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Performing Mutuality in the Writing Class: Creating Emancipatory Teacher- Student Relationships through Response and Interactivity

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PERFORMING MUTUALITY IN THE WRITING CLASS: CREATING
EMANCIPATORY TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH
RESPONSE AND INTERACTIVITY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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August 2013

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ABSTRACT

Title: Performing Mutuality in the Writing Class: Creating Emancipatory Teacher-Student Relationships through Response and Interactivity

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This study offers a step-by-step process for encouraging mutuality in the freshman composition class. This discussion begins by reexamining the theoretical underpinnings of response methodology in an effort to situate the act of responding to student writing within the scope of mutuality. In particular, this reconsideration reveals that most traditional response methods fall short of creating mutuality, since the teacher-responder most often orchestrates the revision process for students rather than with them.

With that, this study closely examines *Parallel Text* and *Sideshadowing* as two contemporary response techniques that have the ability operate within the tenets of mutuality, making the student's voice an integral part of the response process. And, while each of the previous techniques encourages the teacher and the student to work collaboratively in order to create a revised text, this examination reveals that teachers' verbal and nonverbal behaviors influence students' receptions of their comments. In addition to teacher behavior, this study discovered that the classroom setting/atmosphere plays an equally important role in developing a *co-intentional* response approach within the scope of mutuality.

The results of the previous examination reveal that in order for *Parallel Text* and *Sideshadowing* to truly fit within the parameters of mutuality, the teacher's performance

in the classroom and the classroom environment must be considered as crucial elements that influence the response process. This study determined that response to student writing must be an extension of both the teacher's behavior and the overall classroom atmosphere in order for it to truly operate within context of mutuality.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE DESIGN OF THIS DISSERTATION: AN INTRODUCTION

A transformed pedagogy cannot exist where the teacher typically makes two-thirds of the discourse moves. It cannot exist where the functions open to all classroom participants are assumed to be limited to *initiation*, *response*, and *evaluation*. And it cannot exist where teachers occupy the powerful subject positions as initiators and evaluators, and students, much less object positions as responders who must match their understandings to the teacher's expectations or face immediate correction. (11)

David L. Wallace and Helen Rothschild Ewald

Mutuality in the Rhetoric and Composition Classroom

David L. Wallace and Helen Rothschild Ewald's above remark strikes a major chord with me as an aspiring professor. Perhaps most cutting is that it reminds me of the many negative experiences I encountered as an undergraduate student with my professors. In particular, I never felt like my professors actually cared about me as a student or my unique experiences. Simply put, there was a wall between me and my professors that promoted the impersonal, apathetic learning environment I experienced year after year. My sense of insignificance was confirmed by the countless times professors failed to address me by name in class or simply acknowledge my presence in the hallways. These occurrences, coupled with my own insecurities at the time, reinforced my belief that professors did not care about me or my success as a student. This quickly led to my anxiety within the classroom and an overall lack of confidence in my ability to contribute to class discussions. I can recall not asking questions in class, fearing that my misunderstanding was a result of own inadequacy as a student and

certainly not worth interrupting the professor during class. There were, however, times when my confusion and desperation led me to seek additional help outside of class. In particular, one memory stands out for me.

I was taking “Biology I”—an introductory course set within the context of a large lecture hall—and facing consistent difficulty learning the material. I was, however, determined to comprehend the subject matter and make it through the course. I asked my professor for help outside of class and he agreed to meet with me during his office hours. The time arrived and I entered his office with optimism, hoping that this tutoring session would lead to the a-ha moment I so desperately wanted to encounter. I sat directly across from him as he walked me through the various stages of the Krebs cycle, using different colored beads to represent the different molecules comprising the eight-step process. And, despite his best efforts, I simply could not fully comprehend this complicated cycle. I vividly remember giving the wrong answers to a series of questions and, as Wallace and Ewald caution, I faced “immediate correction” (11). However, my rectification was, regrettably, accompanied by a swift slap on the back of the head from my professor. My initial shock was coupled with feelings of inadequacy, which quickly turned to confusion and bewilderment. There I sat, speechless, wondering what just happened. I could not tell he wasn’t trying to be malicious, judging by the smirk on his face, but this situation was highly inappropriate on countless different levels. I mean, how was he to know that a seemingly playful slap on the back of the head would trigger such painful memories for me. He barely knew my name, let alone my personal history. Unapologetic, he quickly moved onto the next phase of the process, while I fought back the urge to land a right hook squarely on his jaw. At that moment, he lost my trust as a student, as well as my

respect. I contained myself long enough to finish the meeting and left without incident. That was my first and last face-to-face meeting with him that semester. I made no official complaint against him, fearing that my accusation would be met with a failing semester grade. In hindsight, I should have reported him to his department chair and filed a formal grievance with the Dean's office; however, I vacillated with the severity of the situation and felt it was better left alone. I attended the remaining class lectures and continued studying intensely, hoping it would be enough to earn a "B" in the course. I made it through the semester with a "C" and, although disappointed, I was confident with my efforts. Perhaps most tragic, though, was the fact that my interactions with future professors, while certainly not to the extreme as the one described, were not the nurturing experiences I yearned for as a student. In fact, I cannot recall one interaction that would vaguely resemble the emancipatory relationships I now create with my own students. Upon graduation, I left the university with little or no recollection of the significant learning experiences I was promised as a freshman. Moreover, I carried with me a true distaste for both professors and academia. How ironic that I am now pursuing the very profession I abhorred years ago. It wasn't until recently that I recognized what fueled this professor's interaction with me: a Quintilian-like teaching approach that hinged on my ability to meet this professor at *his* level. Simply, he did not make any effort to create an environment or dialogue suited to my specific needs. In hindsight, the shortcoming was/is his inability to step outside of his particular station as the all-knowing professor and develop a dialogue that valued my knowledge at that time.

Thankfully, my earlier unenthusiastic portrayal of undergraduate education was met by countless positive experiences with professors during both of my graduate degree

programs. In particular, my graduate professors demonstrated a sincere interest in my development as both a student and an individual, which was something I longed for as an undergraduate. You see, I have suffered from depression since I was a teenager, undergoing countless therapy sessions and even more medicinal remedies over the years. In 2005, the perfect storm occurred during my M.F.A program. In addition to constant therapy and medication, I was taking my first poetry workshop. This class was unlike any other course I had experienced in the past. The class size was small—approximately twelve students—and the professor demonstrated a genuine interest in every student by quickly learning our names and interests outside of class. Additionally, she created a relaxed, nurturing environment that centered on building the “trusted community of readers and writers” her syllabus promised. I quickly found myself wanting to share my feelings with those in my class, writing more and more about my experience with depression, something I had never shared with classmates in the past. However, her affective teaching style did not simply end with class; she extended the same nurturing tone in her written comments as well. In particular, her comments demonstrated a deep commitment to understanding my voice as a writer, offering responses that encouraged the message I was attempting to furnish forth to my audience. Surprisingly, there was no trace of the comments I grew accustomed to receiving in the past, such as “awk,” “I think you mean to say...,” and my all-time favorite, “unclear.” For the first time in my academic career, I was encouraged and inspired by my professor, carving the initial path for my present aspirations.

Eventually, I selected this professor as my thesis director and began crafting a book of poetry exploring depression, as well as my relationship with my dad. My thesis

was the amalgam of my willingness to reveal personal “truths” to my reader, as well as my director’s unwavering commitment to helping me both artistically and stylistically. This poetry book represents one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. It not only helped me take ownership and control over my illness, but it also proved to me that professors can, indeed, have a lasting affect on students. This professor etched an affective teaching model for me to follow and enact as a future professor, which I fondly refer to throughout this dissertation as the “mutuality-minded” classroom model (an extension of Wallace and Ewald’s concept of mutuality).

The apparent dichotomy between my undergraduate and graduate experience represents the fork in the academic road that we as teachers, ultimately, encourage for our students. One path represents a transmission model of teaching by promoting anxiety and apathetic correction; the other, an emancipatory model motivating students through caring, affective teaching. This dissertation establishes an approach to teaching writing that goes beyond the student-centered model, exploring how we as teachers have the ability to create lasting experiences for each and every student in our classroom. In particular, this exploration begins by examining one of the most labor-intensive aspects of our job: responding to student writing. This chapter continues by offering a brief overview of the seminal texts surrounding response to student writing, detailing the theoretical underpinnings of both past and contemporary approaches to teacher commentary. And, although limitations exist within each study when looking through the lens of mutuality, these scholars, no doubt, greatly advanced composition studies by placing process in the forefront of response methodology. They are, as Patrick Bizzaro told me in conversation, “the baseline” for future studies surrounding response and

without them my study would not exist.

The second chapter is a narrative account of how response to student writing became a topic of interest for me. In particular, it provides context for the importance of reexamining response methodology and considering the role teacher performance plays in student reception of teachers' written comments. This reconsideration of response provides the contextual scaffolding for the chapters that follow.

Chapter Three begins by exploring the term *performance*. In particular, performance is situated with the act of teaching in the writing classroom. With teaching in the forefront, this discussion offers a working definition of performance, examining how and why it is a central component of the mutuality-minded classroom environment. I will explain why teaching falls into the category of *restored behavior*, what Richard Schechner defines as “performed actions that people train for and rehearse” (28). This discussion will continue by examining how the previous consideration creates the possibility for more humane, authentic teaching practices. Subsequently, this discussion moves into key features surrounding the concept of teaching as performance: verbal and nonverbal communication. Specifically, I will detail the importance of a teacher's verbal and nonverbal communication with students when enacting mutuality in the classroom. This chapter concludes by explaining how the previous types of communication directly impact student reception of teacher commentary.

Once defining performance and establishing how a teacher's verbal and nonverbal communication shapes the mutuality-minded classroom, the subsequent chapter begins by defining Wallace and Ewald's term mutuality, as well as its major tenets. This chapter deeply explores mutuality's chief concern with creating equitable teacher-student

relationships and how, ultimately, response has the potential to encourage this type of relationship through teacher-student dialogue, rather than exclusively teacher commentary. With that, this discussion revisits *Parallel Text* and *Sideshadowing*, illustrating how each of these response approaches has the capacity to create the transactional teacher-student relationship reflected in mutuality. I will argue that in order for the previous two strategies to truly operate within the mutuality-minded classroom, one must consider the impact the overall classroom setting and teacher-behavior have on these response approaches. Additionally, this section considers the social relations created through simple freewriting exercises, examining how students' performing their writing every class session can also influence the techniques of *Parallel Text* and *Sideshadowing*. This discussion considers how developing emancipatory discourses within the context of the writing classroom can significantly impact the way students interpret teacher responses, leading to more thoughtful revision practices.

Finally, this dissertation concludes by detailing my mutuality-minded classroom model, offering an approach to teaching writing that encourages equitable teacher-student relationships. This model hinges on my ability to implement the previous response strategies, while constructing and maintaining a nurturing environment. And, as I argue, incorporating music into the classroom is one way to build this trusted community of readers and writers.

Apologia

The following theoretical study offers an approach to response that fits within the scope of mutuality. And, while the methods and techniques within forthcoming chapters could certainly be employed in other writing courses, I wanted to lay the groundwork for

the mutuality-minded classroom in a setting that was/is most familiar to me: the freshman composition course. Moreover, this research, while extensive in the theoretical underpinnings of response and performance, does not broach the subject of evaluation. Specifically, it does not examine the complexity of administering individual student grades when performing mutuality in the writing classroom, which, for me, is one of the most challenging aspects of operating within this emancipatory classroom setting. And, while a discussion surrounding evaluation certainly has its place within this study, I recognized the need for more research before delving into this conversation. Finally, this research details my approach to achieving mutuality in the writing classroom, which may or may not apply to every reader. Simply put, the techniques described later in this discussion are an extension of the qualities that make me and my approach to teaching unique; therefore, I recommend that readers also consider what makes them unique and use these inimitable qualities to develop their own approach to achieving mutuality.

Entering the Response Conversation

Perhaps no single responsibility we perform as writing instructors demands more of our time and attention than responding to student writing. It is a unique performance that requires commitment to both the words on the page and the writer behind them. Over the last several decades, scholar/teachers have theorized strategies for responding to student writing (Anson; Berkenkotter; Cooper and Odell; Brannon and Knoblauch; Lunsford; Sommers; Straub), developing standard and, more recently, alternative approaches (Bizzaro; Welch) to commentary. The following discussion reexamines the theoretical underpinnings of response methodology used in composition studies and

creative writing, detailing how and why past efforts fail to meet the standards of mutuality. The impetus for such analysis is that most traditional response methods lead teachers to appropriate their students' writing. And, while most traditional approaches provide feedback and guidance for revision, they do little in the way of encouraging student writers to take control of their work. For me, it is crucial that students assume authority over their writing, making rhetorical decisions based on the meaning they are attempting to convey, rather than simply turning in a paper that pleases me, the teacher. It is within this context that my comments have the ability to help writers move toward the text *they* are looking to create or, conversely, appropriate their writing by telling them how to create *my* ideal text. The latter clearly positions my envisioned text as the standard that they should strive to achieve, whether or not it fits their original intentions for writing it in the first place. This research argues that continuing such practices will only reinforce the inequitable power distribution between teacher and student found in many college-level writing classrooms. With that, a central effort of this research is to redefine response to student writing by examining how teachers can encourage *dialogue* with students, rather than offering comments that tell students what their writing should actually say. This shared approach to response is a major tenet of *mutuality*, which Wallace and Ewald define as "teachers and students sharing the potential to adopt a range of subject positions and to establish reciprocal discourse relations as they negotiate meaning in the classroom" (3). Wallace and Ewald advocate for an *alternative pedagogy* that "invites students to take subject positions as co-constructors of knowledge," creating a shared meaning-making experience between teacher and student (2). And, it is within this alternative pedagogy or "emancipatory discourse" that mutuality becomes an integral

factor (3). In particular, mutuality encourages a transactional approach to knowledge construction, rather than the transmission model found in most traditional classrooms, where teachers are deemed “conveyors of knowledge” and students mere “receptacles” for deposit of that knowledge. In order to move closer to the transactional teacher-student relationship Wallace and Ewald advocate, it is imperative to reconsider the previous studies exploring response to student writing, asking why and how they failed to achieve mutuality. Upon reexamination, I will revisit two response approaches (Patrick Bizzaro’s *Parallel Text* and Nancy Welch’s *Sideshadowing*), as well as offer my own model, that can be utilized in both the composition classroom and the creative writing workshop, illustrating how each approach encourages mutuality, addresses the occurrence of teacher-text appropriation, and, most importantly, promotes student voice or *ethos*.

