. He understands that presence has a dark, inhumane side to it, and he accounts for it by saying people should "be as privatistic, 'irrationalist,' and aestheticist as they please so long as they do it on their own time --causing no harm to others and using no resources needed by those less advantaged."

Reader: I remember that Nancy Fraser opposes Rorty's position strongly, and wants a world which fuses the public and private. But will her world eliminate the positive transcendent moments of creation that come from complete self absorption?

Professor: If you're Friedrich Nietzsche you fight against Fraser, and say, "She will kill the human inventive spirit." You scream, "Poetry will die." If you are John Dewey you sigh in relief and know that in Fraser's balanced world consummatory human expression will somehow be channeled into humane service.

Reader: Okay Professor, I think I have a sense of awareness and presence, and the dilemmas they raise. How does Don Johnson see it? He generally seems to have a program I can relate to.

Professor: Johnson, like Fraser, is one of those people who thinks contextual awareness and presence are not only compatible, but must be integrated somehow. Remember we talked briefly about his "technology of authenticity."

Johnson believes in forms and tools and practices, theories and methods. He recognizes that humans are tool users and tool makers. All of these things he calls "technology." And technologies, because they draw on outside sources, are contextual. They come out of the environment and extend into it.
Johnson also believes in the integrity of the individual. Skin is a boundary. And as I've said, he thinks the world around us has its own integrity. Therefore, technologies--practices, forms, methodological tools, actual material tools--can and must be used for touching back into the deep intelligence in the Earth and in people's tissues. In other words, technologies can be employed to promote states of presence. This is a marriage of context and self making, a marriage of awareness and presence.

Reader: Can you give me a concrete example of presence and technology coming together?

Professor: Yes. I know a man who made his architecture masters degree model out of polished hardwood.

Reader: You mean instead of that cheap foam stuff everyone uses to make those kind of models.

Professor: Foamcore. Yes. He made his out of the finest piece of rosewood he could find.

He designed a mall. And his site plan included an elevated sidewalk raised up on rows of small pillars. The sidewalk at full scale that would have been a mile long. The scale of the model shrank this walkway to the dimensions of a small hair comb, with "tines" less than a sixteenth of an inch thick. There could only be a sliver of distance between them. He ordered a micro-thin stainless steel saw blade from Germany, spent half a day setting up the power tools, and then cut 96 separations in a stick ten inches long and a half inch wide. The piece of wood was so small it had to be held and passed through the blade by hand without a guide. The quality of his holding/touch/movement made it hard to distinguish where the rosewood ended and his fingers began. He did not break a single tine.

Reader: He has an amazing sense of oneness with woodworking tools. It's a lovely image. I see how he was present, but I don't see how he was responsive to the environment.
Professor: Hmm. Good point Reader. Maybe he was just being narcissistically involved. I think Don Johnson would tell my friend to examine how his labor contributed to his social environment.

Reader: Do you have an example that would satisfy the awareness and presence dilemma?

Professor: Let's go back to Bob Wiginton and the Warehouse. I think we'll find ourselves right in the middle of it there.

Bob has something beyond his organizational skills, and his ability to drive forklifts up and down the slenderest aisles. From an awareness standpoint we already know he has a prodigious understanding of the politics of recycling, the shaping of his world, uses and abuses of industrialization in modern cities.

Reader: In other words, Bob is acutely tuned to context.

Professor: And Paul has told me some other things about Bob that I'm going to share with you, because they make real the complexity of our discussion here.

Bob takes things apart and sorts them into containers with a quality of absorption, of touch, of holding, of handling things that is masterful. Bob is a big man, and when it comes time to bearing weight on a rusted bolt he can do that. But he can strip two tiny brass nuts at once, one in each hand, nuts that might be hard for many people to get any kind of grip on, or even hold in their fingers. It is complete attunement to the task and the environment and materials.

There is probably not another individual on the Earth who has more fully mastered the dismantling of mechanical objects than Bob, and "mastered" is used here without reservation. He can reduce motors to coils, housing, gears, and screws in minutes. He stops to fashion elegant little tools for extracting tiny rivets so that buttons of brass can be separated from an aluminum housing. This is nuance. And
there is a strange, hypnotic quality of making in the dismantling process. Remaking, reusing, reshaping, and invention are all implied by Bob's work. Whether he hauls the materials to a smelter, or recycles them into the repair of a truck, there is a fluid, hormonal sense about the whole operation. It's industrial, elemental, primal.

Reader: It almost sounds like Bob and the Warehouse are an organism.

Professor: Yes, I think the attunement is that deep. The boundaries between the materials and Bob's body gets blurred sometimes.

Reader: It's interesting that it can happen in demolition work.

Professor: Yes, the point is alignment with the environment. During the Rainbow era Bob spent months transforming the back end of a truck into a bottle crusher-sorter using a vast array of recycled sheet metals, hydraulic cylinders, wires, gears and rods. It was a fascinating job in which the processes of stripping things down and building them up flowed into each other seamlessly.

Reader: Did the crusher work?

Professor: Well, it turned out the glass itself was so voracious it "ate" all the recycled parts.

Reader: Couldn't we look at Bob as just taking things apart and piling them up? Isn't he just a big strong guy who aimlessly moves stuff around? Worse yet, isn't Bob the ultimate technology monger, the ultimate consumer, needlessly stockpiling and reshaping materials which are rightly called refuse?

Professor: Ultimately, like Johnson, we go back to the body, his body, and the Earth's body for an answer to your questions. Bob has completely redescribed his own flesh as an organism that shapes and moves in an industrialized world. And more importantly, he shapes and moves with, not against, these forces. He is a big man, but not a giant. Yet he has a kind of usable strength that allows him to manipulate enormous
quantities of weight. His chest and legs and arms are constantly being defined and refined as means to encounter industrial contingencies. And the warehouse itself is also in constant flux. Piles and Collections move and regroup and repile. Bob is also reshaping the body of the world.

Reader: Is this reshaping narcissistic self-indulgence?

Professor: For starters, Bob's capacity to energetically flow with his industrial world that he evokes that thing Robert Pirsig in Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance calls "quality."

Reader: "Quality." Hmmm.

Poet: Reader and Professor Theory, let me see if I can help.

Bob is urban natural forces operating in the industrial landscape.

He is hurricane and earthquake and volcano reshaping the environment.

He can be seen, rain, shine, snow, sun, lifting, rolling, pushing things from one place in the warehouse to another, creating new piles, new spires, new aggregates, new collections.

At the heart of this is Bob reshaping himself, his own body, as a site of change.

Reader: So Bob is remaking the world, and that includes the environment and himself.

Professor: This is the key to understanding the Warehouse. This is where Johnson and Fraser's theories about public awareness and private expression really manifest. Bob's life and work is an uncanny conflation of social awareness and presence which results in the reshaping of his environment and his body.
It is total redescription, cellular and social.

There is no language between Bob and the brass. It is a visceral contact with the world. Bodies and flesh matter. There is a recognition of the deep intelligence of tissues. The Earth's materials count as tissues for Bob. And his work is acutely aligned to the pollution and environmental issues of his whole city. Bob is the best example I know of where awareness and presence mesh in a personal and public expression of change.

Poet: May I offer a final thought on the Warehouse?

It is High Work
stripping things
back to their brassness.

His body is the Earth's body,
stainless steel hands
softly thread his fingers,
shaping his aluminum bones.

Reader: There sure isn't much room for this kind of contact with the Earth in the postmodern cosmos. Is Lyotard's world totally alienating?

Professor: Great question. I don't really know the answer. There certainly has been a potent outcry against the rise of technology in the past hundred years. Alienation has been a primary issue in modern culture. And there seems to be a growing movement in the world revolving around the environment, some of it based on a general mistrust of technology.

Reader: Yes. Maybe the postmodernists just haven't spent enough time in the gym!

Professor: Yes, but it is too easy and glib to completely dismiss hyperscience as a technological holocaust. As we've talked about there is something exciting and vibrant and expanding about it too. Humans are tool users. Bob is an example of that. We do have minds. And we have incredible capacities for stretching and perceiving and connecting, of having our visions actually shape the Earth.
The postmodern vision, accessibility to vast quantities of information, opens up fantastic possibilities. Imagine the kind of world we could have if the information was integrated with flesh. If networking really included our minds.

Reader: So the question is how can Lyotard's world of mobile subjectivities be integrated with embodied physicality?

Professor: That's an important question for Paul. Perhaps these two world views are incompatible. There are those, of course, who want to pull back away from the computer age completely, and "return to the Earth." But remember, Deleuze and Guattari demonstrated the flexibility of capitalism to withstand resistance. It's pretty clear that the mind expanding possibilities of technology have gripped the globe. So the question now is how to meet the hyperscience environment, with local and global awareness, with the same sense of presence that Bob brings to taking nuts off of bolts.
Endnotes


2. Rajchman, p. 106.

3. Johnson was program director of my masters's degree program at Antioch College, San Francisco, and often spoke of himself as a philosopher/scientist.


5. This is ultimately the point for Johnson, and he closes his book *Body* with two chapters urging consensus. They are entitled, "Consensus," and "Consensual Spirituality."


CHAPTER X
The Bill and Paul Story

After leaving college Paul lived on the margins of American work life as a carpenter/cook/stained glass maker/handyman/basketball coach. Subsistence level earnings came with the territory, but that is not the only thing that was happening out on the "edge." It also meant resisting temptations to join all kinds of activities that were considered too mainstream. And, it meant engaging in a nearly constant critique of something Paul and his friends glibly called "the culture," or "society." It was routine for Paul to use words like "people" and "everyone" when speaking about most other people or places in the country—which basically accounted for everything and everybody west of Philadelphia and east of Berkeley.

Paul and his father spent many Saturdays together watching college football. In those days Alabama, Oklahoma, Notre Dame, and Ohio State were the powerhouses. Bear Bryant at Alabama, in his felt hat with the silly feather, was a Southerner and could be forgiven his excesses. Nice Ol' white haired Bud Wilkinson was the coach in Oklahoma, and besides Oklahoma simply does not inspire fear in Californians. The Catholics of Golden Domed Notre Dame had the potential to inspire a lot of anxiety in Paul and his father if they had let it, which they didn't, because their home team USC beat the Irish regularly. Besides their coach's name, Parseghian, sounded a lot like a kind of cheese.

But Ohio State was the enemy. Woody Hayes punching his own players on the sidelines. Three yards and a mouthful of dust. Military metaphors to the max. These guys ran on 4th and 4 with time running out in the Rose Bowl, for christsake! They were Imagination stalled. For those like the Marienthals who fancied themselves the last stronghold of the liberal free spirit OSU was THE MIDDLE, and the middle was to be feared and loathed.
When Paul told his father he was enrolling at Ohio State his father stared. When Paul told him he would be based in the Physical Education Department his father dropped to the floor, hysterical.

For the past twenty years Paul's father has sought a reconciliation with his German roots. He has taught in Germany on Fulbright grants, given innumerable workshops there, and even married a young German aryan. In his gut he understood Paul's desire to appreciate the psychic middle of the country. He understood Paul's desire to come to know "those people" they always talked about as "the others." His father understood that Paul didn't want to spend his whole life filled with his father's childhood hurt and anger. Paul didn't want to spend his whole life alienated from his neighbors.

So, Paul tied a foam mattress and his bike to the roof of his '69 Dodge Dart, and drove off to discover "The Heart of It All." (This slogan graces Ohio license plates.)

* * *

When Paul met Bill, Bill's wife had just gone off to India to follow her Guru.

It's important to keep in mind that Bill is an Associate Professor at a major research institution. Heavy duty spiritual questing doesn't exactly play in your basic OSU College of Education hallway chit chat. You might be okay disclosing your casual involvement with the local Unitarians, but serious ties to some Swaminanda in India makes you pretty suspect.

Bill was in pain. And he really didn't have anyone to talk to about it.

* * *

It's important to keep in mind that Paul has done his time on the cultural fringe, where this particular Guru, the one Bill's wife follows, is just one of many fabulously adored religious figureheads. Out on this fringe a lot of people take their rising signs seriously, are into a thing called "Enneagrams," and ask each other, deadpan, "Are you a Number 2 or a Number 7."

It is also important for you to know that Paul was a registered intern with the state of California as a Marriage, Family and Child Counselor, and that he left a
small private counseling practice when he headed for Ohio. Strangely, he was in much more familiar territory talking about grief and loss and karma with Bill than he was talking about chicken wings and the American Gladiators with his OSU undergraduate students.

* * *

Bill is a big man. He stands 5'11" and weighs somewhere around 260 lbs. He has the early signs of diabetes and has to regulate his sugar intake. He gets so nervous speaking in front of groups that he takes a drug to calm himself when he gives presentations. This is the profile of a man pretty out of touch with his body.

When his wife left, Bill's world was pretty shaken up. He could have been completely reactive and defensive, but he recognized the situation as a challenge to some old habits, and an opportunity to experience the world in completely new ways. He was ready to explore new psychic ground. Paul offered to do some simple counseling work with Bill on a friend to friend basis--just a couple of guys getting together to explore.

Paul's clinical training is in body-oriented psychotherapies. He believes everyone's life history (which includes genetic and cultural components) is "embedded" and reflected in flesh--posture, muscles, organ functioning, movement patterns, and so on. He uses a combination of principles and techniques in his work, most of which are based on sensitivity to physical experience. Some of this involves movement, some involves touch, and some involves simple awareness and focusing.

Paul invited Bill to his place for a session. He lives in an old elementary school converted into an artists' colony. He has a classroom to himself--chalkboards included. There are still rows of hooks three feet off the ground under the shelves, where the kids hung their little coats. His window looks out on the Timken Ball Bearing Factory, perhaps not the most scenic view in town, but often, strangely, a source of urban comfort to him. The walls of his room are made of concrete block a foot thick, perfect for the noise-making eventualities of personal counseling work.

They did a simple body awareness exercise as a way for Bill to begin getting at some feelings about the situation with his family. Paul asked Bill to lie down,
close his eyes, and breath deeply. While Bill did this, Paul lifted each of Bill's legs slowly, and he asked Bill to notice any images or sensations that he felt in his body as he was being moved. That is all they did, but it produced some startling information. Bill reported that he felt nothing, no sensation in his legs, no feelings anywhere in his body!

Bill was an athlete. He'd been an all-league football player in high school. He'd gone to college on a baseball scholarship. Baseball was Paul's father's game too. When Bill and Paul played catch one afternoon Paul immediately recognized the effortless movements of the trained ballplayer. The loose elbow snap and extension of the true thrower, the mobile searching wrist of the confident catcher. Bill has soft hands. The ball hit his glove silently.

Paul wondered how and when Bill had so lost track of his flesh. And he was curious where it was in Bill's life that this refined sense of touch, the knowing that is still in his catching and throwing, still manifested itself.

* * *

At the time, Bill and Paul were deeply into Richard Rorty. For some similar and some different reasons, they were each pretty worked up by the notions of contingency, irony, and redescriptions. Soon after the breathing and leg-lifting session Bill invited Paul over to his house for a conversation to explore these ideas.

Bill lives in the Northwest corner of Columbus, in Hilliard, actually. It is one of the fastest growing neighborhoods in the state. Too bad. Until a few years ago Bill's street bordered a cornfield. Now there's a Big Bear SuperDeluxe Market and a Cinemark 12 across the street. But Bill has a huge yard filled with trees, and it still feels like country.

The house itself is wooden and lived in. You know the kind. Every object looks like it gets used regularly. Every soft place has a body print in it. Every wall surface has ball marks on it. All the closets overflow. Bill and his wife do an early morning paper route with their two boys, so there are various stacks of advertisements and comics piled around.

Paul took a little tour through the house and felt comfortable in every room. And, he noticed with a twinge
that there were artifacts of the Guru everywhere. Posters with her brown skinned face beamed down from the walls. Small framed portraits of her in serious poses mushroomed under the lamps. A locket on a string of beads hung from a door jamb—the Guru’s serene smile emanating from the center.

Their visit that afternoon was to be a session on Contingency, irony, and solidarity. But before they started Bill asked if Paul was hungry. Paul said he was. They headed for the kitchen. Paul loves to cook too, and asked if there was anything he could do. Bill said no and offered Paul the chair closest to the door. There was a particularly large poster of the Guru above the table. Paul had a moment of strong feeling. He was there to talk about Rorty’s world. It was poignant to him how strongly those ideas contrasted with The Truth that Bill’s wife was following.

Bill has remodeled several parts of the house, but as Paul looked around he noticed the kitchen had all its original equipment. Linoleum counters. Simple cabinets. A single porcelain sink. Free standing wooden shelves filled with Ball jars. A dining nook with a simple wooden table. A view of a maple tree.

Paul could have gotten lost in the poignancy or irony of it all. But to tell you the truth, he can’t remember anything about their conversation, or whether they actually had a conversation at all. Paul’s attention was completely consumed watching Bill in the kitchen.

Bill made a Greek salad. The onions seemed to grow out of the palms of his hands. He caressed the cucumbers, and removed their seeds with the back of a spoon as if he were performing a delicate surgery. After carefully layering the sliced tomatoes and the feta and peppers, he spread a handful of dark spicy olives with a gentle sweep so that each one nestled comfortably into a place among the other inhabitants of the dish. The light green olive oil poured over it all from the ends of his fingers.

All the while he moved and turned and leaned in the space. Taking things from storage bins, moving from sink to drawers to shelves to counters. Silently pulling out bowls and jars and spoons. When he was finished, and gently offered the gorgeous plate of food to the table, Paul had somehow even acquired eating utensils, and the
kitchen was clean! Overall it was one of the loveliest cooking performances Paul had ever witnessed.

In the two years since that first visit, Paul has eaten dozens of Greek salads at Bill's. They will be one of his strongest memories of Ohio. He has also eaten velvety soft bean dishes--soups, thick and thin--chilies, spicy and mild--whole and refried, in tortillas. Sometimes Bill fixes wonderful middle eastern specialties like tabouleh and humus.

Paul has never tired of watching Bill prepare food. Bill holds vegetables when he cuts them with both a firmness and gentleness that evokes mastery. In fact Bill's whole kitchen gestalt is wonderful. He keeps lemons and onions and tomatoes on the feet of little devices that look like insects on their backs. He lines these up on the window sill. He checks the progress of these ripening fruits and vegetables and sometimes turns them over or around. There is always a fresh bag of ice in the freezer, fizzy water in the pantry, and cranberry juice in the fridge. There's always a bread to go with the meal. He does not make lavish, rich food, but that isn't the point anyway. The point is that his whole presence in the kitchen thrills Paul, relaxes him, and fascinates him. Paul experiences it as an expression of Bill's whole being.

* * *

Not too long after that first visit Bill's wife, Bonnie, returned from India. In the two years since then Paul has come to cherish her too, and considers her a good friend. It makes him feel great when he telephones their house and Bonnie responds with her long and animated, "hhHHHiiiiiiiii." She frequently joins Bill and Paul at the table. Occasionally, she joins their conversations. She rarely agrees with their positions.

* * *

There are several things to hold from this story:

Paul's relationship with Bill is not professor-student as usual. They have obviously experimented freely with roles. They have each taken turns at being teacher, student, advisor, friend. For instance, Bill audited one of Paul's courses. And, when Paul was anxious about playing his first racket sports tournament in a decade, Bill accompanied him to Pittsburgh as a support person.
Bill must be acknowledged for his willingness to give up the high status trappings that can come with his position. He has shared his personal search openly with Paul.

Their rich conversations over the past two years--some of which ran five to six hours long, and serve as the springboard for this document--occurred in an atmosphere of widely divergent beliefs and agendas. Over the past two years Bill and Paul have developed a growing appreciation for the thinking of Rorty and Foucault and Becker. They've thrilled at the prospects of contingency, irony, the critique of the Grand Narratives, and breaking down of the big "T." Truth.

For two years they've also been considering the personal and social implications of religious practice. Bill is committed to his own value system, but he loves Bonnie and wants to support her. He has made efforts to understand and participate in Bonnie's world. Paul also deals with religious influences in his life. His closest and dearest friend left him to become a rabbi. It will be fascinating to see how they integrate Richard Rorty's de-divinizing hopes into their lives. How will Bill meld contingency with the Guru's timeless Hindu message? How will Paul blossom into irony and also continue to support his friend as a professional Jew?

Once a week Bill goes with Bonnie to chant. The chants are based on Hindu texts--long on vowels--which produce powerful effects, no doubt about it. This past summer he walked five to eight miles a day chanting as he went. He has found great benefit in the experience. It has been energizing and relaxing and fulfilling. Without buying into all the trappings of the "religious conversion experience," Bill has still found ways to experiment with the possibilities of the "practice" and "discipline."

This past summer Bonnie spent a month at the Guru's American headquarters in Fallsburg, New York. (The Siddha Yoga folks have purchased an old Jewish resort hotel in the heart of the Catskills and converted it into a Hindu ashram. Paul loves this.) Bill decided to open himself to further contact with the Guru and enrolled in a workshop on karma for the last weekend of Bonnie's retreat.

Here is the story Bill returned with:
Bill: I had never been there in Fallsburg when the Guru was there. I went to a couple of courses. One of them was on karma. On the last day I worked in the kitchen as part of my service. I was in the kitchen chopping vegetables. I looked up and there was the Guru. It's half a mile from her "compound." She rarely goes to the kitchen. She started talking to me. People were frozen. I'm chit chatting about vegetables. She wanted all of us to have a carrot peeling contest. To make a long story short, I won the carrot peeling contest. I actually took second place. There were 15-20 people around the table. I was the only one who spoke English. For me having the Guru show up was interesting. For others it was a BIG DEAL. An hour later I was chopping parsley and the secretary comes up and says, "Come with me." The Guru is in a Chair.

Paul: Like a dais, a little raised stage.

Bill: I mean there were 500 people working in the kitchen. And there were hundreds in the reception hall where she was sitting on the raised stage. She wanted to give me a gift. It was a shawl. I said, "No, no. I just had a smaller carrot than others." And she said, like a good teacher, "You just had a two day course on karma, it may not be for carrots at all." The shawl is made out of Tibetan goat chin hair! And up until a few years ago only the Dalai Lama could wear it.

So I'm open to spiritual energy. What's your theory Marienthal?

Paul: I think some people are tuned in to special qualities of presence. You know how I feel about your life with vegetables. This woman might be very perceptive. I think maybe this woman knows how to tune into energy emanations of presence, and "sought" you out in some way in the kitchen.

Bill: So she was reading that quality of presence, but I don't buy into the magic powers she is ascribed.

Paul: Were you enamored of the Guru?
Bill: Yes I was in awe of the whole situation. . . It's maybe just x-rays and beyond current science [the Guru's ability to perceive qualities of energy]. I didn't bow down. Or refuse a gift from the Guru. But I stepped back about five feet and just kind of stood there, and the Guru said, "It's okay Bill, you can leave now, it's okay Bill, you can go." So I was magnetized by that somehow. I don't believe that effects me, but she's a bright woman.

Paul: How did your wife react?

Bill: Yeah, she thinks it's divine stuff.

It may not be important for you to know any more details of Paul's German Jewish background or Bill's family life. You may not need to hear any more about Paul's search for Middle America or Bill's search for Himself. But it is important for you to know that their complex relationship, and often critical discourse, happens over Greek salads and black beans and humus and gazpacho and fresh cornbread and cranberry juice sparklers against the sometimes energizing, and sometimes uneasy swirling background hum of god-talk.
Endnotes

1. At the time I was gathering much of the material for this chapter, I had not yet met Bill's wife. Therefore I acknowledge the one-sidedness of this material concerning her. That does not invalidate my observations. Just take them with a grain of salt. Also, Bonnie has had an opportunity to read, comment on, and edit this material.
CHAPTER XI

Professor Theory and Reader Do The Guru

Reader: Wow. What a rich story. There's a lot going on there.

Professor: What grabbed your attention?

Reader: The first thing that struck me was the presence of religion in the story. Given the intense critiques of the divine, metaphysics, and essentialism by Rorty and the poststructuralists, it was fascinating to see that religion figures so prominently in both Bill and Paul's lives.

Then I was reminded of Bob Wiginton and the Warehouse. It's so clear how both Bob and Bill handle the physical materials in their lives with "presence." It doesn't seem to matter whether it's cardboard or cucumbers. They each experience a special organic alignment with their chosen medium and environment, but there's a great difference in their bodies. Bob uses his recycling practice as a way of positively shaping his body. Bill seems numbed out, although he's making a powerful effort to recover himself.

And how about the whole theme of reconciliation: Paul's father with the Germans, Paul with his fellow Americans, and Bill with the Guru. Paul and Bill both seem to have almost a spiritual need to engage and respect difference.

Also, we talked a lot about power in earlier chapters--especially about situations in which there was asymmetrical power. Pursuing the Ph.D. certainly is a big set-up for that kind of power, but Bill and Paul are sure doing a fascinating number with it. They
both seem willing to experiment with new kinds of power relationships and possibilities within the institutional setting.

I guess, now that I think about it, there are a lot of agendas here. There must be some heavy duty lessons to learn.

Professor: It is Paul's task to determine what theories to adopt, and I assume he'll get to it soon. Our job is to identify theory. So let's not get bogged down in case histories, analyzing personalities or relationships. We are here to pull out the important theoretical dilemmas and at least recognize their implications. And, there is something very important going on in this story. Perhaps it is so pervasive it is almost invisible. Any guesses?

Reader: Well I've mentioned Ph.D.'s, religion, and reconciliation. If those aren't it you better clue me in.

Professor: It is the relationship of EMANCIPATION and AUTHORITY.

In the broadest terms, and in different ways, Bill and Paul are both trying to liberate themselves. Paul moved from the eccentric but alienated edge of his culture into the very heartland of his country in order to free himself from some old prejudices and stereotypes. Bill, experimenting with body work that illuminates his numbness, and by trying the Guru's practices, seeks a self renewal.

Reader: And even though they have come from wildly different backgrounds, it looks like Bill and Paul have served each other well in their searches.

Professor: And Reader, I want you to note something that is very important. Bill and Paul created a situation in which both people had equal opportunity to influence the relationship and interaction. Paul's offer of service when Bill was down was just that, an offer. Bill understood what Paul was offering, and he could have refused the offer. And Paul didn't have
to go to Bill's house repeatedly. If the presence of Bonnie and the Guru were too much, he certainly could have avoided them easily enough.

Reader: So Bill and Paul chose to be influenced by each other. Is that so important?

Professor: What if there had been no choice? What if liberation had been "REQUIRED?" What if it was the agenda? In other words, what does it mean when someone "knows" something they think others should know, and the "knower" has some ascribed authority?

Reader: Say a little more about ascribed authority.

Professor: I'm talking about situations that are defined by the social structure in order to create power imbalances. It's one thing to be an evangelist on a street corner; it's quite another when that evangelism is masked by social positioning. For instance, teachers have a special kind of authority that reinforces their own belief systems, and gives access to other people.

Reader: Yes, I see. And what has that got to do with evangelism and liberation?

Professor: In the past thirty years, in the so-called era of civil rights, there has been a lot of talk in educational circles about "emancipation" and "empowerment." There has been a lot of speculation on how teachers could empower students. "Liberatory Pedagogy" has been the progressive educational agenda for a while. There have been attempts, both theoretically and practically, to redistribute power in the classroom, to "give" students back their powerful voices.

Reader: And what are the objections to this? Hasn't a lot of good been done under the banner of civil rights and the various identity movements? The women's movement and the gay liberation movement have changed our culture radically. There certainly has been a lot of talk of "empowerment" in these movements. Aren't people being emancipated and empowered, and in turn liberating others?
Professor: Here is the question. Is it possible for one person to empower another? Think about it. Isn't it a contradiction? If I give you your power, haven't I really maintained my higher status as the provider?

Reader: I see your point. How is this theorized?

Professor: For starters we know that poststructuralism interrogates the notion of the fully autonomous subject. Because culture is now recognized as going very deeply, if not all the way "down" into people, it may be illusory to talk about an individual possessing anything, much less something as immaterial as "power."

Remember our discussion in CHAPTER V? Foucault showed us that power in modern culture is not a thing to have. It is capillary. It is productive. It cannot be "given, provided, controlled, held, conferred, taken away." It is not a gift to be bestowed or a commodity to be traded. It happens in action. It is produced within every relationship.

This last point is very important. It means that everyone is involved in the production and effects of power struggles. It is arrogant and foolhardy to conceive of a situation in which there is an already "emancipated teacher" dispensing "liberation" to students. "In the focus on Others there is a danger of forgetting to examine one's own (or one's group's) implication in the conditions one seeks to affect."

Reader: Does this mean everyone has an equal share in power?

Professor: No. Clearly that is not the case. What it does mean is that in any given interaction, all the people involved are at that moment co-creating a power dynamic. Even the "victim" participates in some way.

Reader: Does that mean the oppressed have brought it on themselves? And does it also mean that people's desires to liberate others are
necessarily insincere and a cover-up for their own desires for control?

Professor: Hard questions. Maybe yes, maybe no. This viewpoint certainly seems to implicate victims as contributors to their own oppression. But again, think about Foucault. His point was not that everyone had an equal stake or interest. To the contrary, he was showing was how unequal power relations are implemented. It is clear that some groups have systemically acquired and solidified their hold on the belief systems and resources of modern nation states. Foucault's great contribution is to show how everyone, at every level of social positioning, participates in the maintenance of that imbalanced power structure.

The notions of "victim" and "the oppressed" tend to become obsolete in Foucault's cosmology. Because there is no longer an attitude that power happens from the top down, we get to step back and say, "How are we all participating?"

Reader: Is there no one to blame for injustice then? Doesn't that simply allow exploitation to continue?

Professor: That has been the basis of the critique of Foucault's work. "Because Foucault has no basis for distinguishing, for example, forms of power that involve domination from those that do not, he appears to endorse a one-sided, whole rejection of modernity as such. Furthermore, he appears to do so without any conception of what is to replace it."

Reader: But how about those who really want justice?

Professor: Reader, I think that a good deal of the emancipatory impulse is quite sincere. I do not share Foucault's pessimism, but in respect to his brilliant analysis, it is essential to recognize the impossibility for any one given person to step outside or above the situation in order to dispense freedom--theoretically or practically. Everyone, at all times, has a stake in the proceedings. The oppressed and
the oppressors, the liberator and liberated, are all deeply implicated in the structures of a powerplay.

Reader: So is it O.K. to intend liberation for the world? Say a little more about classrooms, for instance.

Professor: Much wonderful work has been done in theorizing and creating classroom practices that are sensitive to these issues of bias, and attempt to redress power imbalances in the classroom. Henry Giroux, Roger Simon, Cleo Cherryholmes, Elizabeth Ellsworth, Paolo Freire, Ira Shor, and a host of others have explored educational practice, in a postmodern world. But as we've seen, there are a lot of different ways to conceive of the world, and each of these thinkers proposes a solution to emancipation that furthers their own viewpoint. Again let's remember that everyone, no matter how sincere, has their own agenda.

Giroux, for example, remains enamored of the democratic/humanist project that John Dewey also felt so strongly about. Giroux is sensitive to the poststructural accounts of power, but he is not ready to give up on the Enlightenment project of liberation. Perhaps humanism just hasn't gone far enough. He says,

In the best of the Enlightenment tradition, reason at least offers the assumption and hope that men and women can change the world in which they live. Postmodernism redefines the boundaries of that world and makes visible what has often been seen as unrepresentable. The task of modernity with its faith in reason and emancipation can perhaps renew its urgency in a postmodern world, a world where difference, contingency, and power can reassert, redefine, and in some instances collapse the monolithic boundaries of nationalism, sexism, racism, and class oppression.
Reader: Wow, those are great ambitions, but they seem like awfully huge claims.

Professor: Yes. There are many, especially some feminists, who claim that this humanist program just continues to recreate conditions as usual. They say that the program doesn't sufficiently interrogate the underlying assumptions and sources of continued power imbalances— including the humanist's own stake in the program. For instance Elizabeth Ellsworth says,

Literary criticism, cultural studies, post-structuralism, feminist studies, comparative studies, and media studies have by now amassed overwhelming evidence of the extent to which the myths of the ideal rational persona and "universality" of propositions have been oppressive to those who are not European, White, male, middle class, Christian, able-bodied, thin and heterosexual.

Reader: That certainly drops a little rain on Giroux doesn't it?

Professor: Yes. And in response to the feminist and poststructural critique of the emancipatory project, Giroux and other humanists are trying to offer a more self-reflexive pedagogy that begins to account for the problem of teacher bias. But it mustn't be solved too glibly. Ellsworth, for instance, in her article "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering?" exposes and critiques the many ways "emancipatory" agendas have been theorized by well meaning educators.

For instance, some liberatory minded educators reject the Foucauldian challenges to rationality, and think the point is "to give students the analytical skills they need to make them as free, rational, and objective as teachers supposedly are to choose positions on their objective merits."

Reader: That is basically the humanist project. Reason will triumph over all?
Professor: She goes on to say that "a second strategy is to make the teacher more like the student by redefining the teacher as learner of the student's reality and knowledge." This is also a strategy of Paolo Freire and Ira Shor who encourage teachers to relearn basic lessons with their students.

Finally she says, "a third strategy is to acknowledge the 'directiveness' or 'authoritarianism' of education as inevitable, and judge particular power imbalances between teacher and student tolerable or intolerable. ... 'Acceptable' imbalances are those in which authority serves 'common human interests by sharing information, promoting open and informed discussion, and maintaining itself only through the respect and trust of the those who grant the authority.' In such cases, authority becomes 'emancipatory authority.'"