Revisiting the forthcoming scholars offers an excellent starting point for the present discussion. In particular, each of the studies examined acknowledges the complexity surrounding how best to respond to student writing. There are countless response approaches teachers employ for many established reasons, which in their eyes inform and shape student texts. And, while most approach this task with good intentions, there still remains the tendency to redirect the revision process through innocent, non-directive questions. This approach becomes particularly problematic when the teachers responding are writers themselves. Simply, it is difficult to resist the impulse of telling students “this is what I would do,” directing them to create a text that encompasses many of the good qualities present in our own writing. Lil Brannon and C.H Knoblauch’s study illustrates how easy it is to redirect a student’s text to meet the Ideal Text we as teachers envision. These Ideal Texts are a result of our many years of both reading and writing,

studying the rhetorical conventions and methodology surrounding composition. Like many of the detailed scholars illustrated throughout this chapter, Brannon and Knoblauch advocate process over product, encouraging multiple drafts of single assignment and peer-response activities. In particular, they encourage teachers to use comments that generate a dialogue with students, rather than simply directing them to create texts that do not preserve their initial intent for writing.

Like Brannon and Knoblauch, Nancy Sommers bolsters process pedagogy by reiterating that in order to offer students text-based, facilitative comments teachers need to acknowledge the stage of a given draft by offering responses that fit the particular needs of that draft and that particular stage. Additionally, Carol Bernkenkotter extends Sommers's discussion of appropriation by confronting teacher authority and how this presence affects student reception of teacher commentary. She examines peer-response activities a possible solution to combating the writer's lose of authority. Ironically, her study finds that student responders have the same tendency as teachers to impose authority over peer writers, leading to student-text appropriation.

A discussion regarding response to student writing cannot begin without first reviewing the historical underpinnings of this subject. However, before delving into response methodology, it is essential to revisit *process* pedagogy, arguably one of the most significant developments in composition studies, which, in my estimation, directly influenced much of the research surrounding response to student writing. Subsequent to this discussion is a thorough review of the seminal texts present in the study of response, providing the necessary backdrop for the alternative response strategies offered in this dissertation. Pleased be advised that this review reflects texts that shaped and guided the

present research and are in no way a comprehensive account of all the texts surrounding response. Additionally, my review reveals why each study, although instrumental in the progression of response methodology, falls short of reaching mutuality.

Donald Murray and Process Pedagogy

Any conversation concerning the teaching of writing inevitably draws upon the work of Donald Murray, one of the earliest advocates for teaching writing as a process not a product. In *Learning by Teaching*, Murray compiles a collection of short essays ranging from 1968 to 1982, detailing his own thoughts and perspectives on writing. In Chapter Three, “Teach Writing as a Process Not Product,” Murray’s sermon begins in true Murray fashion:

Instead of teaching finished writing, we should teach unfinished writing, and glory in its unfinishedness....This process of discovery through language we call writing can be introduced to your classroom as soon as you have a very simple understanding of that process, and as soon as you accept the full implications of teaching process, not product. (15)

Murray’s message in this essay is clear: the real business of teaching writing is not merely expecting students to write a finished paper; rather, it is celebrating the evolving process of creating meaning while moving from draft to draft. For Murray, this journey through multiple drafts is the site where most writers discover meaning through language, making choices that ultimately lead to a new understanding of their subject. Simply, writers encounter new meanings as a result of traversing from draft to draft. Murray, a writer himself, recognizes that writing development is not merely “a question of correct

or incorrect;” rather, it is “an exciting, eventful, evolving process” that urges writers to use language to discover both themselves and their lives (15). And, it is this process of self-discovery or *expressive discourse* that constitutes much of my own pedagogical foundation, reflecting Britton et al. “communicative-expressive-poetic” continuum of utterances (11). That said, it is essential to distinguish expressivism from process, since not all advocates of process are necessarily expressivists. To reiterate Murray’s above statement, process values the meaning writers discover while navigating from draft to draft, while expressivism places chief importance on liberating individual writers by fostering their “aesthetic, cognitive, and moral development” by valuing their voice (Burnham 19). In “Expressive Pedagogy: Practice/Theory, Theory/Practice,” Christopher Burnham explains:

Expressivism places the writer in the center, articulates its theory, and develops its pedagogical system by assigning highest value to the writer and her imaginative, psychological, social, and spiritual development and how that development influences individual consciousness and social behavior. Expressivist pedagogy employs freewriting, journal keeping, reflective writing, and small-group dialogic collaborative response to foster a writer’s aesthetic, cognitive, and moral development. (19)

The “center” Burnham mentions is in reference to the central position of the writer’s voice within the rhetorical triangle, which is comprised of four key elements: “writer, audience, message, and language” (19). The value placed on the writer’s voice is, as Burnham reveals, “a key criterion when expressivists examine writing” (19). This attention to individual voice becomes paramount when attempting to create emancipatory

discourse or dialogue with student writers through written commentary; therefore, I believe that for mutuality to come to fruition the teacher needs to recognize both the importance of process (what the writer discovers from the writing) and the presence of each writer's voice, offering commentary that supports/advances the particular aims of that voice.

According to Murray, the writing process is partitioned into three equally important stages: *prewriting*, *writing*, and *rewriting* (15). It is important to reiterate Murray's stance that while most writers will move through each of these three stages, the duration of each stage depends mostly on the writer's style or "personality" rather than a "rigid lock-step process" (15). Such a distinction is important for the teacher because prescribing a finite period at each stage goes against the spirit of process, which acknowledges the unique intricacies of each writer. In my own classroom, the prewriting or invention stage is paramount. We begin every class in the same manner: I offer a creative writing prompt and my students begin freewriting. And, of course, this attention to invention is best illustrated in Peter Elbow's *Writing Without Teachers*, where he advocates self-discovery through the practice of freewriting (I will review Elbow's contribution to expressivism and process in the upcoming subsection). This ten minute freewrite offers students the time to slow down, drifting into a space that often leads to new ideas and paper topics. An important aspect of our freewrite session is sharing. Every writer shares his/her freewrite with the class— every week, every class session. For me, this approach extends from my M.F.A. background, workshopping poems with classmates week after week. Murray champions the sharing of writing as well. His attention to individual voice and sharing one's work, in many ways, extends from the

creative writing workshop model. It should come as no surprise that Murray's approach to teaching writing places importance on sharing, since he is an avid proponent of the individual writing conference. Murray recommends:

The experience of sharing writing should be reinforced by the writing conference. Individual conferences are the principal form of instruction in the writing process approach....We must, in our conferences, help the student respect the piece of writing, pay attention to what it is trying to say and experience the process of helping it say it. (28)

For me and Murray, this act of listening and encouraging individual student voice is one of the many features distinguishing process from current-traditional teaching. And, certainly, there exist countless methods for promoting student voice, such as individual writing conferences, in-class writing workshops, and, of course, teacher written commentary. With regard to the latter, Murray advises teachers to recognize their role as a reader, making a conscious effort to avoid premature correction in early drafts, such as indentifying mechanical errors or telling students what their text should be saying. Simply, student writers need space and authority to explore the meaning their text is searching to unearth, rather than looking to the teacher—or teacher comments—for the correct answers. Under the shade of process, “The teacher must give the responsibility for the text to the writer, making clear again and again that it is the student, not the teacher, who decides what the writing means” (89). Donald Murray's contribution to the process movement and acknowledgment of student voice, undoubtedly, influenced teacher/scholars to reconsider how they comment on student texts, leading to significant developments in response methodology. These developments are confirmed in the

forthcoming studies detailed in this chapter.

Peter Elbow and Expressivism

Like Murray, the name Peter Elbow is synonymous with process pedagogy, as well as expressivism. In *Writing without Teachers*, he discusses the implications for creating a *teacherless* class that places emphasis on the writer's process or journey using words to create meaning, rather than the teacher's assessment of that writer's final product. Elbow's teacherless class was, in many ways, the impetus for what is now commonly referred to as freewriting and peer-response. In this class, students are given the opportunity to discover new ideas and hear reactions from many different readers in response groups. In this context, the writer is afforded the opportunity to receive feedback from a diverse audience, rather than the authoritative response of one: the teacher. Anyone familiar with creative writing studies will recognize this teacherless class as the workshop method, which originated at The University of Iowa and continues to be a staple of M.F.A. programs across the country (more about the workshop method in Chapter Three). Elbow's inspiration for creating this teacherless class was to help demystify the writing process for other struggling composers, offering an account of how *he* works through the often messy process of writing:

The authority I call upon in writing a book about writing is my own long-standing difficulty writing. It has always seemed to me as though people who wrote without turmoil and torture were in a completely different universe. And yet advice about writing always seemed to come from them and therefore to bear no relation to us who struggled and usually failed to

write. (viii)

He is apt to point out that advice from most writing manuals illustrated “the characteristics of good writing so as to help you produce it, and the characteristics of bad writing to help you avoid it,” which does little in the way of improving the individual’s writing (vii). With that in mind, Elbow asserts that his text can “give advice that speaks more directly to the experience of having a hard time writing,” thus benefiting those plagued by the writing task (viii). Elbow’s approach is, in many ways, a reflection of mutuality, since he makes it a point to meet students on their level, placing him within the same category of having “difficulty writing.” By doing so, he becomes part of the community of learners, rather than the outside authoritative standard that students must aspire to achieve. As Burnham aptly points out, Elbow “returns the responsibility for and control over learning to students,” acknowledging the importance of developing individual voice during the writing process (Burnham 23).

Clearly, Elbow’s desire to create the teacherless class aligns directly with Murray’s belief that meaning emerges—or can be discovered—during the writing process. Elbow and Murray’s shared vision challenges the current-traditional model’s two-step process: “First you figure out your meaning, then you put it into language” (Elbow 14). In addition to Elbow’s support for teaching writing as a process, his teacherless class brought the concept of student-centered teaching to the forefront of the process movement. And, without a doubt, Elbow’s student-centered approach harmonizes with mutuality by recognizing the importance of empowering student voices. Conversely, it is imperative that the mutuality-minded class recognize the importance of expressivism, since, as the previous discussion reveals, simply teaching writing as process does not

single-handedly ensure the promise of mutuality. In order to truly evoke mutuality, the writer, not just the writing, must be at the core of our pedagogical approach. That said, the following contributions to response to student writing will be critiqued based on their capacity to instill the expressive nature of mutuality, in addition to their recognition of process.

Lil Brannon and C.H. Knoblauch's Ideal Text

Lil Brannon and C.H. Knoblauch's "On Students' Rights to Their Own Texts," begins by contemplating the assumed authority of most well-known authors, stating "the more we know about a writer's skill, the more we have read of that individual's work or heard of his or her reputation, the greater the claim to authority"(157). Accordingly, this assumption of authority causes readers to accept the author's statements, as well as tolerate difficulties in interpretation. Simply, the reader assumes responsibility over the text, viewing "harder material as a problem of interpretation, not a shortcoming of the composer" and "readers will assume that problematic texts demand greater effort from them, not rewriting from the author" (157-58). When cast in the context of the teacher-student relationship, the teacher's willingness to concede authority to the student writer seems extremely abstract. Brannon and Knoblauch elaborate:

When we consider how writing is taught, however, this normal and dynamic connection between a writer's authority and the quality of a reader's attention is altered because of the peculiar relationship between teacher and student. The teacher-reader assumes, often correctly, that the student writers have not yet earned the authority that ordinarily compels

readers to listen seriously to what writers have to say. Indeed, teachers view themselves as the authorities, intellectually maturer, rhetorically more experienced, and technically more expert than their apprentice writers. (158)

In the previous scenario, the teacher-reader assumes control over the student's writing, often appropriating the text by correcting mistakes or redirecting the writer's initial intentions to achieve what Brannon and Knoblauch deem the "Ideal Text" or the teacher's ideal of what a student's text should resemble. Not surprising, the Ideal Text sets up the writer for failure by taking writers out of their own realm of experience and asking them to craft texts that "lie beyond their own sense of their intention and method" (159). Thus, students come to believe that writing is a nearly impossible task of creating the teacher's Ideal Text. This clearly falls short of expressivism, as well as mutuality, since emphasis is placed on the teacher's standard rather than the student's voice.

With the presence of the Ideal Text in mind, Brannon and Knoblauch conducted a study using an assignment asking students to write an essay on the Lindbergh kidnapping trial. They selected John's essay for examination (his own version of the prosecution's closing argument), asking forty teachers to "assess the quality of this writing in light of what the writer was trying to do" (160). True to form, the student readers did not concede control to the writer; rather, a conservative group criticized John's deliberate emotional plea as patronizing and illogical, while a more liberal group concluded that "John must surely be writing satire because he could not possibly mean what he appeared to be saying on the page (160). In each group, the readers imagined an Ideal Text to measure John's essay against. As Brannon and Knoblauch later reveal, "both groups were

surprised when we showed them the actual transcript of the prosecution's summation in Hauptmann's trial. They discovered that its strategy and language were in fact very similar to those in John's essay" (161). Brannon and Knoblauch's study proved that, ultimately, teachers need to respect each writer's original intentions for a text, rather than consciously or unconsciously imposing their own Ideal Text, especially when the Ideal Text seldom meets the needs of the student's writing. Brannon and Knoblauch's Ideal Text is, most often, a form of teacher-text appropriation. And, while the previous study advanced the importance of recognizing the student's intention for writing a piece, this assignment fails to reflect the aims of mutuality. In particular, the essay prompt was designed exclusively by the teacher, whereas the mutuality-minded class would perhaps negotiate the terms of the assignment, allowing students to play an active role in the actual design of the project.

Brannon and Knoblauch suggest a modification in teacher attitude, altering the teacher-student relationship. They champion multiple-draft assignments, allowing the student to focus more on the revision process, rather than the creation of a single, final product for judgment. Additionally, they encourage an open dialogue between teacher and student; particularly, a discussion concerning the writer's *intention* for the text and the reader's reception of that text (162). This discussion can take place in a variety of forms, including written commentary from the teacher, individual conferences, and peer-response activities. Ultimately, Brannon and Knoblauch advocate negotiation between teacher comments and student revision, rather than the teacher assuming control over the text and directing the student to make changes aligned with an imagined Ideal Text. And, while this study brings the possibility of teacher-student dialogue into the forefront, the

actual assignment Brannon and Knoblauch implement clearly does not reach mutuality.

Nancy Sommers and Teacher-Text Appropriation

One of the earliest and most notable articles written on response is Nancy Sommers' "Responding to Student Writing." In her article, Sommers addresses the issue of teacher-text appropriation, a chief concern of this dissertation. When reflecting on previous research conducted with Brannon and Knoblauch, she comments:

The first finding from our research on styles of commenting is that *teachers' comments can take students' attention away from their own purposes in writing a particular text and focus that attention on the teachers' purpose in commenting.* The teacher appropriates the text from the student by confusing the students' purpose in writing the text with her own purpose in commenting. Students make the changes the teacher wants rather than those that the student perceives are necessary, since the teachers' concerns imposed on the text create the reasons for the subsequent changes. (149)

In order to address appropriation, Sommers advises that "our comments need to be suited to the draft we are reading" (155). This approach hinges on identifying *where* a given draft is within the writing process and responding in a way that addresses the needs of that particular draft. For example, identifying mechanical errors does little in the way of advancing an earlier draft of a particular essay. In essence, the teacher is identifying flaws that will most likely disappear naturally over the course of the drafting process, ignoring the opportunity to offer responses that lead to revision, such as developing ideas and

concepts more fully. Simply, mechanical errors are best addressed during the final editing stages of the writing process, not at the initial stages. This example reiterates Sommers' assertion that in order to truly help students during the revision process it is important to identify the stage of a particular draft and respond according to the needs of that draft. In turn, the teacher's text-specific responses will more likely lead to revision, since he or she is addressing concerns appropriate for developing a later draft. This makes sense when placed in the context of Brannon and Knoblauch's process-centered approach to commenting. Simply, drafts are not final products and should not be responded to as such.

In addition to the discussion of teacher-text appropriation and the importance text-specific commentary, Sommers magnifies an issue that, no doubt, continues to persist to this day: the inequitable power relations between teacher and student. Later in her article, Sommers makes a keen assertion:

The key to successful commenting is to have what is said in the comments and what is done in the classroom mutually reinforce and enrich each other. Commenting on papers assists the writing course in achieving its purpose; classroom activities and the comments we write to our students need to be connected. Written comments need to be an extension of the teacher's voice—an extension of the teacher as reader. (155)

And, while Sommers' statement touches upon the troubling occurrence of the teacher's voice overshadowing that of the student writer, this quote should not be confused with mutuality, since there is no mention of *student's* voice during the response process. Like expressivism, mutuality is grounded in the practice of valuing student voice or what I

refer to as authorial intention. Sommers' astutely emphasizes that teachers should attempt to read student texts as readers and respond as such; however, the teacher's voice still remains at the forefront. Therefore, written comments need to be an extension of both the teacher and student's voice if, ultimately, working towards mutuality.

Carol Berkenkotter and Peer-Response

Carol Berkenkotter extends the work of Sommers, Brannon, and Knoblauch in her 1984 article, "Student Writers and Their Sense of Authority over Texts." In particular, she examines the use of peer feedback, rather than teacher commentary, as an approach to response and revision. Her study examines the tape recorded responses of ten freshman writers to multiple drafts of a single essay. Specifically, Berkenkotter examines three different students (Stan, Pat, and Joann) and their reactions to peer feedback. In the case of Stan, he demonstrated a negative reaction to the group's feedback, dismissing his audience entirely. Stan's reaction reflects that of a writer unwilling to surrender any degree of control to the audience. According to Berkenkotter, Stan's reaction was a direct result of immaturity and the fact that "he never accepted the responsibility for critically reading his text, but was more concerned with defending his proprietary rights" (315). As a result, Stan made few changes from draft to draft, ignoring the opportunity to address his readers' concerns through revision.

The second writer, Pat, exemplifies students that "become their own best audience" once possessing a clear vision for a subject (315). Initially, Pat's essay focused on a narrative describing his motorcycle escapades with a friend and, although his peers offered positive feedback to his draft, Pat was dissatisfied with his paper. Simply, Pat was

unsure of his subject. Shortly after his peer-response session, he met with Berkenkotter in conference—internalizing Berkenkotter’s question regarding the appearance of one of his characters—which prompted Pat to reconsider his overall subject matter. In particular, Pat decided to focus the paper on the previous character/friend, Finn, ultimately leading to his decision to disregard peers’ earlier suggestions to add more detail concerning his adventures with Finn. However, Pat was committed to his new subject describing Finn and, therefore, found peer comments useless, since as Berkenkotter states, “they did not possess a clear sense of his subject” (316). In essence, Pat’s revisions were self-directed and based on an internal obligation, rather than audience feedback. Both Pat and Stan represent writers that resist readers, indicating that peer response does not always inform a writer’s revision process.

While Stan and Pat refused to concede authority to readers, Joann demonstrates a writer that is responsive to readers and willing to make changes based on their suggestions. However, Joann gradually lost control over her own text while conceding authority to the audience, even when she disagreed with their comments. As a result, she became increasingly hostile to her readers after realizing many of their comments were superfluous and failed to address the needs of her intended text. Joann’s experience represents how peer feedback can sometimes fall short of addressing writers’ needs, often ignoring their initial intentions for a piece of writing. Berkenkotter concludes stating:

Together the three cases suggest that students who write for peer readers as well as their teacher might not necessarily reap the advantages we’d like to imagine. It is true that peers can offer the writer additional

perspectives, support, and, generally, less threatening feedback than a teacher-evaluator. But it is a much more difficult matter to generalize about how writers respond to readers. These responses hinge on a number of subtle emotional and intellectual factors. We need to learn more about these factors and about the process through which writers gain a sense of authority over their texts. (318)

Berkenkotter's study examines the potential for peer response to either bolster writers' sense of authority over their texts or, conversely, take away authority. Her study demonstrates that while peer response activities may decentralize teacher authority there remains potential for writers to either concede too much authority or too little to their audience. In terms of mutuality, the previous study indicates the importance of striking a balance between teacher and student voices, creating the transactional dialogue proposed later in this dissertation. Berkenkotter's study reveals that while student voices need to be an integral part of the response process, students, like teachers, have the tendency to appropriate peers' writing when placed in the exclusive role of evaluator.

Richard Lloyd-Jones and Primary Trait Scoring

In Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell's *Evaluating Writing: Describing, Measuring, Judging* (1977), Richard Lloyd-Jones details Primary Trait Scoring and how such practices can be applicable to large-scale assessment. Lloyd-Jones explains primary trait scoring as follows:

The goal of Primary Trait Scoring is to define precisely what segment of discourse will be evaluated (e.g., presenting rational persuasion between

social equals in a formal situation), and to train readers to render holistic judgments accordingly. The chief steps in using the Primary Trait Scoring System are to define the universe of discourse, to devise exercises which sample that universe precisely, to ensure cooperation of the writer, to devise workable scoring guides, and to use the guides. (37)

And, while this chapter is not directly concerned with response strategies, it does suggest the possibility of a mutuality-minded approach for grading student writing, as evidenced in Bizzaro's *Responding to Student Poems: Applications of Critical Theory*. Bizzaro, along with individual students, devises a list of primary traits—exclusive to each student's writing—to use as a method for grading individual student poems. He begins by defining six qualities he feels should be implicit when grading student poems:

(1) It should offer students options as to how they want the final grade for their poems to be determined. Consequently, a teacher should be able to employ more than one method of reading, evaluating, and grading student poems and should be able to explain these options to students.

(2) It should reflect semester-long emphases. To this end, teachers should employ the critical methodologies that they have emphasized in examining both student and professional poems during the term, methodologies such as New Criticism, reader-response criticism, deconstruction, and feminist criticism.

(3) It should provide criteria agreed upon by both the student and the teacher. This can be accomplished several ways, all of which require in-process evaluation of writing which enables students to revise before

submitting their poems as part of a portfolio.

(4) It should apply these criteria either to individual poems or to groups of poems. In consultation with the teacher, students can strive to develop criteria unique to each separate poem or inclusive enough to apply generally to a set of poems written with a unifying goal.

(5) It should reward careful revision. Regardless of the system the student chooses and the criteria the teacher and student agree upon, revision must be the goal of evaluation. This is particularly true of evaluations that accompany grades, especially if we hope to encourage students to continue to write after the course concludes.

(6) It should reveal evaluation to be an ongoing activity. Teachers must see poems periodically during the term, not just when they are turned in for grading, so that students will see both the evaluation and grading as natural parts of class activities. (197)

The above qualities reflect Bizzaro's efforts to empower student writers by making them part of the evaluation process, as well as recognizing writing as process by rewarding revision rather than final product. With these six qualities in mind, Bizzaro decisively adapts Lloyd-Jones' previous goals to fit the mutuality-minded evaluation system his text envisions:

Through a conference with the student, this method establishes an agreed-upon criteria that the teacher can then apply either to an individual poem or to poems in a portfolio. Students will thus clearly see how they have been evaluated and why they have received the grade they have. What's

more, they will be able to revise, if they choose, since the method identifies what they have and have not accomplished in a piece of writing. (198)

To be clear, the conference mentioned above is a collaborative meeting where the teacher and student create an “agreed-upon criteria,” developing primary traits that reflect both the teacher’s and the student’s voice. This compromise between teacher and student clearly coincides with Elbow’s championing of student voice, which is a key feature of expressivism. Specifically, the list of primary traits is co-created by the teacher and the student, positioning the student’s voice as an integral component of the evaluation process. In terms of mutuality, this collaborative act enables students to feel a sense of control over the evaluation of their writing. It should be noted that Bizzaro’s text was truly avant-garde, given that Wallace and Ewald’s inception of mutuality did not occur until more than a decade after his 1993 publication. In many ways, Bizzaro’s text has become the archetype for performing mutuality when responding to student writing, which will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter Four. Bizzaro, recognizing the implicit “authoritarian notion of grading” uses primary trait scoring to decentralize his authority as the evaluator, making the process of grading a shared venture between teacher and student (197). And, although Lloyd-Jones’ primary trait scoring was not initially intended for small-scale evaluation of student writing, Bizzaro skillfully establishes how to adapt it for the purposes of achieving mutuality.

Richard Straub and Ronald F. Lunsford

In Chapter One of *Twelve Readers Reading: Responding to College Student*

Writing, Richard Straub and Ronald F. Lunsford provide an extensive overview of research concerning response to student writing. According to Straub and Lunsford, there existed two major flaws characteristic of many earlier studies (Arnold, 1962; Bata, 1972; Clark, 1968; Stiff, 1967), making them of little use in the area of improving student writing: “(a) they were performed in settings that failed to treat writing as process, and (b) they failed to define what was meant by ‘improvements in writing’” (6). This attention to process was a direct result of both Murray’s and Elbow’s efforts making student discovery and multiple drafts commonplace in the writing classroom.

Straub and Lunsford continue their review of process when discussing Nancy Sommers’ seminal article “Responding to Student Writing.” When discussing her article, Straub and Lunsford call attention to the issue of authority when commenting on student writing. This issue surfaces when teachers “read students’ work as authority figures intent only on judging its ultimate worth” (8). Sommers advises teachers to assume the role of reader rather than evaluator, asking questions of the writer and offering commentary when confused. According to Straub and Lunsford, this reader-response approach encourages the student to “reflect on the ways in which a reader has responded to what she has written, revising in those instances in which the writing does not seem to say what she intends or have the effect she wishes” (8). The teacher’s role when responding is further examined when discussing Donald Murray’s categorization of teacher roles in the writing classroom. In “What Can You Say Besides Awk?,” Murray offers three specific categories: 1) judge; 2) Moses; and 3) listener. A judge “evaluates and penalizes any student who breaks the law,” while Moses is “a teacher who applies form when there is not yet content.” And finally, a listener “hears and respects what students want to say,”

the last role clearly aligned with Sommers' reader-response approach (151-152).