Reader: What a crazy term that is, "emancipatory authority." From what you've already said this sounds quite contradictory. How can authority be used to open someone to themselves? It's like wrestling with the internal contradictions in the phrase "making people free." It reminds me of the Nazi invocation, "Work Makes Free."

Professor: Ellsworth thinks the notion of emancipatory authority reveals "the failure of critical educators to come to terms with the essentially paternalistic project of traditional educations." This emancipatory authority business requires the existence of the free, rational, emancipated teacher, the authority. And we already know that these fully liberated individuals are pretty hard to come by. In fact, by poststructuralist standards, such an "individual" cannot exist. Culture is too deeply embedded for anyone to really be free of their own web.

Therefore, as far as Ellsworth is concerned "critical pedagogues are always implicated in the very structures they are trying to change." Perhaps, then, liberatory pedagogy is the most authoritarian and normalizing kind of education because it masks secret agendas in shades of freedom.
Reader: So what is her solution?

Professor: She calls for humility. Educators who are interested in promoting emancipatory causes must first give up the notion that they can be all-knowing authorities. She also reminds us that it is impossible to really know what is happening for Another.

Reader: Doesn't this get paralyzing? Is it possible to act at all?

Professor: I think Ellsworth is willing to act in the world. She just doesn't want people, even well-meaning people, up on their emancipatory hobby horses leading arrogant charges up the hill. Listen to the final lines of her article:

Right now, the classroom practice that seems most capable of accomplishing this ["working against oppressive social formations"] is one that facilitates a kind of communication across differences that is best represented by this statement: 'If you can talk to me in ways that show you understand that our knowledge of me, the world, and the 'Right thing to do' will always be partial, interested, and potentially oppressive to others, and if I can do the same, then we can work together on shaping and reshaping alliances for constructing circumstances in which students of difference can thrive.'

Reader: How do these cautions about emancipatory authority relate to Bill and Paul?

Professor: What we have is a rich story of colliding beliefs, agendas, and life circumstances. Bill and Paul are both attracted to the anti-essentialism of poststructuralist thought. Both of them are energized by the ideas of Rortian irony and redescription. And, both of them have been forced to make sense of the religious Grand Narratives that figure prominently in their lives. Their's is a rich stew of Hinduism,
Judaism, body therapies, and redemption through sports.

Reader: It's rich mix alright. What's the problem?

Professor: Well, this issue of emancipatory authority figures quite heavily. Talking about religions, the term is easily converted to "evangelism." You can imagine, given their poststructural sympathies, how nervous they both are about their own possible evangelisms. They don't like being the target of other people's Truths. And, they don't want to spill it around either. There is just a lot of possible Truth swirling around in this story -- from the Guru to the Alexander Technique. Bill and Paul are cautious.

But the point in this story is not the choosing or rejecting of any particular life path. We are examining how unacknowledged power actually is played out between Bill and Paul.

Reader: At the beginning of the story, when they met, Bill was at a moment of struggle and Paul had something to offer. That seems pretty simple and straightforward. Wasn't Paul just helping Bill to rediscover his own personal authority?

Professor: Is it possible Paul's offer of energy and care to Bill also had a power laden component? Let's account for a little more context. Like Ellsworth says, we better remember how the "teacher" is implicated.

Paul was a very sharp and capable kid. When he was seven years old, his mom even told him he was going to be a Renaissance Man. I've also learned recently that for part of his youth Paul's mother was alcoholic. So, from very early on he was "assigned" to be the unswerving and steady one in the family. Put all that together with Jewish desperation and hope, and you have your basic world saving complex. Paul grew up figuring it was his basic job to become the Messiah.

Reader: So maybe there was an element of compulsion to his care?
Professor: Maybe being the rescuer is even just a familiar way for Paul to stay in charge. After all, he learned it that way as a kid.

Reader: Ah, and maybe all that talk about "appreciating the other" as a motivation for moving to Ohio was really a cloak for his own form of evangelism. Maybe he was on a secret missionary expedition. What would he be pushing?

Professor: Presence? And, perhaps Paul's disdain for the Guru, and other Grand Narratives, masks his own people changing interests.

Reader: So what are you saying?

Professor: We're just speculating here. And I am just setting out a cautionary tale about power and influence. I'm reminding us that we need to keep looking and digging and noticing so that we don't overlook our own secret hopes— even, and especially, when that exploitation is couched in words of emancipation. We need to hear our own words with humility and caution.
Endnotes


CHAPTER XII

Concluding PART I: Building an Educator Profile

Reader: Hi Paul. It's great to see you.

Yes, Hi Reader. And Hi Professor. It's nice to see you both. How did it go?

Professor: Well, we certainly enjoyed the stories. They were most provocative, and provided us with wonderful opportunities for theoretical explorations.

Reader: I think the Professor really came through on his promise to give me the basics.

Professor: Why thank you, Reader. It was a pleasure, and I learned a great deal myself presenting it so concisely.

Reader: Where do we go from here?

You may remember from the Introduction that PART I lays the theoretical groundwork for an educational project to be discussed in PART II.

Reader: Yes, in PART I you said you were going to explore other people's final vocabularies, and show how those create your own current life view. I think I could stay with that discussion at this point.

As you know, I am particularly concerned with education in this dissertation. I am exploring how a wide range of theory ultimately shapes my views as an educator. You have done a pretty thorough job on a lot of complex thinking. And rather than rehash it here, let's proceed this way. I'll briefly sketch a profile of myself as an educator reflecting the ideas you have encountered in PART I. Then I'll discuss what I might actually teach in a classroom. This
will be a kind of pedagogy and curriculum summary.

Professor: That sounds like an excellent way to synthesize this material.

Reader: But my gosh, look at the contradictions and cautions in all this theory. How will you ever settle on any clear choices?

Good question Reader. In fact, given some of the potency of Foucault's power/knowledge concept, Rorty's public/private split, and the anti-fascist radicalism of Deleuze and Guattari, it's possible to theorize public education right out of existence. Certainly a case could be made to severely limit its scope, perhaps reduce it to vocational and basic skills training. However, it is precisely the power/knowledge connection that makes me want to increase the scope of public education.

Technology, at least in industrialized nations, is omnipresent. Because of the power/knowledge conflation everyone is constantly bombarded with someone else's truth. It simply isn't possible any longer to live in romantic isolation. I don't think there is any choice now—given modern contingencies—but to actively create the world the way we want it. We must be activists, or accept the yoke of the potent totalizing forces unleashed in the modern world. I think it has come down to either inscribe the world or be inscribed yourself.'

Reader: Okay, let's agree that you are going to do education. So, in a nutshell what do you take from all this theory that is useful to you?

In the broadest terms, I am currently an IRRONIC-HOLISTIC-EMANCIPATORY-PRAGMATIST educator. That means,

As an IRRONIST I question myself. In my classroom I will share doubt freely. But IRONY is exciting too. Each of our vocabularies can change again and again. It is this juiciness of doubt and experimentation that I'll share with my students.
A HOLISTIC perspective recognizes that mind, body, and emotion are simultaneous manifestations of human experience. In other words, every given moment in our lives has a thought, feeling, and physical component. Some people actually think these aspects of being are indistinguishable. For example, for them, "emotion" is the sum total of physiological reaction to stimuli. Thinking is the sum total of synaptic activity in the nervous system, and so on. It boils down to the question of whether human experience is synergistic. Is the sum total of our lived, physical lives greater than the sum of its parts? Is there some magic capacity? Is thinking a special kind of activity that draws on or taps into forces beyond molecular expressions in our flesh? I don't have the answers to these questions, and I don't think anybody else does either.

What I can say is that these different aspects of human experience can be distinguished. Each of them can be nurtured alone. And they can be nurtured as an integrated whole. Sometimes in my classroom we will foreground emotion, and focus on feeling states. Sometimes we will focus on body, and participate in physically active experiences. Sometimes we will focus on the mind, and converse about books. We will regularly integrate these activities through art, discussion, writing, and playing. And, at all times we will acknowledge that knowing and being are complex.

It is also important to note that since mind, body, and emotion are so "intertwined" in my cosmology, an entrance into one is an entrance into total being. I strongly resonate with the phrase the "deep intelligence of the tissues." I trust the kind of knowing that comes out of my flesh. In fact, it is often my preferred way of knowing the world.

Holism accommodates my assessment of social organization as well as personal organization. I am not interested in dividing up public and private pursuits, especially the emotionally-charged ones. What's the use of having all the excitatory events in our lives
happen in private? My public classrooms will nurture emotional richness.

Okay, I know that raises huge questions about surveillance and control. As soon as you deal with strong emotions you gain entry into people's deepest selves.

Reader: The opportunity is ripe for exploitation.

Professor: That is Foucault's point about microtechniques of power. The danger exists. But school occupies a big portion of everyone's lives. Let's find a way to make it real and whole without squeezing people's idiosyncrasies out of them. No that doesn't mean invading each other. It means proceeding with immense caution toward openness.

This calls into question my EMANCIPATORY claim, obviously the trickiest aspect of the profile to justify. Given the poststructural critique of power and knowledge, EMANCIPATORY claims are pretty suspect in general. But I trust that through humbling self-reflexive practices I will not necessarily fall down a self-delusionary rabbit hole.

In a nutshell, EMANCIPATORY classroom practice is the sharing of alternative vocabularies in such a way that students gain an increased capacity to examine the specific cultural pressures that bear on them, and have the opportunity to explore escape routes out of those pressures. The best thing students might do is escape from me!

This will all happen in a spirit of experimentation. That is the PRAGMATIC impulse. I am a strong believer in trying things out and learning from the try. Do it. Check it out. Reflect. Try something else. Notice details. Open your eyes and ears and noses. Check it out. Touch it. Do it again. See what the consequences are. Run another experiment. Try it. Do it. Turn off the computer and go outside. And if it doesn't have some bearing or connection with our world, why bother for chrissake?

Professor: Those are pretty bold statements.
Reader: Maybe you could elaborate a little on them. Maybe just take them in order and give us a little more.

Okay reader. I accept from the poststructuralists that I am deeply embedded and shaped by culture. Culture changes, beliefs change, languages change. I change. Like Rorty, I fear that I have been born into the wrong language game. I doubt my own thoughts and beliefs.

An ironic position means I am also attracted to and juiced by widely divergent, even contradictory, theories. That both excites and horrifies me. When I accept something, I am aware that soon I'll have to defend, alter or abandon it. At the very least I know that I will have to constantly accommodate conflicting interests and viewpoints.

I have chosen to keep my intake lines open. I mistrust anything that even hints at Grand Narrative. However, I wonder if perhaps there is a god, or at least a "force" in the universe. I wonder if there really is a "right way" to live, a Cosmic Truth. Maybe my limited perception keeps me from Knowing the Answer. That's where the excitement is, in the possibility that I've totally missed the boat.

Reader: HOLISM?

I agree with Don Johnson on this one. The Enlightenment project in its enthusiastic rush to equate Freedom and Reason somehow lost track of bodies and flesh. Reason is simply not the only way we "know" the world. There is a deep intelligence in our tissues that must be honored and nurtured. And there is a deep intelligence in the physicality of the Earth which we are a part of: Not above, and not outside of. This has become painfully clear in the past twenty years.

Poststructuralists say that we're socially constructed "all the way down." And there's a lot of sizzle in that phrase. It puts truth-making up for grabs in an exciting way. It
invites remaking and reshaping the world from
moment to moment. At least it invites
reshaping language from moment to moment. That
is the poststructural specialty, word games.
And they certainly have come up with some
amazing textual analyses.

But placing the emphasis so heavily on
language just doesn't wash with my experience.
I have spent too much time working with the
materials of the Earth, cutting, building,
nailing, gluing, sewing, cooking, and too much
time playing sports, music and dancing to
ignore the patterns and cycles of the natural
environment, and the primacy of my physical
urges.

Ernest Becker's hunger, Jessica Benjamin's
innerness, and George Bataille's over-abundant
Sun all mean a lot to me. There are forces in
the universe, real forces, physical forces.
These bear heavily on our desires and actions.
I wonder sometimes how some of the postmodern
theorists got so far away from their own
organic impulses?

Reader: Are we **only** subject to our primal urges?

No, like the poststructuralists say, it is clear
that cultural beliefs and practices are
contingent and powerful. The
poststructuralists have taught us a lot. We
can be shaped and reshaped over and over. And
language certainly is a key component of that
change process we call contingency. But, like
Johnson says, our bodies have integrity, and
that integrity is bound up with the integrity
of the physical environment.

So HOLISM for me means striking a balance
between the deeper intelligence of our flesh,
our experience within bodies, and the capacity
to alter our own desires. I want to balance
poststructuralism with a kind of body
essentialism.

It isn't all that complex really. All I'm
saying is "Pay attention and integrate
everything--minds, emotions, bodies--and
remember we didn't invent it all."
Reader: Okay, how about EMANCIPATION?

This is the tough one. The paradoxes are thick. The notion of emancipation turns on these questions:

(1) Is there such a thing as an individual?
(2) Do these individuals have any real agency?

You have encountered many viewpoints here. The poststructuralists and postmodernists give a resounding "No" to both of these questions. They dissolve the notion of the autonomous, self-empowered subject altogether. Everyone simply reflects culturally induced pressures. For them, people are "socially constructed all the way down." Even hunger may be culturally induced." For the most part, according to the poststructuralists, people are formed by the language that happens to be in the culture at the time. In this cosmology the whole notion of emancipation is a ruse for the continuation of the Enlightenment project—a project the poststructuralists think is inherently unjust and exploitive.

At the opposite pole, you've encountered the Nietzschean will-to-power. Nietzsche understood that historical circumstances are powerful, but he contended that individuals can, and the best ones do, express an animal-inspired will that allows them to overcome social contingency. He would answer yes to both questions (1) and (2). Certainly there are individuals who can be emancipated, by and for themselves. He counted himself as one of those individuals. In fact, he was desperate to be one of those individuals.

A third position comes out of Ernest Becker's model of heroic transcendence and organismic expansion. Certainly there are autonomous agents in his world. In fact, according to Becker, each human organism is fighting it out for available food, and for the available immortality rights. But Becker's world is pretty complex when it comes time to sorting out the nature of individuality and agency. He never claims that immortality exists. On the contrary, immortality and transcendence are social constructions
conferred on an individual by the group, for the psychic health of the group. The hero exists because the group needs a force to allay their anxiety about death. The hero is created to pull the collective along, in a sense to "emancipate" the group from their collected fears. It's ingenious. What counts as individual and what counts as agency gets quite blurred in Becker's world.

Reader: So there are many different ways to answer the questions about the individual and agency. What is your current position?

For the record I think we're socially constructed almost all the way down. We have some agency. Like Becker, I think our capacity to dodge cultural pressures exists in a limited form. And, like Richard Rorty, I also resonate to Nietzsche's Strong Poet—the possibility that we really can create something new. But perhaps, again like Rorty, that resonance simply reflects my privileged white male positioning in late Enlightenment capitalism.

Whatever the source for my reasons, I think some precious, free, and flexible kernel of agency exists. In my quiet, alone moments, I experience myself as a source of creativity—even if that creativity mostly synthesizes that which is already around me. I think there is primal juice in it, and it can be nurtured. Preserving that juice is an important component of my classroom practices.

No, I don't think Nietzsche's desperation for self-fashioning reflects the cosmos very well. It simply doesn't take into account the deep interdependence of organisms with the physical environment. But the impulse to shape and make in unique ways buzzes me. And as an educator I want to provide opportunities for students to experience that buzz.

Professor: But Nietzsche couldn't have cared less about providing for others, much less emancipating them.

Ah, there's the educational rub, isn't it. Liberation for the self is one thing, but it gets complicated when it goes public. Our hope
for self-liberation is tenuous enough, but it's a whole other ball game when we start talking about nurturing agency in other people.

You've read about Foucault and Ellsworth. You have heard about the insidious nature of modern power, and how everyone is implicated in its production. You know about the folly of taking an arrogant liberator stance.

But some of us do have urges to change the world. Like Rorty, I think being cruel is the worst thing that people do to each other. And, I define cruelty very broadly to include exploitation and injustice of all kinds. Therefore, there isn't much suffering in the world I don't count as a candidate for my liberatory ministrations. But, unlike Rorty, I think that cruelty must be addressed openly in the educational forum. I follow Nancy Fraser here, wanting to make my educational community a mix of public concern and private pursuit. That is where poetry and politics meet.

But I have also read Johnson and Foucault with respect over the past five years. I am acutely aware of the abuses of power—from subtle surveillance to outright physical intrusion. I do not want to perpetrate abuses in my own classroom. And I understand that the kind of emotionally responsive and active classrooms I intend to provide are ripe for power nightmares. Even being vigilant, I don't doubt that I will perpetrate some abuse. I'm not the Buddha.

Reader: So what do you do about this curious thing called "emancipatory authority."

With a healthy dose of self-doubt I say to students, whether they are seeking personal transcendence or social solidarity, "Here are some things I think you should look at."

Reader: Even if what you are offering has a "liberatory flavor" aren't you imposing yourself on your students when you do that?

Life is not neutral. I do influence other people. That's okay. I'm willing to take responsibility for my choices. I understand
that to a certain extent I impose on people. I just hope the trade-off is worth it.

Reader: What trade-off?

Keep in mind that I'm an ironist. My classroom is likely to be filled with difference and doubt. I encourage paradox. I share my doubt freely.

Therefore, I hope the trade-off for introducing particular vocabularies to my students will be a wild increase in their own sense of irony, and an appreciation of difference for and amongst themselves. How students will incorporate vocabularies is quite unpredictable. That is the spirit of experimentation that comes from PRAGMATISM. I will consider my classroom emancipatory if students sense encouragement to let their own vocabularies fly off in any direction they choose.

Reader: So EMANCIPATORY doesn't really mean literally liberating people, or giving them power?

No, I can't liberate anyone else, not at their core. Empowering oneself is basically just that, it has to be done by the self. I can't install power in another like an air conditioner. Remember, there may be no such thing as "power" in the first place.

Like I said before, I consider EMANCIPATORY education to be the sharing of alternative vocabularies in such a way that others have a better capacity to examine the specific cultural and historical pressures that bear on them, and have the opportunity to explore escape routes out of those pressures. That is the extent of my emancipatory authority. Again, I assume the best thing students will do is escape from me!

Reader: Okay, so let's turn to educational settings. How do these theoretical positions translate to classrooms?

Always keeping in mind the concepts of irony, emancipation, holism, and pragmatism, I
use TECHNOLOGIES in the classroom to promote PRESENCE and AWARENESS.

I use the term TECHNOLOGY to include not only the hardware, but also the methods and designs of teaching as well. I am a tool user. I am a maker. I shape and refine time and space and materials. I will use just about anything I can get my hands on or my mind around to promote PRESENCE and AWARENESS.

PRESENCE is a state of oneness with an activity or environment. The development of PRESENCE is self-work. It means discovering and nurturing that kernel of agency I spoke of earlier in this discussion.

AWARENESS accounts for context--history, theory, literature, politics, science and so on. I put these in the category of AWARENESS because in my classroom I want information referenced to living human beings and communities. The point is to account, in detail, for how social constructions of truth actually bear on our lives.

Ultimately, the point is to bring these all together in some kind of harmony. In that way we can all sensitively use the tools of our environment to promote our own lives and the life of the community.

Et voila.

Reader: And what does this actually look like in a classroom?

Without going through detailed course descriptions --you will get that in PART II--here are some resources from my curriculum.

My current favorite TECHNOLOGIES are free movement sessions, building tools, musical instruments, critical theory, sewing machines, sports equipment, art supplies, and communication practices. I consider the mastery of specific techniques to be technologies in the larger sense. The cutting edge in the use of tools is this--does the use of the tool extend the person or somehow trap the person? TECHNOLOGIES can do both.
Promoting PRESENCE can be tricky business, especially in public situations. Each person comes into the fullness of a moment in very unique ways. Some of us do it through quiet meditation. Some of us do it through wild and frenzied dancing. Some of us do it through steady and controlled breathing. Some of us do it building houses. Some of us do it reading or writing. I consider it a primary task to assist students in finding their own particular paths to states of presence. I hope my curriculum offers enough choices and enough expertise so that students find something to resonate with. Then it is their task to follow their impulses.

From a holistic standpoint these practices of presence elicit strong sensations and feelings. This is controversial in education—what to do with affect. Remaining aware of the poststructural cautions, my curriculum includes the nurturing of strong feeling. Understanding and practicing intersubjectivity—the quiet holding of the Other—comes up regularly.

AWARENESS puts it all in context. There simply is no substitute for reading widely and gathering data in the world. In order to identify and describe and understand themselves, students must know about their world—its history, politics, languages and on and on. My classrooms are intellectually demanding.

Reader: How do these all work together?

The point is integration. TECHNOLOGIES and PRESENCE can both be so easily misused for narcissistic aggrandizement if students do not ground their knowledge and experience with AWARENESS.

For example, using Don Johnson and Michel Foucault's theories of cultural body shaping, a student comes to understand the social pressures that have literally shaped her body and her uses of her body. Using presence promoting practices, she taps into her deeper organic intelligence, and comes to understand and identify those oppressive or supportive
pressures. She participates in a movement practice that promotes her authentic organic impulses, and learns to express her idiosyncratic movements. She feels in charge of herself in the world. She may even invent a new movement form. During this redescription process, she is likely to have strong feelings—and she will be supported in having those strong feelings. Finally, she examines how her process affects and is affected by the community around her.

Reader: Sounds pretty tidy.

Actually Reader, holistic personal redescription of this kind, the kind I want to promote in my classrooms, lurches along in fits and starts.

Cultures are strongly embedded in people. Exploitative power is deceptive and often hard to identify, even for those of us on the lookout for it. Resistance is sharp. Anxiety runs hot. The whole thing is just not tidy.

You will see this in PART II.
Endnotes

1. There are many thinkers who contend we have no choice but to inscribe the world, and be inscribed on by the world. They contend life is an endless series of these events. At times I agree with this point of view. At other times I entertain the possibility that isolated self-creation is possible. Read on.

2. Many of the precious activities in my life--stained glass making, flute playing, and racket swinging--depend on sophisticated muscle memory in the large muscle at the base of my right thumb. I have often thought that a portion of my "mind" actually resides there.

3. Throughout this document I have pointed toward the intertwining/inseparability of the body and the culture. Michel Ryan in Politics and Culture takes this right down to the level of physical needs. On page 16 of the Introduction he writes,

   Even hunger, that defining line where the human and the extra-human or natural world intersect as a norm of material necessity, never exists simply as such, outside certain shapes or forms that it is given by human action. The modern famine is a political event, as much as a natural one, and hunger in New York City is as much a social metonym, shaped by cultural forces and connected to social policies as is an Independence Day Parade . . . .

I find this a startling and stark concept. Every aspect of our lived lives is touched, if not fully ordered, by cultural forces.
PART II

A COURSE CALLED TECHNOLOGY AND PRESENCE
CHAPTER XIII

Technology and Presence

How do you inscribe difference without bursting into a series of euphoric narcissistic accounts of yourself and your own kind? Without indulging in a marketable romanticism or in a naive whining about your condition? In other words, how do you forget without annihilating? Between the twin chasms of navel-gazing and navel-erasing, the ground is narrow and slippery. None of us can pride ourselves on being sure-footed there.

(Trinh T. Minh-ha)'

This morning, after four months on PART I, I picked up an early draft of PART II. There is a distinctly navel-gazing feel to it. At the beginning are thirty five single-spaced pages of my own convoluted struggling with research/writing paradoxes. As it goes on there are endnotes within endnotes within endnotes following trails of my own peculiar interests. The story is in there, but it's hard to find. I considered hitting the delete key on it all.

Then I reconsidered. Wouldn't that be committing the sin of navel-erasing? I am aware of male narcissism. I am aware of male dominance issues. I am aware that teaching and writing are sites where power and visibility can be abused. This dissertation, in part, is my coming to see this. Wouldn't it be terrible to sanitize this document and remove the struggle in order to find sure footing in a place where the self and the other are balanced.

And so, I firmly, but gently, lean on the delete key, and attempt to bring my attention into the world. Perhaps this document can serve as a map for others . . .
A course comes together

For two years, over our Greek salads, Bill and I have wrestled with awareness, presence, technology, agency, and evangelism. How do these issues affect educational practice?

Bill teaches media and technology courses in the College of Education at Ohio State. For Bill, the social critiques offered by the theorists of PART I have contributed to a general problematizing of technology and education. He's looking for something else.

In the Fall of 1990 Bill audited my course called "Self, Other and Team" in the School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation. This course was filled with exploratory experiences aimed at developing self-awareness and presence. It also touched on the powerful socializing forces of media and technology. It examined --theoretically and practically--how the culture manipulates people's flesh. Wheels began to turn in Bill.

While teaching his regular winter seminar, "Technology, Society and Schools," he had an "aha." Why not introduce some of the experiences from my course into his own. That way he could begin redressing the way "technology" seems to be eliminating personal experience from the classroom. He introduced a simple touching exercise as a way of demonstrating the concept and sensations of presence. It raised so many fruitful issues he decided to pursue this kind of education further.

Bill and I developed a proposal for a course to be called "Technology and Presence." Bill hoped to attract students already familiar with the issues. His winter seminar students were already thoroughly engaged with him, and Bill felt they would be the ideal group to work with. Here is the heart of the invitational letter Bill sent out to them:

I have a proposal to make to you. Please give it your careful consideration. A number of you expressed to me in a number of different ways how much you had gotten out of the seminar. What I propose is that we do it some more! Why stop when we are having fun? I think we would start with a couple of topics that we just barely got into during the last few weeks of the seminar and see where that
leads us. We could make the notion of presence our major jumping off point. We worked on being "present"—to focus on the "now" and to intensify the present lived experience—when we did the hands on experience. We would contrast the notion of being present with the notion of rationality as that has evolved in the modern period—what Eva and Jane termed in their guest lecture: instrumental reason.

One of you pointed out in your paper that the invention of modern, complex technology requires as a prerequisite the ability to do complex planning—that is to say futuring. This is instrumental reason: the ability to calculate the present behavior against the future or expected outcomes. In the last couple of centuries it has become our rationality almost to the exclusion of other rationalities. Being present is an interesting contrast to instrumental reason, or to put it another way, being present is an interesting alternative to a technological way of reasoning and living. Now you know that I'm not anti-technological. But I am interested in restoring a balance in our lives with something that counters an exclusively technological way of being. Being present is one possible way that we might find that balance—for at a minimum it brings to consciousness the idea that we can make choices about our rationality and our mode of being in the world.

Now, I propose that such a course not be just a cognitive activity. The hands-on "presenting" experience we did in class was based on an experience I had had in a class last fall. That class was taught by Paul Marienthal who is a doctoral student in Health, Physical Education and Recreation. Paul is also a practicing therapist who helps groups of people get in touch with their bodies—or to use the language I used above—to get in touch with their present lived experience. The exciting news is that Paul is willing to take a leadership role in our proposed class and each time we meet lead us in an activity focused on the present.

Bill
This proposal embodied my own current dilemmas, so I proposed to use it as the basis for my dissertation. Bill agreed. The original letter did not mention the dissertation, but in the organizational meeting, held before any commitments were made to the course, this was topic #1. It was clearly understood by everyone that I intended to write a dissertation based on the proposed course.

A class and a dissertation were born.

Regarding intentions and biases

What does it mean for me to have information I think you should have—whether you are students or readers? It makes me a little god-like, which is no problem if I am the Messiah. I know I've got a message for you. But I know that I am not the Messiah. In fact, one of my primary agendas is the escape from authority. I intend to undermine my own grip on people, but what do I do with my strong urges to shape and make the world—which includes shaping you reading this now?

Obviously I've got internal validity problems to solve. If my big agenda is not to have agendas for you, well shit, shouldn't I just get out of your face and let you be? But sometimes I think I have information that will let you be better. Do you get the paralyzing possibilities here?

Here is how the dilemma manifests in this account. If I tell you what our original hopes were regarding this class, am I yanking you by the nose? Should I just report data—whatever that is in light of the poststructuralists? Or, does hearing our biases up front open something for you, free you in some way? You decide and let me know.

Here are our original assumptions concerning Technology and Presence. We wanted to:

1) Increase peoples' capacities for awareness and expression of their bodies.

2) Familiarize students with theoretical viewpoints dealing with presence, awareness, power/knowledge, docile bodies and so on.
3) Persuade them to become sensitive to historical contexts, especially those having to do with the confluence of power/knowledge and the body.

4) Assist students in the interrogation of power strategies and dynamics as these actually come down in their own lives, including the dynamics in our own class situation.

5) Help people refashion the very way they make sense of the world, promoting self-reflexive redescription.

6) Open up a space for utopian speculation.

We planned to fulfill these intentions by balancing discussion with practice. Theoretically, we would draw on Foucault, Rorty, Johnson and so on. Experientially, we would draw on my resources as a movement educator and therapist.

Logistics and Reporting

We held two evening sessions to outline the possible course. Ten students agreed to participate. For the most part, they were professional educators in their thirties, forties, and fifties. Several were M.A. students. Two of them were Ph.D. candidates. Some were classroom instructors, some were administrators. They all had experience with public education.

We met Friday evenings from 5:00 to 7:30 in a large ballroom space at OSU. We convened four times in May, 1991, took a summer break during which there was an ongoing assignment, and then met twelve times in the Fall 1991. We met once after the formal class sessions ended to evaluate a preliminary report. That meeting is the subject of CHAPTER XVI.

From both a research and pedagogical standpoint, we were drawing on emancipatory methodologies. This meant an attempt to break down the often hierarchical positioning of researcher over respondents, and teachers over students. Both Bill and I intended to participate and share our own reactions and learnings along with the students. We anticipated having critical student input at every stage of the project.
I began collecting data on the very first invitational evening. I made audio tapes, saved drawings, began a personally reflexive journal, and held regular debriefing sessions with Bill.

I let people know that at some point we would all get together and evaluate the experience.
Endnotes


2. Half the group sits on chairs in a circle with their eyes closed. The other half of the group stations themselves behind the people in the chairs--one person standing behind each person sitting. The directions are given to the people standing, "place your hands on the shoulders of the person in front of you."

   This is not about massaging. It is not about doing anything. It is about making contact. Being with.

   After two or three minutes, the facilitator asks the people standing to remove their hands from the shoulders of the person in front of them. Each of the people standing then moves to the next person in the circle, and repeats the action of making contact. This goes on until everyone standing has made contact with everyone seated.

   The facilitator may ask the participants, especially those sitting, to notice certain moments during the activity. For instance, the facilitator may give these instructions: "Notice the moment of initial contact. Notice if it evokes any images or strong sensations." "Pay attention to the moment of parting." "Do you want this touch to be lighter or stronger?" And so on.

   After the two groups have traded places and roles, the group customarily "debriefs." It turns out, as simple as this activity sounds, to be profound for many people. The kinds of information that can be had from simple touch becomes very clear in this exercise. Even the lightest touch can be experienced as "invasion." The strongest pressure can be "soothing." And so on.
CHAPTER XIV

Reality Check!

I didn't understand a single sentence in this paper.

(Marge, class member of Presence and Technology, week seven)

Perhaps Paul cut a little close to the bone during their planning session for week seven when he challenged Bill about the assignment of class readings.

Paul: So tell me again why you want to assign Foucault and Rorty? They couldn't even handle the T-Group Rules for chrissake.

Bill: Because this is important material. These are the questions important thinkers are asking. They've simply got to address these questions.

Paul: Bill, it sounds suspiciously like you're looking for validation from external authorities. Isn't this exactly what we're attempting to interrogate in this course?

Bill got up quickly from the table. Went to the sink. Ran some water. Fumbled silently with the dishes.

Paul: What's going on?

Bill: I'm pissed. I'm mad as hell.

Paul: But . . .
Bill: Look I don't want to talk about it. You've got some kind of concatenation about reading and I just don't want to talk about it.

They then sat for an hour in silence and watched the World Series.

Reflecting later on the exchange Paul remembered that earlier in the evening Bill had expressed anxiety about being pigeon-holed as a resistor by his peers at the University. Bill perceives himself being intellectually discounted. Paul thought that he had taken advantage of Bill's vulnerability by further interrogating academia.

Reading remains one of the few academic activities Bill believes in unflinchingly. Their shared readings had been a primary source of stimulation for their conversations and growth together for two years. Paul saw how his remarks could be perceived as an attack on reading, on their mutual enterprises, and even on their friendship. So, he reminded himself, from Rorty:

Solidarity is not discovered by reflection but created. It is created by increasing our sensitivity to the particular details of the pain and humiliation of other, unfamiliar sorts of people.'

Paul understood that he had overlooked the particular details of Bill's struggle with the Academy. But, their inability to address the issue, once it had surfaced, upset him; The failure to resolve it was still gnawing when Friday evening's class session rolled around.

Class opened with a discussion of an unpublished paper by Don Oliver of Harvard entitled, "Reclaiming the Fullness of Experience." Though Paul had reservations about the piece, he assumed that, unlike Foucault, it would be provocative and readable by these students. On page five, at the heart of the paper, Oliver says,

There is, I venture to suggest, another fundamental aspect of culture essential for human survival, beyond the Culture of Literacy [which he defines early on as the Enlightenment obsession with language], and that is what I would call enactment.
Enactment is the implicit knowing that is remembered when our whole bodies and minds are involved in recreating the fundamental stories of the human condition: birth, predation, eating, dying, loving, playing. Enactment involves drama, song, tableau, ritual, dance, sport."

Whether or not Paul resonated with the content --which he did for the most part--the writing seemed pretty accessible. But Marge said, "Not a single sentence made any sense to me," and went on, rolling her eyes, "I read some of this to my secretary and we both just looked at each other." And when she proceeded to gush about some ultra high tech teaching project in Minnesota, further demonstrating her lack of contact with the Oliver piece, something in Paul snapped. He thought, "How am I ever going to live in the world with such different Others? What have I got to say to this woman?"

Here is a poem Paul wrote that evening when he got home.

Week Seven Reality Check

Hey, Reality Check!
Us, who is Us?
I had a failure to love
when I asked them,
"what kind of a world
do you want this to be"?
And they said, "What"?

Hey that would have been OK
but the Saturn School
in Minnesota under
the IBM glass magic
living in her flesh
is just too much for me.
Doesn't she get
that she is it.
There is no Other.
She is the Bored Teacher
She's been talking about.
No. I forgot to look 
at the details. 
I forgot to look at Them. 
I didn't see 
I was playing alone. 
Thought I had it mapped 
out so elegantly:

First Week
Second Week
Third Week
Four
Five Six Seven
and out the Door

What did I think 
when they dropped out 
misclass 
didn't show 
wouldn't move 
couldn't talk

Stupid me and my pedagogy. 
They haven't heard a word. 
What have they heard?

This was the crisis moment in the course for Paul. 
He realized that his good, emancipatory intentions were 
going right by this woman. Other students were dropping 
out. Something wasn't working. And he was angry. He 
called Crayton Bedford, his friend and colleague, for a 
consultation. Crayton is fellow therapist and educator 
who lives in California.

Paul: Hey, listen to this quote I found yesterday 
about being a Jew. "Being elsewhere, the great 
vice, the great secret virtue, the great 
vocation of this people." Wow. How's that 
for getting inside the Jewish experience! You 
know I'm always struggling with the paradox of 
belonging and alienation. I'm experiencing 
alienation from my students, and I want to make 
contact.

Crayton: Your intensity draws a lot of different 
things out of people. You seem to generate 
faith, loyalty, anxiety, and fear in people.

Paul: Yeah, and you know that it's common for me to 
find other people and situations both alluring
and repulsive at the same time. That's what's happened with this class. I see that people are developing a great sense of trust with each other. A few of them are going quite deeply into the issues of self and culture, but others don't participate much. And sometimes the overall scene makes me bored and pissed.

Crayton: Just remember that in education as in therapy there is a time to break through people's defenses and there's a time to maintain those defenses. Your co-teacher Bill, he's a big guy isn't he?

Paul: Yes, and I'm really thin and hard these days.

Crayton: I'll bet he's a great container. And we know that your thing is being an inquisitor. It sounds like you've been intuitively drawn to each other to extend your possibilities.

Paul: Yes, Bill is reclaiming himself and slimming down. I am softening and expanding.

Crayton: It also sounds like Bill knows something about the pace of change that you don't. He probably knows that people around there can't be pushed too hard. He knows that "baby steps" are enough.

Paul: I think sometimes he goes a little easy, but he's a lot closer to knowing "where people are" than I am.

This conversation softened Paul, and created in him a renewed sense of challenge and excitement. He composed another poem that reflected his expanded awareness of the situation, including the realization of his own co-creation of the tension:

On Breaking Down Defenses

On being the Messiah
On Opening your clenched fist
On Asking you to do it
On assigning you to do it
On being there with you when you do it
On being gone when you don't
On putting your fist up on the table
On prying it open for you
On boredom
On boredom that makes me want to
    keep driving south on 71
On boredom that means I have something to learn
On boredom that makes your closet-bodies
    secret sources of my discovery
On boredom that makes your clenched fists my teachers

In general this whole crescendo of thoughts and feelings produced a shift. In particular, Paul reinvested in the course and the students. Realizing he did not really know what was happening for the class members, Paul scheduled individual interviews with each of them.

These interviews, called the "10th Week Interviews," were conducted over the next three weeks. Some of them lasted hours. All of them turned out to be pivotal experiences, for Paul and the student. They were also a rich source of learning, and a rich source of "data."
Endnotes


3. Harold Bloom's discussion of the collision of alienation and belonging for Jews touches me deeply. Here is a slightly expanded version of the quote:

"Being elsewhere, the great vice of this race, the great secret virtue, the great vocation of this people," Scholem comments: "This 'being elsewhere' combined with the desperate wish to 'be at home' in a manner at once intense, fruitful and destructive."


There is something powerful here in the Jewish heritage, my own heritage, about commentaries on commentaries on commentaries. It evokes lineage. I like the building and layering effects in Bloom's work.

4. Part of the agenda of the next chapter, and this dissertation, is to problematize taken-for-granted notions of "data."
CHAPTER XV

The Data

I have a lot of frustration with the linear quality of the written form. Unlike music or painting, themes and ideas cannot be overlaid on the page. I cannot achieve in words the wonderful semi-transparent quality, the ability to see many layers at once, that painting, for example, provides. Therefore, I have frustration with the written form for reporting something so complex as this class.

I struggled for weeks trying to come up with the "correct" approach to this material. My primary concern was a respectful accounting of the students' stories. But I was also concerned with a representative accounting of the course itself. And I also wanted to explore research dilemmas and general paradoxes concerning dissertation-making. I have written several substantial pieces, and they all seem like just the right thing. One version approaches the topic from a narrative viewpoint, and begins with the students' stories themselves. One version approaches the topic from a contextual viewpoint, and gives the course outline. One version approaches the whole topic from a research/reporting vantage point.

Feel free to read them in the order you like. If you prefer a little drama before your theory stick to what I've set up, and read THE STORIES first. (Note that the STORIES contain extensive discussions of class activities, but not an overview of the entire course structure.) If you like a little context up front first read THE COURSE SPEAKS. If you're a theorist and want to know where "I'm coming from as a researcher/writer," read REGARDING METHOD AND DESIGN as the introduction. You decide.

In other words, you, as the reader, can layer these any way you like.

+++
THE STORIES

IMPORTANT NOTES: I would have considered it ideal if the students had co-written these stories with me. But the students were all also busy professionals, and it was unrealistic to expect their input in that way. It was realistic for me to write preliminary findings, distribute the findings to the students, then get together and alter, embellish, or delete portions of the work—giving the students a substantial say in the final outcomes. In liberatory research methodologies, this kind of substantial interaction between the researcher and the researched is called a "member check."

As it turned out the member check was the hot event of the research. And, it was volatile because of what I had written. This is worth exploring. Therefore, THE STORIES as they appear here are unchanged from those read by the students before the member check. That may seem strange to you, given the stated intent of member checks, which is, to adjust the material. But I think you will see that it is essential for me to give the original writing in order to preserve the integrity of the process. In other words, the difficulties and paradoxes in the writing/reporting mirror the difficulties in the course and the research itself.

Let me say up front that the students might have been better served if my "I" voice had never appeared in these stories. Perhaps a much richer report and experience for us all would have happened had I found a way to enter more fully into the narrative with the students. Disappeared so to speak. But an uncomfortable positioning of my voice may just be the critical point in the whole project. How I was situated as a teacher, a researcher and a reporter turned out to be a volatile issue for many of us. It would be a disservice to this report to change the contexts of these stories now. Therefore, except for the alteration of names for purposes of anonymity, corrected punctuation, and minor word changes, the following material is exactly as the students received it."

+++
The Class List

Ralph
Alice
Marge
Marcella
Lynn

Bill and Paul

The following are the events from class that I observed to be the turning points in each student's experience. In some cases the "turning point" is a particularly strong reaction reported to me by the student in an interview or paper. In other cases it is my observation. It is some event or response that strongly shifted the person's experience of the class, of herself, or of the world.

Obviously any story that I tell about this class is going to be biased and partial. I am well aware that all of these so-called turning points could be my fantasies -- pure constructions. Consider these stories opening remarks. The students will have an opportunity to critique my choices and observations. We will gather soon as a group and discuss this material. My report of that meeting comprises CHAPTER XVI of this dissertation.

Ralph's Story'

I think, in terms of leaders
supporting me, I don't. I'm
uncomfortable with people with power.
I don't think in terms of leaders or
teachers supporting me. I just don't
think in those terms.

(10th Week Interview)'

Ralph is on his back. He fiercely clutches a wooden chair to his chest and belly. His arms and legs wrap tightly around the back and legs of the chair. I am on the floor, my chest pressed hard against Ralph's back, surrounding him from behind, prying at his hold on the
chair. I yank at Ralph's hands and fingers, wedge my heels behind Ralph's knees in an effort to separate Ralph from the chair. Ralph continues to grip fiercely and laugh out loud.

There were an odd number of people in class so I partnered with Ralph that day. We began by simply walking around the room in close proximity to our partners. As we walked we decided who would be the "leader" and who would be the "follower" for the next portion of the exercise. (Everyone switched later and got a chance at the other role.) We then enacted a series of possible relationships between a leader and a follower. Leading and following here did not mean mimicking action as in the game "follow the leader." This exercise is an exploration of relationship. Therefore, it was not only the kind of movement--jumping, walking, running, sitting--that marked "following", but more importantly the focus here was on the kind of connection or disconnection that was present. Following could be done energetically. For example, in qualities of movement like, fast, slow, big, small, flowing, chopped, and so on.

A "scenario" was explored for two or three minutes, and then I set up a new kind of relationship. Here are some of the relationships that were played out:

--Leader leads enthusiastically, follower follows attentively.
--Leader leads, follower follows attentively but from across the room.
--Leader leads but couldn't care less about follower, follower really wants badly to be noticed and directed.
--Leader leads with occasional interest, follower couldn't care less.
--Leader leads attentively, follower comes and goes. When she is following it is fervently. When she is off, be completely aloof.

And finally the direction that produced the encounter with Ralph in the scene described above:

--Leader do anything at all to get your follower to follow.

At the start of this last episode Ralph, the follower, kind of laughed and went his way. I went after him, and gently pushed him, trying to get him back "on
course." He veered away. A smile came to his face. I pushed him harder. I am a powerful physical person. When he realized I was serious about "doing anything at all to get him to follow" his energy rapidly picked up. When I seized hold of his shoulders, he pushed away forcefully and grabbed the chair. I started to pull it away. He went down on the floor and wrapped himself around it like a starfish on a clam, laughing.

+++ Ralph came to the university after working as a science educator for many years in a young men's prison. He left his position at the prison after a curriculum power play by his superiors. The issues of power and control figure very heavily for Ralph. In May, when the Technology and Presence course first convened, I conducted an initial observation and interview with each of the participants. The power issues in the prison situation dominated the conversation. Ralph had a very developed story about himself in this situation. In fact, he had a very developed story about himself in general. Here is an exchange from that interview:

Paul: How did you feel about this whole process of leaving the prison?

Ralph: Terrible, I was outraged. I used the rage to help me get out. I knew I wasn't going to win that battle. I tend not to change unless I'm uncomfortable, which is the same with most people. That's what we said about the delinquents. They're not going to change unless we make it uncomfortable.

Paul: So what did your rage look like?

Ralph: At first it's almost a white heat. It's probably the purest kind of rage, because you know that what they're doing isn't right.

Paul: How do you react to it?

Ralph: I don't lose control. I'm not the kind of person that loses control.

In retrospect this is a very revealing exchange. It speaks of 1) Ralph's passion; 2) his sense of justice; his intense desire for dignified treatment of people;
3) his own capacity for making other people uncomfortable, in other words, his delight at being powerful; 4) his own sense of powerlessness; and 5) his need to sense control. This is a potent mixed bag.

Ralph's affect through all this was very subdued. I never saw, felt, or heard anything that reminded me of "white heat," or even the possibility of "white heat." I wrote in my field notes, "It's hard to imagine." Fundamentally I think Ralph was unaware of the complex mixture of rage, power, powerlessness, compassion, and victimization he was carrying. He was primarily and thoroughly aware of his capacity to control and subdue his feelings. [Note: I had an opportunity at the initial observation to watch him in a very patient but subdued interaction with a student.]

+++ 

In my field notes there are roughly 100 pages leading up to the leader/follower exercise I described at the beginning of this story. In those 100 pages there are only four short references for Ralph. It's not that he was a non-participant. He didn't sit out, or refuse to do any exercises. It's just that he did everything in such controlled ways, with so little affect, reported so little change, and expressed so little amazement, that I had nothing to report. He is a large man. And I was often aware of his presence. But he had a way of diminishing his presence so that his passion/affect never showed. Nothing we did seemed to move him one way or another. But sometimes I thought to myself that his, "I have no feeling in my body, I get no sensation," came out a little too fast, a little too glibly, and with a little too much bounce to really be the "truth."

There was one exception. Toward the end of the day we explored moving back and forth from an everyday movement into an ideal/fantasy movement. Ralph strode across the room in a powerful way that he reported had awakened a whole sense of capacity for hugeness he'd buried long ago."

In the last eighty pages of my field notes there are thirty references to Ralph, some of which are a page long. What happened? It was not inconsequential that Ralph partnered with me, the visible status holder in this group, for the leading/following exercise. Something really changed for him in this experience. It marked a critical shift in his experience of the class,
and himself. He talked about it a couple of weeks later in the 10th Week Interview.

Question #4: "Has anything from class been particularly useful in your life?"

Ralph: Yeah. I don't know if it's useful in the moment. It's made me see some things in myself, I don't know how I'm going to deal with them, but I have to. The exercise two weeks ago was real interesting. I'm finding I'm uncomfortable with my own power. And I'm uncomfortable with those who have power. And that shows up in a subversive form.

In the exercise he was extremely reluctant to lead me. I'm sure the fact that I have the ascribed authority as the "teacher" exacerbated it, but basically he didn't want to have a relationship with me when he was leading. He seemed to ignore me no matter what the scenario called for. He basically abandoned his role as leader. I felt a little pissy, a little sad, and very unsatisfied as a follower. His last remark about being subversive is a reference to his laughing when I had hold of him at the end of the exercise. For Ralph, any resistance to power comes out as "subversive." Something about resistance is always covert. (Anything about prison mentality here?) There was such a marked difference in the two roles for Ralph. As the subversive resistor he was full of juice. This also gave me a clue to understanding the glibness of his remarks about many of the early exercises. I think he got a little bit of a subversive thrill in reporting that "nothing went on," or "I feel nothing in my body." Kind of a "stick that one in your ear teacher" thing.

Ralph's interview happened to be scheduled for the morning after his M.A. General Exam, obviously an emotionally charged time. And I think the juxtaposition of the exam, the class, and the interview really shook him. He looked crestfallen when he first approached. And his first remarks were that he was sure he'd failed the exam. He said he'd been wholly unprepared and didn't do the job. [I don't have these remarks quoted exactly because he told them to me before I could even set up the tape recorder or note pads.] As the interview went on I began to hear a very different story than the self-controlled one I heard in May.
His boat was rocking. I think these are some of his first honest glimpses at the myths he's developed for himself around power, and what a complex set of feelings power raises. At the prison he obviously had to exercise quite a bit of authority. Once, late in the quarter when we were discussing Foucault and "gaze," and working on exercises that spotlighted looking at each other, he related how he'd frozen a kid with his stare. Then he laughed that same kind of covert laugh. But when speaking about himself, he often maintained the position that he didn't feel comfortable with authority, and never sought it. I don't think he liked finally seeing how complex, mixed up, and suspect his self-myths about power were.

Before I just transcribe away, I need to say that this interview is a clear case of a text that must not be pulled apart into little textual bites. The meaning of isolated responses would leave a lot of the story out here. It is the "tone" that is most revealing.

Every response that Ralph gave to a question about "power," "status," and "how would you like the world to be," was framed in the negative. His words and subdued tones announced "lack," "threat," etc. He answered several key questions by framing them as the avoidance of hurt. For instance, when he answered what he wanted the world to look like, my invitation to his utopian vision, he said, a place where people are "able to live with each other without fights."

He made many references to people needing to be handled with dignity, but always excluded himself from deserving the same support and care. Here is a man who can have "white rage" when kids in prison are not treated with dignity, but can say:

In terms of leaders supporting me, I don't. I'm uncomfortable with people with power. I don't think in terms of leaders or teachers supporting me.

I'm sure, even in this interview, he did not see the contradiction in these responses. But the confrontations in class combined with the stark realities of his General Exams began showing Ralph that some of his old patterns weren't airtight, they just weren't working. In fact, they were crumbling. This kind of stark realization can be hard for me to watch in confirmed "searchers."
Witnessing Ralph, who has avoided this kind of self-
realization for most of his life, was particularly subduing.

As I took dictation I made a point to look up from my paper to make eye contact, but Ralph never looked at me. For an hour he spoke. It was clear he was on shaky ground. He said the exam had been a brain dump [a computer term]. He was self-critical in ways I'd never heard before.

Question 4: "Has anything from class been particularly useful in your life?"

Ralph: I'm becoming aware of how self-destructive I am.

Question 9.5: "What could you have done differently in the course?"

Ralph: I should always be doing something differently."

Question 15: "Do you know more now than before this course?"

Ralph: I know more about myself whether I like it or not.

And, it's clear that he viewed me as an authority over whom he had no power, and to whom he had nothing to teach.

Question 11: "If you wanted to teach me something what would it be 1) about you, 2) about education, 3) about life?"

Ralph: All three! If I wanted to teach you? I don't think there's anything I could teach you. There probably is, but I don't know what it would be.

Paul: How about you that I don't know?

Ralph: [he looks at me for the first time, voice cracking] I'm not sure I want you to know that person. And I've been doing some subversive things. .."
We finished a pass through the interview schedule. I was hearing the death rattles of an old story. When I asked him to go back and elaborate on Question 4, "Has anything from class been particularly useful in your life?", there was a powerful abrupt change in the tone of the interview. Here is the exchange:

Ralph: . . . my feelings of failure overwhelm my feelings of success.

Paul: Seeing this stuff, is it freeing?

Ralph: . . . I have serious doubts if I'll be able to make the necessary changes. I've been overestimating my ability. And now it's caught up with me.

Paul: Is class aiding you or crushing you?

Ralph: Right now I'm feeling overwhelmed . . .

In my transcript I noted,

"[Is he crying? Sniffling!]

Ralph: Right now I'm not feeling very good.

"[Yes he's crying]"

I was a little shocked. Ralph is a person who has clearly learned to subdue his affect and control himself. Given that he professed over and over to feeling uncomfortable around people with power, and he clearly saw me as a person with power, I was surprised Ralph let these feelings show.

He cried on and off for the remainder of the interview, about an hour. My transcript notes are a little sketchy for this portion of the interview. It didn't seem appropriate through much of this to be taking notes. This is where therapy/research/world-making need to be compressed into conduct that respects the cautions about cruelty. He revealed some strong emotions, and I felt awkward doing anything but really attending to him.

We talked in detail about the leader/follower activity. He expressed his on-going fears about people with power, and his discomfort at having power. But
mostly I understood how devastating it was to have all this finally come to consciousness. It wasn't all so tidy after all.

And though this looked a lot like therapy, something I am trained to do, it was very clear I was not being his therapist. I did things I would not do as a therapist: I intervened openly; gave advice; interpreted; explained my beliefs.

I did not have a big agenda. I didn't feel one-up on him. I felt sad. (In fact, later that evening when I got home and sat down to write up field notes I put the tape recording of the conversation on the cassette player to refresh my feeling memory. I had to turn it off because it made me so sad.) The most poignant moment for me came toward the end of the interview:

Paul: How does it feel to do this?

Ralph: (laughing) It's a tough question. If somebody told me I'd be doing this I probably would find ways to avoid it... I didn't have expectations, but I kind of knew. I knew we could reach into these levels. I guess it doesn't really bother me. Because I have so much anxiety. I'm worn out.

Paul: What do you sense about yourself?

Ralph: I don't feel a threat from you right now more than other times. You can be pretty threatening with your exuberance in class... I'm slowly coming to exist, coming to deal with my personality, the strength of my personality.

Paul: [right to the end he frames "support" as "threat" or "non-threat"] I wonder if you could notice that there is now a high status player, a teacher, really being here with you.

At this he cried harder.
Alice's Story

The world became a rounder place.

(10th Week Interview)

The turning point for Alice came on the first day of class. I will let her tell it in her own words. From her final paper:

Another thing we did that really affected me was the time we sat in a circle (this was last Spring) and closed our eyes while Paul handed us objects to explore with our other senses and then pass around the circle.

I passed out balls of all weights/sizes/densities, hot and cold water balloons, frisbees—in general objects of "play." The circle was tight enough, shoulder to shoulder, so that passing the objects around the circle could be accomplished with eyes closed the whole time. Thus, as each new object was received it was a sensory surprise. I passed them out in an order that produced high contrasts.

I mentioned this to Paul in the interview: the lead shot-put REALLY grabbed me. I was immediately fascinated with it, probably because it was so thoroughly unexpected—certainly not an object I would pick up on my own. When Paul then suggested that we choose one of the objects we'd handled and use it to explore the room, I felt an instant terror that somebody else would reach for the shot-put first. I really wanted it—had no idea why—but I nearly jumped on it so I'd be sure it would be mine!

I asked everyone to pick the object that fascinated them the most when they were passing them around. Of course the SIGHT was different then the FEEL and some people could not identify the object. Also, there are all the issues about distribution. What happens if two people want the same object? (This has been very rich at workshops, especially with large groups.) When everyone finally had an object I asked them to use it as an
extension of themselves, like a bat using sonar, to find out about the room—its surfaces, its volume, its textures, etc. I also asked them to explore what they could learn about themselves from this object.

I didn't know what Paul meant about using it to explore the room. My first impulse was to pick it up and carry it around in front of me and show the room to it as if it were live and had eyes. But that seemed too silly (the self-monitor was noisily awake, as usual). Besides, the thing was heavy. So I set it down—and it rolled away on its own. Its weight and smoothness (what I named its "own little gravity well") made it seek out every depression in what otherwise looked like a level floor, and once it had found one, it would notice and begin to follow another, almost like it was alive (and maybe it is!). This fascinated me even more.

I got down on hands and knees, then, and crawled after it while it rolled and wobbled from spot to spot on the planks. I remember that I was smiling, feeling a lot of undirected amusement, then let myself grin. I wanted to giggle, too (which I remember feeling like a tickle under my breastbone that moved up into my throat and then under my tongue and along the sides of my mouth, but mostly made my throat tight right at the larynx until I did something with the tickle—that is, let it out as a laugh or giggle). But I'm not sure whether I did.

Then I had an urge to get down and smell the ball (something in me remembers doing this somewhere, with another metal ball, when I was very small), which I did. It had a warm smell (does that make sense?), a little salty. I decided to stop its rolling and spin it and see what happened then. Not much—it lolled off again in a new, drunken direction.

As I told Paul, that simple experience had a profound effect on me. It was, I think, the first time since perhaps kindergarten that I simply played. Did something purely for the pleasure of it, without an agenda or anticipated payoff or effect. It felt good—wonderful, happy, freeing! And I wanted more
of it. Whatever we were doing, would do, in the group, after that, this convinced me that it would be good for me. I didn't have to explain it to myself anymore. I didn't need a "reason." I could give myself to it, and be pretty sure I was safe.

As I go through her 10th Week Interview, my class fieldnotes, and her papers, there are so many examples of committed work bearing fruit for Alice that they cannot all be related here. I will mention a few more that seem particularly noteworthy, not only because of their benefit for her, but because they reflect on the wide range of purposes of the course--personal work to theoretical understanding. Again, in her own words:

One of the more recent things Paul asked us to do was to pick someone with whom we interact regularly, and keep a log of status-related behaviors. I chose to record interactions with my boss, since authority/status issues with her have been such a trial for me.

The assignment was to pick a person who is regularly in your life and for a week note all kinds of micro-relational behaviors, e.g. who initiates conversations, who makes or breaks eye contact, who touches who and where, does one of you interrupt the other, who stands, who sits, whose voice deepens, whose slows, etc. We talked about this in class at length, and discovered there were dozens of things to look for, and many ways to group them--for example, by time, duration, spatiality, touch, and so on.

As I jotted down notes over the course of the week, and tried to identify the power/status behaviors and related "rules," I began to realize that MANY fewer of my interactions with my boss were one-up/one-down than were actually peer-to-peer. That came as a real bolt out of the blue to me. In looking over the week's worth of notes and rules, I could not avoid the fact that (1) my boss actually treats me as a colleague rather than as a subordinate at least half the time we interact, and (2) a lot of my emotional distress around her was based on my own assumptions about always being one-down.
During one class I led people through a long guided image session. (This was part of making "Body Maps," and will be discussed in Marge's Story.) I asked people to lie on the floor, eyes closed and allow images, sensations, and thoughts to surface. I verbally "took" everyone back, slowly, through their young adulthoods, their teen years, their childhoods, back into the womb. Alice writes:

The most amazing part was going back into my little girl, my toddler, my infant ... and then to my unborn self! Part--most--of me felt as though I was Really There. My whole body felt very soft, my arm and leg bones like soft rubber toys. I felt my fingers claw up, clutch and reach, my toes curl and stretch, my legs and feet start to draw up, the movements (especially my hands) in little, jerky, nerves-firing-on-their-own motions, except they weren't; I was making them do those little, uncoordinated flailings myself, purely because it felt good to make them. At the same time, another part of me was watching all this in semi-shock; though I'd heard of people being "regressed to the womb" through hypnotherapy, I don't think I'd ever believed it. And here I was, Not Even Born Yet, and definitely aware? And it happened without trying.

And finally on our reading of a Foucault piece, she says:

It's all political. Jesus. This article disturbed me. As I read it, though, I could sense pieces falling into place, realities I knew at some level about Gaze, and about the hidden agenda in how human beings conspire to organize space to support authority and compliance. But I had never brought these realizations to conscious attention before, at least not on this scale.

Alice addressed this course at all of the levels it was intended: the interior self, the self in an environment, the self in relationship, the self in culture, and the whole mess theorized. I think she began to see the layering effect, that many levels of activity and awareness are going on all the time. It is her "choice" at what level she will buy in. She really used the course as a cauldron to explore many aspects of being--her own and culture. As she said about class one day:
"I lose myself in my choice safely. That's the experiment. That it's even available is amazing."

(November 1)

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Now let me problematize some of this. The experience for Alice had some tense areas in it. And I too have some unsettling observations to report.

Here is part of her response to the first question in the 10th Week Interview.

Question 1: Has this course surprised you? Is it what you expected? How is it different than what you expected?

Alice: . . . Is it what I expected? No. The letter seemed to have a different emphasis. I thought it would have a technological emphasis. But instead its had a technique emphasis. And I thought it would have a broader pragmatic sense. And it's been much more personal. I feel empowered by it. But it's not something I can give someone else. I couldn't write it into a curriculum.

The "letter" she refers to is the letter of invitation to the course Bill and I sent to his students. (See CHAPTER XIII.) Originally we conceived of this course as a continuation of his class on issues of media and culture. That we did not really accomplish this, that we didn't do what that first letter said we were going to do, is an important piece of Bill's Story, and I will get to it later. Alice is not the only person who noted the discrepancy between the original invitation and the final product.

Her second comment about the course not being pragmatic, not having any application to educational settings, was the most consistently raised question about the course. This is the issue of "technique." I think everyone, to a greater or lesser degree, expected to come away with a method. My resistance to providing these Methods, and the theoretical underpinnings that back my stance, are things I think they still don't grasp. And,
paradoxically, I did in fact give some method, but they didn’t see it. You must gather by now how pivotal this particular issue is for me. I will take it up at length later in the telling of my own Story.

Alice is extremely verbal, not shy at all about sharing. But she was a champion about talking about the whole world, and had trouble giving her opinions as hers. She writes:

Almost the first change that the seminar made in my life was when Paul urged me to begin to use "I," "my," and "me" in talking about my thoughts and feelings, instead of the anonymous and general "you" and "they." The impact of this on me has been gradual but profound. This simple act has made me actively aware of the fact that I am having very personal feelings about a topic of discussion. And the feelings are in me and of me— I can’t hide behind the safe detachment of anonymity anymore, I have a personal responsibility for my thoughts and my feelings and how they affect people around me.

Alice has really addressed this piece of the language game. However, she never has given up her tendency to pronounce, to universalize, to seek the absolute, to find just the "right" action or right time. In the face of the concept of difference, and the actual differences that have surfaced in this course, she said, "You should start the class with My Dinner With Andre." In the face of all the unbelievable variety of ways people organize, act, defend, encounter a situation, after all the consciousness raising that Alice has participated in, as late as the ninth week—in a class conversation exploring how this course might affect Bill’s Winter course— she can still say, "You should start the class with "My Dinner With Andre."

The point is not whether this is a good idea or not. My whole pedagogical position is that Bill needs to meet these people in the Winter before he’ll know when to show the damn movie! This is the whole concept of contingency that figures so prominently in my thinking. Sometimes this practice is called improvisation (if you are a musician, or an actor.) In education I like the term "contingency." It does not mean I go into class bare-assed, without any idea, without any lesson plan, without any framework. It means I go in with a framework of flexibility. This requires upping my level of
attentiveness. This is the heart of my life's practice, this responsiveness to contingency.

Over and over Alice made references to the lack of class plans for this course. Right up to the final day of class she still gave me a funny look when I told her there were class plans. In my fieldnotes I wrote, "At the member check next week I will share with Alice my class plans, and my overall course plan." Both of these are fairly extensive. I don't know if she will believe it, see it, or what, but the issue here is huge. I work by shaping a concept in my own mind, then take a stance of theoretical sensitivity, without reifying the plan. I have a plan. I love the plan. I am always ready to alter it. That is the key, altering. I don't abandon it like a rotten fish overboard. I actively change it and shape it as I go. That is quite a different activity than saying, "Fuck it, let's just xxxxxx."

I think the fact that I did not let people in on the process I went through as I shaped class was my biggest pedagogical failing in the course. It is this methodological practice which I am so committed to, this rapid improvisatory decision making based on exhaustive planning and weighing, that I want to share with people. But so much of it happens quickly, and invisibly. I also try not to dominate the space, and so I clamp down on my own processing. (The dark side of this is the discovery of my potent "desire" to keep control--even as I profess to wanting to give it up. This is all very tricky and I will take it up further in my Story.)

Bill and I also had a discussion that touched on this. After dinner one night I found myself defending "consistency." My position is that at any given moment I want my actions, beliefs, and emotions to line up. I may change my mind, but at any single moment I am "consistent." It is my contention that my commitment to this alignment is freeing. I don't have to have a rigid plan of action. In fact, I can't have a rigid plan of action. Each moment requires me to size it up anew. (I am aware of the irony that my attachment to contingency is a contradiction, and produces ironic situation.) Bill seems to be perfectly happy with the postmodern notion that actions and words and thoughts and the moment and beliefs are capricious. It's fine to profess a belief, but to act in some other way. I will take this up further in my Story, or Bill's story.

I very much want the members of this class to understand the difference between "unanchored free float"
and "activated choice-making." I'm trying to share the possibility that neither "checking out" nor having rigid programs (which we know kills any spontaneity) serves a rich pedagogy. The point is to develop the capacity to read the environment, which includes the self, Other, and context, and combine that reading with theoretical sensitivity (which means also historical sensitivity.) This makes every situation an opportunity for rapid and present choice-making. This means giving up the initial desire to find the right answer in November to the question, "When should I show My Dinner With Andre in January?"

An important note here: I trust that Alice will understand what I have said above, and that it will somehow be useful to her. Here is a comment from my fieldnotes:

My own feelings about tonight. I was invested. I think because Alice was here and she had some juice. I like it when she says something like, "Well, this is the only place we get to experiment with these things."

But I don't want to paint a picture of Alice as a Technology and Presence groupie. For instance, Alice has this to say about me:

Your Quest To Understand, if I may give it a name, does give you an extraordinary intensity, Paul. You have an unnervingly direct, piercing gaze, and a focused energy (often restless, sitting forward in your seat, like a hyperactive child) that still leaves me uncomfortable. I know now that your gaze is not judgmental, is not directed at me, as an individual, so much as at me as a fellow experimenter and source of potential insight. But that intensity (mostly that gaze) of yours makes me want to keep an emotional distance between us. What we share is a mutual fascination with this realm of being that is new for me, less so for you; but we are not friends. And that's okay.

And that is okay.

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Marcella's Story

. . . I also don't think anyone can violate my personal privacy unless I let them. The only way somebody could do that is if they could read my mind against my will.

(10th Week Interview)

I really haven't a clue what, if any, was a turning point for Marcella. I can't read her mind.

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Marcella finished her program at the university during the summer and so she made a bold commitment to drive in the rush hour traffic from Westerville after work on Friday's at 5:00 to be in class. Early in the quarter she damaged her knee badly playing tennis. (She had it opened up and worked on late in the quarter.) She still made it to class, although she lamented how her knee prevented her from participating fully in the movement activities.

I enjoyed Marcella's presence in class. I enjoyed our 10th Week Interview. It sparked my own thinking in the most productive ways as I will share in my Story. I received a final paper from her, but frankly she's still a mystery to me!

In her final paper she says:

This brings me to the second aspect or strategy [of the class] . . . sharing the experience. Very revealing. I was grateful to other class members for being quite open and honest. Some "pain" was involved here for them. The sharing activities constantly reminded me how many different interpretations might work around one experience.
The tone of this entry is familiar. She is making a
good, clean observation. She is even enthused. But the
pain is for them. She's not really saying anything very
specific about herself. Very early in our sessions
Marcella made it clear she was a physically active
person. We know she hurt herself playing tennis. Her
life must have been severely altered by the injury. In
retrospect I'm surprised it never really came up as a
factor in her sharing. Almost as if her job was to
overcome it, rather than share it. Over and over I
wondered, "What's really going on with Marcella?"