Murray's stance that teachers should play the part of *listener*, allowing ample room for student voices to be heard, speaks to expressivism's central element of student-centeredness.

As I stated earlier, student-centeredness is a key component of Elbow's teacherless class. According to Elbow, "I can only set up something like the teacherless class in my own class if I adopt more the role of a learner and less the role of the teacher,"(ix). Like Murray's urge for teacher's to listen, this teacherless class requires a transactional approach to instruction that places students at the core of the meaning-making process, rather than a traditional teacher-centered approach that casts the teacher as knowledge transmitter and student as knowledge receiver. Elbow's attention to teacher-student roles and development of the teacherless class emanate from his experience responding to student writing, where he vacillated between offering objective or subjective feedback. Like Bizzaro's earlier approach to evaluation using primary trait scoring, Elbow's student-centered approach or attention to student voice aligns with the aims of mutuality. That said, Straub and Lunsford's study, like many before, fails to acknowledge the importance of student voice when providing commentary.

After reviewing additional studies concerning the subject of teacher roles (Brannon and Knoblauch; Britton; Burgess; Martin; McLeod; and Rosen), Straub and Lunsford's research focuses on teacher written commentary to student writing by examining the response practices of twelve elite teacher/scholars in Composition. This exceptional group consists of Chris Anson, Peter Elbow, Anne Gere, Glynda Hull, Richard Larson, Ben McClelland, Frank O'Hare, Jane Peterson, Donald Stewart, Patricia

Stock, Tilly Warnock, and Edward White. The aim of their study was to examine how prominent teacher/scholars in the writing field approach response, asking each participant to respond to a common set of first-year college writing essays, later comparing and contrasting their responses to individual essays. And, while comments varied in both substance and form (some commented marginally, while others provided only end comments; some responded exclusively to the text, while others offered a more affective response to the issues presented by the writer) Straub and Lunsford concluded that they all shared a common trait: “a noncontrolling style of responding that attempts to establish a conversation between teacher and student” (374). However, I take issue with their claim that the examined response styles were, in fact, “noncontrolling.” In particular, the process of response and evaluation stills lies within the realm of the teacher. Unlike Bizzaro’s use of primary trait scoring, the scholars detailed in this study still operate from an authoritative stance. Simply, the students’ voices, although represented in their writing, are not an integral feature of the actual evaluation process. This explains why this particular study does not achieve mutuality.

Richard Straub

Richard Straub’s *The Practice of Response: Strategies for Commenting on Student Writing* offers readers a list of practical techniques to augment their approach to student commentary. This text attempts to accomplish the following by: (1) “displaying samples of how experienced teachers respond to student writing; (2) analyzing the strategies these teachers use in their responses; and (3) considering methods of response in terms of the larger context of instruction” (2). Straub’s text does not champion one

definitive approach to response over another; rather, it asks readers to reflect on their own style of commentary and consider implementing some of the offered strategies.

The first four chapters analyze the comments of twelve experienced teacher/scholars to a common set of essays, focusing on several different responses to a single essay. After offering each selected teacher's response, Straub focuses on one or more features distinguishing or unifying the said responses. In particular, he identifies the following features for consideration: (1) focus and scope; (2) length and specificity; and (3) mode. Focus refers to what the responder calls attention to in their comment. Straub identifies five general categories under focus: (1) correctness;(2) style;(3) organization; (4) content; and (5) context (76). Length and specificity simply refers to the breadth and detail of each comment. Lastly, mode is defined as "*how* the comment is framed" (76). For example, a teacher may comment marginally (in the margins of the paper), intertextually (within the lines of the text), or provide an end commentary that can take the form of a summary. According to Straub, there are nine categories within mode: (1) corrections; (2) criticism; (3) qualified criticism; (4) praise; (5) commands; (6) advice; (7) closed questions; (8) open questions; and (9) reflective statement (76). And, yet, all of the previous categories run the risk of teacher-text appropriation, since the student's voice is clearly absent from the evaluative process.

Chapter Five, "Guidelines for Responding to Student Writing," suggests that response is ultimately tied to the course itself, which includes the course description, class assignments, and expectations for students (246). Such a focus is what Wallace and Ewald refer to as *course architecture*, a feature taken up later in this dissertation. And, while Straub discusses the importance of adjoining response to course itself, there is no

mention of the student's role within this process. This absence of student involvement is one reason why Straub's guidelines do not furnish the opportunity for mutuality to exist.

Straub's text exemplifies the "baseline" Bizzaro refers to earlier in this chapter. And, while Straub's study addresses the complexity surrounding response and devises logical strategies for commenting, there remains a lack of student voice during this process. However, his study, while falling short of achieving mutuality, opens the opportunity for the present conversation to advance contemporary response methods toward mutuality. With that, the next two scholars illustrate such advancement by offering response styles that achieve mutuality by including student voice within the evaluation process.

Patrick Bizzaro and Parallel Text

Patrick Bizzaro's *Responding to Student Poems: Applications of Critical Theory*, addresses the unique discipline of creative writing and the need for those teaching within this field to develop a solid/distinctive pedagogical foundation. In particular, Bizzaro explores the "interrelatedness of literary-critical theory and composition theory" in regard to his own approach to teaching poetry writing (p. xiii). This text confronts the nature of a teacher imposing his/her unique writing style (appropriation) when evaluating student texts, often ignoring the individual writer's intentions for a particular text. Bizzaro uses his knowledge of literary-critical theory and poetry writing to examine alternative ways of responding to student poems, as well as return authority for the text to the students. Specifically, he challenges the *New Critical* approach to reading student texts by implementing *Reader-Response*, *Deconstruction*, and *Feminism* when crafting responses,

illustrating the benefits of employing such methods to individual student poems. In effect, Bizzaro offers the poet/teacher options for examining and responding to student texts. By employing alternative methods of response, the teacher eliminates a great deal of individual bias, allowing each text to dictate the type of reader required for each experience. Bizzaro explains:

Often teachers read and evaluate drafts of their students' poems the way they read and evaluate drafts of their own writing. But such readings may not always be appropriate for addressing student texts; they will, in any case, no doubt result in a teacher's appropriation of a student's poem. By studying their own reading and writing habits, though, teachers will be better able to employ alternative methods when a student or a student's poem requires them to do so. (222)

Bizzaro's exploration redefines the teacher's role as *a* reader, not *the* reader, acknowledging the benefits of applying alternative critical lenses when responding to student poems.

In Chapter Four, "Interaction and Assessment: Some Applications of Reader-Response Criticism," Bizzaro details his experience using reader-response criticism as a response method. This method places equal importance on the reader, the writer, and the text. Bizzaro explains, "If properly adapted to the classroom situation, reader-response methodologies will require that students determine who they want their texts to address and that teachers relinquish some power in examining those texts" (67). Such an approach, as Bizzaro reveals, requires teachers and students to actively create texts, as well as determine the "envisioned audience" for those texts (68). Of the four critical

lenses explored, reader-response criticism encourages *transactional* learning between teacher and student, where both actors work cooperatively toward constructing new knowledge. Here, Bizzaro's response method clearly differs from the strategies offered by Straub, due to the presence of student voice within the process of evaluation.

Bizzaro's application of reader-response to written commentary reflects Louise Rosenblatt's monumental contribution to composition studies. Rosenblatt is considered to be one of the earliest advocates of reader-response theory, often cited for her use of the term *transactional*. According to Rosenblatt, "Reading is a transaction, a two-way process, involving a reader and a text at a particular time under particular circumstances" (268). In essence, she emphasizes the interaction between the reader's background knowledge and the textual features as the site for meaning construction. Bizzaro aptly extends this transactional relationship to include the teacher, making the writing process a mutual endeavor.

When applying this technique to the classroom, Bizzaro creates a *parallel text* next to the students' poem. He explains, "I recognized the need to make a record of my reactions as a reader in a 'parallel' text, preferably alongside the students' poems" (70). Bizzaro's parallel text asks questions based on how he as the reader has "*construed the author's intent*," asking the writer if "this reading, upon reflection, is what he or she hoped would result from the text" (76-77). This type of question is quite different from those that simply focus on influencing the writer's revision process (76). This distinction is crucial when using reader-response criticism, since some questions will only reinforce the New Critical method, which, as Bizzaro repeatedly argues, favors the teacher's interpretation of the text over the writer's intent. The reader-response approach offers

writers the opportunity to discover if the reader they *want* to create is, in fact, the one created by the text. This observation becomes even more beneficial to writers when using peer-response activities as a supplement to teacher commentary. In this context, writers receive reactions from different readers—which may or may not match their intended text—allowing them to ultimately decide whether the current text creates the desired reader. The key, for both teachers and students, is to focus questions on one’s reaction as a reader at that given moment, rather than asking questions that influence the writer to make changes that fits the reader’s ideal text. In essence, the reader-response approach recognizes and champions three distinct entities: the text created by the author, the author’s intent for the text, and the reader’s experience with the text. In particular, Bizzaro encourages teachers to create comments that ask the writer if “this reading, upon reflection, is what he or she hoped would result from the text” (77). Such an approach encourages the shared dialogue between teacher and student that most traditional response methods disregard.

Nancy Welch and Sideshadowing

Nancy Welch’s “Sideshadowing Teacher Response” considers the possibility that, like teachers, students struggle with resisting the same Ideal Texts Lil Brannon and C.H. Knoblauch reproach in their earlier essay. She begins with a quote from Mikhail Bakhtin: “Reality as we have it in the novel is only one of the many possible realities; it is not inevitable, not arbitrary, it bears within itself other possibilities” (374). Welch continues by including a paragraph from a student, Bill, detailing his own experience traveling by bus for 300 hours. Welch comments:

As I read them, Bill's words dramatize Bakhtin's, telling me that reality as we have it in a student's essay is likewise not inevitable, not arbitrary; this paragraph bears within itself many possible realities, or, more accurately, many *competing* ideas of and forms for composing reality.

Advantages/drawbacks, compare/contrast, epiphany and anti-epiphany, the truth-is-confession: all of these possible essays jostle for space and control...students also grapple with internalized, idealized social texts, not just one but several.... (374-375)

Given these considerations, Welch aptly questions her own ability as a reader/teacher to respond to Bill's draft *without* assuming an authoritative role. In particular, she struggles to encourage Bill to define a "reality" for his draft without defining it for him (376).

Welch touches upon a struggle that many writing teachers endure: no matter how text-specific and non-directive a comment may be, it is still defining a reality for a student's text.

In response, Welch suggests that the margins of drafts become shared spaces for teacher/student dialogue, rather than solely limited to teacher comments. To achieve this dialogue, she encourages the technique of *sideshadowing*, asking both teacher and student to consider the existence of "multiple possibilities" when reading and writing a draft (377). Sideshadowing encourages reciprocity between teacher and student by disrupting the common "student-composes-and-teacher-comments" model, just like Bizzaro's parallel text (377).

Welch's approach asks both students and teachers to suspend their foreshadowing impulse, focusing attention on the draft's present reality rather than the

“revised essay it could or should become”—this impulse to create this revised essay is a direct result of foreshadowing (378). When applying this technique to the composition classroom, students turn in drafts with marginal comments and teachers consider these comments when responding. In affect, the teacher is given access into a student’s reading of his/her own draft, encouraging a *transactional* relationship amongst the text, the student’s reading, and the teacher’s reading; what Welch calls a “multi-stranded triologue” (388). Simply, sideshadowing asks teachers to consider the comments/questions students may attach to their drafts, directing revision with those comments/questions in mind. This approach focuses both student and teacher on the present draft and, more importantly, it promotes student voice and authorial intention.

Moving Towards Mutuality

Bizzaro confronts appropriation, as well as the same Ideal Text Brannon and Knoblauch caution readers about, acknowledging that a teacher’s knowledge and authority as a writer often lead to appropriation. He suggests one way to address this occurrence is to consider the lens of literary theory when reading/responding to student texts. This lens, as Bizzaro demonstrates using his own experience responding to student poems, creates boundaries for teachers to follow rather than enforcing their own writing style upon students. Like Bizzaro, Welch develops a similar strategy for combating appropriation, a term she calls sideshadowing. In the same way Bizzaro preserves writer intent through *Parallel Text*, Welch’s sideshadowing expands the previous act by considering the margins shared space between teacher and student. This approach allows students to direct the feedback they receive from teachers, assuring that it meets their

overall intent for the piece.

This next chapter offers a narrative of how and why response to student writing became a topic of interest for me. It offers a detailed account of my own experiences with commentary and why I find this subject so compelling.

CHAPTER TWO

WHY RESPONSE: A BRIEF NARRATIVE

Writing teachers probably spend as much time and effort responding to student writing as they do teaching and preparing for class. It is the most demanding, work-intensive part of the job, and I would argue that there is no more important task that writing teachers take on. Response is at the heart of writing instruction.

Richard Straub

The Practice of Response: Strategies for Commenting on Student Writing

Responding to student writing is, as Straub proclaims, “at the heart of writing instruction.” And, most of us would agree that helping our students improve their writing certainly supersedes the endless hours we spend commenting on papers. Straub, like most traditional response theorists, places this arduous task squarely on teachers’ shoulders, missing the opportunity to recruit an essential component into this practice: the writer. As the previous chapter argues, teachers need to consider the importance of the writer’s voice, implementing strategies that include this feature (the student’s voice) when engaging in response activities. To further illustrate the importance of voice, the following narrative offers a candid glimpse into my own experience studying and enacting traditional response methods, which, ultimately, shaped my current views on the practice. And, in accord with the said methods, my experience presents a cautionary tale of what happens when the student’s voice is superseded by teacher commentary. Like the previous chapter, the forthcoming discussion aligns mutuality with expressivism, recognizing the importance of incorporating student voices when attempting to foster

mutuality.

A Brief Narrative

I recall sitting in my first CCCC's session in New Orleans, March 2008. The panel discussion centered on response to student writing. Admittedly, I was new to the field of composition studies and teaching, so many of the theoretical and pedagogical concepts remained abstract given my limited experience as a writing teacher; however, as the following narrative will demonstrate, my MFA experience—particularly the poetry workshop—would become the element shaping my approach to teaching composition. I was in my second year of course work at IUP and a recent MFA graduate. My concentration for several years had been writing/reading poetry, so the transition from creative writing to composition studies was strange at first, but, ultimately, felicitous considering my present context. There I sat, dumbfounded by the many names and studies each speaker mentioned. Still, I diligently recorded in my journal what I thought to be valuable information for later reflection. Several days later on the plane ride home, I pulled out my journal, reading the modicum of scholars and key phrases I managed to record. At that moment, one of the pilots entered the cabin, engaging the flight attendant in conversation. Each glanced my way and politely introduced themselves, given I was directly across from them in a lone seat in the first row. The pilot, whose name escapes me, asked what I was working on and took the seat next to me, demonstrating genuine curiosity. I explained that I was returning from a conference for composition scholars/teachers and reviewing my notes on teacher response to student writing. We briefly exchanged stories of written comments from past teachers, summarizing both

positive and negative experiences. Then, the conversation centered on my work as a PhD student and what interested me about my field. I sheepishly replied that I was in the midst of course work and still trying to find an area of research that interested me. “Well, this response thing sounds like a good place to start,” he said. With that, our conversation ended with a handshake and his warm wishes for success. Once again, I perused my journal, jotting down questions concerning this new area of study for later investigation. In particular, I directed myself to read Nancy Sommers’s “Responding to Student Writing,” which I eventually did once returning home. After my initial reading, I highlighted the phrases “rubber-stamped” and “appropriation,” and for months those words echoed in my thoughts. For whatever reason, those two phrases truly spoke to me. I was on to something...

The semester quickly came to an end and summer went by even faster. I entered the fall semester after successfully completing my course work and began my second year as Michael M. Williamson’s graduate assistant. As part of my assistantship, I observed his two freshman composition classes. Ironically, I spent the majority of my time both teaching and responding to student drafts—under Williamson’s supervision of course. As part of our response approach, Williamson and I created “Response Forms” and “Reflective Forms,” each designed to aid collaborative response activities. Students would fill out response sheets upon reading a peer’s work, addressing the following: (1) What was the essay about; (2) list three different things you liked about the essay; and (3) list three different suggestions that might improve the essay. Respectively, the reflective forms asked students to consider how their peers’ responses could shape or inform revision. By the end of the semester, writers had a collection of these sheets, offering us

an indication of both their active involvement in the writing process, as well as their ability to consider/utilize peer feedback. More importantly, students learned how to revise their own work without the teacher as the sole evaluator. And, while this approach valued the responder's voice and encouraged revision, I still felt like something was missing. This feeling brought me back to my MFA program; more specifically, my time in the poetry workshop as the "silenced writer," a well-known feature of the workshop setting. In "Broken Circles and Curious Triangles: Rethinking the Writer's Workshop," Hephzibah Roskelly acknowledges the silent author stating, "the silence of the writer is the primary rule of the workshop" (53). However, I would argue that the silenced writer is not the primary rule of the workshop; rather, it is the primary rule of a New Critical approach to the workshop, as used by some teachers. This New Critical method, which was the approach I experienced in my poetry workshops, reinforces the authority of the text. In particular, it is the duty of readers to use the words on the page to guide their interpretation. According to Bizzaro,

the New Criticism approaches literary texts as finished products, products that can be analyzed for the relationship among their parts without regard to the author's intentions, the reader's responses, or the biographical and historical backdrop. The goal is to determine a text's meaning by offering a close analysis of the text itself, which is seen as the final authority for such determinations. (40)

Bizzaro's discussion of New Criticism includes, as his text reveals, those texts written by student writers as well. And, while the silenced writer encouraged by New Critical methods does have the opportunity to address peers' interpretations after discussion, the

writer's ability to direct or focus the feedback toward his/her original intentions has sadly vanished.

For most aspiring creative writers, the concept of the workshop is charming; it is an opportunity to craft, collaborate, and coexist with other writers in an atmosphere that celebrates the unique. Indeed, the individual growth of each writer is paramount in this given environment and while the technical aspects of writing are not necessarily absent, the mundane practices that infiltrate most traditional writing classes (5 paragraph theme, emphasis on mechanics, etc) are not at the forefront of what is deemed "successful" in this context. My MFA program housed a diverse group of writers, ranging in age, cultural background and economic status. Our classes gathered around ornate, oak tables that echoed "Knights of the Round Table." There we were, sipping our coffee, offering insightful responses to one another's poems as both gentle and resisting readers. Such responses were a result of reading poems through a New Critical lens, basing critical feedback on our individual experience with the textual features of the poem. Once a week we gathered, spending the allotted two and a half hours focusing on four to five original poems, depending on the length of each piece. The featured writers would email their poems to the class prior to the workshop, giving peers' ample time to read and respond accordingly. At the time of the workshop, the featured writers read their work to the class, selecting one additional student to perform their poem. This event allowed each writer to hear his/her poem aloud, calling attention to the poem's language, as well as alternative approaches to performing the poem. After the two readings, our professor would kindly introduce discussion by saying, "Ok, what do we love?" asking students to focus on the positive qualities of the piece. This dialogue was followed by her asking,

“Ok, what can we help them with?” During this time, the writer was required to remain silent, while responders took turns offering commentary and advice for revision.

The idea of the silenced writer took on an entirely different meaning for me while reflecting on my response approach in commenting on student writing. In particular, I began to reconsider the silenced writer, questioning the sway of such an approach on impressionable, emerging writers. In many traditional classrooms—not just freshman writing courses—there exists an inequitable relationship between teacher and student, where teacher commentary may intentionally or unintentionally overshadow the student’s initial purpose for writing piece. And, without a doubt, this same inequity occurs in the workshop when peers’ “gentle and resisting” comments eclipse the silenced writer’s voice. It is this extinguished voice that concerns me.

In addition to working with Williamson’s students, I was tutoring two freshman writers each week, one of whom was struggling to finish a particular poem. We spent several sessions discussing theme, tone, and imagery before delving into audience-specific questions. After several drafts and commentary, I began noticing a familiar tone to her work. Specifically, her poem resembled one of the many pieces I crafted during my MFA experience—sparse lines filled with vivid imagery and lyric musicality. The following is an example of my work:

Alone with Melancholy

I. Mornings

I hear you
 a distant moan
dusting my ear.

I keep still—
head down,

eyes sealed.

My body
 burdened
knowing nothing
keeps me

from you.

II. Afternoons

Your approach slams
the heaviest doors—

windowless rooms shiver.
Your spite funnels

a disquieting chill. Outside
the slow swath
 of the sickle.

III. Evenings

 The ashen
whisper of your voice, the icy
peeled finger pressed
 against my lips.
 Shhh....

A reminder.

Immediately, I noticed my own voice—as demonstrated in the above poem—surfacing in this student’s poem, leaving me to question whether I really assisted her as an emerging writer. Upon reflection, it was clear that I unknowingly appropriated this student’s work. And, this act of appropriation occurred as a result of my inability to listen to the writer’s voice, as Murray and Elbow both urge.

During this time, I was also working for Patrick Bizzaro as his graduate assistant. I vividly remember meeting him for the first time at his home. He sat next to me, graciously listening to my love of poetry and overall interest in creative writing studies.

At one point in the conversation, he left the table to retrieve a book from the basement. Returning, he placed *Responding to Student Poems: Applications of Critical Theory* in front of me and smiled. “This was a labor of love,” he explained, quickly noting that it was published in 1993. We spoke briefly about the impetus for the book—teacher-text appropriation—and once again, Sommers’s words echoed vociferously in my head. I left his house that day not knowing the impact his book would have on both my dissertation research and my approach to teaching. I spent several weeks working my way through his book, copiously etching notes in the margins and highlighting key passages. I was now in the midst of a dialogue between Sommers’ and Bizzaro, trying to find my voice in this conversation and, thankfully, it would not take long to find it.

Upon completion of the fall 2008 semester, I selected my dissertation committee, choosing Michael Williamson as my chair, in addition to Patrick Bizzaro and Mike Sell as readers. I met with each extensively over the course of the winter months, working to place myself within the response conversation. In particular, my meetings with Sell allowed me to consider the role *performance* plays in responding to student writing. And, once reflecting upon my previous experience responding to student texts and my background in performing music, this concept made more and more sense to me. I realized that my comments needed to not only be text-specific, but also writer-specific. With that, response became much more than simply directing a student to revise according to my approach as a writer, it developing methods of response that included the voice of the writer. In effect, I was looking to *un-silence* student writers by placing more emphasis on their intentions for writing and less on my purposes for responding. With that, I began considering response as a particular type of performance. In particular, I was

interested in examining the response process through the lens of performance, hoping to unearth an alternative method that encouraged a dialogue between my comments and my students' voices. However, before delving into the particulars of performance and response, I would like to offer a brief backdrop to my relationship with performance.

My Background in Performance

Drumming and Performance

I have been performing most of my life. At age 8, I began playing the drums, discovering a passion for music and performance that led to playing live shows in an alternative rock band. In many ways, drumming, for me, is like writing an essay or a poem. The words are the notes and how you perform them—tempo, volume, accent, etc—is what truly makes them unique to you as a musician. For me, drumming is a form of self-expression; it offers me another voice that is unique to me. To take this analogy a step further, consider the importance of “call and response” when playing in a band. Call and response is when, for example, a guitarist plays a particular riff and in response the drummer lays down an accompanying beat. This dialogue can occur amongst the entire band, resulting in the creation of a new song. What is important in this analogy is each musician's ability to listen to one another and respond accordingly. For this dialogue to truly take place everyone must work together, accepting individual roles and fulfilling them. In essence, responding to student writing is a call and response between the writer and the reader, each fulfilling a specific role in the process. It simply does not work if the teacher's influence overshadows the student's voice or intention. I now integrated performance into the terms “rubber-stamped” and “appropriation,” continuing my

research on response.

Mutuality and Personal Training

Along with attending IUP and performing research, I was a personal trainer at a local health club for over ten years. Initially, I never considered my work with clients to be analogous to response or teaching for that matter. However, after viewing my training approach through the lens of mutuality, I quickly recognized a parallel. And, like Bizzaro, I realized that I was essentially performing mutuality without even knowing it. This realization, of course, did not occur until recently.

Throughout my career as a personal trainer, I have trained twenty or more different clients over the course of a given week. And, without a doubt, all of my clients required me to engage and respond differently to successfully address their individual needs and goals. Like student writers, clients bring a unique set of issues and abilities to each session. In order to effectively address such concerns and create change, I created workout routines individually tailored to each of my clients. These routines were a result of both my expertise as a trainer and the objectives outlined by my clients. The said objectives were established in a one-on-one consultation between me and my client, occurring well before any exercise took place. This consultation or *conference*, as Murray would say, presented me with the opportunity to listen to my clients and develop workouts that addressed their individual concerns. With that, the designed workouts became an amalgam of my insights as a trainer and my clients' personal goals or intentions. Like Bizzaro's creation of "shared-upon" goals using primary trait scoring, my approach to training was a mutual venture between trainer (teacher) and client

(student) that operated from a shared-upon goal/s. The result, more often than not, was clients' achieving their established objective/s. Of course, I could have easily designed or rubber-stamped the same workout for all my clients, ignoring their individual intentions. The obvious outcome: unhappy clients falling short of their personal goals.

Recently, I began reflecting on my training experience, realizing that one of the underlying principles for my success was, in fact, the presence of clients' voices throughout the process. Ironically, this presence of voice is, as the previous chapter established, a key feature of both expressivism and mutuality. This insight directed me to consider how my training approach could parallel the task of response, wondering if this mutual venture could be replicated. And, after reading Bizzaro and Welch, I eventually discovered that a mutuality-minded response approach is possible. However, like my experience as a trainer, the desired approach cannot exist without the presence of the student's voice.

Approaching Mutuality

The spring 2009 term ended, leaving me with countless learning experiences from my time as a graduate assistant and my new perspective on response to student writing. I was granted a Teaching Associate position for the fall of 2009 and entered the summer with a nervous excitement, realizing that in a few short months I would be teaching for the first time. Over the summer, I continued personal training and began preparing for my fall teaching schedule. I spent countless hours creating syllabi and learning activities, attempting to forecast what I thought would benefit my students. Soon, the semester began and I was daunted by the task of responding to countless student drafts each week.

At the time, I was committed to engaging each text individually, asking myself what role was required for each performance. I would spend a minimum of fifteen minutes on each student's draft—I had a total of 48 students at the time—making the response event last several days. In retrospect, I was trying to fix every issue in each draft, not considering what draft I was reading (1st, 2nd, final) and, more importantly, I was not making the student's voice or intentions an integral part of my response approach. My marginal comments looked more like summative comments and my summative comments, well, they read like novels! Clearly, I could not keep this up for the duration of the semester and decided that I needed to reconsider my approach. With that, my earlier reflection on drumming resurfaced and I realized that in this session of “call and response” my voice was drowning out that of my students. I was spending too much time responding and not enough time listening. In particular, I focused on what was not in the essay, rather than responding to what the writer or text was actually saying. It was as if the writer was playing jazz and I was off in the corner playing hard rock—there simply was no dialogue between us. At that moment, I considered that perhaps part of the problem was that I did not know enough about the writer's intentions to truly help them with the given draft. I realized that I needed to get to know my students better before I could help them as writers. And, once the semester ended, I recognized the importance of listening to my students and responding accordingly, rather than telling them what I think they should do or say.