We had a very revealing exchange in the 10th Week
Interview in response to Question 8: How would you
describe your status relationships in class with 1) other
students, 2) with Bill, 3) with me:

Paul: Do you feel one-up or one-down?

Marcella: ... it's something I've brought into
class. So I think when I say, when I say
something, I look sideways at Bill waiting for
a response. Some of the things I say should be
attacked. I probably should be disappointed
that they're not.

Paul: Have you had collisions with Bill in the past?

Marcella: More or less.

Paul: Are you being more cantankerous?

Marcella: This is just a more open atmosphere, so I
was hoping he would be probing a little more.

I got the feeling in class that Marcella wanted a
lot. She wanted her quips to be probed. She wanted her
short answers to be confronted, but I don't think she was
really willing to reveal herself. I have so little
detail about anything that moved her. I have been told
she was moved. But I just can't tell you much more
detail. This gives me some sadness, because, as I said,
I like Marcella's presence. I just find myself at a loss
for specifics.

I got the sense over and over in the interview that
Marcella "wanted more from class." She just wanted more.
I don't know exactly what she wanted more of, but she
wanted it. And, in some ways I trust it. I sense a lot
of desire from her. It's in the anxious attentiveness of
her face when she listens. And she was quite animated in the interview. But I never really got the details.

We had this exchange about Question 11: If you wanted to teach me something what would it be 1) about you, 2) about education, 3) about life?:

Marcella: Probably I'd like you to react personally to my personal opinions.

Paul: Say a little more.

Marcella: You're asking me to clarify my thoughts!

And a couple of moments later we had this exchange:

Paul: You want me to react from the gut?

Marcella: Maybe not always. It may not always be appropriate. So if you want that to come from the class it needs to come from you too.

Paul: I assume that you think I'm being stingy about that too.

Marcella: I'm just cognizant that you're different. And I guess if you react to me personally I get more insight, I get more perspective. I grew up in the Midwest, and I get joked about that all the time. I've lived in Germany and other places. But I can be in my own little place [here in Columbus now] and import someone like you. [You're] Cheap Travel!

I get the sense that Marcella saw the class as a place to come and soak things up, a little like a deep psychic sightseeing tour. (That's the first time I've ever been called "cheap travel!") I get the sense that she wants to be confronted, wants to hear people's feelings, likes people revealing themselves, is not threatened by any of it, and doesn't really want to put her own stuff out on the line too.

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Marge's Story

"Where are all the hungry learners?"

(Marge's litany)

This is a hard story for me to tell. I have thirty references for Marge in my field notes, and almost all of them are my own angry, critical outbursts. But I like Marge, and in many ways, I consider her story the most instructive one for me.

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The turning point came early!

In the second week of the Quarter I asked everyone to lay down on a piece of poster paper, larger than their entire outlines, and make themselves comfortable. After some preliminary breathing exercises I asked them to close their eyes and visualize themselves at different times in their lives. I paused at each life stage, moving backward toward infancy, and asked them to remember their bodies. I asked them to take a detailed inventory of their physical life at each age, and before moving backward to a younger time I asked them to "drop" onto the paper whatever images they had experienced. I told them to leave a residue of their body memories.

[I gave them several possible images for accomplishing this, and encouraged them to imagine it any way they liked. For example, they could see portions of their body as full of liquid colors, and those colors sinking to the paper; or, they could think of the images as silt or snowflakes settling to the paper; or they could simply see it as energy subtly imprinting the paper itself.]

As I spoke I went around the room and traced around each of their bodies so their outline was on the paper. At the end of this long guided image session, I passed out crayons and felt pens and asked them to make the "images" that had "collected" on the paper visible. Each person thus produced a map of their own bodily history.

There are many possible uses for this kind of body map. As a personal discovery tool, the map shows immediately where the critical incidents of our lives
have registered on our bodies, where our particular histories have been marked in flesh. As an educational tool these maps provide a concrete way to enter the discussion of culture impacting the body. For instance, we can begin asking questions like, "How did my culture tell me my breasts should look when I was fourteen? How did they actually look? And what were, and what are my images and feelings about all that?"

Because time ran out in class, I asked people to take their maps and work on them at home. I asked them to expand the drawing, and also write all over them. I said we would share them the following week. But, Marge was not in class the following week when we had a chance to look at these rather amazing documents. And when she appeared the week after she told me her body map was rolled up, and untouched. Several times during the quarter she mentioned, with emphasis, that her map had never been looked at. And at the 10th Week Interview she made a point of telling me the map was now crinkled up and banished to the garage. (I assume by now it's either in the garbage or burned.) In the interview she said:

Marge: Why am I still in class? Because my fee waivers were paid. . . . I would have dropped after the body map. After that point I couldn't push any further.

And in her final paper she said:

I enjoyed the spring and looked forward to fall quarter. However, after the evening when we did the body maps, I almost dropped out. It was feelings of I'm not comfortable doing these things, I don't understand what we are doing or why we are doing them, this is not what I expected (though I don't really know what I expected.)

But in the Interview she also said something else about the maps:

Marge: I couldn't transpose to paper. But there were feelings that came out, feelings of loneliness that I don't want to face, because if I dwell on them, I'll be sunk.
I think this is the key. When she understood that there were going to be potent explorations of personal feelings in this class she psychically checked out. Her attendance was sporadic, and she made it clear to me on most occasions that she didn't want to be there. But when she checked out she missed the point. She complained on several occasions that she didn't understand the purpose of the course. Well, for starters she missed several key discussions in which we talked at length about the purpose of these activities.

On occasion Marge's denial of the personal was mind-boggling to me. On one occasion I asked them to remember an "ideal body image" from their past--any image, that of an athlete, a model, a ballet dancer, a musician, a librarian, a parent, a cleric, whatever, from anytime in their past. I then asked them to assume a pose in that image, whatever that looked and felt like to them. The purpose here was to bodily experience the ways that cultural image has impacted us. This concept had been discussed on many occasions. It was the subject of several readings. For instance, Don Johnson's Body is an extremely clear and accessible presentation of the cultural impact on bodies. We read several chapters from it. I then asked them to let the pose change. Not to work at it, just let it alter by itself. The purpose here is to work with choice-making impulses that start right inside the body, to let our flesh find its own course. My hope was that in the transition from the rigid ideal pose into a relaxed state people would get some fragment of understanding of the huge influence idealized images have had on all of us.

Marge couldn't do it, or wouldn't do it. She kind of took a stab at it. Or stood around. I can't quite remember. She claimed she'd never had any images bear on her. She'd just "always been herself." Talking about this in the 10th Week Interview she said she didn't get it because, "you are what you are." This is a woman who went though strict Catholic schooling telling me she's never been subjected to any idealized images in her life. My fieldnotes say:

WHAT A BUNCH OF CRAP. I told her that makes her the Buddha. I was pissed.

[Bill gave me a pedagogical dirty look when I said this to her, but I don't think she picked up on it.]
Marge is a teacher and program administrator in a large urban high school with a largely minority population. She has a teenage daughter. From her descriptions of her job and workload it is clear that she is a tireless advocate for education. There is nothing apathetic about her desire or her output. It is utterly clear to me that she wants to make things better for a lot of people; but it is also clear to me that her energies for making things better are all directed at programs which may or may not have much to do with her students.

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So two questions come up: 1) Do I have the right to ask her to go into personal material? And, 2) What is my responsibility for meeting her where she's at?

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I not only have a lot of judgment about Marge in respect to our class, but I also think the way she's going about creating public education will ultimately just substitute one possibly dehumanizing program for another. The critical middle step, addressing the question, WHAT IS A HUMAN BEING ANYWAY?, simply doesn't get addressed in her world, certainly not by Marge. She says things like, "Those big questions aren't for me," and so on. But as you would guess from the rest of this document, I think those big questions HAVE to be for her. They don't have to dominate her life, but they have to be addressed. In her final paper she writes:

One thing that I have come to realize is the lack of my basic knowledge of philosophy and human behavior. I'm awed by the knowledge exhibited by some members of the class and made painfully aware of my own lackings. However, realization of this fact has not made me an avid student of philosophy or human behavior. These are not fields of study that have interested me--nor do I think they will. It's just not possible to know it all.

I appreciate Marge's humility and realistic assessment. And I don't think people who are devising programs for children need to become professional philosophers. But I do think that people who are devising the programs that children must endure have to somehow include in their deliberations the question, WHAT
IS A HUMAN BEING? How else are they going to decide what should go into the damn program. And I'm afraid this process must start with those program-makers asking themselves, WHAT and WHO AM I? Otherwise they won't even be able to start the discussion.

Marge's litany, the words I hear in my head when I think of her are "Hungry Learner." Over and over she lamented that the school's don't produce "hungry learners." These "hungry learner" raps were often embedded in a long lament about how awful it is in the schools, how impersonal it is, how little caring there is, how violent it is, etc., etc., etc. These long raps always placed the responsibility for the bum conditions on those other bored teachers, those other myopic administrators. I don't think I ever heard her once self-reflect on her possible contribution to this situation.

And what is Marge's solution to the problems? Her solution, and the constant theme of her discussion, was always to look for a better Program. Go to Minnesota and look at their Program. Work for the school bond issue so that we can hire IBM or Xerox to devise experimental Programs. I don't think Marge understands what "hungry" means at a visceral level. At least she is not willing to let it rise into her consciousness and affect her life in any real way. And what's worse is that she doesn't know she needs to if she wants to reach these kids. "Hungry Learners" are her code words for some kind of vision of people, but I sure don't know what that looks like to her. I know what "hungry" means to me, and it is not tidy or orderly or programmatic. Hunger is intense, and it is intensely personal.

I do not want to discount the considerable problems that exist in the innercity schools these days. But I visited several schools in May when I did my first interviews. And from the advance warnings Marge gave me about her own school I expected to be assaulted at the door, then treated to either a constant flow of random acts of senseless violence down every hallway, or confronted with drugged semi-comatose bodies lining the walls. Yeah I saw some wild energy, and I could feel the apathy and the boredom in some classrooms, but ... .

"Hunger" is the right word. It needs to be addressed in education. But "hunger" is real stuff. I think Marge wants to avoid "hunger" at a visceral level, the level where she might really connect with the kids and make a long term difference.
Now let me problematize my critique. What about those two questions I asked a couple of pages back?

1) Do I have the right to ask her to go into personal material?

and,

2) What is my responsibility for meeting her where she's at?

Oh my god, I have a lot of feelings about these two questions.

I want to be gentle here. I want to be responsive. I want to entertain the possibility that there is no place in public education for the kind of personal work we were doing. And I also want to open the possibility that I either horribly failed Marge in some way, or have failed to honor her participation.

I doubt whether Marge or her fellow teachers are particularly sensitive to the poststructural cautions about surveillance and gaze and invasiveness. My guess is they'll do anything to keep track of what's going on at their school and in their students' lives. Several times Marge has explained how the principal has a walkie talkie always squawking at his desk. I presume there is a cadre of teachers and/or administrators out on the grounds keeping their eyes very much alert to everything, and reporting back to central. I doubt whether Marge is sensitive to the possibility that this is invasive. But I am.

The reasons for not doing personal/therapeutic work in public education are potent. The danger of exploiting and converting and normalizing is so great. Even the most cautionary of us have our canons. I know I do. At some point very early in our first class meetings I was trying to explain my ambivalence and turmoil around these issues. I must have said something about my world-changing aspirations. In the 10th Week Interview Marge responded to this:
Marge: . . . One of the things you said, "You wanted to lay your hands on the world." But some people don't want your hands on them.

Later in the interview responding to Question #11: If you wanted to teach me something what would it be 1) about you, 2) about education, 3) about life, Marge answered:

Marge: I don't think we have the right to teach each other about life.

Does she feel the same way about the students she's going to cram into her Programs? So how far do we go in taking our mitts off of people? You see I don't think Marge understands that the emphasis on skills based curricula is very much the culture putting it "hands on people." I think she has been taken in so deeply by the language of her times, technology/science, that she just assumes this is the world, period. One of the critical pieces of Bill's Winter Quarter class was to examine how science and technology are constructed discourses, how they are a part of the constructed world we live in. But somehow Marge doesn't get it, she doesn't understand that the whole discourse, from word #1, is part of a made up social myth. (Never mind the fact that we also gave readings out of Steven Toulmin's, Cosmopolis, that traced the history of technology overtaking modernity.)

Michel Foucault has made it wonderfully clear that any and every social interaction is laden with power dynamics. I don't know that he ever said anything specifically about formal education, but I can imagine him saying, "Just close the damn schools down!" So how far should we back away from putting our hands on people? Right out the door? Obviously I don't think so, or, I am a terrible hypocrite, because here I am doing it. I am not ready to abandon "education." But my current response to this question falls somewhere between and responsive to both Foucault and Nel Noddings.

Noddings is a Stanford University Professor of Education who supports "intuition," "caring," and "love" in schools. (See Awakening the Inner Eye, Caring.) She wants students and teachers to get "involved" with each other. She says:
We instead assert that love in education, or educational caritas, is something very real. It is a force that can be the most powerful agent in the classroom, leave the most lasting impressions, and touch lives most deeply."

What are the filial and feeling responsibilities of learners and teachers? If Noddings is right then we need to very radically up the feeling component of educational settings, not eliminate it. California, for example, spurred on by State Assemblyman John Vasconcellos, is currently designing a whole course of study on "self esteem." This is both a heartening and a terrifying thought to me. Are school boards now going to outrightly tell kids what they are supposed to feel? Vasconcellos, I believe, happens to be a pretty sophisticated man. But I doubt whether everyone who will administer the program has his capacity for irony. I wonder if they will account for normalizing and invading tendencies.

I don't mean to dump on Marge. She's working her butt off, trying to get it right. Me too. And I am troubled by all of this. I honestly don't know how I will respond to these dilemmas in the professional life that rapidly approaches. I may not be able to justify my teaching style or my curriculum after this course.

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At the beginning of this story I said that perhaps I learned more from Marge's story than anyone else's. Obviously she was a lightning rod for my judgment and dissatisfaction, but she was also a catalyst for my turning point. The discussion revolves around the 2nd question,

What is my responsibility for meeting her where she's at?

Considerable, I think. Otherwise I'm just another fundamentalist with the New Word.

The impression Marge gave me all quarter long was that she couldn't wait for every minute of this damn thing to end. But the last thing she said in her 10th Week Interview really stopped me:
Marge: I wonder if you said we're going to meet once a month, no credit, I don't know what I'd say.

I couldn't believe my ears then. I can't believe my eyes now. The fact that she would even consider continuing shocked me. And in her final paper she wrote something else that intrigued me:

As I expressed to you in the interview, I'm glad I participated in the class—it has not been a waste of my time.

These thoughts made me reflect. And I went back to my field notes. I found perhaps the single most telling interchange we had in the whole quarter. During the third week of class (after the sessions of producing and sharing the body maps) I phoned to remind Marge about bringing her journal to class the following week. Here are my field notes reporting her response:

Call to Marge. She says, "It's wonderful to say 'no'! There are just some things I don't want to do. In all my years of school I've never had a chance to say, 'no, I'm not going to do that.'"

For Marge, deciding not to keep a journal was, in the words of her final paper, "new found freedom." I am reminded of Roger Simon's caution:

Although it is clear that experience can teach us much, it is not always obvious what it is that it teaches nor what and whose versions of the world it legitimates.

(Roger Simon)"

I find it entirely ironic, and fabulously delightful, that the single most powerful response, and perhaps the most enduring reaction to the course will be Marge's general attitude of "No! I'm NOT going to do that." It's quite possible that Marge is telling the God's Truth when she says:
In all my years in school I've never had a chance to say "no."

That is an amazing statistic. And I believe her. In my field notes I responded to her proclamation:

So Great. Permission! We must be doing something right!

I would not even begin to guess how the freedom to say "no" will affect Marge's life, or the educational environments she finds herself in. I know that when I have the freedom to say "no" I stop defending and become much more potent. As she said in her final paper:

Another instance of my expressing this new found freedom was when I consciously decided not to keep a journal. I also felt at ease and free to express my feelings to you in the interview.

Maybe I was missing the most liberatory experiencing of the whole course by not seeing that Marge's litany of "no's" were the real

SHOUTS OF FREEDOM!!!!!!!!!!!!

Lynn's Story

What does it look like when a drawing comes out of the flesh?

(Lynn's response to my comments about her hand drawings, eleventh week of class)

The turning point came for her at 10:45 a.m. on December 6, the morning of our very last class session.
Lynn was a model student. She did everything. She participated in every exercise. She read everything. She did all the assignments. She had perfect attendance. She did her summer journal. She cried revelatory tears in her initial interview.

In the 10th Week Interview, Lynn responded to Question 4: Has anything from class been particularly useful in your life?

Lynn: I think it’s been very helpful and I can give you some examples. My diary is full. I think the way you set our summer up was real helpful.

I asked everyone to read a book over the summer written by Lawrence Weschler about California artist Robert Irwin called, Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees. Irwin has spent his life as an artist dealing with perception. At one point the book details how the obsessive and contemplative Irwin spent months, alone in his studio, moving a line on a canvas up or down an eighth of an inch. He constantly monitored the effect of the extremely small changes on his environment and on himself.

In order to bridge our work from the Spring sessions to the Autumn course, I asked the students to pick a familiar environment and over the course of the summer alter it very slightly and notice the effect of those changes. For example, they could move a chair in a room a quarter of an inch to the left each day, or they could add one piece of straw to a vase each week, etc. Lynn talked about her summer with this project:

My office is different because of that. Elements of change. I brought things in that made me feel good, like, that picture of New Mexico, Western skies... So this [my office] is an extension of me, a true extension... My office and home are different. I cleaned up my studio and it freed me [to begin weaving again]. I found I was changing all kinds of things. I was changing my environment a lot. And I was changing inside me. I was looking at my reactions to things as they happened.
You get the picture. Changes were occurring everywhere for Lynn. She could go on and on. She openly showed her body map and that was personally risky. She always supported other students well. She found her angry "voice" after a discussion of a Don Oliver reading. Basically, she didn't miss a thing.

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But I missed something. Perhaps I got sunk by my own struggles. Or I expended too much energy being alternately miffed and solicitous of Marge and/or other students who were dissatisfied. As early as the 5th week I wrote in my fieldnotes:

I feel badly that I'm not catering to Lynn and Alice who are really doing their jobs. I/we need to acknowledge their considerable commitments and willingness to redescribe themselves.

Perhaps it was my homage to the postmodern cautions about surveillance and invasion. Or just timing. Or that on the evening Alice and Lynn were so excited by their work (ideal image collages) that they stayed after class and shared with Bill. I had to leave. Well, whatever it was, I somehow failed to actually look carefully at any of Lynn's prodigious output until the afternoon of her 10th Week Interview. I just kind of assumed, as you can tell from my fieldnote entry, that Lynn was sailing along getting the point like gangbusters, integrating theory and going deeply into the lived life of her bodily experience.

I went home from the 10th Week Interview with a stack of her "hand maps," an assignment from earlier in the quarter. Surprise. Reality Check.

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There is much going on in our bodies all the time, even just sitting still, pressures and throbs and itches and twitches and contractions are happening all the time. We are part of a throbbing world.

Many of the early activities in the course were self-awareness/sensory awareness experiences designed to draw attention to these small "dances" in our flesh. For example, on one occasion I had people close their eyes
and notice the moment just before inhaling and the moment just before exhaling. These are powerful moments that come over and over. The sensations and attendant feelings to these moments are quite different for people. This exercise can be powerful. It can be enormously revealing about issues of "holding," "squandering," "resisting fullness," "cherishing release," "fear of emptiness," and so on. It is a powerful therapeutic tool, and I have used it many times.

Another time I had them stand in place for quite a while, barefoot on the gym floor, making extremely small adjustments in their body to remain comfortable.

Obviously I think having some awareness of these twitches, glitches, and spasms is important. It is part of the "Why is awareness important" question. Put simply, when we can identify and bring to consciousness what's going on in our flesh, we can respond to our environment with a flexible and appropriate choice. The more we know, the wider and more flexible our array of choices.

Several times, as a way of going deeper into these awareness experiences, I asked people to draw their images and sensations. Usually I had them do these drawings with their eyes closed. It is unpredictable what happens when people close their eyes like this. Some people experience waves of color, others sounds, some feel heat or light. Some people see distinct static images. Some people see movies! I ask people not to look as they draw because expression is the point, not representation.

Towards the middle of the course I attempted to extend the boundaries of our experimental laboratory. I extended them past the walls of the classroom into the students' lives. In order to accomplish this transition gently, I assigned "hand maps," using the "blind drawing" technique. For a week, the students were to pause several times a day, outline their non-writing hand, close their eyes, and express the sensations that were presently occurring in the non-writing hand. I figured everyone could do this fairly discreetly, at their desk, or at a table, without getting a lot of flak from co-workers. The point was for students to begin using their growing self-reflexive capacity in the midst of their day.

Clearly, it is not possible to draw exactly what is in the hand. There is no way to translate physical
sensation into the pen exactly. Hands are hands, heat is heat, words are words, and pen lines are pen lines. These distinctions are very important. (See Steven Tyler, Jean-Francois Lyotard et al. on the impossibility and undesirability of translation across media or languages.) Don't underestimate the importance (irony) of that last sentence to a written document that is simultaneously writing about drawing about bodily experience.

I only expected the results of the hand maps to be an approximation of the sensation. Just as I expect this dissertation to just be some kind of approximation of what I've experienced in my body for the past year. There is still much to gained from the attempt.

The ideal happens when sensation and pen are indistinguishable. There is no mediating metaphor. Not the pen is like my hand. Not my hand is like a bird. Not my hand reminds me of a turtle. But, we try to open some direct channel from sensation into drawing, without intermediary cognitive symbolizing. Not "like the red means my mother was angry, the blue shows how bad I felt when she said I couldn't go to the prom, the green symbolizes the infection that happened in my wrists after I slashed them, etc." In the hand drawings I was looking for some kind of a mad instantaneous rush from experiencing to page . . .

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There!

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Lynn's hand maps are lovely. Really. The date and time appear clearly in the upper left corner of each page. Her hand is carefully traced in the middle of the paper. And each drawing is carefully rendered.

--One of them divides her hand into bricks, with a lovely archway in the center of her palm. Birds depicted as those graceful "v's" we know so well fly under the archway. The caption reads, "Left hand is the 'holder,' the stabilizer, the 'hold the plate while I shake hands or reach to someone while talking' with my right hand. . . . It frees me to action by its base stability."
--In another drawing the hand is being squeezed by a large, carefully drawn C-clamp--threads included. The caption reads, "Tired girl--too much to do in the time I have and I'm tired."

--One of them says "The heat is on!" There is a neatly drawn red heating coil in her wrist. The bottom half of her hand is shaded blue for water. Neat little oval bubbles escape up into her fingers. They collect at the finger tips. Under her hand there are more words, "And the pressure is building."

--Another of them says, "In a hurry-late for an interview with a parent of a child I use to work with--anticipating." Her hand is lightly shaded. There is a detailed picture of a blond boy in a wheelchair in the center of the palm, and something that looks like a loaf of bread with a ribbon and bow in her thumb!

These are lovely drawings. But they are entirely mental reconstructions. They are detailed and well thought out. But they are pure symbol. I don't see a sensation in any of them. I don't get any sense of lateness, or tiredness, or stability from the drawing itself. Nor do I even really sense that these feelings or sensations were intended to be in the drawing. They are kind of like a reminder, a ghost, of something that must have occurred for Lynn sometime earlier--moments or hours, we don't know.

The leap into direct now expression is a huge one for many people. It is especially huge for people with a fascination for techno-cognitive-symbolic thinking. It seems clear that Lynn sat down, assessed her recent past experience, and then reduced it to symbols so she could make hand drawings. What I wanted was exactly the converse of this procedure. I wanted her to sit down, surrender (no thought of assignments anywhere in sight) to the sensations in her hand, and just allow something to appear.

Utter failure? Oh no. Heavens no. When I had a chance to talk with Lynn about these, I think she understood my observations immediately. That is the wonderful thing about working as hard as Lynn had all quarter. We had all kinds of experience to call on for our conversation.
I think Lynn was finally getting, in the 10th week, what a big leap it was to "express the flesh." It is the bottom line practice for all kinds of creative people: artists, musicians, dancers, poets. And there isn't a single one of them who wouldn't say, "Every expression, to some greater or lesser extent, is merely a translation of some deeper kind of knowing. All I do is hope for a good approximation."

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Let's take a moment and problematize this a little by invoking Roger Simon once again:

... But although experience may provide powerful messages about the world we live in, it contains no guarantee that it will generate the insights necessary to make its "truth" transparent. Indeed, there can be a dangerous conservatism in experience given its possible complicity in the production of a socially and culturally reproductive conformism predicated on the acceptance of the "way things are" as given and natural."

Obviously I agree with Simon that cultural forces bear on us substantially. They shape us in the multiple sites of our living--our multiple "subjectivities" to use the current jargon. Cultural forces are at work in the way we sit, shit, eat, piss, sneeze and yes, draw. Cultural forces shape us differently when we are being white/middle/class scholars or white/working class carpenters. (Yes, we can be both!)

How do the hand maps stack up against Simon's cautions? Does this exercise just reconfirm some cultural knowing that has imposed itself on people? Am I romanticizing the possibilities that creative expression can survive outside of cultural forces? Was I just giving the students an opportunity to be tapped by some deeper aculturating process? Does sitting at a given moment in a public place, and noticing with some attentiveness what is happening in the flesh legitimate cultural forces, or does it do something else? Does the choice-making capacity I cherish and talk about come from a "real" self-awareness or is it simply another late capitalist deception?
Obviously I think we have some real choice-making capacity and it is not all cultural force. And I also think the capacity for resisting "conformity" comes from first being able to identify sensation thoroughly. Taking deep notice of oneself opens up the possibility of choice. It doesn't guarantee it. It opens up the possibility. Acting is another story. I see something as simple as "hand maps" being the beginning of resistance to conformity. I see the hand maps as a simple subversive act."

The pedagogical problem of why these students produced them in the first place, and what conformity and what culture did that reproduce, is a legitimate question. I guess they did it for me and Bill. Hell, sue me. It is possible, once again, to get paralyzed by the irony of what it means to require my students to undertake a subversive act.

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I asked Lynn to do the assignment again. And just before the last class session began she returned her new hand maps. The last one dated December 6 is her familiar left hand print. There are some yellow, red, blue, and violet scribbles across some of the fingers and palm. It is a revelation.

#1 The date and time appear in the right corner instead of the left. There was no space remaining in the upper left. She must have done the drawing first. This is key. This time she understood the point was the expression, not the translating of symbolisms. This time she understood the point was to work inside out.

#2 The content of her blurb confirms the order of the experience. She says,

    eyes closed
    I thought I was really
covering a lot of area as I was
doing this. I was surprised to see
    that I had not.

Wonderful. She was surprised. The drawing had some kind of life of its own. She didn't run her impulses through some cognitive scraper and take the barnacles off it. It's just the outline of a hand and some colored scribbles. It could be a four year old's work. But it
tells me that at last Lynn absorbed one of the critical directions my work points to, the power and importance of primary experiencing.

#3 Her initial comments on the drawing are confined to reflections on the drawing itself. Given Lynn's tendency to make symbol, this unembellished description is a powerful grounding moment. She recognized and focused on the material right in front of her, her body, the drawing, her surprise.

The significance here is that I think Lynn just barely, just a little, got that there is another way of making sense other than cognition. It took her six months of concentrated effort. And, I think she got a glimmer. This is the difference between being simply self-reflective and being self-reflexive. Lynn is just now realizing that there are other kinds of Lynns to be.

And, I note that by the end of the writing she veered off into the world again, "... students' projects are absolutely wonderful."

It is so hard to stay with the self.

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Bill's Story

I've spent a lifetime in acts of concealment.

(Debrief, November 1)

I want the world to look like Islamic Heaven.

(10th Week Interview)

But what I really got was that sure, I can do this coping strategy but THERE'S A PRICE TO PAY, A HUGE PRICE.

(Debrief, November 22)
Reading Richard Rorty's books over the past two years Bill and I have frequently laughed and said, "Wow, we just love this redescription stuff, but who is this guy, what does he do?" For us it isn't enough to have great theories and then lead lousy, despicable, stingy lives. The point is to integrate theories and practices. This doesn't mean our work and private lives are indistinguishable. It does mean everywhere there is tangible, substantial connections and flows.

Bill and I have spent quite a lot of time together. In our long after-dinner conversations it's hard to say what was theory, what was pedagogy, what was planning, what was random speculating, what was Life. It's hard to say where dinner ended and education began.

(When the class was first conceived of last April, and we decided it could serve as the core of my dissertation, I began taping those conversations. I figured they would make great data. But we sometimes talked for four or five hours, and I amassed over thirty hours of recordings in the preliminary stages alone. At that rate I projected about five straight years of transcribing. I gave it up and got a note pad.)

I could probably do a very nice dissertation on our dinner conversations! So, what part of this is Bill's "class story?" The Greek Salad? The Tabouleh? The Black Beans and Rice? Obviously what I've chosen to tell is partial (as all the stories in this research are.) This one is just a little more partial than others!"

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From the 10th Week Interview:

Question 1: Has this course surprised you? Is it what you expected? How is it different than what you expected? 

Alice: The letter seemed to have a different emphasis. I thought it would have a technological emphasis. But instead its had a technique emphasis.

Marcella: I thought we might have something tangible, quantifiable to take away.

All of the students had taken Bill's course the previous winter. It is a media in education class. In the course they questioned technology and media, but they did it in a pretty gentle way. It is also head work. Only toward the end did Bill experiment with a gentle hands-on touching exercise. They all just loved the class, cherished Bill as an instructor, recognized his own genuine searching, and wanted to continue working with him. Bill has a special quality. He genuinely respects where people are at. He doesn't push. I think this really draws a lot of students to him. Based on Bill's first invitational letter, I think they expected our class to continue the critique of media in a way that could be directly applied to their classrooms.

In the 10th Week Interview Lynn summed up a lot of class sentiment when she responded to Question 13: How do you describe this class?:

Lynn: I usually lie and say it's about taking the present moment and being able to use it.

Everyone wanted something they could use. By the tenth week they didn't think they were getting it. They wanted to know, clearly, what it all meant in their lives. They wanted crystalline applications for their classrooms. Marge would have loved it put into a Packet."

During the introductory meetings in April when people met me, I think they knew that my contribution would send the course a little off the track of the "seminar as usual." I don't think they had any idea how far off that track it would go. Even Bill, who had taken a course of mine the previous Autumn, was surprised by what happened in the class. When I interviewed him after the course had ended he answered Question #1 this way:

Bill: The course surprised me in several ways. At the time we first were talking about the course and getting it underway, I assumed some of the content would be novel but that, by and large, the course would not depart too far from a traditional looking graduate seminar. My surprise was, and this was continual—if surprises can be continued—we never got tracking into anything that might be called traditional, at least as far as my experience goes in a seminar. I think the students were pretty much at sea, too. They actually caused
the group and class to be formed in the first place, but other than the desire for holding the class, they were never really in on inventing it. There were fewer reading and writing expectations for the students. Other homework assignments were completed by fewer than we expected.

Of course, the biggest surprise for me is that the course "worked." How well it worked is a surprise to me, as well as what it worked on. I could not have known where the course was going before hand because I had never been there myself. The course gave me somatic insights into the social construction of myself.

A last surprise is that the class gave me very little info on technology and presence. This is a rich statement. (For the record, I also thought we would deal extensively with issues of "technology".) And so, regardless of whether and how the course had "worked," it's clear that everyone's expectations had received a shock.

What happened?

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My class plan for week eleven reads:

Give it back to class

"Force" them to

Find an issue
Name it
Create an Experiment about it
Do The Experiment"

By the eleventh week of class we had experimented with an awful lot of different kinds of things, but those experiments were all my invention. If our work was to be of any long term use, we would have to bridge the gap from class experiences into "real lives." It was time to
make that leap from teacher-directed experience to student-directed experience.

The first task for the class was to identify some kind of real life issue, an issue that could be named and talked about. The second task was to figure out a way to work with that issue in movement. This is the critical leap asked for in this class: taking an idea, a theory, an observation and putting it into action. And why do this? Bill summed it up beautifully the week before, in class, when he said:

Bill: What I've been doing, I've taken an intellectual idea, that I'm constructed by the culture, and I've put this down into me, so I can see, really know that I can remake myself... I've been up here [indicates head] for years. But I have tenure. And I'm in the process of liberating my body from the University... 

By now it's obvious that I am an inquirer/experimenter. My medium is body. My intention is liberation. I am fascinated by the embodiment of ideas/reactions/theories. It is utterly clear to me that there is no such thing as pure cognition, cognition with no reaction in the flesh. There is no such thing as neutral, "I feel nothing." Feeling nothing may well be numbing, and that is hardly a neutral state. This has been made pretty obvious in the past twenty years and is no great revelation. Thinking and feeling are whole body acts. However, understanding this and acting on it are two different things! Really exploring the physicality of concepts turns out to be quite a revelation for many people, especially those people like Bill who have been "up in their heads."

Again, the class was to pick an issue and come up with a way to experiment with it, bodily, in movement. This is the heart of the course. It means actually identifying life issues, and then doing them. Again, why? Because in doing them, we know them, and then, in Bill's words, "I know I can remake myself."