Over the course of the holiday break, I began reading Straub's *The Practice of Response: Strategies for Commenting on Student Writing*, hoping to find a better response approach for the spring semester. I encountered Peggy O'Neill's “Letter to the

Reader” form. This form asks writers to compose a paragraph explaining where they are with their draft for readers. Additionally, they create three questions or concerns regarding their present draft for readers to address. In essence, the letter to the reader encourages the author to speak before the reader comments, while many peer-response activities—especially in a New Critical creative writing workshops—ask writers to initially remain silent before addressing reader comments. Once the spring semester began, I used this approach in my Research Writing class and quickly noticed significant improvements in my ability to respond without appropriating or offering “rubber-stamped” comments. Specifically, my comments were more focused and took me a fraction of the time to craft. Most importantly, though, my students were given back their voices, receiving feedback more akin to their particular vision or purpose. That said, there still remained flaws within this approach. In particular, I noticed that many students were not filling out the forms completely, which, initially, suggested a lack of effort on their part. However, after speaking with many of them in conferences, I realized that the problem was, in fact, a question of confidence. They simply did not feel a sense of ownership over their writing, making it difficult to direct reader feedback. In order to address this level of insecurity, the next chapter deeply explores my performance as a teacher and how I have the ability to generate a classroom environment that cultivates confidence within each of my students. It is my belief that self-confidence is one of the key components shaping the mutuality-minded classroom; therefore, we as teachers must build an atmosphere that champions each student’s individual experiences and unique perspectives. Then and only then, will students begin to take ownership of their writing, discovering their own inimitable voice as a writer. However, before investigating the

nuances surrounding my performance in the classroom and how this act directly affects my students experience as writers and human beings, a definition of the term performance is required.

CHAPTER THREE
TEACHING “AS” PERFORMANCE

Performance is always performance *for* someone, some audience that recognizes and validates it as performance even when, as is occasionally the case, that audience is the self.

Marvin Carlson

Performance: A Critical Introduction

Anything and everything can be studied “as” performance. Because performance studies is so broad-ranging and open to new possibilities, no one can actually grasp its totality or press all its vastness and variety into a single book.

Richard Schechner

Performance Studies: An Introduction

Undoubtedly, the interaction between me and students in the classroom has an enormous impact on the way they read and interpret my written comments. From my perspective, response to student writing should be an extension of the classroom atmosphere rather than an isolated practice. In essence, my goal is to evoke the same teacher-student dialogue I promote in the classroom when responding to student writing, creating a seamless transition between my voice in the classroom and my voice on the page. That said, it is useful to consider the act of teaching as a *performance* that we as teachers can actively construct and, to a certain degree, control through our verbal and nonverbal communication. With that in mind, this chapter explores my belief that teaching is a type of performance that, ultimately, shapes and informs our written responses to student writing.

Understanding Performance

I agree with Richard Schechner's position in the epigraph, and would add that it is equally difficult to grasp performance studies' "totality or press all its vastness and variety" when writing a dissertation. Simply put, the term performance presents a continuum of possibilities, including anything from a Foo Fighters concert to the month-long Hindu celebration of Diwali, making it difficult to offer a definitive working definition. This complexity extends from performance studies' rich history, which, as Marvin Carlson reminds us, encompasses a wide-range of forms. When examining the historical presence of performance, Carlson transports us back to Medieval England:

In the Middle Ages there were the troubadours, the scalds and bards, the minstrels, the mountebanks, and that miscellaneous group of entertainers that in England were designated as the glee-men, "a term which included dancers, posturers, jugglers, tumblers, and exhibitors of trained performing monkeys and quadrupeds." The range and variety of such activity was much greater than is often assumed today. (87-88)

Entertainment of this kind spread throughout the Middle Ages, continuing well into the Renaissance and beyond. Inarguably, this array of activity continues today in the form of staged performances (rock concerts, sporting events), as well as everyday life performances (going to work, taking a morning yoga class). And, while performance studies proves to be an expansive discipline full of varying possibilities, there is, however, one distinguishing characteristic embodied by all performances: action. According to Schechner, "performances are actions" that are "framed, presented, highlighted, or displayed" and, as he points out, performance studies "takes actions very

seriously in four ways” by examining the following: behavior, artistic practice, participant observer, and social practices and advocacies (1-2). In particular, the rest of this chapter focuses on the importance of behavior and social practices when framing the act of teaching within the realm of performance. However, before defining why teaching is performance and how such knowledge can inform the way we teach, I would like to forge ahead and attempt, through my own experiences, to offer a working definition of performance (situated within the mutuality-minded classroom) worthy of Carlson and Schechner’s critique. In order to accomplish this understanding, I will establish a clear explanation of how performance manifests itself in everyday life before moving into the specialized view of “teaching as performance.”

Performing Everyday Life

Today, I woke at 4:45 am to the incessant shrill of the alarm poking at me. Once making it out of bed, I am greeted by my cat, Leopold, who is patiently waiting for me in the hallway. After a quick “meow,” Leopold triumphantly drops to the floor, stretches out on his back, and looks at me as if to say, “Ok, you can pet me now.” So, like every morning, I spend a few minutes rubbing his fuzzy belly, while trying to pull myself into the day. Then, as quickly as he fell to the floor, Leopold jumps up and scurries to the kitchen, patiently waiting for his morning snack. For my own convenience, I have strategically placed his jar of treats next to my Keurig, so I can feed the little guy while preparing my morning caffeine rush. After brewing a fresh cup and adding my favorite hazelnut creamer, we make our way to the couch. I grab the remote and turn on the morning news, while Leopold nestles himself inside the circular bed (designed

specifically for the feline population) directly positioned in the middle of the couch. I sit next to him with one hand holding my coffee and the other gently resting on his back. This event occurs every morning—a collective performance constructed from a series of actions that appear to be the same day after day. And, if Leopold and I performed this routine in front of an audience each morning, our actions could be categorized as *twice-behaved behaviors* or *restored behaviors*.

Schechner defines restored behaviors as the “physical, verbal, or virtual actions that are not-for-the-first time; that are prepared or rehearsed” (29). My interaction with Leopold, while not necessarily rehearsed, is made from bits and pieces of behaviors (petting him in the hallway, feeding him treats, and petting him on the couch) that merge together to create our morning routine. And, even though this routine seems the same every morning, it is, in many ways, unique each time. Schechner addresses this paradox by saying:

Performances are made from bits of restored behavior, but every performance is different from every other. First, fixed bits of behavior can be recombined in endless variations. Second, no event can exactly copy another event. Not only the behavior itself—nuances of mood, tone of voice, body language, and so on, but also the specific occasion and context make each instance unique...Even though every “thing” is exactly the same, each event in which the “thing” participates is different. The uniqueness of an event does not depend on its materiality solely but also its interactivity—and the interactivity is always in flux. (30)

When cast in the previous light, my framed interaction with Leopold could certainly fall

within Schechner's described paradox if there was an audience, since both the context and the interactivity between me and my cat is constantly changing. And, no doubt, this daily event exhibits countless variations as a result of changes in context and interactivity, such as the number of snacks I scoop from the treat jar to the number of times Leopold allows me to pet his little belly. That said, the core actions of our routine remain the same day after day, since we both maintain a consistent framework of actions.

When situating Schechner's paradox within the context of the writing classroom the importance of *interactivity* is evident. For example, if I am teaching different sections of the same class it is likely that I will use the same lesson plan, offering the same information to each class, which speaks to Schechner's stance that a performance, like teaching, does consist of bits of restored behaviors (the information contained in my lesson plan, my class objectives and goals). However, the overall experience created in one class cannot be simply replicated from section to section. Not only would it be inauthentic, but more importantly, it would be nearly impossible due the uniqueness of each group of students. Simply, the interactivity between me and my students is ever-changing since each class exhibits an inimitable range of personalities and learning abilities. The interactivity, as Schechner maintains, is in a constant state of instability, making each class section unique. This, of course, requires me to make adjustments in my teaching performance in order to address the uniqueness of each group of learners.

Getting the Cat into the Classroom

My earlier portrayal of me and Leopold represents how everyday life events could be viewed as performances consisting of restored behaviors if an audience is present. The

realization that even seemingly mundane routines are, in fact, collections of behaviors or actions that are “not-for-the-first-time,” creates the opportunity to consider how this knowledge can inform our approach to the many activities we perform on a daily basis—like teaching. In particular, it signals that we as teachers have the ability to recognize the bits of behavior (both positive and negative) that make up our many teaching sessions, making a concerted effort to restore or repeat those behaviors that have a positive outcome on the overall class. Naturally, these behaviors cannot be exact replicas of one another, but they can encompass similar traits or characteristics in order to create level of familiarity for my students. For me, practicing this level of self-reflexivity creates the opportunity for us to develop consistent, effective behaviors that encourage the equitable teacher-student relationships mutuality advocates.

So, what is the point of sharing my morning routine with Mr. Leopold if it is not technically a restored behavior? Well, let us consider for a moment that our students are cats. Yes, I said cats. Like Leopold, most cats believe that they are the ones in charge and that they are, ultimately, the ones pulling the strings. For instance, when Leopold races to the kitchen for his morning snack he believes that his actions are causing me to dish out his favorite treats; however, he fails to recognize that my actions are also an essential component of this process. Initially, I selected the brand of treats that he has grown to love, which I continue to purchase each week. And, unless Leopold has the ability to open the jar on his own, I have ultimate control over whether or not he gets his treats. Moreover, I set the tone for this routine by performing certain actions and actively creating an environment that encourages his behaviors, and I do this without making him feel like his actions are solely dictated by me. And, like cats, students should feel a

certain sense of control over the learning process without feeling like we as teachers are pulling all of the strings. With that in mind, how do we get the “cat” into the classroom? Specifically, how can we perform behaviors each day that encourage our students to become active participants during the learning process? Moreover, how do we perform these behaviors consistently over the course of the semester in order to create a familiar environment for students to thrive within each and every class? The answer, I believe, is to view teaching as a restored behavior.

Teaching as Restored Behavior

There are, undoubtedly, countless instances of restored behavior that each of us displays on a daily basis and, of course, the most common for me is teaching. It is easy to see how teaching the same lesson plan for multiple class sections could be categorized as restored behavior. In particular, the act of teaching reflects Schechner’s earlier paradox that restored behaviors can appear to be the same everyday and still be unique. The information conveyed from class to class is certainly modified to some degree based on the ever-changing context and interactivity present within the college classroom. However, the physical classroom environment (desk arrangement, lighting) can be controlled to a certain degree, creating a familiar space for both you and your students. And, certainly, controllable actions like seating arrangement, lighting, and sounds (like the music played during all of my classes) can be considered bits of restored behavior if I consciously enact these each and every class. Now, that is not to say that all features of the classroom are controllable. For example, the desks may shift slightly as a result of a new group of students seating themselves, or the sun may occasionally find its way into

the classroom making the room a bit brighter and warmer. That said, we can still try to create consistency in terms the classroom setting and our behavior, even if these variables are in a constant state of instability. The point is that viewing teaching as restored behavior allows us to consider the effect interactivity has on the daily actions we attempt to carry over from class to class, recognizing that modification and adjustment are natural part of successful teaching. The key is to recognize those factors that *are* within our realm of control and work to perfect those habits/actions, creating an air of familiarity from class to class.

Still not convinced that teaching is a restored behavior? Consider the many classes you have taught in the past. Did each group of students act the same? Was one section particularly disruptive or unresponsive, while another exhibited model behavior? Did one class laugh hysterically at your witty joke, while the same joke fell flat in your later class? If so, you may have asked yourself, “What am *I* doing differently from class to class to elicit different responses from my students?” For answers to these and many other questions, all arrows point to the fact that teaching is a collection of restored behaviors that are in a constant state of flux. What is important in this context is that we recognize each class section as a unique entity that requires, at times, modifications on our part to create the best possible teaching experience for each student. The sooner we recognize how to adapt the best qualities of our teaching practices for each and every group of learners, the sooner we can create the significant learning experience each of our students deserves. Idealistic you say? Perhaps on the surface, but this liberatory teaching approach is actually quite achievable, and realistic, if you are willing to step outside of your station as the teacher and open yourself to the perspectives of your students. Allow

me to further explain.

Recently, I taught three introductory composition courses on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. I selected the theme of music for each course, using the same syllabus and lesson plan for all three classes. And, although the material and focus remained the same for each section, there were many factors that made this collection of restored behaviors different from class to class. One of the most pronounced features was the overall dynamic or interactivity between me and my students, which, as Schechner reminds us, is “always in flux” (30). In particular, each class consisted of a unique group of students with varying personalities and idiosyncrasies, requiring me to *adjust* my performance in order to meet the every-changing needs of each atmosphere. For example, in one particular section I noticed a few of my students repeatedly texting during class (fortunately, this was not an issue in my other two classes). And, despite my best efforts (emails, meetings after class) they continued to check their phones and key the occasional text during class. I found myself starting to second guess my liberatory approach to teaching, wondering if imposing my authority as the teacher was my only option. Additionally, I became increasingly critical of my ability to captivate this particular audience. After countless hours reflecting on my teaching practices and soul-searching at the gym, I found my answer.