After a lengthy discussion of all this, straws were drawn for who got to choose their favorite life issue of the day. Lynn won. She chose an extremely rich life issue, one that affects all of us at times, inclusion/exclusion. In other words, who's In and who's Out. You know, "I'm in with the In Crowd," or "I'm not
In with the In Crowd—OUCH!!" "Everyone's going to the beach, but they don't want me to come," or, "Oh, I'm the only one in red, yikes." You get the picture.

Converting ideas into action is the heart of my training as a body oriented/movement therapist. It is the basic process for planning each class session. It is not easy to do. I wanted to really let people have a chance to wrestle this on their own, so I went downstairs for a soda while they tackled it. (And knowing how strongly this issue had affected me in the past, it really tickled me to be leaving.)

When I returned ten minutes later they were really into it. Bill, Lynn, Ralph and Marge were in a chorus line. Alice was off in a corner sulking. During the rich discussion of these and the subsequent events Bill made several references to having been profoundly affected by something in their movement experiment, but he didn't want to elaborate. Because I had been out of the room I was quite curious about what had happened that was so strong for him. After class, in the parking lot, I got this report on Bill's experience:

Bill: [After you left] well we got up, I was pretty directive, we did a couple of things, and then I was through leading. So then I checked out, stopped playing. I really saw how if I wasn't leading, I wasn't in it. You could talk about it forever, but when we did it in movement it was really stark. I just checked out. But what I really got was that sure, I can do these coping strategies, BUT THERE'S A PRICE TO PAY, A HUGE PRICE!

In my field notes I wrote a gigantic "B I N G O." This was an utter revelation to me. It explained a lot about Bill. It explained a lot about the class.

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For a long time I had known of Bill's anxiety about public speaking. I have been with him often in large gatherings such as lectures. I knew he did not feel comfortable sharing in large group situations. He never had participated, even once, at any public gathering he and I had attended together. We'd spoken about it many
times, but this was the first time I had ever heard it linked to the issue of leading.

What this meant was that true collaboration was doomed from the start. If Bill checked out when he wasn't leading, that meant when I was leading Bill was "gone." And that was frequently my experience of Bill. He'd lean his head or body out of the circle. (Last Autumn when he took a course of mine he often sat outside the circle altogether.) A few times during exercises he chattered away with his partner. And sometimes during the sharing sessions after the exercises he'd read the bulletin boards at the sides of the room.

I am no shrinking violet. I have a lot to say. I have a lot of ideas. I'm quite comfortable being out front and visible. I am a bold performer, and particularly unself-conscious. I'll do whatever it takes to pull the thing off. I can be loud and exuberant and intense. I am also trying to adjust some of this. I work hard at holding my voice to myself in class, giving others the floor. That's partly why I wanted to collaborate. I wanted to stretch myself by sharing the leadership.

Well, my tendency to put myself out front, combined with Bill's tendency to check out, so that quite shortly into the quarter I simply became the teacher of the course, and Bill became a student. I will take up what that meant to me later. For Bill it meant he didn't get to lead, and ultimately he didn't get to do in class what he wanted to do--technology critique. What I think he didn't realize is that we all lost out here. I wanted a partner. I respect his thinking enormously. I wanted to do the technology stuff too.

And why didn't he say something about his discomfort? I can only speculate. I'm not doing an exhaustive psychological profile here. For many powerful reasons, until that eleventh week, I don't think Bill allowed himself to realize that the maintenance of this pattern exacts a huge price. Somehow he's psychically accounted for it. He very quickly says things like, "Oh that's fine," or "Sounds good to me." He rarely says, "Now wait a second here!" I do not know the history behind this. But I do know that it can be an exciting, and unnerving, moment when a person realizes his or her basic organization in the world is paralyzing.

Why I didn't say something I'll address in my own story. Also, I didn't identify this pattern, but I could
have. I always just wondered why Bill could consistently be such a rich companion in his kitchen, and sometimes such a low energy black hole in the classroom. I think the reason we didn't address it is has to do with the collision of our patterns. Bill has put so much energy into maintaining the pattern, that there was no energy left to really reflect on it. And I love being the leader. It added up. But frankly I'd much rather have had a companion. I don't think either of us was really satisfied. The one time I broached the topic, on our ride to Pittsburgh, the "conversation" went something like this:

Paul: It was very hard in class last week when you just kind of sat in the corner. It was hard for me.

Bill: Hmm, I haven't really got anything to say about it.

End of conversation.

It's our problem, or our conceit, that we think people should be worried about the issue of what it means to be human. That's where we are.  

(Bill, class debrief, May 17)

We've been into some things that hurt. And the students aren't required to be hurt in grad school.

(Bill, class debrief, October 28)

It's easier to talk about them as cripples.

(Bill, class planning, September 17)

Yes . . . the kinds of things we worked on in class . . . would be the end of capitalism. The goal is to get rid of life as we know it now.
And a really transformed life would be to wander on the beach. But there's a problem. There are five billion of us. We can't all wander on the beach.

(Bill, in his 10th Week Interview)

Remember, I don't have to make sense, that's your aesthetic, not mine.

(Planning, November 17)

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Paul's Story

My Buddha nature says, "Let them go slow." My Anti-Christ nature says, "Off with their heads."

(Paul's fieldnotes, following 10th Week Interview with Marcella)

Ai Yiah Yih--------

God: Aiyiah

[I'M] STINGY

(Paul's fieldnotes, following 10th Week Interview with Marcella)

At the end of week seven I was wound up tight, pissed and ready to leave town.

Perhaps this fever broke because I'm forty, and familiar with this state of being. Maybe it broke because my friend Crayton challenged my boredom in just the right way, "Isn't that why you went there?"
Maybe it broke because
my friend Anne
questioned my sincerity in just the right way,
"Do you really care about them?"

I sat.
I fidgeted.
I wrote.
I squirmed.
I bitched.
I went to unnerving movies.
The fever broke.

And then I realized
I might not know anything about the students.
I had all kinds of assumptions,
but did I really know anything?
The idea for the 10th Week Interviews
came to me in a flash.

+ + +

I realized, while doing the 10th Week Interviews,
just how pervasive the mechanisms of power, control, and
authority are. I am intellectually committed to breaking
down the traditional barriers between teacher and
student. I want to do all those great liberatory things
that Freire and Shor and Giroux and Ellsworth talk about:
being a "co-learner," respecting difference, undermining
the assumption of high status for the teacher, and so on.
But it is real hard to pull off."

As Alice said in her interview:

Alice: I did not feel supported by you because
there's an aspect of you studying us . . .

Persons who are peers share the agenda.
Participate equally. I do not think you did.
And you had your own agenda. . .

Mostly I felt that you were one-up. . . . I
still don't know where you're coming from. I
feel confused. Your lifestyle, philosophy, and
investment in feelings and not cognition is
new. . . . It goes back to teacher/student, the
Master [and] groveling novice.

I do not want to paint this too black and white.
She said some very supportive things as well, and made it
clear that her discomfort had also come from her. And it
is essential to recognize that everyone seemed quite open to sharing material which could have been very volatile if I weren't being perceived as supportive in some deep way.

But I did see how the distance-making traps of the situation had fooled me. Perhaps it was the double whammy of compounding teaching with research. It just became very obvious that, unlike Bill who has an amazing ability to be a student, I became the isolated authority/researcher/asshole. I think we all conspired to make this happen.

For instance, during the preliminary sessions in the spring the students came in, sat down, and turned their attention to me. On one particularly disgusting afternoon, temperature around 97 degrees, two truck-sized air conditioners whining away on the landing out the north window, a heavy metal band screeching in the amphitheater out the East window, I had the feeling everyone was waiting for me to do magic and make it cool and quiet. They all sat like lumpin dead clay blobs. Neither Bill nor I could get a discussion going on the topic of the day. Finally, I had them all find a place on the floor, close their eyes and take an inventory of themselves. The environment was toxic with heat and noise. This could have been viewed as an opportunity to really explore what technologies do to our bodies, but when I passed out paper for blind drawing of their sensations, everyone dashed 'em off and left the room.

I was a little desperate about the whole thing in this early stage of the course. The four sessions in May were introductory classes. If people didn't like it they might not sign up for the Autumn and then I'd have no dissertation research. I spent a lot of internal energy trying to make it "okay" for everyone, and maybe I was even selling it. I never confronted the situation and just said, "Hey folks, I don't give a damn if you're tired and hot. Cut the crap and do the work." I somehow let myself get backed up psychically into a pleaser/therapist mentality. Everything they did I kind of accepted, but I didn't really like it. The irony, of course, is that more than half the people dropped the course. I speculate that by going into "therapy" mode it got too personal for a lot of people, too threatening, and they dropped. Maybe if I'd been more of a hard-ass at the beginning, assigned papers and graded discussion participation, it would have looked more like traditional school and I wouldn't have lost so many students!
Perhaps I was just being too damn careful about the whole thing. I am so committed to this liberatory notion of the teacher not dominating that I think I frequently withheld my own contributions. Kind of a reverse whammmy. Anyway, it added up so that I didn't do all those emancipatory pedagogical things I wanted to do. I didn't participate enough. I thought someone needed to direct the exercises from outside. I didn't give people enough of the responsibility for shaping the class, even though I had it in my lesson plan as early as the third week. I did a body map and the hand drawings, but somehow didn't share these. None of this was "malicious." It all just added up to me being the authority harboring a slightly secret agenda—not a bad one, just a private one. Sigh.

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In week nine we did one of my favorite activities. I call it the Repeat-Go Game. When I first learned this activity ten years ago it was in the context of developing improvisational dance skills. Now I see that it raises many important issues about the way we look at and see each other.

The game is played with a partner. One person is the mover. The other person is the watcher. The mover begins moving any way they like. This can be big movement, or small twitches. The kind of movement is not the issue at all. People just never understood this about many activities we did. The kind or amount of movement wasn't the issue. Commitment was the issue.

(Was it my crappy explanation that caused them to miss this? Or, was it that they just didn't know what the hell I meant by "commitment to a movement?" This is the chicken and egg thing again that comes up over and over. How can I explain this if they haven't got the language in them. All I can do is point and say, "See, there it is," when it happens. I tried. But we had a long way to go.)

The game goes like this. When the watcher sees a fascinating movement she says, "repeat." The mover then repeats that motion over and over and over until the watcher determines that the mover has completely committed themselves to the movement. (Trying to describe these kinds of being states is when language breaks down a little.) The watcher is looking for total commitment to the movement. The watcher wants to see that the mover and the movement are "as one," "really doing it," "totally identified." A simple way to talk
about this would be to say the mover wasn't distracted by anything. The mover's concentration was only on the movement. There are no specific clues to look for, it is a sense of fullness. This movement could be as slight as a finger raising half an inch. It is the quality that counts. In the example above the watcher is looking to see if the mover's whole being is "raising."

When the watcher senses that the mover has fully become the movement she says, "Go." The mover immediately allows her movement to change and become something else until the watcher again sees a fascinating movement and says, "Repeat."

I don't think the students grasped how profound this simple exercise can be. Several of them shrugged it off as a requirement to do stupid boring movements over and over. Some of them thought it was about mildly torturing a buddy. I don't know that any of them realized that it is about the profoundly important issues of 1) fully engaging the self in our bodies, and 2) the way we look at each other.

The looking and seeing aspects of the Repeat-Go Game related perfectly with the reading for the week, a Michel Foucault piece on the Panopticon." The Panopticon was Jeremy Bentham's prison design devised in the 18th Century. In a panopticon a single person in a central observation tower has visual access to all the prisoner's cells, which ring the tower like a doughnut. The cells have glass fronts so that the person doing the surveillance from the tower can see everything going on in the cells. Because the cells are backlit the prisoners are perfectly exposed, but cannot see into the tower. Foucault calls this kind of invasive visual surveillance "gaze." He traces its use into mental hospital designs, schools and so on.

But Foucault takes his discussion of gaze further than simple surveillance. He claims that we have all been subjected so deeply to this kind of being looked at, that the gaze almost floats in the air, and it has been taken inside us. We don't need to actually be seen in order to feel like we're being watched. We do it to ourselves. We've buried that looking-judge in us. We can shame ourselves, even assume we "look" stupid, out on a desert island alone.

But this hard-eyed gaze is not the only kind of looking that goes on in the world. Observe the bonding that goes on between a mother and child when the child
calls out, "Look, look at me." The parent's look is manna. It is essential psychic food. Look can be very nurturing. We need to be seen. That is why the hard gaze Foucault talks about carries so much power. It is the perversion of a deep hunger for contact turned into status maneuvering.

I don't think many of the students made the connection between the game and Foucault. And therefore I don't think they understood how much was at stake. They did not see the game as an opportunity to explore the way we look, and the way we are seen; big issues for all of us. People who felt tortured by their partners obviously reacted from their "gaze mentality." Whether or not their partners meant them discomfort, they pulled the gaze thing out of themselves.

People could also have seen this as a wonderful opportunity to have a loving set of eyes hold them, watch them. Yes, I understand most people in this group were extremely self-conscious. That's the point. Look at that! This isn't a Sunday picnic. But that would have been a big leap, and it would have taken a shift in their commitment.

This could also have been a rich movement exploration. This exercise is about full embodiment. The point is not silly repetition. It is about staying with a movement, practicing it, until we finally, fully identify with it. These are our movements. I didn't assign the movements. There is something profound in surrendering to our own impulses this way. It was possible to have seen the other pair of eyes as assistance in the task of coming to cherish our simple movements.

The fact that so many of them found the exercise "boring" or "torturous" tells me a lot about the way they deal with looking at, and being looked at, and a lot about their self-judgment about moving.

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I brought up the Repeat-Go Game in this discussion because it raises deep, disturbing, and essential issues about looking and seeing which I think have critical implications for education and research. There are obviously many ways to look and see. We can "look right through" someone. We can "freeze them" with our stare--as Ralph relates he could do with the kids in prison. We can hold someone gently in our warm soft-eyed glance.
In class we spoke often about upping our awareness levels--awareness often being equated with a kind of fruitful "self-observing." That is, when we have awareness we can "see" what's going on. Well what kind of seeing is that? Is that a hard-eyed stare, or a loving blush?

This research required me to do a lot of looking and seeing. What kind of looking and seeing did I do?

Many therapists try to develop a panoramic eye, the ability, no matter how frantic the therapeutic situation becomes, to "see" from a "distance," to observe the whole thing happening even if she, the therapist, is right in the thick of it. This capacity to remain "outside" the action in some way, to preserve the observation capacities, has great beneficial possibilities. It allows practitioners to be fully engaged in situations where the fur flies, and maintain a sense of perspective about it. This allows them to go very deeply without going nuts.

There is also a great danger in over-developing this panoramic viewpoint. Lynn began to pick up on this drawback toward the end of the quarter as she began to deepen her experience of herself. There is great danger that the ability to keep a distant eye freezes people out of the activity in some crucial way. It is possible to remain always an observer, never "in" the thing.

I have great fear about this for myself. Teaching this class, doing this research, and writing this dissertation has only upped that fear. As I told Lynn, the great educator or therapist, or researcher is the one who can adopt that panoramic viewpoint, who trusts her capacity to see the situation, and then totally invests herself in the relationships. But it is terribly sad to have that panoramic eye stuck at three quarter distance. Then the practitioner becomes a voyeur. There is plenty of observation, but no investment. Half-hearted commitments to awareness can be very exploitive, and very discouraging, leaving the researcher in a semi-knowing place of distance from the action.

I felt this often in class. I think it was the combination of being the teacher, the researcher, and the dissertation-writer. My panoramic eye got stuck just a little too far out of the scene to really surrender and be in the scene fully. I hated this. And I hope nothing like this ever happens to me again.
THE COURSE SPEAKS

The following is an overview of the course. In The Stories you can find details of exercises, and discussions of particular class sessions. This section grounds these exercises in a framework. We also welcome back Reader and Professor Theory. They took a cruise in the Caribbean after their hard work in PART I. Let's join their conversation . . .

Reader: Nice tan, Professor! So after that kinda terrible seventh week Paul did a big interview session with everyone.

Professor: He realized in a flash that he could be making up all kinds of stories about the students, and he better go and talk to them and really find out what was happening. He met with everyone privately and asked about twenty questions. He got some wonderful responses. Everyone had strong feelings about what went on in the class. But it sounds like everyone thought the class was too unplanned and amorphous.

Reader: Well, it was emerging!

Professor: Everyone thought Paul was flying by the seat of his pants. They didn't have a syllabus. They didn't know the plan. Right up to the end they thought the whole thing was a jumble of random exercises. Listen to these responses from Paul's interviews. This is how people responded to Question 13: "How do you describe this class to others?"

Alice: That's a hard one.

Marcella: I haven't really been able to. I've tried. I usually end up trying to describe it in ways that the person cares to hear.

Marge: I start out saying it's a kind of self-discovery course. But it ends up being "that weird class."
Ralph: When I've had to describe class, wow, I haven't done a very good job of it.

Lynn: 'The Friday Night class I can't talk about.' 'My Friday Night class no one can explain.' 'My technology and presence class.' And then I usually lie.

Reader: Wow, something pretty weird must have been going on. Were they doing satanic rites, sacrificing baby rats or something?

Professor: Well I don't . . .

!!!WAIT A MINUTE. JUST WAIT A DARN MINUTE HERE!

Professor: Who are you?

I am THE COURSE. And I've just about had enough of hearing how weird and unexplainable I was. Everyone seems to think I was an airhead, doing anything that popped into my brain at a moments notice, making it up as I went along, which I guess means they think I didn't have anything in mind.

Reader and Professor: It does sound that way.

THE COURSE: Let me straighten this out. Admittedly, at the beginning I was struggling to find myself. Those first four session in May were preliminary sessions, kind of an o'er d'oeuvre. There were an awful lot of agendas going on. Bill's students had some expectations coming in about doing media work. Bill and Paul still had to work out their whole co-teaching dynamic. Paul was trying to convince people to take the Autumn class so he'd have something to do his dissertation on. And even Bill had a big emotional investment in people sticking with it, whatever "it" was. I was a completely new course. Maybe one that's never been thought of before. You know this is no small trick, how to make the issues of media, and technology, and the body come alive in experience. They all bit off a big chunk.
Bill and Paul were trying to stuff me full of everything they could think of on awareness, the body, and culture. Blah, blah, blah.

But though it was pretty overwhelming, right from the start I was pretty clear what my basic intentions were. That's my style. I had some underlying beliefs that I felt strongly about. But how to get them out is kind of an improvisation. In those early sessions I wanted to begin developing people's sensory awareness skills, and I wanted to be developing a vocabulary so we could go on to talk about 1) our bodies, and 2) how our bodies have been impacted by culture.

Reader: What happened in class then?

THE COURSE: Three kinds of activities comprised class sessions: experiences, processing the experiences, and discussions of reading. I didn't really change this when the Autumn classes began, although I added personal projects to work on during the week away from class.

Reader: Can you say a little more about experiences. I mean is this like, "you all went to the Zoo and had a great time" kind of experience?

THE COURSE: Good question Reader. No, the experiences, especially the early ones, were extremely personal and subdued. Here, let me give you an example. I call it "Inhale-Exhale." For quite a while, five to ten minutes, the students closed their eyes and took careful notice of the moment just before they inhale, and the moment just before they exhale. They were to notice feelings, thoughts, sensations, and images that went with each of these moments."

Reader: And then you did this thing called "processing the experience?"

THE COURSE: Yes. Either in pairs or as a group we shared what had happened in the exercise portion. Frequently, before this sharing, I had people spend a few minutes drawing their sensations with their eyes closed. This was a
way of reflecting and focusing their attention. For people who are not used to slowing down and really feeling things, these kinds of exercises can be quite strange. They can also be quite powerful. The Inhale-Exhale exercise, for instance, generated a lot of sharing. People were surprised at how different and powerful their feelings were about these two different moments in their bodies. Some people felt insecure when they inhaled. Some people loved to release the air. Some people were afraid when they released the air. Some people were afraid to really fill up, and wanted to keep exhaling forever. Very early on people understood that focusing on the body this way could be really intense.

Reader: So is that what you did all quarter? Stood around breathing deeply!

THE COURSE: No, no, Reader! Beyond personal noticing and recovery of their bodies, I wanted people to see how the culture had molded their flesh. Wilhelm Reich said it very clearly, "The body is the first artwork of the culture." I wanted people to see how, starting in infancy, their bodies have been shaped by cultural images. And I also wanted them to start identifying how all this shaping, all these messages, play themselves out in their daily lives. And why do all this? Bill said it really well one day in class:

I've taken an intellectual idea, that I'm constructed by the culture, and put this down into me, so I can see, really know, that I can remake myself.

Reader: Seems pretty clear. Is that what happened?

THE COURSE: Well, Reader. There was a lot more resistance than I thought there was going to be. I think the personal explorations were much more threatening to people than I could have imagined. A lot of people dropped me, which freaked Paul out. Maybe it scared him enough so that he slowed way down. It took us a lot longer to really get the hang of the personal work than I figured it was going to take. And, besides, some people just didn't
participate fully. They didn't do their readings carefully. They fidgeted in class, and so on. I don't know exactly why. So there was no way to plan ahead, but the principles of the course were always pretty clear to me.

Looking back, I can really see the shape of the way things went. I'm not going to try and cram it all in here, but let me give you an overview of the whole quarter.

[Here is a copy of the outline THE COURSE gave to Reader and the Professor.]

1. Inhale-Exhale/Floor Work/Ball Work/Free Movement

2. Body Map

3. Ideal Images
   A. Visual projects
   B. Posing
      1. Alone into movement
      2. With partners mirroring slightly
         [shadow images for Bill and Marge]

4. Status work
   A. Leading/following
   B. One-up/one-down improvisations

5. Interpersonal Rules
   A. In class discussion
   B. Relational profile

6. Life Issues
   A. Conceptually
   B. Movement scenarios

   The first two items are very personal kinds of activities. Item (1.) refers to all those very internal kinds of sensory awareness exercises I was telling you about. The Body Map is a document each person made chronicling the life events of their bodies. It is a very explicit visual personal history of the body.
In the middle of the course we explored the cultural impact on flesh. That's item (3.), an exploration of all the ideal body images each of us has been subjected to in our lives. We noticed how these images are different for each of us. And we explored this in movement. That is the "posing" part.

As the course went on, item (4.), we looked at the complexity of power issues at micro-personal levels, and explored the physical aspects of status.

We then looked at the way interpersonal behaviors are actually physically played out. That's item (5.).

Finally, toward the end of the quarter we experimented with actual issues that come up in our lives. That's item (6.).

Reader: So it looks like you had some organization after all.

THE COURSE: Yes Reader and Professor. I want you to note the thematic flow in the activities listed above. In general, my activities went from personal awareness early in the quarter to relational awareness in the middle of the quarter, to contextual/cultural awareness toward the end of the quarter. There was overlap, especially in the theory. Notice I started with an emphasis on internal process (e.g. breathing), and slowly moved toward relational, and finally to social awareness.

Early in the quarter the experiences were pretty much focused on our bodies in class. As the quarter went on, more and more of the work required the students to use the awarenesses gained in class to notice and record what happened in their lives. The classroom was a place for experimenting. But I really wanted people to see how they could use the material in their lives. I wanted people to see that their lives are rich places for experimentation. A lot is going on all the time, but you don't notice unless you do some reflecting and close observing. Also, I wanted people to see that reality is not all "cast in
concrete." This "concrete" version of the world was a phrase several of the students used over and over to justify their boredom and resistance.

We can change our behaviors, but we must first be able to identify them. A lot of the class activities were about identifying and noticing the wide range of behaviors we all do. Our bodies are very much a part of the show. I'm not sure how much of this they got.

Professor: So you must have given them some theory to go with all this activity.

THE COURSE: Yes, we had a wonderful range of readings from the very beginning that supported the work. These included Don Johnson's Body, Steven Toulmin's Cosmopolis, and some wonderful "street writing" by Michael Ventura called White Boys Dancing. Unfortunately, some of the reading turned out to be difficult for some people. Oh well, next time.

Reader: So, it sounds like you didn't have a detailed quarter plan to begin with, but you had some clear agendas all along.

THE COURSE: I was quite comfortable operating from week to week. In fact, improvising is one of my clear agendas. And, as I already stated before, my intentions were to help people 1) acquire heightened capacities for noticing their own experience, 2) become aware of the power of social context and cultural influences on individual experiences, 3) identify, specifically, how the culture affects each of them, and 4) be able to physically explore all these issues.

And more or less that's what I did.

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REGARDING METHOD AND DESIGN

Method:

Why undertake an inquiry? Perhaps for money. Perhaps to keep a job. But I would like to think that most inquiry happens because someone has a question, an inkling, a problem, an itch. My itch has to do with authority and power, the body, liberation, dilemmas of the public and the private—all the issues that surfaced in PART I. In fact in CHAPTER XII I built a profile of myself as an educator that addressed these issues. I called myself an

IRONIC-HOLISTIC-EMANCIPATORY-PRAGMATIST.

Didn't all that work in PART I satisfy my itch? Why go to all the trouble to organize a complex experiential event if I already had a theoretical solution? Ah, the pragmatic piece. Life is endless circles of formulations and experimentations. Those darn theories just have to be enacted and evaluated—over and over and over. (Strange things seem happen to those theories when the ignition is actually turned on.) Howard Hughes thought he could build a gigantic airplane out of wood. He sure had all the theory going for him, but his Spruce Goose only managed one half-minute flight across the Long Beach Harbor.** (Maybe that was a success.) How the heck did I know if an IRONIC-HOLISTIC-EMANCIPATORY-PRAGMATIST would fly? And if it didn't fly, what did it do?

Let the wild rumpus begin.

Like many itches mine moves around. I am fascinated by power/force/authority/body questions on the micro-personal level, at the relational level, and at the communal/social level—from Foucault's sweeping discussion of modernity, to Jessica Benjamin's precise explorations of mother/child bonding. In fact it is the balance/tension of macro and micro concerns that grabs my attention. Well, it turns out that the Academy, at least mine, is a rich source of power struggling—at the micro and macro levels. Rich. Very rich. There had to be an inquiry in here somewhere.

+++
What comes first, method or design? Form or content? Rhythm or melody? In the case of this dissertation I can actually say that method came first. In a year of intense coursework and independent studies with my doctoral committee member Patti Lather, I acquired a taste for qualitative research methodologies. In class and in private discussions we explored the implications of these methodologies on micro- and macro-relations. Patti and I were especially concerned with the liberatory intentions in certain kinds of research projects. We were constantly on the look out for ways in which method fostered or sabotaged those intentions.

In this project I draw heavily on the post-positivist concepts I explored with Patti—especially the elements of research having openly emancipatory intentions: member checks, participant-observation, negative case analysis, and so on. [Blah blah blah on post-positivism and post-positivist research methods. I am not going to do an exhaustive discussion here. It just isn't my current interest.”] The key here is the basic underlying principle of emancipatory research: that the work be responsive to the needs of those being researched. This is a simple enough concept. But as you can see from THE STORIES it is extremely complex business, and hard to pull off.

Design

When I began organizing this research I simply did not have a narrow question. Then, as now, I was operating from a theory of "emergent design," meaning that the question itself emerges from the interactions.

Therefore, if "design" means "initial intentional shaping" then the design of this inquiry, based on emergent design concepts, was quite simple. I simply created a wide variety of interactions in which power transactions could become visible. These included meetings with doctoral committee members; class sessions of Technology and Presence; observing the students at their job sites, debriefing sessions with Bill, and so on. I simply intended to conduct myself with sensitivity to fundamental emancipatory principles, and see what questions emerged out of the many varied sites of my participation.

I think what came of this is ironic. Because I entered the arena without a tight little ball of indecision, because I entered the arena with a gigantic
ball of doubt, I had to become a superb data collector. The emergent design feature of this research ironically had the effect of making me methodologically fierce and persistent and rigorous. I noted everything. Tape-recorded and transcribed hours of class. Saved artifacts. Transcribed debriefing sessions with Bill. Took extensive notes during our planning sessions. (I have an on-going list of my favorite "Bill Quotes".) I tape-recorded and transcribed the initial planning sessions with individual committee members, and recorded our committee meetings as well."

So there are layers and layers in the design: the class, the overall process, and the preparation of the document. These all emerged as sites of the inquiry. Method and design actually became one thing. And ironically, the most powerful questions that emerged are, 1) "What does it mean to be a data collector?", and 2) "What are the pitfalls of reporting on that data?"

+++ 

Layers upon layers. I think you need to know that the sentences I am now writing are the very last ones I am composing in this document. Isn't that poignant? The discussion of design comes at the very end of the process.

But it is even stranger than that. At the beginning of PART II, I talked about material I called "convoluted struggling with research/writing paradoxes." I was referring to material the whole process began with six months ago. As I said I have excised the bulk of these struggles.

I have decided to leave one portion of this material intact--the following conversation between Professor Theory and Reader in which I discuss how to begin reporting. It was the very first material written for this document. Why include it at all now that I've obviously solved the "problem?" Well, I just love the irony of ending with a discussion of the design butting up against the very originary planning, all happening in retrospect, located in the middle of the final document!

Let's rejoin Professor Theory and Reader. Remember, this is the section I invited you to read first because it was composed first, before everything else. . .

+++
Reader: Professor, I know this material is complex and Paul doesn't quite know where to start, but he's now come up with three or four ways to deal with the course and he hasn't picked one yet. He's designed maps, put in whole transcripts of classes, he's even written up all the class plans including the exercises. It looks to me like he's paralyzed trying to get this all RIGHT.

Professor: It's important that he develop a workable strategy here. It's clear that very many highly intelligent people are struggling for articulation here. He is experimenting, weighing, considering . . .

Reader: Yeah but he keeps putting new code numbers on all this work and filing it away in the hard drive. Yesterday I checked them out while he was at school teaching racquetball. Yikes. I found Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 and already he's on #4." He knows that he has to tell the stories of the students, but he goes off on tangents about himself.

Finally today he got to the evaluation of the 10th Week Interviews and then he got hung up on the ethics of qualitative research. I'm going to leave him this note and see what happens:

Hey Buddy,

Just go ahead, use their words and make up a conversation. Heck, they'll never even know about it. Oh wait, the member check you told them about. Heck, it will be a month before they actually get a look at this. They'll forget exactly what they said. You can probably even say it better for them than they could say it for themselves.

Oh yeah, yeah, when Professor Theory hears about it he'll probably write the Dean or something and bring up validity, and the importance of people speaking for themselves. But just do it anyway. I'll take care of the Professor. You have all their words from the
interviews. What's the point here? To get every comma right, or tell some stories already?

Here's Hanging with You,

Reader

Professor: Reader you probably think I won't go for that little trope you've just suggested, but you're wrong. I know full well that language can be manipulated in so many ways that even if Paul were to be anal retentive about presenting every comma from the interviews, he's going to end up shaping them to suit his own purposes. Yes certainly I am going to watch out for the internal validity and structural inconsistencies of this little gem, but it's perfectly okay with me if he constructs a story out of the words of these participants. In some other kind of research document--one that was perhaps just a little tidier, a little more quantitative, a little more tuned in to Science, and maybe just a little less literary --I would, of course, be appalled at your suggestion of a fabricated conversation. But it is quite in keeping with the experimental, and let me say, experiential, qualities of the document. I, for one, shall be anxiously awaiting what he comes up with.

When I got Reader's note I was reminded that this research is not about micro-analysis of language. I'm dealing with pedagogy, body, experience, and world shaping. Certainly micro-awareness fits in here, but it is possible to get too precious about commas and "uh's" and "ummm's."

The 10th Week Interviews are full of dense descriptions and reactions. And this time I am really interested in content. The nuances of word choice and language usage are not really the point here. I am not doing a textual analysis. (I hope the Professor doesn't start on the inseparability of structure and content! If he does I'll never get anywhere.) I think I can construct a group conversation out of the interviews and class notes and stay close enough to the actual words of the students that it will stay with the spirit of the thing.
Professor: But Paul, is docu-drama science?

Well Professor, you know that however I construct this, it is my belief that I will be producing literature.

Professor: Yes, but there is literature and then there is Literature. I have seen some excellent research done where the author has accepted his or her authorial omnipotence, but quotations have been used intact, respectfully, and a story has been told.

Yes. I understand this to be possible, but there are some other issues at stake here. Some real methodological things to consider. And I think the strategy that Reader suggests may well serve the methodology, and ultimately the content.

My purpose in doing this work is about world-making. If situating myself in the academy is a good way to do this, then I will do what I have to do to satisfy the Dissertation Police, or the Science Police, or whatever Police are on my tail. But I also never lose sight of my first intention to shape the world, and the conduct of science and the Academy. Therefore, I am searching for the edge of science that lets me tell the story and keeps me on purpose. I'll use whatever works.

So in this course we ...

Reader: Whoa what's going on? You froze in mid-sentence. I don't think I've ever seen a thought die so fast.

I'm extremely sensitive about prejudicing the information. Obviously I know my preconceptions will come out somehow in this document, but I really don't want to conclude before I've begun. That would close down my own discovery process. I think I was just about to do that.

Reader: You don't want to lay down the law too early, is that right?

Yes, that's one way of putting it.
Professor: I think you are also faced with that reader dilemma again. How much to reveal before, and how much to look back on. I think you were just about to make a big pronouncement about THE WAY IT WAS. But that might take all the steam out of SHOWING it in the write up of the interviews. This is a tricky question, the background question, because if you don't give us a little basic information, we won't be able to follow the conversation.

Reader: But you were only going to say something about the methods you guys actually did use. That is not speculation. That might be very useful information for us. You know you can, and you do err to the side of stinginess sometimes.

Professor: Very fine point Reader. Lighten up Marienthal.

Okay. Okay. And Reader, thank you for your suggestion on how to proceed. But I'm going to consider the implications a little further before I make my decision.

Bill and I operated on what might be called an emergent pedagogical design. Each week we met to discuss the direction to take in class. In a sense we were "following" the direction of the class (though this is certainly a complex question bringing up the issues of power/directivity--both subtle and unsubtle--status, and so on, topics to be dealt with as we go.) My point is that even though we had strong biases about what we were doing, as a theoretical construct, we were open to change.

Professor: Reader, doesn't that remind you of John Dewey and the "inquiry model" of life?

Reader: Yes, but I'd still like Paul to get on with it already.

Patience Reader. Professor has asked a good question that needs to be addressed: "Is docu-drama research?"
I ask, isn't all research reporting docu-
drama? At what point do the words cease to be 
a subject's and become the researchers? During 
the dictation when the researcher makes a 
choice about punctuation? When the researcher 
chooses which sentences to use and which to 
overlook from a cassette recording? When the 
researcher starts adding commas to phrasings? 
When the researcher adds an "a" or "the" to a 
quotation so it can be fit into a sentence? 
When the researcher fabricates a transition 
line, or gives voice to a "silent" look, or 
slouch? Isn't a report always a construction 
from the very beginning?

Also, whenever we choose a methodological 
filter, whether it is the manner of data 
collection (tape recording, dictation, memory), 
reporting, or theorizing, we gain something and 
we give up something. That is almost a stupid 
thing to say, but it is so important to really 
remember this. Choice X means not Choice Y.

Professor: So, what will you gain and what will you 
lose with a reconstructed conversation?

Obviously I lose a certain kind of methodological 
purity. There are people, and sometimes I am 
one of them, who feel that using others' voices 
in any way is already risky ethical business. 
Shouldn't people's voices be inviolable? 
Shouldn't every grunt, every sigh, every 
repeating phoneme be included without 
alteration?

At times, in fact, I will argue that there 
really is no story other than participants' 
collected voices. Everything else is pure 
fiction. And even then, because of the highly 
selective processing maneuvers it takes to 
reduce data, the researcher always produces a 
fiction.

Reader: So how can you even consider this 
fabricated conversation as a way of telling the 
story?

Being an ironist I contradict myself again and 
again. The above statements are real for me. 
And so is the statement that there simply is no 
methodological purity. The point is to get the
method aligned with purpose aligned with intent aligned with carry through. Actions and intentions and methods must compliment one another. I call this internal validity. It is not trying to satisfy the validity police. It is about, at any given moment, making a holistically consistent choice.

Bill and I had a heated exchange about this recently. I think Bill misread my adherence to "consistency" as a kind of rigid metaphysics. He thought consistency meant sticking to some personal set of rules. This is exactly the converse of my belief.

Remember Rorty's contingency, the notion that our whole way of being can change with our ever-changing environment. I have a powerful intention to align myself, holistically, with the contingencies of my environment. That means at any given moment I am going to think, act, be and feel in some consistent manner. The point is to actively consider, reflect, and adjust one's thinking and being and acting. Perhaps this happens many times in a single day. It is a kind of personal-self-reflexive-internal validity. It applies in every context of my life, and I consider this the heart of my practice as a human being.

Paradoxically it is very freeing. When I give up a rigid adherence to rules, and invest in my capacity to respond consistently and contextually, I am trusting myself to make appropriate choices. If you ask me how I determine what is an appropriate choice, "How do I know when I've got it", I'll tell you to 1) think back through this entire document, and 2) wait for the last chapter. There is no glib answer to that question, and I don't want to throw one out here.

Reader: So contingency figures in your whole research design?

I collected data and reflected on that data in accordance with my notions of contingency. Sometimes this principle is called "emergent design." That is a name. A fine name. But a name. In real terms, as far as the class went, it meant that I sat down at the end of every
week, meditated and reflected on the class and on me. I let issues emerge out of this meditation. And the big issue that finally floated to the top at the end of week seven was not the same issue I went in with at week one.

Reader: What was the original question?

I thought my big questions were pedagogical and curricular, for example, revolving around the issues I have named "emancipatory authority," or, how the teacher's status can be minimized, or, how to strike a viable balance between theory and practice, or, can presence be taught, or how do I come to an ethical balance between disclosure and withholding.

Reader: And what emerged?

The burning issue turned out to be the "Reality Check!" How many veils, how dense the filters, how much baggage do we bring into situations?

Has this class been useful and helpful in getting people, me included, to notice that what we call "really happening" may be just a fiction of our contingent imaginations and lives. I consider myself pretty observant, but I clearly misread people over and over. Just when I thought people were into the class they dropped it for chrissake.

Reader: And how does that affect your decision about fabricating a conversation?

As anal as I could get, obsessive to the max, about sharing the students' stories in their own voices, I know damn well that my biases are going to bleed all over anyway. That is not to say that a paraphrase is exactly the same as a direct quote. I just want to acknowledge that biases are going to surface. But spending a lot of energy minimizing this is not my current struggle.

I actually think that my proposal to construct this conversation is actually a revelation. It would be a disastrous call if it was going to be the final word on the course
or the final word on these students, but it isn't.

Professor: Yes, you already know you will meet together for a member check to evaluate your observations.

Yes, we have all agreed to meet and discuss this writing in detail. Each student will get a copy of this whole chapter, including the "conversation." They can do whatever they like with it. Mark it. Hack it. Burn it. Edit it. Correct it.

Professor: But a constructed conversation will be so much your reality.

And I assume I will get close on some observations. I also assume I will mess up on some observations. In either case, this format will accentuate this emergent issue: it is harder than I thought to know others realities. By fabricating a conversation I will be sending this issue up in neon lights.

"Is docu-drama research?" It's a great question. Professor, does it matter whether you or Bill really asked it? Will this form of reporting further the inquiry? Will this form of reporting contribute to making the world? Does this form of writing have internally valid consequences? Does this form of reporting satisfy the contingencies of the moment?

Alice: Well now just hold on a second here. We're all wondering what you're going to write in our names. I know we will all get a chance to read and amend this later in a group interview. But we're all just a little worried about it coming out exactly as we said it.

Well folks, it's tricky going here. For instance Alice, you didn't even really say what you just said above. I am stretching and playing a little here before I actually begin. I'm trying out what it feels like to write your words for you. How does it feel to the rest of you?
Lynn: Well that's interesting. In this course you're trying to help us reclaim our authority you've now completely appropriated our voices. Isn't that strange and odd?

Marcella: I'm not so sure I'm willing to continue with this at all.

Marge: Smells like some kind of weird reverse secret agenda, putting our words back into our own voices that didn't exist in the first place. Weird.

Paul: Whoa, whoa everybody. This is just an experiment. Come on. I promise the bulk of the conversation will be your own words. I'll only fabricate where I absolutely have to, and you can rewrite it all later at the member check anyway.

Ralph: Alright. I'm willing. It might even be fun. Go ahead then, write it up.
Endnotes

1. Paradoxically it is this disembodied quality of language that lets readers accomplish this layering effect themselves by holding and mixing textual elements within themselves. But as a writer, I am sometimes frustrated by the linear quality of the act of writing.

2. In foregrounding my voice, I intended to responsibly account for my presence. I'm afraid, however, doing this has served to pull attention away from the course and the students. Again, I leave it all in the document because that is the process that occurred. And I think from an educational standpoint it's important to share this dilemma.

   See Minh-ha. (1989). Woman, native, other. Bloomington: Indiana University, pages 28-44 for an excellent discussion concerning the difference between "writing yourself" and "writing about yourself."

3. Obviously, given the cautions about ego-centrism a more accurate title for this section would be "Paul's Story of Ralph." But, as I said, the positionings of teacher, writer, researcher, student, and respondent was critical to the process. Therefore, in the body of the report I am preserving the original titles.

4. Here is the complete interview schedule for the 10th Week Interviews:

   1) Has this course surprised you? Is it what you expected? How is it different than what you expected?

   2) Do you want to come to class? If yes why? If no why?

   2.5) Why do you think so many people stopped coming?

   3) Have we promoted and respected difference in the class, or have we insisted on our way of looking and talking about things?
4) Has anything from class been particularly useful in your life?

5) Is class too personal? Not personal enough? (This is a question about personal privacy.)

6) Have you been asked to do things you just didn't want to do? Have you felt free to say "No?"

7) Do you feel supported by Bill? By me? In terms of interpersonal rules, how do you get this, or not get this?

8) How would you describe your status relationships in class 1) with other students 2) with Bill 3) with me?

9) Have Bill and I done anything that you really dug? Really annoyed you?

9.5) What could we have done differently? What could you have done differently?

10) Have the readings been useful? Annoying? harmful? Other?

11) If you wanted to teach me something what would it be 1) about you, 2) about education, 3) about life?

12) How has the balance been between Bill and me in class?

13) How do you describe this class to others?

14) Does our work conflict with other kinds of learning you have done or are doing now?

15) Do you know more now than you did before this course? Have any of your beliefs changed about the world? About yourself?

16) What do you want the world to look like? Has this class helped or hindered you from achieving that? How?

17) What was it like to do this interview?
18) Other questions I could have asked on the interview?

5. We had been exploring Don Johnson's work on the notion of cultural pressures and ideal images. Several creative art projects supported this work.

   In the exercise mentioned here, I asked students to take five minutes and explore a movement they considered "ideal" by cultural and personal standards. Even if they couldn't actually perform the movement. I wanted them to assume a position that evoked the sense of meeting an imposed standard.

   I then had them take five minutes and explore a fantasy movement of their own. It could be small.

   Finally, I had them explore ways to segue from one movement into the other and back again. We did this in order to begin sensing the power of idealized standards on the flesh.

   An interesting note is that this transition from the everyday movement into the fantasy movement was to be accomplished seamlessly. The instruction was, "Just let your body find a path into the other movement." This reminds me of something Ralph showed me at his computer lab in that very first observation back in May. He had a software program that allowed a person to "draw" two shapes on the computer screen. After designating them #1 and #2, the computer would find a way to transform the first shape into the second shape--visibly, right on the screen. It kind of pulled in the edges and corners, warped and wrapped the sides, and like magic, moving across the screen, the new shape emerged. Ralph considers himself "technology literate," and loves this program. Perhaps the similar parameter of the movement exercise is the thing that grabbed him?

6. I am not totally surprised. I have practiced hard at listening to people. And paradoxically, though many people can not quite place it, my listening intensity is unconsciously read as "support." I am really "there" when people are speaking. In this case I was intently paying attention to Ralph, which at some level he must have recognized.

7. Let me pause for a moment on this topic of "participating" and its companion bugaboo "performing." We never really quite grasped, or dealt with this issue sufficiently. I think this was my fault. I simply
underestimated the magnitude of the cultural messages about performance that existed in this particular group of people.

For the most part the exercises I do have no "correct answers." They are open-ended invitations. Therefore, a request to "find an ideal movement" says nothing about the size, shape, duration, or frequency of the movement. I certainly never said, "make a beautiful movement," or "if your movement isn't big enough to pass muster, then just sit down!"

Every "movement" exercise I assigned could have been successfully accomplished sitting down, with microscopic movements in the fingers or the hands. Marcella's predictable groan of exhaustion was unnecessary. She could have stayed still and done most of the activities with complete commitment. The point is attention. If people had been prepared to really concentrate and go deeply, they would have understood that their ideas of movement were exactly what was being interrogated!

I somehow failed to address this critical issue. Partly, I just didn't pick up on the signs. And partly I just plain resisted their resistance.


12. This is the tip of the "awareness" question: "What's so great about awareness." Ah I finally remember. This is not simply about seeing the simple options, whether to pick strawberry, vanilla, Rome, Milan, tomorrow or Friday. The capacity I talk about, the "awareness" I talk about, goes deeply into the way we make choices. Awareness gives us the possibility of changing the very way we make sense of the world. That's why the upcoming story about Lynn is so significant. That's why I didn't choose her stated turning point. Although it is in the same category, I understood that the hand drawing was the
tip of a whole new way for Lynn to think about even thinking about herself in the world. That is a core change. That is what I'm talking about when I talk "choice" and "awareness." It is redescription, which means retooling the apparatus to make sense of the world differently. This discussion is the difference between mere self-reflection and being deeply self-reflexive.

13. I also want to acknowledge Bill up front for his honesty and willingness. He has been identified as a committee member and so I can not disguise his identity in this report. Nonetheless, he has at no time censored my words about class, or about him. I consider that courageous.

14. Of course this is exactly what I cannot provide if I am to stay anywhere close to my own beliefs around canons and ideologies and authenticity and evangelism. I can't tell you how to emancipate yourself, much less how you can emancipate others for god's sakes. Certainly I want everyone to ultimately use what I teach in their lives and in their classrooms. But I really wanted to open up the recovery/discovery/development of their own ways of making sense of the world. I don't really know, nor do I want to account for, exactly how you react to my suggestions. That's for you to decide. I can open up a laboratory, and I can even provide experiments. But I stop short of making the conclusions. If I try to give that to people in a tidy package, I destroy my primary purpose.

This was just extremely hard for people to grasp because they were not in the market for discomfort and irony. I see (even better now) that irony just cannot be forced on people. And so, several of them remained frustrated through the whole course waiting for the methodological manna.

Of course, it is also ironic that I did in fact offer the ingredients for many methodologies. There was no shortage of activities, there was no shortage of theories, and no shortage of useable material. It just didn't come out in neat programs. Or rather, it came out in a "program" that said, "Shape it as you will." This is a big leap. Shape it as you will. This places the responsibility for the creative/synthetic act with the students. They were not all prepared to take up that responsibility.

You see, the really scary thing is that ultimately I am asking people to consider the possibility of
rethinking the very way they go about making sense of the world. That's scary. I assume, contrary to Marge's beliefs, for instance, "That people aren't just who they are." People change. I think that's exciting. And that's the way I always want it. That makes for an ironic life. But can I impose that on others? No, of course not. But I can say, "Hey, check this out."

15. This was an in-class assignment. I wanted them to begin making the fluid "conversion" from cognition to action. This is a little misleading, because I think it is possible to notice and perceive and respond to the embodied component of cognitive work. When we think, when we talk, our flesh is engaged.

I wanted them to start seeing that relationships exist in the world, spatially, organically, impulsively.

16. A key somatic principle is that a change in action alters perception, and a change in perception changes action. In other words, changing the way we look at something, actually changes our bodies. This extends of Rorty's language/contingency notion into holism.

17. It's ironic, because I wanted a partner to take some heat off me, that I'm a little pissed at Bill for giving up his role as a teacher, and becoming a student. But as a model of a teacher exploring he is a magnificent exemplar. I have never seen a teacher impose so little arbitrary authority on people. It's amazing, really.

18. This material on the Panopticon was covered in CHAPTER III. I have left it in here to protect the integrity of the process. I also think that gaze is a potent concept, and a review of the Panopticon won't hurt.

19. This is a deceptively simple exercise, but it often has startling and even stunning results. These two moments have powerfully different implications. At the most basic level one is a filling up moment, and the other is an emptying moment. But much personal information can be had here about "holding," "resisting," "expanding," and so on. It can be very rich.

20. Charlotte Selver, one of Don Johnson's contemporaries, thinks that heightened sensory awareness is totally where it's at. Everything else is extra. She has her students just slow down and notice, week after week after week.

22. The Spruce Goose is now in a giant hangar, visible from my mother's apartment window, off the Long Beach Coast. It sits, immovable.

23. If you want to pursue post-positivist research methodologies, here is a short reading list to choose from. This will give you a good running start:


24. Some of this is explored in the CHAPTER XIX.

25. See the following page for Endnote 25.
25. Here is one of the original four Alternatives—a preliminary and rough schematic of the course itself. I am not going to do a lengthy discussion of this. Consider it an artifact, an archaeological find. See what you can make of it:
CHAPTER XVI

The Member Check

What I must have is a will to try, to risk, to look, to judge, and to stick with the material until it speaks to me. The end result of such an episode is a broader and deeper familiarity, which will tend to enhance the next quest for understanding.

(Nel Noddings)"

December 6 was our last class session. Starting that night I wrote feverishly for two weeks, and on the 19th, I hand delivered the first three chapters of PART II, a working copy of CHAPTERS XIII-XV, to each of the class members. These, of course, are the chapters directly related to the students. On the Sunday before Christmas we gathered in Lynn's living room to evaluate the material. We quickly identified three areas to be addressed: 1) the methodological purpose of the member check, 2) the relationship of these CHAPTERS to the context of the entire document, and, 3) the content of THE STORIES themselves.

1) About member checks I said:

. . . I'm working out of a particular research paradigm which says that since "truth" is a construction, we better all construct it together. If I'm saying something about you, I better include your substantial input in it, as opposed to taking an omnipotent, all-powerful-eye viewpoint, which is the traditional research model.

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Though I was interested in their evaluations of the STORIES, I was also there to get anything and everything they had to say about the general document. But perhaps most importantly, I considered the meeting a critical part of the whole educative experience.

The liberatory research paradigm demands that every stage of the process be designed for the benefit of the participants. I saw the member check as an opportunity for all of us to reflect on what had obviously been an emotional experience for everyone. I saw it as a possible treasure chest of insights for us all, a way for everyone to see some of the issues in action.

2) About the eventual shape of my dissertation, I explained that the format and content of the final document, like that of the class, was still "emerging." "So," I said, "Voila, here it is!"

3) We agreed to deal with the STORIES using the following format: each person would have an opportunity to speak about their own Story without interruption or feedback. Only when they were finished would others respond to the writing or content or the person's reactions.

+++ Did you notice how glibly I addressed the issue of member checks? "I better include your substantial input in it." What does that really mean? Didn't I just glide over some subtle methodological undertows of the emancipatory model? An exchange in the early moments of the meeting touches on all three of the discussion areas we identified, and evoked some of the more complex dilemmas of doing liberatory research:

Alice: ... After we respond to what you have written, will the responses today be put in a separate section called "member check," or will you see what happens and use it to amend what you've already written?

Paul: Good question. I don't know. I assume I'll do some of both actually. As I say, I consider what I wrote entirely negotiable. No one else has read it. I haven't passed it around. And
I'm trying to make it clear that this is simply a view. One of many possible views. And there's nothing in here that's not negotiable, from the writing style to the content.

Bill: Let me press on her question a little. Do we have the final cut?

Paul: Good question.

Bill: If I don't want that paragraph in there . . .

Paul: I'm negotiable about that. I don't know. Let's talk about it.

This exchange raises huge issues, the core methodological issues are: who is this all really for, and who is this really about? Is this my writing or our writing, my Story or our Story? Who is the intended beneficiary of all this effort? Who is ultimately responsible for the wide range of reactions, thoughts, feelings that were stirred up in this course and this meeting? And ultimately what is the goal of the whole project?

And though I obviously adhere to the principles of interactive/emancipatory models of research, was everything really negotiable in this document? Maybe in my utopian dreams. If someone had demanded that I eliminate sections wholesale, perhaps I could have sucked it up and axed large parts of them. But quite honestly it would not have been easy for me at the time.

I'm reminded of the trite but important distinction between process and product. If I now amend the stories behind the scenes, using the students input, I might have produced a more "accurate" account. But I would be running the risk of subsuming the more fascinating negotiation process itself.

Writing hardly lends itself to group activity. And though I wanted, and still want, to include the students' input, it's difficult to pull off. Unless they actually take on some of the primary writing, we will always be playing catch up with the last chapter. This is a real problem in the so-called liberatory research model. Sure, I did extensive interviews. I wasn't writing off the top of my head. But . . .

+++
Having determined the agenda and ground rules together, and putting to rest for the moment the methodological and context questions, we tackled the STORIES themselves. People had a wide range of responses to each of the stories. Anger and hilarity flowed freely. Some people accepted my observations.

Alice said:

"I'm okay with what you wrote."

Marcella's initial reply was:

"Well I thought you were pretty much on target."

Lynn said:

"I think your story is fine. . . . I don't have any problem with it."

But Ralph and Marge had powerful objections and reactions to the writing, and Bill said almost nothing about his Story. I find these the richest sources of illumination and will now take them up.

**Ralph's Story**

We are not looking for the discovery of a generalization, nor a particular pattern of investigation, not the mechanical application of a procedure, nor any glib response. We are aiming at a "Eureka!" response: I see! So that's it! Now I know!"

(Nel Noddings)"

Ralph: I asked Paul when I came in if he had his psycho-social body armor on (laughs). . . . When I went through this the first time, I was a little pissed. I felt betrayed. [Because I'd revealed his strong reactions in the interview, including crying.] There were
things I'm not sure I want shared. . . . And when I got to the end, that upset me. The way you ended the story. I think there needs to be more.

When Ralph finished, the others immediately picked it up:

Alice [angrily]: I'm really glad [you said] that. I think there's some serious boundary intrusion. Serious boundary intrusion. Especially in Ralph's Story. And I think you really need to reconsider how much you put down. And also you forget some of the wonderful things that happened for Ralph. The way that your walking made you feel huge, and wonderful. When you did your skydiving. Mostly this is just pathos. I just think it strikes me that you forgot some of the good stuff.

Lynn: I'm not sure some of that is even bad. But there's a lot more that I saw.

Marge: I think Ralph's privacy had been invaded. I seem to remember the first night, back when the quarter began. . . . You commented that you were here to enjoy because you [already] had enough material [for the dissertation] . . .

Two basic issues emerge from these interactions:
1) Had I said too much, had I invaded his boundaries/privacy by writing that he had cried in his interview? 2) Had I left important material out, especially the positive experiences? Here are my responses to these two questions:

1) Had I violated Ralph's boundaries by revealing some extremely personal material?

I wrote in the transcription, after Alice's initial comment:

No. I didn't promise not to share STUFF. Come on. That's your issue. Maybe I could have been more sensitive. But you [people] have assumptions which weren't discussed. Especially Alice. What's her charge with boundaries?
Everyone knew I was doing research for a dissertation. I'd tape-recorded early class sessions and interviews. I'd saved their drawings. I never made an agreement to eliminate the use of any observations or interview material. I should have been explicit about the fact that I was intending to use everything. In fact, I had this topic penned into a class plan. But we had such a great discussion that day that it got overlooked.

This is all chicken and egg stuff. I'll make the wild speculation that if I had said, "Is there anything from any class session or the interviews that I can not use in this first pass," everyone would have said, "Go ahead." Still I needed to make that contact, and I didn't. It's just very important to do the "Roger-Roger, Over and Out" thing. I think they were surprised and shocked by the nature and depth of my observations. I don't quite know what they expected, something a little vaguer perhaps? I could have known this—even I was a little shocked at how much I wrote. I could have prepared the way a little better.

However, I did point out to them that I hadn't just gone ahead and made a dissertation out of it. After all we were having this meeting. I reminded them that for the time being, nothing was going any further than our small circle.

But it wasn't quite enough. I just hadn't been sensitive to how poignant the work really was. I forgot that many people are not committed to personal exploration in the same way I am. For Ralph, even our small circle was apparently too large for a first encounter with his Story. I either needed another step in the process—individual feedback sessions with each person on their own Story—or I needed extremely clear agreements about who was going to see what, when. I apologized. People seemed satisfied and dropped it. We went on.

As far as I am concerned I failed at some important communication, but I hadn't violated a boundary agreement. Of course, that does not mitigate or discount Ralph's feelings of betrayal, which were real—agreements or not.

2) Had I left out important material, especially the positive experiences?
Yes. Very clearly. This was a glaring absence, and affected everybody's Story to some extent. I did not frame Ralph's Story as a triumph in the way I actually experienced it. I considered what had happened in the interview a real breakthrough, and I implied that Ralph experienced it that way. But I left that pretty much as a subtle undertone.

I agreed that I had skewed the Story toward pathos, and acknowledged it was part of an old pattern of mine --overlooking the triumphs." I said I needed to find a way to include more of the liberating insights Ralph had experienced throughout the whole quarter. I asked him if he would be willing to go back through the document with me, and make this adjustment. He agreed to meet me a couple of weeks later, just after New Years.

The Follow Up Session With Ralph After New Years

We are aiming at a "Eureka!"
response: I see! So that's it! Now I know!"

(Noddings)"

After some short preliminary chit chat while setting up the recording equipment in Ralph's office we had this exchange:

Ralph: When Bill started this, [proposed the course] talking about social construction and all that, my first reaction was, well that's a bunch of crap. That the idea that our total personalities are socially constructed. I guess after this, particularly my reaction to you writing about the crying. It really struck home how much of a construction that is. How my feelings are not my own.

Paul: The crying?

Ralph: I'm beginning to see . . . just the basic social stigma of men crying. That's a very basic aspect of our culture.
Paul: And letting people know.

Ralph: That's even worse. But there are socially acceptable times for crying. And [animated voice] I don't know if this was one of them. (Laughs).

Paul: Maybe there was confusion in there too . . .

Ralph: I was under a tremendous amount of pressure at the time.

Paul: One of the reasons it didn't occur to me that I was breaching your privacy was it seemed like an appropriate time to be crying . . .

Ralph: and when I said I felt betrayal. I think that was a social reaction. . .

Paul: that I'm a man exposing you . . .

Ralph: yeah, and I debated as to whether I should modify that . . . but that was the reaction that I felt [at the member check when he said I'd betrayed him by writing about his crying]. But I wasn't trying to hurt you.

Paul: At the moment you said it, you hurt me . . .

Ralph: yeah, and that was my gut reaction. . .

Paul: I think it's really great that you see that's a reaction, something . . . we all got.

Ralph: Alice felt it was a betrayal too. . . . I felt her support.

[The fact that Alice assumed a report of crying was a breach of privacy indicates to me that the socialization around crying is not limited to men. I'll speculate that a report of Lynn crying, which happened in class on several occasions, would have gone right by Alice. I don't intend this as a criticism of Alice. It's simply a recognition of acculturation.]

Paul: That's rich to see that stuff.

Ralph: For most of my life I don't acknowledge those things. I've gotten real numb.
I have left this long piece of conversation intact because it marks such a powerful shift--betrayal to insight. Understanding and feeling that the cultural forces actually embed themselves in our functioning was the primary message in this course. Ralph GOT IT. And I think he got it viscerally as well as intellectually.

I think it is also worth noting that this discovery is being made by Ralph and being reported to me. That is an important pedagogical point. I did not do the discovering for Ralph and then ram it down his throat. I was fully prepared, after the volatility of the member check, for Ralph to say, "I've thought this over and I want this taken out."

The tone of this conversation was clear and subdued, but not without some joy. When we finally got to negotiating the final use of the "crying" material, and how it would fit into the dissertation, Ralph said,

"I wouldn't want you to put something in that dilutes the power of this. This is powerful."

In my transcription I wrote,

Remarkable. Not only do we come full circle from betrayal to insightful camaraderie, but he doesn't want it diluted! This is a pretty big shift for two men to make.

And one more observation about this sequence of events. It's a speculation. I'll verify it later with Ralph. Just hold this, it will be important soon in Marge's Story. I think Ralph understood at some gut level, even through his strong feelings of betrayal, that I was on his side. And because of that, he was able to really examine the situation, emotionally and logistically. It was in this supportive light that my seeming betrayal became an opportunity for him.

The point I'm making is that Ralph, in a milieu of support, even if that support was subtle, was able to turn his hurt/anger into to a powerful insight-gaining tool.
Remember the Nel Noddings quote at the beginning of this chapter:

What I must have is a will to try, to risk, to look, to judge, and to stick with the material until it speaks to me. The end result of such an episode is a broader and deeper familiarity, which will tend to enhance the next quest for understanding.

Ralph had the will to try, to risk, to look, to judge. He stuck with the material and something shifted. Something lifted. He risked. He looked. And the result was both "broader and deeper familiarity." BINGO.

+++  

But as Bill pointed out at the member check,

... necessarily you can only give each of us a few pages of the hundreds that can be written. So you have a strategy for, a technology for what the Story does for you, for getting on down the road.

Of course that is true. And the writing above suits my purposes beautifully. It illustrates the liberatory possibility of risk, one of my pet agendas. And I recognize that there is a long continuum between private interpretations and collaboration. I want to express my viewpoints and I also want to include collaboration. Therefore I'll end this section with Ralph's own objections/corrections to the original Story. That is also an important move "down the road" for me, honoring co-research, even if the aesthetic doesn't seem as elegant to me.

Ralph objected to the blanket description of him as a resistor.

Ralph: I wasn't trying to resist you as a teacher. I think at those times I truly either didn't feel anything, or couldn't perceive. ... And again that goes back to my whole upbringing, and suppressing so much. The term "you use it
or lose it." Until something massive comes along, these little changes just don't get through . . .

Paul: So you think this is my projection?

Ralph: Yes . . . for the most part I don't go around rebelling. It's only when something really strikes some core issue inside me . . .

Paul: So you didn't say, "He's really seeing something important here."

Ralph: No, that was wrong.

Paul: But in this exercise we did together [the leader/follower exercise described in his Story] we did go pretty deep so . . .

Ralph: Yes, that's when it happened. That really made me aware.

I accepted the correction. And when I went on to ask Ralph for triumphs I had completely overlooked we had this exchange:

Ralph: The end [the last day of class] when we created an enactment." I'll take credit for that. . . . I think I really helped develop that activity.

Paul: I actually have it written down to give you acknowledgement.

[But I didn't give that acknowledgement--another failure to openly acknowledge success]

Ralph: After I saw them struggling [Alice and Lynn] I got what had to be done. I'll take credit for that. And that's difficult for me. I'll take credit for that. (LAUGHS LOUDLY)

No Shit! It sure is hard for Ralph to take credit, to be "out on Front Street" as he puts it. He's stretching in every direction. His laugh was full of embarrassment and thrill.

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I'll assume I've now taken care of Question #2: "Had I left out important material, especially the positive experiences?"

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**Marge's Story**

In our illustrations, both Carl and Nancy were pulled out of Sartre's "gluey haze" by a teacher who invited them to see.

(Nel Noddings)"

Marge: I don't know where to start. I've been livid ever since I read this. There are a couple of key phrases in here: "I don't mean to dump on Marge." I didn't mark anything until just now. I read it about three times. But I just. First my reaction was don't go to this meeting. My second reaction was to call you and say don't put any of this in. I feel there was an agenda for this course, that none of us knew, or if we knew it, we didn't discuss it. Two questions, [she reads] 'Do I have the right to ask her to go into personal material,' and two, 'what is my responsibility for meeting her where she's at?' As far as I'm concerned, that if I had known this, up front, I probably wouldn't have taken this class. And the whole issue of so many people dropping out, I think was never really addressed. And I feel like at one point, I couldn't really drop the course. I made that commitment and so I stuck it out. Reading all this I begin to see where we were going. That we were all used, we were really guinea pigs, that we were totally being observed. A lot of assumptions were made. I think where I'm concerned. I gave you the impression that "every minute I couldn't wait for the damn thing to end." There's an awful lot of assumptions in here. Words like "lament," "litany." A lot of things were taken out of context.
I also don't quite know where to start. As soon as she started speaking I felt both her anger and hurt. And the issue here is not whether I got Marge's Story right or wrong. The fact is, I immediately realized I'd had a failure of empathy. I still think many of my observations have validity. But somehow I had failed to communicate to Marge, like I had to Ralph, that I was on her side. What I now see is that I used this Story as a forum to express my feelings.

I made a pedagogical choice early in the quarter not to dump my anger and dissatisfaction on the students. This is a carryover from my training as a therapist--always take my distress to my own support system whatever that may be. It's an issue about the uses and abuses of transference and countertransference." Most counseling theory contends that it is never acceptable to dump on the client. What's the case in education? Perhaps dumping is never okay. Not even in Life. But when is it acceptable to express the full range of our feelings? Doesn't education get pretty dry if the teacher has to be the one to suck it in all the time?

We talked about this at the member check. I speculated that perhaps I should have blown up early, and really let them see my frustration. Alice said that might have been a good choice for me, but would have been a bad choice for the class. I agreed. But aren't I part of the class too? So what's to do here?

Perhaps the pressure of multiple agendas sabotaged me. As a teacher I remembered to treat Marge respectfully. As a researcher I forgot. But let's assume that my anger was just as real as Marge's fear or anxiety or whatever it was. What should liberatory teachers do about their feelings?

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I heard and felt Marge's rage. And when she said, "What have I been doing for fifty years," I heard her pain. I realized then that I had used the writing as a way of telling my Story, of expressing my feelings and beliefs. Yes, my feelings needed to be vented too, just not in this way. (Sigh).

Alice suggested that Marge and I get together and rewrite Marge's Story to reflect Marge's "truth." Marge and I agreed to do that after the first of the year. I
called and left a message for Marge on January 3. I received this letter in return:

January 6, 1992

Dear Paul,

This is to let you know that you can use whatever you want from the original manuscript. What you wrote are your perceptions of what you observed, felt, perceived etc. about my participation in the course. I can't change those. My reactions were just as personal as your writings about the course/experiment (whatever it was).

I attended the session at Lynn's to close the chapter on the course and I really do not want to spend any more time thinking about it or rehashing what has become a very unpleasant experience. At this point the only thing I thank you for is bringing such a great group of people together.

Good luck in future endeavors!

Marge

["I can't change those."]

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There were simply too many agendas going on. I was trying to be a liberatory teacher and a form-breaking researcher at the same time. I needed to express those feelings of anger and dissatisfaction. But I didn't need to share it with Marge, at least not in a public forum. I didn't need to use the words "litany" and "lament" in a piece of writing she would have to approve as a description of her experiences?