One evening, I was lifting weights and listening to my iPod when the band, The Replacements, came to my rescue (if you are a Goo Goo Doll’s fan you understand the significance of this band!). In particular, their song, “I’ll Be You,” gloriously resonated in my ear phones, asking me to consider an obvious solution to this problem: look at things through my students’ eyes. For the first time, I truly considered the fact that my students

had lives outside of our classroom that, no doubt, impacted their performance in the classroom. Armed with this understanding, I engaged this particular class section in an honest discussion about texting in class and why it is so important to them. This conversation opened a dialogue that forever changed the way I looked at this group of students. For example, one student explained that she likes to tweet what is going on in this class because her friends are always asking, “What are you doing today in Johnny’s class?” She went on to explain her interest in our class and why she feels the need to tweet her excitement. And, of course, some students revealed that they had no particular reason other than they received a message and felt like responding; however, the majority of students explained, in great detail, what compels them to text during class. This simple question created a dialogue that not only explained why they felt so tied to this practice, but it also created an important transactional teacher-student moment. At the end of this discussion, I had an idea. For this particular class, we decided to set aside three minutes of class time (halfway through class) for texting and checking emails. One student volunteered to be the official time keeper, alerting me when it was time to take a brief pause from class discussion or group work. Surprisingly, this simple change in class architecture encouraged my students to be more focused and refrain from texting during class time. Moreover, this new policy did not affect my ability to present or perform the same lesson plan enacted in my previous two classes. In fact, it brought me and my students closer together, making it easier for me to teach.

The previous vignette represents more than a simple example of how context and interactivity can affect a performance event. In particular, it is an archetype for how the mutuality-minded classroom operates. For instance, if I announced to my students that

texting during class is strictly prohibited and anyone caught texting will be marked absent, then I would be enacting my authority as the teacher/evaluator. Now, this approach may reduce the presence of texting in the class, but it also creates a major shift in the relationship between me and my students. It also drastically alters my ability to generate consistency with all of my class sessions, since one of my classes would have the misfortune of being reprimanded during class time. What I learned from this situation is that a desired outcome—in this case, getting a select group of students to refrain from texting during class—can be achieved without punishment or reprimand. Simply, I had to take myself out of the role of evaluator and consider the perspectives of my students. By building this time for texting into the structure of my class, I demonstrated my willingness to compromise. Not only did my students like the policy, but more importantly, they respected me more for recognizing an important feature of their day-to-day lives.

This is just one example of how my restored behavior (teaching the same lesson plan from class to class) had to be slightly modified in order to address the issue of texting, due to a change in interactivity. And, while the overall performance of my lesson plan was somewhat different from my other two classes, the foundation of my teaching (the lesson plan, the environment I strive to create every class, my personality) remained intact. The impetus for the change in context (the new texting policy) occurred in response to the interactivity between me and my students. This example reflects Schechner's position that "the uniqueness of an event does not depend on its materiality solely but also on its interactivity" (30). That said, I was still able to preserve the positive qualities of my teaching performance even when faced with a flux in interactivity. With

preservation in mind, this next section looks to examine how we as teachers can create consistency with our both our verbal and nonverbal communication in order to create the best possible teaching scenario each and every class, even when dealing with an ever-changing context of the classroom environment.

Verbal Communication

J.L. Austin and the Performative

How do I offer utterances that encourage, nurture, and motivate my students? Is there a way to generate actions that consistently match/reflect my utterances in the classroom, thereby building the emancipatory environment I am striving to create? Better yet, how does an awareness of the performative nature of language equip the mutuality-minded teacher for success when attempting to build equitable teacher-student relationships? Well, according to J.L. Austin, “To *say* something is to *do* something,” but these utterances need to be followed by some type of action in order to be considered performative (Schechner 123). Austin’s exploration of the performative, while extensive, does not specifically address teacher-utterances in the college classroom (his discussion accounts for the broad spectrum of performative utterances rather than one particular context). With that, I would like to re-conceptualize Austin’s performative by including the realm of teaching in order to answer my earlier questions concerning the role a teacher’s language plays in the mutuality-minded classroom. However, before analyzing the presence of the performative in teaching, let’s briefly revisit Austin’s *How to do Things with Words*, a series of lectures Austin delivered in 1955 at Harvard University (preface).

In “Lecture I,” Austin begins his talk by clarifying *what* constitutes a statement, explaining that philosophers long assumed that “the business of a ‘statement’ can only be to ‘describe’ some state of affairs, or to ‘state some fact,’ which it must do either truly or falsely” (1). In an effort to differentiate words that perform action from those that simply describe, Austin offers the performative. When distinguishing a performative from a statement, Austin eloquently comments that the “performative utterance” does not simply make an assertion; rather, it “performs an action” (Carlson 61). When defining a performative, Austin states:

The name is derived, of course, from ‘perform,’ the usual verb with the noun ‘action’: it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action—it is not normally thought of as just saying something. (Austin 6-7)

A common example of a performative is the act of exchanging wedding vows, where the words spoken by the bride, groom, and officiant all acquiesce to create an action: marriage. For instance, when a catholic priest proclaims, “I now pronounce you husband and wife,” this particular utterance sanctions the previous vows, validating both the bride and the groom’s previous utterances as actions. In addition to their utterances, the couple performs physical actions to accompany their words, such as exchanging wedding rings and, of course, signing the marriage license soon after the ceremony (Schechner 124). Schechner does question, however, the potential “weakness or incompleteness” of the actual performative language when its effectiveness hinges on the actions that follow (124).

In the case of the classroom, this presents a provocative situation, given that much

of what we say as teachers hinges on the actions that follow if we want our words to be effective. For instance, if I say to my students, “I will have your papers graded and returned to you by this Friday,” then the effectiveness of this performative utterance relies on my ability to actually grade and return the papers by Friday. In the event that I fail to meet my imposed deadline, the utterance, according to Austin, is “infelicitous” or “unhappy” given that the action (getting the papers back by Friday) was not fully achieved (Austin 14). But there is more here than simply the act of returning late papers. Specifically, my performative failed because of my inability to follow through on my promise. And, certainly, this situation connects to response, since my students will eventually begin to distrust my written comments if I am constantly failing to follow through on my verbal promises in the classroom. In my opinion, this is problematic when attempting to create the mutuality-minded classroom. Let me explain.

Like many teachers, I have specific due dates for my students’ assignments and feel that it is only fair that I impose similar deadlines for returning their work. In the previous scenario, my words (I will have your papers graded by Friday) were not followed by the promised action (actually having them graded by Friday), understandably causing my students to possibly mistrust my promises later in the semester. This type of behavior on my part clearly does not encourage or value mutuality. Now, many professors have reasonable excuses for not having papers graded on time: committee work, publishing deadlines, personal issues, etc. And, in some cases, these are the same professors that provide little or no leeway for students when they request to turn an assignment in late (due to their own personal issues, busy work schedules, etc). This type of hypocrisy incenses me. First, it establishes that the professor’s commitments are more

important than the student's, encouraging a clear division between teacher and student. This division places the teacher, not the student, at the forefront of the teacher-student relationship, which is diametrically opposed to the goals of the mutuality-minded classroom. The student quickly learns that their job is to please the teacher. Second, it will, no doubt, lead to resentment on the part of students, since my actions (returning their papers late, but not extending the same courtesy to them) reinforce that my needs supersede theirs. And, while the previous scenario is only one of many, it illustrates how easy it is to undermine our performative utterances when we do not follow through on our promises or create double-standards. Simply, in order to encourage equity we must practice consistency both in our words and our actions in the classroom, as Freire asserts in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. "To say one thing and do another—to take one's own word lightly—cannot inspire trust" (Freire 80).

There is, however, one overwhelming factor affecting our performative utterances, which makes consistency on our part even more crucial: the presence of symbolic power. In the "Editor's Introduction" to Pierre Bourdieu's *Symbolic Language and Power*, John B. Thompson comments that symbolic power (Bourdieu's term) is an "invisible' power" that, ultimately, influences a performative utterance (23). In the case of the teacher-student relationship, it is difficult to ignore the symbolic power professors knowingly and unknowingly bring with them into the classroom. This invisible power comes directly from an *institution*, which, in this case, is the university. When explaining Bourdieu's term *institution* Thompson states:

An institution is not necessarily a particular organization—this or that family or factory, for instance—but is any relatively durable set of social

relations which endows individuals with power, status and resources of various kinds. It is the institution, in this sense, that endows the speaker with the authority to carry out the act which his or her utterance claims to perform. (8)

For example, the university gives us the power to pass or fail our students. Additionally, it gives us the ability to choose our course materials, establish goals and objectives for our courses, and, ultimately, assess our students' writing. That said, it is essential that we acknowledge the presence of this symbolic power and recognize the implicit authority embedded in all of our utterances. And, while this acknowledgement does not merely erase symbolic power, it does, however, force us to pay closer attention to the consistency between our performative utterances and actions.

Although seemingly nominal, the idea of consistency sets the tone for the equitable teacher-student relationships I am striving to cultivate. Simply, if I want to offer utterances that encourage positive actions on the part of my students, then my performative utterance must be accompanied by the promised action. In addition to following through on our promises, it is equally important to examine how we physically deliver our utterances. That said, this next section explores the power of nonverbal communication when teaching, offering insights into how body language can both inform and shape our performatives, as well as the overall classroom environment.

Nonverbal Communication

Communication is, undoubtedly, the foundation of the writing classroom, since the goal for process-oriented instructors should be to teach students how to effectively

communicate their ideas and perspectives through writing and oration. And, as the previous section advocates, it is imperative that mutuality-minded teachers recognize the importance of creating consistency between their intended performatives and the actions that follow. However, being in-tune with our verbal communication is not enough to ensure equitable teacher-student relationships. In particular, we must consider the impact our nonverbal communication has on both our utterances and, consequently, the way our students receive the said utterances. With that, I would like to explore the role nonverbal communication/body language plays in my teaching performance and how, ultimately, this introspective look at our physical actions is crucial when attempting to build mutuality in our classrooms.

Schechner maintains that, “people are performing all the time whether or not they are aware of it” (207). In fact, an impromptu conversation with an acquaintance at the grocery store could, in many ways, be classified as performance of social life. As a teacher, I make a conscious effort on the first day of the semester to create a classroom environment similar to the previous casual meetings we often experience on a day-to-day basis. For me, this relaxed atmosphere creates a space where students begin to feel valued and appreciated each and every class. So, how do we as teachers consciously create nonverbal behaviors—in addition to our performative utterances—that ensure such an environment? Moreover, how do we maintain this atmosphere throughout the semester?

In “Nonverbal Communication in College English Classroom Teaching,” Lianguang Huang reiterates the significance of verbal and nonverbal communication in the college English classroom. He begins by summarizing Michael Argyle’s (author of the seminal text, *Bodily Communication*) definition of nonverbal communication:

Nonverbal communication is identical to body language, including facial expressions, gaze, gestures and bodily movements, postures, bodily contact, spatial behaviors, clothes, physique and other aspects of appearance and nonverbal vocalizations. (Huang 904)

And, as Huang argues, the previous nonverbal cues have a direct impact on the overall classroom atmosphere. To extend Huang's position, I would like to examine my own nonverbal cues that I consciously and unconsciously enact each and every class session. In particular, I will examine, in detail, the following categories of nonverbal communication: adornment, facial expression, eye contact, gesture, paralinguistic, locomotion, position, posture, proximity, and context. To begin, let's take a look at the way I dress, which, according to Adam Blatner, falls under the category of "adornment" (5).

Adornment

Adornment encompasses a variety of variables, such as makeup, accessories, and, of course, clothing (Blatner). Admittedly, I am really into fashion, which my ex-wife would confirm by describing, in detail, the extensive collection of boots, oxford-style wingtips, ties, vests, suits, designer jeans, and workout gear crowding her once beloved walk-in closet. That said, my wardrobe is more than simply an assortment of impulse buys; rather, it represents the many selves I perform on a daily basis, such as weightlifting enthusiast, alternative rock fan, and, of course, college instructor. With regard to the latter, I have spent the last several years building a collection of attire that supports my overall performance in the classroom. For instance, an outfit I typically wear

(and well-known for on campus) consists of the following: a dress shirt with a tie (my favorite is my skull tie), a vest, designer boots or suede wingtips, and dark, straight-leg jeans (I will sometimes wear my Cheetah-print belt when I'm feeling particularly rock'n roll). Now, there is a clear methodology behind outfits such as the one described. All of my classes are informed by my background as a musician. Early on in my teaching career, I began to notice the similarities between academic writing and song writing. With that, I decided to utilize my experience as both a drummer and poet/lyrist, creating an approach to teaching writing that completely revolves around music and lyric writing. So, after laying the foundation for my envisioned class, I felt it was equally important to project an image/appearance suitable for this approach.

I would describe my overall look as trendy, yet professional, which directly coincides with my approach to teaching writing. Like my attire, my teaching style is artistic and imaginative, while also organized and structured. For instance, this past semester many of my College Writing students were having difficulty distinguishing when to use a comma or a semicolon in their masterpieces (yes, I refer to their writing as masterpieces rather than essays). In response, I designed an in-class activity to help alleviate their confusion. I took a recent interview with country singer/songwriter, Keith Urban and omitted all commas and semicolons. Working in small groups, their task was to go through and place the necessary commas/semicolons in the correct spots. It is important to note that this activity was preceded by a structured discussion surrounding commas and semicolons the previous class. Again, this activity, like my attire, lithely combined the elements of creativity/imagination and logic/structure to create an activity that my students could identify with, since many of them were Keith Urban fans. In

essence, the way I dress reflects not only my personality, but also my teaching methodology. But above all, the way I dress is an *authentic* reflection of my interests and personality, which my students quickly recognize as the semester goes on.