I'm not the buddha, but I consider myself generally pretty perceptive. How did I get so far off? I think there was a methodological breakdown here on two fronts:
1) I needed more on-going support and feedback. Better peer debriefing. Perhaps an interested supervisor who didn't have a primary investment in the action. A well informed friend. A Partner. This class took a turn into deeply personal material very early. I needed to recognize that and account for it methodologically. (I know the Messiah is supposed to handle all this with a certain kind of aplomb, but hell . . .)

2) I needed to respect the volatility of my writing. I probably needed to pause, and share it with a confidant/supervisor before I gave it to the students. I needed someone to say, "Hey, Paul, this is pretty angry stuff, you need to do something else here." I needed to recognize my desperation about finishing this document, and about finishing graduate school. I needed to see I was acting on an idea—that I should have a member check while the material was still "hot."

For Marge, I needed to slow down and add a step in the process. I needed to get together with her and say, "Marge, I have a lot of feelings that are getting in the way of me seeing you. Help me out here. What really went on?" I needed to remember that I was dealing with a good human being. I needed to remember the severe cautions about research running over people. I needed to remember. And I didn't.

Again let me say, I think many of my observations have validity. And, her participation and commitment were limited. I did end her Story with some clear affirmations. But at the member check Alice called Marge's Story "a trashing." Hell, I don't know. Maybe it was. I tried to balance the strong words with a recognition of Marge's newfound sense of "freedom." I think Marge overlooked the considerable affirmation I gave her toward the end of the piece. I understand why. She was already sunk, not by individual words like "litany" and "lament." The overall tone was angry. It was judgmental. And it showed.

With Marge I forgot the point of the class and the research. I hope in my style of education and research that getting the truth "right" doesn't overshadow treating people well. When I wrote this Story I forgot that the kind of personal work we were doing was confrontive and terrifying for Marge. Even if she couldn't say that, it was clear to me. In the member check she said,
I was actually reading this the night of my fiftieth birthday... and I said to myself what the hell have I been doing for fifty years? I mean, what's the use. I don't get it. That's what I'm being told.

In her Story I punished her for having her particular fifty years of history, her particular fifty years of fears. I punished her for being her. I could have written a very different Story. I could have written something that started this way instead:

Marge's Story

In response to Question #5 on the 10th Week Interview Marge said:

Some of the things, I couldn't go any farther with it. I couldn't transpose to paper. But there were feelings that came out, feelings of loneliness that I don't want to face, because if I dwell on them, I'll be sunk.

Marge is a person working very hard to do good work in the world. She is attempting to restructure the public school system of Columbus to create imaginative learning environments for kids. She is not used to the intense self-reflection we were doing this course. Therefore I consider it a triumph that she was willing to share so openly with me in her interview.

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I should damn well know that taking those first looks at the self, at the self underneath the old time assumptions is terrifying. I shouldn't forget this. I'm a goddamned therapist for christsake. It's my job to remember that people are scared to look at the layers underneath. It's my job to remember that shoving someone's unconscious in their face might just cause a defensive explosion."

I could have seen Marge doing her damnedest to make contact with a scary situation. After all, she thought this was going to be a course about technology. She didn't know I was going to ask her to look at her core for christsake.
Marge uses a phrase, or something like it, over and over in her speaking and her writing, "YOU ARE WHAT YOU ARE." When I hear that I have two reactions. One is still anger and sounds like this:

   no more
   no less
   Then what happens to your
   cherished critical thinker?
   Why think at all?
   to what?
   If you just are
   what you are,
   why then Education?

   The other is forgiveness and softness and sounds like this:

   I forget that
   "you are what you are"
   is Marge's way of saying
   Back off,
   get your hands off me.
   I'm going as fast as I can.

   Of course I had an agenda. I wanted people to "get it." Every teacher does. Including Liz Ellsworth and the other cautionary pedagogues. I wanted Marge to say, "ah, there I am, thanks." I wanted her to acknowledge me for taking her out of the "gluey haze"--as Sartre puts it."

   But Marge is fifty years old. She's been defending her unconscious for a long time. I should have seen that her 10th Week Interview was a triumph of openness. When she said:

   I couldn't transpose to paper. But there were feelings that came out, feelings of loneliness that I don't want to face, because if I dwell on them I'll be sunk,

   I should have heard this. I should have heard this as a boundary. Marge was pushing it as far as she could.

   + + +
I can't change those.
I can't change those.
I can't change those.
I can't change those.
I can't change those.
I can't change those.

I don't know what to think about this right now.

Bill's Story

You can't force me to be a member check. Put that in your methodology.

(Bill Taylor, November 17)

As awful as the implications of Marge's Story are, in some ways I am more disturbed by what happened with Bill's Story than anything else.

I blew it with Marge. Plain and simple. It reminds me what comes out of a "failure of empathy." Zilch. Kaput. Nada. No, I didn't lose a client off a bridge or to a gunshot through the head for christsake. But I did lose a partner in exploring ourselves and our shared world. And I hurt someone. That's pretty serious to me. Termination of relationship is painful for me. And maybe I've even done some long term disservice. Perhaps Marge will be more reluctant to do anything like self-reflection in the future. I've contributed to that. In this instance, looked at from any liberatory model--education, therapy, or research--I've done bad work. Not catastrophic. Just bad.

But we all saw it. Alice said, "It's a trashing." Lynn had "litany" circled right from the get go on her copy of the writing. In the member check when Marge said, "What have I been doing for fifty years?," I understood immediately how hurt she was by my observations. When I received her letter I really got the full impact of her distress. I'm truly sorry she and I didn't get another chance to go through it. I think we could have made this thing work for both of us. But I accept the end here, and accept my responsibility in it.
It was Bill's turn.

Bill: I don't really want to say anything about mine directly. I guess I want to use mine to respond to some things said here today. On page fifty-five I talk about [the course]. . . . I sort of thought . . . it was going to look more like a traditional seminar. At least up through, up until the sixth, seventh week. . . . I guess it's not in my story but the fact is somewhere you kind of do the reconstruction of the themes. Well that sounds more in place than I perceived it to be. . . . I'm perfectly willing to accept the explanation you gave a minute ago. Though without some of that experience and vocabulary, you don't really hear the other person when they're using their lingo and jargon. So there's a good chance you told me all along, that this is what I want to do in the course; and since I didn't know what "this" meant, I interpreted it in some other way. . . . I guess somewhere in there at the five, six, seventh week I became fully conscious that, after the Oliver thing, we weren't going to, this wasn't going to look like a standard seminar. There was no way.

Alice: [Short and unintelligible on the tape.]

Bill: . . . [By the seventh week] there was no way of making this thing come around. . . . About the same time we did our thing out on the lawn, . . . but that was pretty good to me, and it allowed me to relax and say, "So we're not going to have a traditional seminar." I'm buying into this one right here. That's just the two points I want to make. I thought we were going to do technology and presence, till the seventh week.

Alice: I think Marge did too. And so did I.

Bill: I heard a lot of you say this. I just want to say, I did too.

Alice: We did get to Presence.

Bill: Yeah, so that's all.
In these remarks Bill opens up one of the touchiest issues of the quarter. Our original course proposal, the one we made in the invitational spring letter, focused on the relationship of technology and presence. That balance hadn't happened. Something else had. A powerful thing. But not that. Obviously that was an issue we all needed to address. There was a lot of lingering feeling about it. But Bill, by framing his participation as confusion or surprise, or whatever you want to call it, evades his responsibility for helping to create that situation in the first place. This is a neat linguistic trick. He has disappeared into the content, into the confusion, and left a real issue dangling in the breeze.

Bill's Story in CHAPTER XV chronicles his pattern of leading and following. It's a pattern he is excitedly coming to see. When he is not in charge he checks out. If he isn't leading, he isn't really participating. At the member check, he once again sat outside the circle, behind everyone at a table. He's beginning to understand that this pattern isn't neutral. It undermines himself and situations he is in.

It was impossible for me ever to really collaborate with Bill. If I led, I was psychically abandoned by Bill. That's hardly grounds for a partnership. It created a situation in which I gradually assumed sole leadership in this group. Of course, this was exacerbated by 1) my tendency to be comfortable with the control, and 2) the demands of the dissertation project always floating around. But the imbalance didn't have to be this great.

What happened to technology? Basically that was to be Bill's contribution to this course. It dropped out. That is partially Bill's responsibility. And he simply evaded this issue at the member check. Like being caught on the wrong side after a surrender and putting on the other side's uniform, he put on the students' own confusion.

I don't think Bill is malicious about this at all. Like I said, it's an old defensive pattern. And like all such patterns, I assume it's there for some good reason. It must have been the best contingent response to his early life situation. I just want him to know that I experience his stance of seemingly constant agreeableness as a form of aggression. His passivity is extremely powerful in this group. The fact that we never really addressed the issue of broken expectations, and the
strong feelings that went with that, has very much to do with Bill's unwillingness to address the leadership issue directly. And because of that I then took the brunt of the students' fire about it.

None of this is really news. I wrote about it in his story. What really shocked me was how everyone colluded with it--including me. There were some substantial issues to be dealt with here at the member check meeting. For instance, was there really no way "of making this thing come around?" Also I never knew that Bill intended for this to be a "traditional seminar." He'd taken a course of mine and certainly knew I didn't do education as usual. But the specific issues here aren't the point. The point is that no one said, "Wait a minute Bill, what about this leadership thing, don't you think we better talk about that?"

Bill is a titled Professor. Did that automatically exempt him from feedback? Certainly he makes himself available and vulnerable in ways that very few academics even consider, much less pull off. But there's also a limit to that willingness. He avoids the hot spots. The students let him. I do too, after all he's on my doctoral committee.

Immediately after Bill finished, Alice entered and we were off the topic:

Bill: Yeah, so that's all . . .

Alice: On page fifty five in the third paragraph, "Marge would have loved it put in a packet."
Why don't you be nice and take that out.

The next seven entries were about Marge, who wasn't even there. She'd left after her volatile contribution to take her daughter to the zoo. I guess she was the safest persona upon whom to shift the conversation. I finally said, "I don't want to talk about Marge too much without Marge being here. . . ." If I hadn't stopped it, I think we'd have just gone on and on about her. We were all tacitly "agreeing" not to address the leadership patterns here--the way in which Bill and I interacted, or failed to interact. Or, perhaps it would be more accurate to say we all agreed to address it by allowing it to continue unchallenged--right through the member check.
The transcription above is virtually the whole discussion of Bill's Story. As a group, we managed to dismiss a core issue in what amounts to a little less than a page of conversation!

Okay, Hold On a Second

Okay, let's give Bill a break. He's been wonderful. The guy's really struggling with some old stuff. And besides, he's deeply entrenched in Academia, which doesn't exactly nurture openness--at least here at OSU. I think, given his life situation, that he's taken a courageous stance for holistic education--education that includes affect. Not many Professors would have supported this enterprise, much less participated in it.

And the issue here has something to do with public and private disclosure--which is shaky territory. I don't claim to know what's right here. In private conversation Bill can be effusive. In public--such as in class--he clams up. Maybe that's just fine.

Some Final Observations About the Member Check

And let's not over-pathologize the member check itself. I want to report on the many positive "intangibles" of this meeting. I'm sorry that Marge left right after dealing with her story. She missed some excellent general discussion, and some real sense of resolution. Yes, there had been strong sentiments expressed by many people. Ralph's initial statement of "betrayal" was strong stuff. Alice had powerful gut reactions to several of the Stories. Lynn wasn't sure there was enough "respect" in the writing. The whole thing raised a lot of feeling. But we had all been extremely engaged by the whole process.

Lynn had fixed a wonderful chicken and broccoli pie experiment which we had eaten at midpoint. There was plenty of popcorn, fizzy water and cranberry juice. At the breaks there was a lot of animated interaction. Several people commiserated with me about how emotional the meeting was turning out to be, and were sympathetic about how much of it was pointed at me. When we all looked up four full hours had passed. We were pretty drained. But there was also a good feeling of camaraderie amongst the six of us. I, for one, sensed some kind of a passage.
In the end, the member check was wonderful. The member check was horrible. The member check was scary. The member check was alive . . .

The awakened inner eye roves over everything of interest; over thorny conceptual problems, over promising methods and techniques, over domains and objects of sensuous delight, over love and faith, over delight and horror, pain, and pleasure. Once awakened it will not willingly return to slumber.

(Nel Noddings)"
Endnotes


2. This document, like the course itself, was "emergent." I originally envisioned PART II as a single chapter, perhaps running ten to fifteen double spaced pages. When it reached one hundred twenty three single spaced pages and I hadn't even started this chapter or the conclusion I thought to myself, "Hmm, I have an aesthetic problem here." At that point I split the document in half.

3. By now it's clear this should be called *Paul's Story of Ralph*.


5. Blah blah blah on my pattern of looking for pathology everywhere. This is an old debilitating habit. I'm going to avoid a lengthy expose at this point. I'll drop it. Can you?


8. Ralph intervened elegantly on the last day of class and created a movement score for everyone that investigated a difficult topic. It was a hard puzzle to solve, and he did it beautifully.

    The issue was based in a technology question: "What if none of the answers offered by a software program, or a teacher for that matter, is 'correct' according to the student. And, very importantly, the student is attached to her answer?" This is a double bind. There is very little give in the system, and it causes stress. The exercise was to enact this double bind. Here's Ralph's excellent solution:

    Bill, Alice, Ralph and I formed a tight circle around Lynn, trapping her inside. Each of us represented both a problem and an exit. In other words, we would not
open up and let Lynn out unless she "solved us." And each of us invented—silently to ourselves—a puzzle for her to solve. These could be verbal or non-verbal riddles.

Lynn turned to each of us and patiently asked us to let her out. That was her solution—to ask nicely. But it was not any of our’s, and she remained trapped. We all took a step closer, tightening the circle. She got nervous and panicky. She demanded to know the solutions. I told her mine. She had to tap my left toes with hers. She immediately tapped my toes. I backed up, and she escaped.

It was a great moment of learning. Remember, the key to the exercise is that Lynn was to remain attached to her solution. She was not to give up her own convictions. But when the pressure mounted a little, and she got uncomfortable, she was all too ready to abandon her convictions.

Alice got it immediately. There was a terrible look of despair on her face. How quickly Lynn had let her solution go when she knew the "right" answer.

We tried it again and this time Lynn eventually went limp and gave up. The circle broke down at that point. Et voila, there's another strategy.

This was an excellent structure suggested by Ralph. Right on the money.


10. Blah blah blah on transference and countertransference. This is such an enormous topic I don't know where to start. Basically transference happens when person A "turns" person B into a particular person or particular kind of person. In other words, a client or student turns the therapist or the teacher into their "mother" or their "father." It is a kind of projection. Countertransference happens when person B responds as if they have accepted the role. In other words, the therapist or teacher buys the transference and treats the client or student like their child.

This is bad news in counseling work. And therapists are paid not to fall down this rabbit hole. But when therapy is really working, clients, in their search for discovery, find ways to draw the therapist toward
countertransference reactions. That's when it's time for a consultation.

I don't think teachers and researchers are sufficiently trained to deal with their countertransference reactions. And therefore they end up dumping on particular students and respondents.

11. "Good" therapists and educators allow clients/students self-discovery. Interpretation can be extremely invasive, normative and damaging.

12. These are words that Jean-Paul Sartre uses. See Noddings (1984a), p. 101.

13. This page number refers to the page numbering of the manuscripts I gave to the students before the member check. It is no longer relevant.

CHAPTER XVII
Beyond The Member Check

Nowhere else, perhaps, does an archaic community take on the lineaments of a noble game more purely than with these Papuans of Melanesia. Competition expresses itself in a form so pure and unalloyed that it seems to excel all similar customs practiced by peoples much more advanced in civilization. At the root of this sacred rite we recognize unmistakably the imperishable need of man to live in beauty. There is no satisfying this need save in play.

(Johan Huizinga)

In order to avoid a disaster similar to that with the STORIES, I decided to give Bill a chance to review my report on his member check participation before anyone else saw it. Bill's initial reaction to the report was so astonishing to me that I spent a week in perplexed turmoil over it. We met briefly the next day and all he said was, "Print it." I asked, "Do you have any thoughts, feelings, reactions, additions, corrections, or deletions?" (I assumed that he must have had at least some of these.) He replied, "No, just print it." I was unnerved by his reaction at the time, but I would be truly amazed by his responses at our next meeting.

I don't think at the time I considered my lunch offer a bribe, but who knows. Bill accepted when I offered to bring in a nice hot pot of soup after his first water aerobic exercise session of the day. Bill's doing aerobic "two-a-days" in the Pomerene pool, at noon and six." He looks great.
After a lively discussion of Rorty, narrative, and irony I served up the soup (a very nice chicken-lentil-curry), and gave it another try on the member check report:

Paul: So Bill, do you really not have anything to say about the writing?

Bill: I'm being DATA! I'm playing my own game. I have a theory that member checks and Emancipatory Authority don't work.

Paul: Are you making sure it doesn't work for you?

Bill: Maybe.

What then ensued was one of the most animated and entertaining exchanges we've ever had. There was something so baldly competitive, so baldly disruptive, so baldly resistant, and so baldly playful about Bill's tone and position that it just makes me thrill as I sit here this morning writing. At the time, I was shocked and dismayed--also enjoying myself and not quite realizing why--but a little pissed and upset too, and maybe a little afraid. I mean, this guy's on my doctoral committee. But my anxiety is all gone right now because I realize that,

THE GAME IS ON!!!!!!!!!!!!

Bill's "data game" is his decision to experiment with the feeling of being treated merely as a piece of data. At this meeting I learned that that is how he perceives himself being treated by me in this document. A big part of our two year discourse has been a discussion of how the culture inscribes itself on our bodies. "Write or be Written" is the way we talk about it. Bill thinks he's being written and has decided to really feel the impact of that socializing imposition on his body. So he's not going to help me readjust his story. He's not going to give me his viewpoint. He's not going to soften or alleviate the stress in this system. In fact, he's decided to conduct his own research experiment using me and this writing as the site of his research! Obviously, I get cast in the role of the Wicked Insciber, but I can handle that. (As he said, "I'm throwing you a curve. It's not fatal.") Turn about is fair PLAY. I LOVE IT. I LOVE IT.
THE GAME IS ON.

Bill: I'm quite convinced this is not my story. Unless I want to take my time to write my own story, and I don't [then my story isn't really going to be told accurately]. It's good what's being explored [this critique of liberatory methodology]. . . .

Paul: It would be useful for me to know why you think member check theory doesn't work, and WHAT your story really is.

Bill: I don't know how it would be liberatory for me to take the time to talk it all through . . . not that it would hurt. I'd have to invent language, and get self-reflective, and I'm not motivated. And I KINDA LIKE BEING A MONKEY WRENCH [in the gears].

Paul: So, in a way you're saying, "Fuck you" to me.

I agree that he's throwing me a "monkey wrench," and it's basically "good what's being explored here." Bill sees in the situation a way to experientially examine and critique emancipatory/liberatory methodologies which are strongly influencing the human sciences these days. I think he genuinely relishes the chance to examine them from the inside. Frankly, I'm really fascinated to see what he comes up with, and I'm glad this project can change and shift and be useful in many ways.

But you can also imagine my fears. Bill is the pivotal member of my doctoral committee. He could be brewing up a catch-22, withholding his participation so at some critical juncture in this doctoral process he can say, "Look, this research failed, you didn't tell my story accurately!" He said that wasn't his intention. And I understood from the animated tone of the exchange that he simply was tickled at finding the opportunity to push the critique of liberatory research methods.

Bill: I've never heard of a defense failing. But it could be an interesting defense. I see myself saying, "I don't think anybody's story was captured here. What do we learn from it [that]?" Prior to the defense I'll talk to Ralph and Lynn and Alice. Did we [the teachers
and researchers of the course, really meaning Paul] get anything right? I'll do a little a dissertation of my own!

This is a statement of outright challenge. He's proposing to assemble an opposition position. He's saying to me, "Okay Mr. Inscriber, let's see you dance with this one!" Wonderful. In fact, later in the conversation we actually talked about it as teams:

Bill: [So in response to your research and write-up of me] I'm just living with "BEING DATA." Remember Minh-ha, "Write or be written."

Paul: [Very animated] We're kind of having teams here!

Bill: [Gleeful] Yes, you're the Cardinals and I'm the Buckeyes ... once I haven't been captured accurately in the stories, it puts me in perverse mode. Let's kick around in this mode, "Empowering Research."

The tone of these exchanges was energetic, crackling. But there was also a darker current which must be acknowledged. I wondered what was fueling the enthusiasm. What were Bill's motivations? I speculated that he was hurt and angered by what I'd written--maybe more deeply than he or I can even know or express at this time. With a little distance from this writing, I see how my write-ups of Bill's participation could be felt as attack, certainly as critique. To an extent, as in Marge's case, I was venting my own feelings. And we know that has powerful consequences. So I asked:

Paul: Are you mad at me?

Bill: No. But obviously I have some theories about why you missed it. The "Freudian investment" for one. [An observation he made about me the week before.]

What maybe is going on is, the contingency of flippancy saying, "I refuse to be a member check." [Said several months earlier] Perhaps it was liberating for me. I don't have to be a docile member of your research.
Paul: I'm worried on a personal level.

Bill: I'm having fun with all this, isn't that obvious? . . . It doesn't look like I'm faking it does it! [This statement is a paraphrase].

One of the most intriguing things about this exchange is the juxtaposition of his observations about our respective motivations. He says he has some theories about my behaviors, which I presume includes my motivations, but then he immediately indicates that there's a pretty good chance he's been resisting the research/(me?) for months. I think Bill is making an important self-realization when he says, "Perhaps it was liberating for me. I don't have to be a docile member of your research." His recognition of prolonged resistance certainly squares with my own perceptions.

I'm not going to jump all over this. But, at the minimum, it says to me that we each have some responsibility for what has happened and for what has been written. Bill's resistance is not solely a result of the written dissertation. His resistance, as his statement above indicates, is older and deeper than his current reaction to these reports. I think this resistance contributed to the writing. In fact, this resistance may have even created/necessitated the writing. Certainly I've played along, and done my share, but I am only part of the picture here.

It's also important to remember that this research, and this relationship, are not "over."

There may be an irony here. I think Bill has felt like a "docile body" around the University for a long time. In the past year he has really begun to take a stand for himself. I think that accounts for his fascination with me, and his interest in this project from the beginning. Perhaps his "being data" exploration is an opportunity for him to experiment with reclaiming his own authority. It is an opportunity to say, "No, I'm not going to be subsumed by your game--whatever it is. I'm taking control." In this light, I can see Bill's "resistance" as an opportunity for him. He said to me, "I'm throwing you a curve, it isn't fatal." He knows that I'm "strong" enough to withstand the anxiety of his challenge here. In fact, he knows that I cherish this kind of pointed exploration. All the votes aren't in yet. There may be some powerful blossoming going on for both of us that is simply not obvious yet . . .
Now I Want to Problematize the Writing Above:

During the conversation we also had this exchange:

Bill: [My] personal history says that [the member check piece] isn't correct. My emotion is sadness.

Paul: Sadness because . . .

Bill: Because after our considerable time together I'm so uncaptured in your ink.

Paul: Me too, somehow I failed to capture [our relationship]. So, do you have any feelings about me?

Bill: No, I've given at the office. You're going to have to finish this up on your own . . .

I'm sad too. And I've spent a quite a few days reflecting on all this, and there are a few things I need to acknowledge:

1. I had an agenda for Bill all along. To an extent I have thought of our relationship as having a therapeutic component--in the sense of all friendship being about change and growth. My agenda has been, "that he blossom, refine his body, gain some self-awareness and be willing to share it." This is classic Emancipatory Authority stuff. And, let me be clear, I am well aware that this is not pure altruism. It is firmly within my interests to have Bill change in these ways. First, it generally makes the world more like I want it. And second, it gives me the companion I need.

2. I have a tendency to pathologize, to look for the dark side. This isn't news to me. It just keeps rolling around.

3. I think I have succumbed to my "image" of academic writing as heavy, pungent and critical. Bill has paid the price. I could have found a way to frame all of this as triumph. But somehow I have acquired the notion that in order to really have any impact, research is supposed go beyond revealing into exposing. And even though I espouse a "liberatory model," this imperative for revelation, the commitment to "truth telling" at all
cost, got me. There's no doubt I've chosen to frame these stories and this project in dark tones. Why? I think a lot of wonderful work went on. A lot of understanding took place in spite of—and maybe because of—the strong feelings.

Perhaps the key statement Bill made in our talk was, "My emotion is sadness . . ." I want to note a couple of important things here. This sentence is one of the few feeling statements Bill has ever made directly to me. I take it very seriously. I believe it. I felt his sadness. And, it's hard for me to entirely believe that he's not also mad. No, I'm not going to put thoughts/feelings into his head. God knows I seem to have done that enough already. I just know that sad and mad are often close companions. His adversarial position leads me to speculate there may be anger here too. When he says, "I have some theories about you. . . .," I wonder if he's also saying, "I have some feelings about you, or at least about what you've written."

And, I don't blame him. I fully understand why he might be sad and mad about what I've written. It is limited. It fails to acknowledge the richness and depth of our interaction. It fails to acknowledge his growth. I feel terrible if I've hurt Bill. I care for him. I also feel a lot of sadness that I felt compelled to write about the dark side of so many things. And, it's important to leave this all here, because it is process I am sticking with in this document.
Endnotes


2. My god, Bill's doing two-a-days! For you football buffs, you'll recognize two-a-days as the grueling workout schedule of those weeks just before the Fall Campaign commences, when, in that late August early September jag of heat, boys across America work their butts off, get creamed into the ground all morning, and then come back and do it all over again in the afternoon. These are two-a-days.
CHAPTER XVIII

What Does It All Mean?

Its quietness. As our elder Lao Tzu used to say, knowing ignorance is strength, ignoring knowledge is sickness: if one is sick of sickness, then one is no longer sick. For a variation, I would say knowledge for knowledge's sake is sickness. Let her who is sick with sickness pass on the story, a gift unasked for like a huge bag of moonlight. Now stars shine white on a black on a colored sky.

(Trinh T. Minh-ha)'

I woke up earlier today struggling with the question, "What does this all mean?" After a morning of leftover Passover macaroons, tea, beer and nothing but a file name on the computer screen, I called my friend Crayton for a consultation:

Paul: Hey buddy, this morning I finally have to say what this all means.

Crayton: Well, what have you learned?

The answer shot out immediately, clear as distilled water.

Paul: Be cautious. Don't be an asshole. And don't think you know more than you think you do.

Crayton: Sounds like the flip side of the Guy's Rules. Have you finally hit on the Girl's Rules?
Four or five years ago, at a time when he was feeling particularly cowardly, I composed the Guy's Rules for Crayton. He has them taped up next to his bathroom mirror, and refers to them when he sinks into a shallow pool of indecision—which he does more often than he would like. That's why they're next to his mirror. They go like this:

Decide.
Do what you want.
Kick some butt.
Have some fun.

Crayton: You've been moving toward the Girl's Rules, at least the Non-Guy's Rules, for a long time. You're one of the few people around who knows that many ways of being have value. And, you attempt to act on that knowledge. You really stick your neck out. You're trying to change. You know there's a time to back off, and you know there's a time to grab hold. There's a time to resist, there's a time to aggress. There's a time to soothe and a time to ruffle. A time to hold softly, and a time to shake deep.

Paul: Yes, I agree, finding a balance is quite important. But this project has taught me something else, and it has quite humbled me.

Crayton: Sure. A problem comes when one or the other of these sets of rules gets taken to an extreme, right?

Paul: What I've noticed is scarier than that. I've now experienced how much damage can be done when one set of rules gets disguised in the other's language.

Crayton: Sounds like you're opening up a new wound here. Isn't this supposed to be the conclusion?

Paul: I know, this is the big wrap-up to PART II, not the time for springing surprises and opening wounds, but that's not the way it's coming out. Girl's Rules and Guy's Rules, that's the way it's coming out. I can't help it. That's what comes up when I slow down and let this all into my body. I feel just how
gendered my world is here at the Academy. And I feel how deeply I have been affected by my gendered environment.

Crayton, I think I've been playing Guy's Rules in Girl's language. Basically, I've been doing exactly what I want and staying firmly in charge in the name of emancipation, intersubjectivity, relationship, and difference.

Crayton: Distilling this to gender issues sounds pretty reductive and dualistic.

Paul: And I hate doing that, it flies in the face of my love for irony. But there's just something too starkly real about the gender in all this.

Crayton: How do you see this happening?

Paul: Even if we limit the discussion to the theory in this dissertation that bears directly on education, I think we come up with some startling divisions--Rorty's private/public split, Noddings's defense of intuition and affect in the classroom, Becker's transcendence, Ellsworth's emancipatory cautions. Each of these can be categorized in that way that has become so familiar over the past twenty years--MALE equals rational/transcendent/individual, and FEMALE equals affective/relational/community. It is reductive, even simplistic, but it's there, both theoretically and practically. Maybe "horribly elegant" is the way to acknowledge this analysis.

Crayton: Are you saying that even though you're sensitive to these issues, you were still playing Guy's Rules.

Paul: Whether it was with Bill, or with the class, or with this dissertation, I decided. I basically did what I wanted. I think I even kicked some butt. And hell, maybe I even had some fun.

And Crayton, all of this is not so startling to me on an awareness level. I've hardly disguised my self-doubt or limitations.
What startles me is that I hadn't seen the gender implications earlier. Foucault talks about the polymorphous techniques of power. Elizabeth Ellsworth warns us about the folly of emancipatory authority. Jessica Benjamin extols a sensitivity to relationship. I think I have been sensitive to those concepts in the course and in this report, but the gendered nature of this material slid by.

Crayton: What didn't you see earlier, and how did you miss it?

Paul: It is pretty clear that one of my agendas in this dissertation is the re-foregrounding of the personal, at least the equal weighting of the personal, in academic work. Nancy Fraser calls this being "neither hyper-individual nor hyper-communitarian." Fraser also talks about politics shading into poetry. I have tried to make this research and this document reflect a balance of the public and the private, the pungent and the poetic. That's been the focus.

Crayton: In other words you didn't want to write a dry, completely self-abnegating report.

Paul: Yes, but I failed to remember that the call for re-personalizing research has come from women trying to redress male power, and male narcissism. In truth it is women who have been silenced. Men have had plenty of attention. I know this. And I forgot. At the least, in my effort to infuse some life into academia I have fallen into an egoistic trap. There is simply too much of me in PART II of the document.

Crayton: Is there anything you can do about it?

Paul: I considered scrapping the entirety of PART II, but frankly I'm not willing. In the rewriting I have pulled as much of me out of it as I could without losing the direction altogether. And, perhaps exposing this dilemma will be a useful contribution. That remains to be seen.

Crayton: But you mustn't completely discount the considerable good work, good thinking, and good support that happened in your class, and in
this document. You did fine work with some of the students and with Bill.

Paul: You're right. But there were gender related problems in the class itself. And I want to acknowledge those too, before I move on to the positive contributions here.

Crayton: How do you see this?

Paul: It's ironic you use that word. I think seeing, and all its implications, is at the heart of the problem I'm talking about. If you look back through this dissertation you will find many references to "looking" and "seeing." There are many discussions about the way in which seeing and power are related. Foucault's work on gaze is particularly to the point. But, what has not been said is that gaze has gender implications.

In Pornography and Silence Susan Griffin writes,

> For we read in church doctrine that the man is the head and the wife the body, or that woman is the known, whereas man is the knower. At one end of this spectrum or another, as pornographer, in fantasy, as the being on whom these images are projected, our minds come together in culture, as we are shaped by the force of images and through the events which these images effect.

Pornography, power, images and knowing are nearly conflated in Griffin's cosmology.

Crayton: Are you saying that your research was pornographic?

Paul: Yes, I think to a certain extent, I am. I spoke at length in my story in CHAPTER XV how the accumulated pressures of teaching, writing, and researching conspired to keep me outside the action. The net effect was that I spent quite a bit of time observing the students as they revealed themselves. In retrospect, I see
the voyeuristic aspect of the work. And yes, I think it had a pornographic feel to it.

Crayton: But you were just doing your job.

Paul: And that is Griffin's point about pornography, and my point about research. Academic culture is set up pornographically, just as the larger culture is set up pornographically. Seeing, knowing, surveilling, controlling are so endemic that they are hardly noticed.

Crayton: And it turns out that a lot of the looking is men looking at women.

Paul: Do you think it just happens to turn out that way?

Crayton: Hmm.

Paul: Alice asked me at the member check meeting, "What would you do differently?" If I had it to do again, it's a cinch I'd be more tuned in to who looked at whom, how, when, where and for what purposes.

Crayton: I can see that! And, if you're trying to be responsive to women's rules, why not pursue Alice's question. What else might you do differently?

Paul: Okay. I don't want to get paralyzed. I think we can move on. In CHAPTER XIII I laid out our original intentions for the course. We wanted to:

1) Increase people's capacities for awareness and expression of their bodies.

2) Familiarize students with theoretical viewpoints dealing with presence, awareness, power/knowledge, docile bodies and so on.

3) Persuade them to become sensitive to historical contexts, especially those having to do with the confluence of power/knowledge and the body.
4) Assist students in the interrogation of power strategies and dynamics as these actually come down in their own lives, including the context of this class.

5) Help people refashion the very way they make sense of the world, promoting self-reflexive redescription.

6) Open up a space for utopian speculation.

Crayton: How'd you do?

Paul: I hope you can see the underlying gestalt in these intentions is to balance the public and private, to somehow assist the students to make active connections between the self and the collective. I think that's the kind of educational world we were trying to produce. And I think we did okay on all six counts.

Specifically, I think the 10th Week Interviews may have provided some of these people their first opportunities to talk emotionally about their work as educators. Certainly it was the first time many of them realized their strong feelings had an embodied component.

In particular Ralph and Alice made connections in visceral ways between their bodies, their cultures, and their histories. They were able to use the movement and technologies of this class to touch deeper personal expressions. And, they were both able to enact change--Ralph in class, and Alice right in her work place.

There were some revelations for Bill. He sees possibilities for significant personal and institutional change. For instance, he has recently proposed a new course, which he will teach next winter, called "Personal Redescription." That could start a shift in the Academy.
Crayton: Other strong moments?

Paul: Listen to this, it's from my fieldnotes:

Is research a naming? Is it a blooming? Is all our language a naming? A naming or singing. The challenge I see here is naming the "impossible." Nothing less. Giving voice to the impossible. And listening to the impossible." Last Friday afternoon in our final session for the Spring, when the four of us, experimenting with feeling conversations, got diverted over and over by "because." At some moment, all leaned in toward the center of our circle, our heads got close, and there was silence. Silence almost singing.

I think there were many moments of revelation. They are often hard to talk about. Crisis plays so much better on paper.

Crayton: Okay. And what are some other things you might have done?

Paul: Of course, there were things along the way I could have done differently which would have promoted these more fully.

I could have confronted Bill's withdrawal pattern and demanded he take care of the technology component promised the students. I could have done all the assignments along with the students and broken down the power/knowledge/voyer barrier. I could have distributed lesson plans, further undermining my hold on the weekly processing and planning. I could have assigned greater portions of the class leadership to other people. I could have shared my observations much earlier, and in private with each of the students, and so on. These all might have alleviated some hitch or other in the process.

Crayton: And I suppose you could have found an entirely different format for this report.
Paul: Yes.

Crayton: But I hear in your voice that there's a big one that hasn't been mentioned yet.

Paul: It has to do with the liberatory pretensions—aside from feminist influences—at the core of this research.

Crayton: Say more about liberation and research.

Paul: The genre known as "emancipatory" or "liberatory" research has the same intentions and constraints as "liberatory" education. The work is supposed to be fully collaborative, and most importantly it is undertaken for the benefit of the respondents. Which isn't to say the researcher derives no benefit, but that benefit must not be at the expense of the researched.

Crayton: And how is this applicable in your work?

Paul: First and foremost I need to address the question of who really benefitted from all this activity.

Crayton: The class itself seems to have really shaken all of you up in some good ways. How would you judge this document itself?

Paul: I think some basic liberatory criteria would be, 1) can those being researched really be found in the research, and 2) are the researched the ultimate benefactors of the research?

Crayton: Hmm, I see. Based on that you might have some problems justifying the work. Like you said, there's an awful lot of "you" here.

Paul: I offered to let people write their own stories. No one wanted to do that—although I included a lot of Alice's own writing in her story. Bill had no interest in writing anything about the work or himself. But the problem was much deeper than the telling of the stories. The fact is, we didn't share an agenda from the start. This is my fault. It was a result of my own fear of rejection.
Certainly it was no secret that I was doing research. But no one in the class had anything close to an agenda of "researching themselves for the purpose of liberation." I think the research aspect of the project was tolerated by the students. I think I should have sucked it up at the beginning and asked, "Do you really want to participate in this research?" I should have been prepared for the answer, "No."

So that is the first thing I could have done differently. Opened myself to full scale rejection. Perhaps had I done a fuller disclosure of my intentions at the beginning, some of the fireworks at the end could have been avoided.

I do not, finally, want to discount the magnificent amount of effort and support I got from everyone, but I must recognize that the effort was a service people did for me. I appreciate the hell out of it, but it was for my benefit. From a liberatory standpoint I find this extremely discomforting.

Crayton: You're talking about the research. Certainly people took the class for themselves.

Paul: This is tricky. Yes, the students took the class for their own benefit. I think they tolerated the research for my benefit. This, I think, was an acceptable arrangement for them, but I'm not so sure it's acceptable to me. In my effort be consistent, to have all aspects of my activity match-up in some way, I wanted this whole experience to have an emancipatory flavor. As I've said before, perhaps I got a little overwhelmed trying to function in so many emancipatory roles at once.

Crayton: You undermined yourself.

Paul: Yes, I think so. Knowing what I now know about the people in this project, I wouldn't have done this research. Period. End of sentence. These people simply were not interested in having their lives interrupted and their stories told. Perhaps this is the single most potent thing I learned in this
event. Unless someone invites me in, I'd just as soon stay out of their insides.

I think I should have sucked it up and found a group of people who understood my intentions from the beginning.

Crayton: But then you wouldn't have run into these fruitful dilemmas about emancipatory authority with quite such a vengeance. Give yourself a break.

Paul: Yes, you're right.

Crayton: Do you really think this project shouldn't have been done? Was there no deeper benefit? How about talking about the good things--some of the curriculum innovations, the fact that you pulled this work off within the confines of a major research institution.

Paul: The course itself had great value. Even with its considerable flaws, I will pursue this work in the future. And, I confirmed an important thing for myself--the importance for teachers and researchers to do extensive self-reflection at every stage of their work. Whether this means writing, talking, moving, or free-associating. Whatever the method. It's clear to me that liberatory pretensions will only have a positive affect to the degree that the practitioner can identify his or her own complicity in non-liberatory undercurrents.

Crayton: Come on Paul. Just say something good, will you, for chrissake.

Paul: Yes. Okay. Yes, there's room for deeply affective encounters at the university. It's possible to do holistic education. Our work was good.

Now let's move on.
Endnotes


3. Fraser, p. 107.


5. This is a reference to Jean-Francois Lyotard. (1979). *The postmodern condition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. He discusses art as striving to name the unnameable. See the final pages.
PART III

CONCLUSION
CHAPTER XIX
The Dissertation as Praxis: The Emergence of An Educator

The artist makes art not to save humankind, but to save himself.

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We may have to accept an ethical cleavage between imagination and reality, tolerating horrors, rapes, and mutilations in art that we would not tolerate in society.

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Behind every book is a certain person with a certain history. I can never know too much about that person and that history.

(Camille Paglia)'

What I seek is completion in the other—the sense of being cared-for and, I hope, the renewed commitment of the cared-for to turn about and act as one-caring in the circles and chains within which he is defined. Thus, I am not justified but somehow fulfilled and complete in my own life and in the lives of those I have thus influenced.

It sounds all very nice, says my male colleague, but can you claim to be doing "ethics"? After all, ethics is the study of justified action... Ah, yes. But, after "after-all," I am a woman, and I was not party to that definition.

(Nel Noddings)''
In this final chapter I am concerned with the meaning of this whole process, and its affect on me. We will finally address the dissertation as praxis.

Shirley Grundy in her lovely book *Curriculum: Product or Praxis* lays out some groundwork on praxis. She writes:

1. The constitutive elements of praxis are action and reflection.

2. Praxis takes place in the real, not the hypothetical world.

3. Praxis operates in the world of interaction, the social and cultural world.

4. The world of praxis is the constructed, not the natural world.

Grundy's book concerns itself primarily with curriculum development. However, I find these concepts perfectly suited for a discussion of personal development as well. And so, for the sake of discussion, I will consider myself the curriculum for a while. Here is the way I interpret Grundy's four assertions:

1. Product is not the point. I develop through a dynamic and fully integrated process of planning, acting and evaluating. In every thrust forward there are moments of evaluation and reflection. Growth and change come as much from negotiating histories--personal and cultural--as from formulating solutions.

2. I develop within real situations. It does me little good, ultimately, to think of myself as a thing, separate from a particular time and place, trying to become some kind of an entity.

3. My development is a social act. As I am influenced by particular social formations, so in turn, I influence them. It is an intensely social event.

4. This one is highly problematic, not because it is wrong, but because it is limited. This is Grundy's way of recognizing that "knowledge is a social construction," which seems fairly
indisputable given poststructuralist accounts. What counts as "truth" is what is agreed upon at any given moment by whomever counts in the culture. This was Rorty's point about the contingency of language in CHAPTER I, and we have revisited that notion often throughout the text. But, is this true of "me?" Am I a "social construction?" I don't think so. At least I don't think so "all the way down." Therefore I find the distinction Grundy makes between the "constructed" world and the "natural" world to be problematic. Yes, I agree that knowledge is socially constructed. But I am not only knowledge. I am flesh and blood. And that comes before knowing. This is ultimately a powerful piece of the puzzle for me, and I will bring it up again later.

In summary, the operating principle here is that praxis is a process of action and reflection within a particular social context. Regarding this dissertation, then, what has happened? Within what context? And reflecting back, what's been learned?

Three Environments

My life for the past year has been essentially consumed by three things: 1) a research project, from conception through documentation (including theory, method, data, and analysis), 2) substantial interactions with committee members within the context of a university milieu, and 3) life that happens in and around the production of the document.

Traditionally, number one is considered the entirety of the dissertation. It amounts to a written report of a project based on particular theory. Number two is taken for merely structural and bureaucratic reality. Number three is trivialized as the student's "problem," a once-in-a-career event to be discussed, eulogized and/or emotionally discharged over beers down at the local pizza joint.

The greater bulk of this document fits this traditional set of intentions. Even if I have produced a document which is not in strictly traditional forms, PARTS I and II are still fundamentally a review, application and evaluation of theory. But I am not
satisfied by this at all. Using Grundy's criteria of action and reflection within a social context, I consider "the dissertation" a combination of all the people and events and environments in which I flourished or floundered in the past year.

It is possible but not desirable to strip out the wide variety of contexts and influences on this work—the realities of life at a research institution located in the Midwest, relationships with these particular faculty members, and the physical production of hundreds of pages of text. In fact, it is only from that totalizing perspective, my interactions with students and faculty at particular sites—the Pomerene Ballroom, Bill's kitchen, Gene's office, my room in the ghetto, the computer lab with the free printer, all in varying states of boredom, anxiety, excitement—that I can finally say how this dissertation created me as an educator. Without all these accounted for I would consider this a partial report of the experience. Therefore, I am going to now take up items number two and three—relationships with faculty/committee/institution and life around the writing process itself.

Life with my committee:

A year ago, foreseeing the possibility that context would emerge as an essential component of the process, I tape recorded the proposal-making/negotiating sessions with my committee members. These interviews were subsequently transcribed, coded, and analyzed in a paper written for Patti.

At the time, these dissertation organizing sessions coded into these primary categories: Sticking to business as usual; clear statements that breaking form is acceptable/desirable, and; the willingness to live with uncertainty/irony. At the time I also wrote:

Note: my aim here is not to oversimplify or demonize anyone. All of us are multiply-sited people. We are all complex. We are pulled on by many forces, influenced by many discourses, yanked on by diverse demons. In fact, one of the things I learn over and over in this work is that reductive data analysis techniques justify any reading an analyst cares to produce. Last week, for instance, the Graduate School videotaped me talking about teaching for the GTA Awards Ceremony." (I assume they are making a commercial of some kind with the material.) It was clear to me that, edited carefully,
they could make me sound like an Educational Nazi. So it is in a gentle kind of spirit I offer this analysis.

And here's what I wrote in that paper for Patti about those early sessions with my committee members:

In response to the issue of sticking to business as usual:

Sy [Dr. Seymour Kleinman, my advisor] frames his conservatism in terms of established structures, pre-existing rules, bureaucratic authority . . .

The "business as usual" component in Patti's world, the authority at work, is the marketplace: job making, job promoting, job keeping. She frames a lot of academic pursuit, in this case the dissertation, as employment enhancement.

Gene and Bill frame their "business as usual" in terms of expertise, certification, and standards. Like Sy, they invoke higher authority. However, Sy focuses on structure, the conformity of the document itself to traditional formats and methodologies. Gene and Bill are more concerned with quality, the issues of "expertise" and "certification." Perhaps theirs could be termed a "personnel" question: Will I, as a trained academic, be personally qualified for academic institutional life?

In response to Breaking Form:

To what extent and in what ways are Patti, Sy, Bill and Gene willing to challenge the corporate-academic hegemony, and how is this willingness reflected in their attitudes toward dissertations?

Patti: "And what the document looks like, I think is also emergent, negotiable. Certainly something that is in a form that at least will reflect the spirit of the project itself. So it just demands a breaking of form, with the traditional document. Have you looked at Bill Tierney?"

Here Patti is not only encouraging an emergent design, an open ended result, she is also pointing me toward alternative exemplars.
Gene: What about the mode of presentation, because I remember being concerned about your voice.

Gene is referring to a previous conversation in which I proposed that each of the committee members, in an obviously wild departure from the "dissertation as usual," co-create a chapter of the dissertation with me. I speculated that these chapters could take many forms: playlets, opera librettos, etc. My rationale for this proposal was that it would conspicuously break down the ownership of ideas. This is basic in my stance against "business as usual" in the academy. Gene, in previous discussions, has agreed to participate intimately in the creation of a chapter of the dissertation. In the statement above he cautions that this co-writing process could have the ironic effect of silencing me. He wants to guard against that. I experience this as a powerful encouragement at challenging form. Not only is he willing to disrupt the traditional production of the document, but he's concerned about me personally as well.

Sy: It's about rules. It's about people who always live their lives by the rules. And once the rule is there that shapes their lives. And the mentality is if I do it for you I have to do it for everybody. Horseshit. I do it for you because it's appropriate to do it for you. And I won't do it for someone else when it's not appropriate to do it. I don't have to do it for everybody because I do it for you.

Okay. So Sy's full of contradictions. He doesn't always follow the rules. He's willing to bend them, or even ignore them. But still note that Sy's metaphor remains rules. He negotiates the university through form and structure.

Regarding Bill: The original flash for pushing the form of the dissertation came in a conversation with Bill (a conversation that ended with us laughing hysterically on the floor). We decided the perfect deconstructive move would be to disperse authorship completely, and have committee members write their own chapters. Heck, we decided, then Patti can have the methodology just the way she wants it! And Bill said,

Let's get Derrida to write the Introduction!!!!!!

What more can I say?
In response to the Willingness to Live With Irony:

This category refers to areas of conscious uncertainty, a willingness for any of us to compromise. Irony is, at times, a painful place, reflecting the desire to create radical new forms, ideas, conceptualizations but recognizing that the Institution has a formidable constrictive foothold. This is the place of "yes, but . . ." In academia it is often the place where corporate/institutional restriction collides with the impulse for change and experimentation. It can also be the moment of pain and confusion and hesitancy and excitement when we begin drilling a hole in our own boat. These four academics all consider getting out their drills:

Patti: So you'll end up with some, let us say for the sake of the discussion, some rich varied vignettes that might end up being crafted out of "this empirical experience base you're going to construct for yourself," where you can pursue these "fabulously elusive" but pressing and urgent issues.

(She laughs)

I love the laugh. This is exactly the point. This is where Patti and I seem to psychically hang out--pursuing the fabulously elusive but pressing issues of the day. But it is a place of uncertainty. Exactly what the issues are, and how they will be perceived and reported is not clear at the time of this interview. This is not only okay with Patti, it makes her laugh.

Sy: I think you should be sensitive to the fact that you can indeed make a very sensible presentation that can be interpreted from a traditional point of view or an innovative point of view or whatever way. . . .

Sy is willing to support all kinds of experiments. It's clear throughout this interview that he has a lot of room for experimentation. He is perfectly willing to have the whole process examined critically, and says,
It's appropriate to critique it (traditional methodologies). But the question is why, you have to state, you know, why you're critiquing it.

Sy is supportive of a middle, critical ground. He just wants to make sure the argument eventually satisfies the Structure/Form Police.

Gene: This is what I understood you to mean . . . when you say with confidence, "I have technologies," to what do you point to prove that? A written document or what just happened? And the irony that . . . you're going to want to foreground here is the irony of pointing to a written document when you would really like to, and should point to an event, an experience, a feeling, a process.

Paul: . . . I'll use Stephen Tyler as a model and transfer what will by then be a series of active alive moments into a visual document.

Gene: Uh huh, into a written document.

Paul: Does it have to be a written document? I was trying to leave myself some space!!! [My fantasy here was a visual multi-media dissertation of some kind.]

Paul and Gene: (Both laugh)

Gene: So that's where it is, it's nice to think of the irony of pointing to a written document to certify your expertise in something that only happens among people, in time, in body, and so forth. Nice irony.

The interview continues in this vain. Gene understands the fundamental ironies inherent in my proposal—the irony in the proposed research, and the irony of producing a written document about material that may inherently be untranslatable, "impossible" in Patti's terms. He knows my heart lies with creative modes of knowing and expression. He knows I'd rather do an opera than a dissertation. And, like Patti, he laughs at the irony in all this quite often. And I laugh along with him.
Bill: I'm not going to know until I see the document. This is really a tough one to predict, or commit to. I mean Gene's right, you've got to show some expertise. That's the game. But your committee is not unsophisticated. They know that's a game, and so they'll bend a long way.

At the end of this paper, written a year ago for Patti, I made a list of the things that the dissertation might accomplish. It hints at my vision of the dissertation as a complex personal and social event:

So wham bam, what does my gut say about all this? What's a dissertation between Patti, Paul, Gene, Sy and Bill?

It's power, but not all that much, flying hegemonically to and fro
It's irony ethnography
It's rules to keep, asses to cover
It's breaking form
It's structures to obliterate
It's taking ownership of ideas
It's loathing ownership of anything
It's collaborating
It's refusing to collaborate
It's reestablishing the integrity of the process
It's a good laugh if everything goes well
It's a source of publications
It's certification in the club
It's access to the jewels
It's situating myself for employment
It's rejecting membership in the Market
It's pushing rules
It's opportunity for personal reevaluation
It's not data-chasing
It's redressing current hegemonic practices
It's creating a pedagogy
It's de-centering professorial authority
It's creating a theory of pedagogy
It's making links across the university
It's constructing the world
It's marketing the self
It's reestablishing integrity of this process
It's not being cynical
It's theoretical sensitivity
It's paying homage to established forms
It's living with uncertainty
Well, it also turned out to be Gene's considerable fascination and care—the innumerable times he hung in with difficult conversations. It turned out to be Sy's on-going bemusement at my emotional swervings, the quizzical look on his face that over and over again said, "Deep man, deep," and let it go at that. It turned out to be Patti's commitment to experimentation. And it turned out to be Bill's own formidable searching and reaching discussed at length in PART II.

And how did it turn out for me?

Production of the document

I live in an old elementary school. A large stone building built in the late 1800s. All spires and turrets. I live in the baby boomer wing built during the fifties that juts off the back into the decaying asphalt. It is just an elementary school classroom. Concrete block walls. Linoleum floor. Low sink in the corner. Blackboards on one side. Bulletin boards on the other. Low shelves with rows of coat hooks at first grade level under them. All of my things are out and visible. Worktables full of clay. Cabinets full of tools. Musical instruments on their stands.

The west wall is all windows. My computer and books and papers are in the corner by this window. They sit on tables made from old doors, hardware, and other materials acquired from the storage basement, which used to be gym. I have built benches and ledges at just the right height, so that my keyboard is exactly at the ends of the arms of my chair. Open pages can easily be read on all sides of me. Using an elaborate system of extension cords, I power my inexpensive boom box, my computer and the hotplate which I use to make oatmeal and heat the corner. I usually play one cassette tape back and forth all day, either James Taylor's greatest hits ("How sweet it is to be loved by you"), or Bruce Cockburn ("Well I'm a loner, with a loner's point of view"). Sometimes I play the tape so softly that I can only hear a note now and again. But having it there seems to absorb some internal chatter. The whole thing is virtually a womb of scholarly production.

Two things happen outside my window. One is stationary. One is active. In many ways they define my experience of the last year. They reflect the heart of my praxis.
The first one, across Cleveland Avenue, is the Timken Company water tower which floats, always in my view. Enormous. I mark the condition of the natural world against it. On a gray morning it absorbs any light that is in the sky, and emanates majestically, almost in defiance of the overcast. On a bright day it relaxes into the flatness, and calls little attention to itself. There are no high buildings around the tower. And so, as the year cycles from equinox to solstice, I watch the afternoon suns approach from the south, then retreat. By June, when I will be finished with this, our great orange orb will actually englobe the tower as it drops toward California.

Timken makes high quality ball bearings. Bob Wiginton, who would know, says they are some of the finest made in the world. Last year when I replaced the brakes on my '69 Dart I discovered that the bearings were made by Timken. Twenty three years is a long time for wheel bearings to last.

When my dad visited two Passovers ago, he went to my window, looked out, and laughed a little. He told me that Dick Marienthal, the older man who had adopted my father and brought him out of Germany in 1936, and presumably saved my father from the gas chambers, sold his last stock to finance his own death in the hospital. These were shares of Timken Roller Bearing.

The active thing that happens outside my window is the F and H Grill. I live on the second floor of the back wing. Looking 90 degrees to the left from my chair at the computer, I look down across a small patch of grass and asphalt, past a bending chain fence, past the alley, past the small parking area, to the back door of the grill. I live at the edge of the ghetto. The F and H is a bar in a faded green wooden house. I know there is broken sign at the front of the building on Cleveland Avenue. I assume, though I don't know for sure, that it is now illegal. Anyway, everyone enters and exits through the back door in the alley.

In the winter, from about eight thirty in the morning until about eleven or twelve at night, and in the summer until one or two in the morning, there is an intermittent but constant stream of people in and out of the back door. Women. Men. Sometimes with children. Young people. Old people. Different people. The same people.
The owner is a subdued and nattily dressed elderly man. I love it when he comes out in his light blues with the matching cap and the wide collared white shirt. I don't think I have ever seen him without a cap or hat. He looked wonderful last week on Easter in his creme colored suit with a white hat and white shoes. He walks slowly. Once I saw him playfully grab someone by the arm. But usually he just nods and goes back inside. Sometimes he reappears and pours a little dry cat food out the back door. He owns a nice large red car. After it snows a young man comes out with a broom and brushes the snow off the car. He always starts with the windows and finishes with the bumper.

I see The Walker every day. He is in his late thirties. Always dressed neatly. On cold days he keeps his hands in his tan coat pockets, up around his chest. He walks fast, with little chopped steps, his feet turned out slightly. A little like Babe Ruth's home run trot. At least two or three times a day I see him coming down the alley from the left or right, or past on the sidewalk out on Cleveland. Sometimes he goes into or comes out of the back door. He is always moving. It is late April as I write this, about 10 o'clock in the morning. I have seen The Walker three times already today. He just came down the alley pulling on a pair of dark gloves.

There is an old set of wooden stairs next to the back door of the F and H that goes up onto the lower part of the roof over the first floor extension. A couple of older men repaired that part last fall with light gray colored roll-roofing. They came two or three hours a day for almost a week. Carefully cutting around the feet of the air conditioning unit. Gluing every seam with a caulk gun. Spreading tar up the chimney. Stepping carefully over the seams as they worked so they wouldn't spread the tar around. I don't know why they left the little jutting overhang green.

In the spring and the summer people take turns sitting on the stairs. In nice weather the oldest man of all sits there a lot. He is extremely thin, but handsome with his dark skin and huge white afro. Last Labor Day he was wearing a gold jacket, which made the blackness of his face and whiteness of hair stand out. But he had his arm in a sling. I felt bad for him, and I couldn't stop looking out the window. I got nothing accomplished.
On summer nights when they open the back door at the F and H, I can hear the music from the jukebox. Because of the angle I can only see the bottoms of the stools. I think they must dance. But I'm not sure.

Many people come dressed for work early in the morning. Painters. Secretaries. Office workers? Sometimes with children in their arms. Clean white sweaters and purses over their shoulders. Gray linen suits. I'm not sure if they cook in there or not. I figure with all the early morning traffic maybe they make eggs or something. But I've only seen beer delivery trucks. The Pabst truck stops in the alley. The Miller truck stops on Cleveland.

About a year ago they had the little area in back paved. An Italian looking guy on a small steam roller kept yelling at his crew to spray water as he rolled back and forth in the little square area, avoiding the telephone pole. Come to think of it I've never seen anyone hit the pole. The owner stood in the door watching. At first I didn't like it. The new hard blackness didn't contrast well with the faded green. And I've never figured out why they didn't pave the narrow strip on the left where the dumpster sits. But it has all worn together.

Vehicles. Endless vehicles. But only three or four can park behind the F and H at any one time. Sometimes they park behind the concrete block building next door. I think they rebuild clutches in there. One afternoon last fall the slightly deformed white guy who comes out of there, shaking his hammer, nailed a "No Parking" sign to the back of his building. Someone from the F and H took it down as soon as the white guy went around the corner. It always seems to work out.

There are four cats. Two black ones. A calico. And a white one. The black and the white ones play around the dumpster quite a bit. The calico runs up and down next to the building, and hides in the grass that grows around the bases of all the fences that border on the alley. The black ones also walk up the stairs onto the porch roof.

I have wondered if this is a crack house. But I strongly don't think so. In three years of looking out my window every day I have never seen a fight or violence or even ugliness. No, that's not true. The first summer, one hot evening a drunken woman in a
halter top raised hell in the alley, and threw several bottles over the fence into our old school yard.

I just take it to be a place of community. Of life. Streamings and comings and movings and touchings. A central meeting ground in the ghetto. And it always surprises me, the turnover. Many people do not stay long. They seem to come just to say hello. Many conversations leaning over car doors in the lot. Short.

I take it to be a place of community. Streamings and comings and goings. Movement and longing. A place of love. Maybe. A place of comings and goings for sure.

One day last summer a nice looking black woman, hair pulled back in a short curved pony tail, wearing loose white shorts, a stylish white sleeveless top, knee length white socks, and black hi-top sneakers, lightly brushed the space between her breasts while talking to a man dressed for work in blue jeans, work boots, butchered t-shirt and hard hat. He walked slowly over to her, cupped her left breast with his hand for three or four seconds, and moved on toward Cleveland Avenue. I thought to myself, "What do I know about the way people act. Nothing."

Last month the sheriffs raided the F and H. Half a dozen marked and unmarked cars showed up. Many uniforms swarmed around the building. Some even went up the back stairs onto the roof. A dark haired man with a thick collared jacket and his chest pushed out seemed to be directing the operation. Clipboards. The slightly deformed guy seemed to be all over the place, and I wondered if he'd blown the whistle. The neighborhood was all out in the back, sitting on the hoods of the cars, socializing with the extra cops. Clipboards and private consultations at the corners of the building. The owner walked around wearing his white hat, and moving at his usual speed. A big truck pulled up in the alley. Two fat white guys in blue work shirts and baseball caps got out of the cab. They lowered the hydraulic tailgate of the truck. They rolled a hand dolly into the F and H and came out with pinball and video games. They loaded them onto the truck. Then they sat in the cab. After about an hour they unloaded the truck, took all the games back inside the F and H and drove away. The clipboards disappeared. Everyone disappeared. All that was left in the parking lot was the red car.
As I write this at 10:30 on a Sunday morning, three cars pull up. A dad pulls a small kid out of a late model blue sedan and slings him like a bag of diamond sand over his shoulder. He goes to the back door, knocks, and waits, like they all do, to be let in. The door opens. He enters. The door closes. The cats freeze on the stairs.

The Emergence of An Educator

I let my panoramic eye float out of this scene and take in this little knot of Columbus all at once, to notice, within one block, the strange juxtapositions of the Timken Company, the Intellectual, and the F and H Grill. Here is industry behind its fences with the guard station, it's tower floating above it all. Here is the illegal ghetto bar full of community life like a terrestrial coral reef. And here is the white doctoral student at his computer in the corner of the old school watching it all, isolated, through the glass.

I cannot speak for Timken. I cannot speak for the F and H. I can only speak for myself.

I estimate that I have spent four thousand hours in the last three years at my computer by the window. My wrists are stiff. My fingers hurt. A place between my neck and left shoulder has gone numb, and sends needles through my skin at regular intervals.

I feel the temptation to rage cynically as my flesh unravels. I am certifying myself as a holistic educator. Education? Holism? I can now endlessly theorize it. But have I, in thinking about how to shape the world, become the tower on the other side of Cleveland Avenue, removed from the real traffic of life? Am I floating outside it all like the Timken water tower?

No. I think something else has happened.

When I came to Columbus three years ago from the West Coast I already had an educational agenda. I was mad that people didn't share affect openly in their classrooms. I was mad at the secret life of power in corporate academia. I was mad at the way people withheld and played their stupid social games. I was mad at the capitalist intrusions in the university. I was mad at Big Science and Big Technology. I was mad
and I had a solution. I wanted guts spilling everywhere.

But this university, this theory, this writing, this environment, this course, this dissertation, this old elementary school, this doctoral committee, these students, this Central Ohio has humbled me. For better or worse, I have learned to contain. Massively. Intently. I have learned to sit alone reading and thinking, writing, and absorbing hour after hour after hour after hour after hour after hour after hour after hour.

And a strange thing happened. Exactly why and when and how I'm not sure. Perhaps it was the result of researching and writing and ordering and examining my rage--the irony of articulating it so thoroughly that it somehow couldn't endure. At some point my rage turned to fascination.

Somewhere along the path I lost the desperation I came with three years ago. The desperation to change people. The desperation to initiate people into bliss. Somewhere along the path I accepted that I am the world. And the world is me. I make the world. It makes me. And so there is no rageful or bitter escape from the tyranny of isolation. I am also the isolation. Has my rage been spent? Is it gone? I don't really know.

So why haven't I gone down to the F and H?

One of the primary recurring themes in this dissertation is the exploration of the many aspects of seeing and looking and gazing. At first glance, it appears I am sitting up in my window perpetrating, yet again as in my research, my voyeuristic urges. Why haven't I left my place in the corner and entered the community happening outside my window?

I think, given the extreme energy and attention demands of research and documentation, I really have not been in an energetic position to really participate in the life at the F and H. I think had I gone down there any time in the past two or three months, even with my liberal face on, I would have been entering as a data collector.

I do not feel like a voyeur. In fact, I sense that I am appropriately participating in this whole environment. My "looking" is not invasive. It feels like a holding. I sense, within myself, that my gaze
is full of support, appreciation and fascination. When the F and H was raided I found my inner voice yelling at the cops, "Get away from here." Ironically, I feel that by containing myself I am a wonderful contributor to my environment.

And so I am not fuming in my corner. I do have the urge to know these people, and let them know me. And I find myself, as this project subsides, turning slowly and patiently toward simple contact. Face to face. Hand to hand. Feet on ground. Lungs in air. Something has called out from the hundreds of hours of reading, writing, sitting, watching. I move toward it. It is contact. Simple touch."

Remember the poem from CHAPTER III:

Kissing is not part of a language game
When I kiss you
I am not making dead sentences
that fit the pattern
"I love you"
When I kiss you
I am placing my wet lips
on the back of your neck

Kissing is not part of a language game
When I kiss you
I am not inviting you
to ask me
what I mean
I am putting my wet lips
on your cheek

Kissing is not part of a language game
When I kiss you
I am not asking you to determine
if it is true
I am simply putting my warm lips
on yours

This poem has the old anger in it. It is full of what not. It is reactive. Unacknowledged despair aimed at technology, at language, at theory. But in the end it offers nothing. Now it's time to add a last stanza and give this poem direction, the direction I have found in the corner of my room looking out. What will go on in my classrooms or workshops I don't know yet. But I know I am changed:
Kissing is not part of a language game
When I put my lips on yours
it's a call
from the universe,
I say your name clearly
without speaking

Soon I will turn my computer off and go outside.
Endnotes


   Keep in mind that I am willing to conflate art, research and education to a great extent. If you let these activities stand in for each other you will begin to see why I respond to these quotes. Respond doesn't necessarily mean agree, it means respond.


4. I was the recipient of the Graduate Teaching Associate Award at OSU in the Spring of 1991. This is given to ten outstanding graduate associates each year.

5. Bill Tierney's dissertation is also a form-breaker, written largely in a narrative format.

6. Stephen Tyler is one of my favorite theorists on writing dilemmas. He understands the tremendous limitations of translating action/feeling/sensation into language. See his chapter in James Clifford and George Marcus (Eds.). (1986). Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography. Berkeley: University of California.

7. Twenty five percent of my Doctoral General exam was fulfilled with a live performance. Part of that performance was a puppet show called "Postmodern Conditioning." I am obviously interested in alternative kinds of knowing and expressing theory.

8. Fiona Burns, a performance and installation artist, has said:

   Being fast and artificial can seem inherently bad; but it isn't. That capacity, not some naturalist
wallowing in the slumber of a neo-natal and maternal authentic community, is what will ultimately get us out from under power and into a world of equality.

I worry that this turn toward simple contact will be interpreted as a simplistic call for neo-natal slumbering. I am not interested in a mushy and ineffectual wallowing. I understand performance. I understand tool use. I understand making. I understand resistance. But I am not interested in Burns's path toward equality if it ultimately populates the world with banal media freaks.

I think my challenge in the coming years will be to re-introduce authentic practice into a political and social activism. I have simply chosen in this document to foreground the element of authenticity, because fast and high tech is amply covered by others.

This material continues to be alive for me. If it is for you, and you would like to engage me in a conversation about it, here's how to find me:

Paul Marienthal
c/o Kim Marienthal
784 Spruce St.
Berkeley, CA 94707

(510) 524-2253
BIBLIOGRAPHY