Facial Expression

In addition to my overall style, I am constantly aware of my facial expressions, which Huang states is “one of the most important types of nonverbal signals in the classroom” (905). I agree that facial expressions are, indeed, important in this context and each of us should make a conscious effort to emote a positive attitude. Simply, if we want our students to *want* to come to class, then we need to show them that we actually want to be there, too. That said, sometimes this is not as simple as Huang would have us believe. Sure, it is easy to smile when things are going smoothly in the classroom, but what happens when our restored behavior is interrupted due to a change in interactivity, such as a student routinely arriving late to class? Huang suggests that “a teacher should smile often in class” since “a smiling teacher is thought to convey warmth and encouragement in all cultures, and will be perceived as more likable, friendly, warm, and approachable”(905). Of course, I agree that a warm, friendly disposition is part of the mutuality-minded classroom and that “lively facial expressions can promote a supportive and non-threatening classroom atmosphere;” however, Huang doesn’t mention how to handle moments (a late student) that interrupt the normal flow of a class. And, for me, it is during these moments that our actions or reactions mean the most. Let’s consider the occurrence of students arriving late to class.

I greet each of my students with a friendly smile and “hello” each and every time

they walk into the classroom, even when they arrive late. In my opinion, it is important that every student feels welcome, even if they are a few minutes (or longer) late for class. Far too often, teachers personalize these particular moments, thinking “how dare this student disrespect me and my class by showing up late.” During these moments, I find it useful to consider the fact that maybe his/her tardiness is due to a whole host of reasons that would fall under the category of acceptable. Perhaps they are not feeling well, or they have an earlier class on the other side of campus. My advice: before diving into the natural reaction of glaring at the student, try smiling. I can certainly respect a teacher’s decision to reprimand the student for being late at that moment, but I place more importance of consistency rather than brandishing my authority as the teacher.

Understand, though, I don’t simply overlook their late arrival; rather, I make it a point to speak with them after class to reiterate my late policy, which is clearly stated in my syllabus. My decision to warmly greet those who are late is due to my overall concern with the energy I am projecting during those first crucial minutes of class. In particular, I use the first minutes of class to engage my students in casual conversation, which helps to create the relaxed atmosphere they routinely mention in their student evaluations at the end of the term. This seemingly trivial banter with my students, or what I like to call a “warm-up,” sets the tone for the rest of the period. So, for me, it is more important to cultivate this feeling (a relaxed, warm atmosphere) than it is to scold the late student, disrupting the established mood. In this case, I want my performative utterance (a warm greeting to the late student) to match my current action (smiling while talking to the class). What would happen if I broke from my warm exterior and scolded the student? More likely than not, it would alter the relaxed mood I have spent the last five minutes

cultivating, potentially changing the entire tone of the class session. In “The Communication of Friendly and Hostile Attitudes by Verbal and Non-verbal Signals,” Michael Argyle and Robin Gilmour test the importance of verbal and non-verbal consistency based on two separate experiments where subjects rated “videotapes of a performer reading friendly, neutral and hostile messages in a friendly, neutral or hostile non-verbal style” (386). The results concluded that “when verbal and non-verbal signals were inconsistent, the performance was rated as insincere, unstable, and confusing” (386). The point is that, yes, it is important to address disruptive situations in the classroom (late students, texting, etc), but is equally important to maintain a level of consistency with our behavior.

This idea of verbal and nonverbal consistency echoes Richard Fulkerson’s article “Four Philosophies of Composition.” Here, Fulkerson re-envision M.H. Abram’s four theories of literature and criticism to fit the composition classroom. Specifically, Fulkerson defines four existing philosophies in composition: expressive (writer emphasized), mimetic (correspondence emphasized), rhetorical (audience emphasized), and formalist (form emphasized) (343). He maintains that each philosophy emphasizes a “different element in the communicative process,” which, of course, gives “rise to vastly different ways of judging student writing” (343-344). And, it is here that Fulkerson reiterates the importance of consistency. For example, if an assignment asks students to write a personal narrative describing their favorite song (expressive), then the students’ expectation/belief is that I will judge their piece based on the expressive philosophy. However, if I evaluate their piece primarily on grammar and mechanics (formalist) and ignore the expressive element of their writing, I am creating an inconsistency between the

assignment's requirements and my method of evaluation. Fulkerson refers to this occurrence as *modal confusion* or *value-mode confusion* (347). And, no doubt, modal confusion is another example of how consistency plays an enormous role in the mutuality-minded classroom, and we should, as Fulkerson suggests, "strive for "teaching procedures that harmonize with evaluative theories" (346). Whether it is consistency between an assignment and evaluative method, or consistency between verbal and nonverbal behaviors, the implication remains the same: we as teachers need to be attentive to the level of consistency we achieve in the classroom.

Eye Contact

In addition to smiling, Huang discusses the importance of eye contact when attempting to create a comfortable atmosphere for students. In particular, he mentions that "looking around" and "looking attentively" are useful strategies in the classroom (905). The first, looking around, is useful when attempting to get the entire class involved. Taking the time to look in the direction of all your students, especially before lecturing, demonstrates that each student is a valued member of the class community. The latter, looking attentively, is particularly effective when attempting to encourage students when sharing their writing during class or just speaking in general. It not only demonstrates interest on teacher's part, but more importantly, it conveys to students that their ideas/contributions are valuable. And, while eye contact should play a central role in the classroom, it is imperative to consider the context of your learners. For instance, many Western cultures use prolonged eye contact to demonstrate interest and attention, while other cultures may avoid eye contact as a sign of respect. Like most teaching

situations, context is everything, so be attentive to the uniqueness of your audience.

Gesture, Paralanguage, and Locomotion

Eye contact is certainly an essential feature of the mutuality-minded classroom, but gestures and posture are equally crucial when attempting to captivate a room full of students. According to Huang, “A teacher may be considered boring, stiff and inanimate, if he or she fails to use gestures while speaking. Comparatively, a lively and animated teaching style captures students’ attention, and makes the material more interesting, facilitates learning and provides a bit of entertainment” (906). I agree with Huang on this point and would add that genuine enthusiasm is infectious; therefore, I place a tremendous amount of importance on displaying my passion for class material, as well as teaching. One way I achieve this is by combining my gestures (raising eyebrows, lively hand motions, etc) with two additional categories of nonverbal communication: *paralanguage* and *locomotion*.

Blatner defines paralanguage as “non-lexical vocal communications” such as, “inflection, pacing, intensity, tone, pitch, and pauses” (3). Huang simplifies this definition stating, “Paralanguage is the way we vocalize or say the words we speak” (906). The key is to match your gestures with your paralanguage, allowing one to inform the other. For instance, when beginning a lecture, I often use humor to grab my students’ attention. Frequently, I will share one of my many embarrassing stories from earlier in the week, acting out the particular event using animated gestures, as well as variations in my paralanguage. Naturally, part of my “professorial-jester act” centers around locomotion or my “physical movement in space” (Blatner 4). Marching around the room,

hopping, jumping, and skipping all represent the category of locomotion, which definitely finds its way into both my stories and lectures (4). The result of using gesture, paralanguage, and locomotion is a captive audience ready for class (this can be particularly valuable when attempting to re-energize weary students mid-way through class).

The excitement I harness through my gestures, paralanguage, and locomotion confirms for my students that I *want* to be there with them, which should be a goal of every teacher. And, while gesticulation does grab student attention, it should be properly matched with what you are saying or presenting. For instance, flailing your arms around while speaking will certainly get you noticed, but it may distract from what you are actually trying to convey to your students. Therefore, be sure that your movements reinforce your utterances, rather than distract from them.

Position, Posture, and Proximity

In “Six Ways to Improve your Nonverbal Communications,” Vicki Ritts and James R. Stein reiterate the value of nonverbal communication in the classroom, maintaining that “this mode of communication increases the degree of the perceived psychological closeness between teacher and student” (1). This potential “psychological closeness” is crucial when attempting to foster mutuality in the classroom. And, like the previously detailed categories of nonverbal communication, a teacher’s position, posture, and proximity to his/her students is paramount when looking to create a relaxed, comfortable learning environment. In terms of position, I prefer a circular configuration, where the desks are arranged in a circle. This arrangement is a common feature of many

writing classrooms, since it enables students the ability to see one another (as well as me) when sharing ideas. For me, this setup is crucial given that the first half of my class centers on freewriting. I begin each class with a five to ten minute freewrite, followed a fifteen to twenty minute discussion, where every student shares his/her freewrite with the entire class. Here, the circular seating arrangement decentralizes my authority, showing my students that we are all equal participants in the larger class community. And, as Ritts and Stein remind us, “interpersonal closeness results when you and your students face each other” in the classroom setting (2). Now, I know what you’re thinking: “Johnny, this sounds like a wonderful idea, but not all students are going to jump at the opportunity to share their class, even if they are in a circle.” I certainly recognize that it takes time for every student to settle into the idea of speaking every class, which is why it is essential to create a space or *context* that makes each student feel comfortable and willing to share (the concept of context will be further explored in the next subsection). And, for me, one useful strategy for helping students become more at ease with talking is to engage in a brief conversation with each of them before class. They will not only feel more comfortable speaking during class, but, perhaps more importantly, you will get to know them better.

In addition to placing the desks in a circle, my posture or “bodily stance” is a key feature of my teaching performance (Blatner 2). Posture encompasses a variety of actions, which we all enact consciously and unconsciously. For me, it is important that I convey a friendly, approachable demeanor to all my students. With that, I make an effort to appear relaxed, but confident. For example, when seated within the class circle I make certain not to slouch, squaring my shoulders and keeping my back straight. I counter this

rigid posture by folding my hands on the desk or crossing one leg over the other. When standing I try to avoid crossing my arms in front of me, making a conscious effort to keep myself “open” to my students. Also, I am constantly moving around the room in an effort to change my proximity or distance between me and my students, which, according to Ritts and Stein, helps to “increase interaction with your students” (2). They continue by stating, “Increasing proximity enables you to make better eye contact and increases the opportunities for students to speak” (2). In my classroom, I always leave a space between two desks, in two specific locations. This allows me the ability to move in and out of the circle with ease. Additionally, I never tower over my students when they are seated; instead, I crouch down beside them, placing us at eye level. And, of course, proximity is particularly critical when performing individual student conferences. Understandably, it can be intimidating for students to enter a professor’s office for a one-on-one meeting, especially early on in the semester. I can recall sitting across from professors as an undergraduate: them in their comfortable chair and me in a lower, less desirable one. With that, I always position myself at one corner of the desk or table with my student at the other, creating a shared space (the corner of the desk or table). Also, I make sure that we are sitting in the same type of chair

Context

For me, context is paramount when attempting to create a relaxed learning environment. Blatner reinforces my belief by stating, “While this category is not actually a mode of nonverbal communication, the setting up of a room or how one places oneself in that room is a powerfully suggestive action” (5). And, like the many restored behaviors

I try to enact from one class session to the next, I also make a conscious effort to restore specific features of the classroom setting. In his discussion surrounding context, Blatner mentions several factors that could potentially influence an interaction. In particular, I would like to focus on three of them: lighting, props, and environmental sounds (5). And, although I placed seating arrangements under the category of position, it is easy to see how this feature is tied to context as well.

Lighting, no doubt, impacts the overall feel of the classroom. Like most of my students, I prefer natural lighting as opposed to overhead, incandescent bulbs, so I try to let in as much light as possible by opening the blinds. If I had my way, though, I would campaign for dimmer switches in all of the classrooms, giving us (me and my students) ultimate control over the intensity of the overhead lighting. This control would be especially useful, since it is virtually impossible to operate within a classroom using exclusively natural light (sadly, not every day is sunny in Indiana, PA). Ultimately, I want to create a comfortable atmosphere for my students, so blaring fluorescent lights doesn't necessarily encourage the coziness I am looking to establish.

In addition to lighting, props can be particularly valuable. For me, the most valuable tool is the media station (computer, projector, and speakers) located at the front of the classroom, which I use for all our in-class activities, one of which is analyzing the video "Slide" by the band Goo Goo Dolls. Along with the many activities I employ, the media station enables me to incorporate music, which is constantly playing in the background during all of my classes. On the first day of class, I ask my students to share their name and favorite band or artist with the class. I make sure to write down each of their responses, making a detailed list of the music each student prefers. Consequently, I

use this list to create music stations in my Pandora online music account, allowing me to play music that my students enjoy, building an atmosphere unique to each group of students within the first week of the semester. This approach, of course, helps to establish a level of familiarity for each group of learners, since *their* music is always on during class.

Implications of Verbal and Nonverbal Communication as Restored Behaviors

To be clear, developing more control over our verbal and nonverbal behaviors does not imply that we have the ability to simply produce and reproduce exact replicas of our words and actions. It does suggest, however, that we can develop consistent patterns of behaviors that, over time, create a familiar learning environment for our students. The key is to enact behaviors that fit the overall context of each event, making a conscious effort as teachers to respect the complexity and uniqueness of each group of students, as well as the individuals that create this community. Schechner maintains that “no event can exactly copy another event...the specific occasion and context make each instance unique...Even though every ‘thing’ is exactly the same, each event in which the ‘thing’ participates is different.”(30). I agree that no class session can be an exact copy of another due to the constant change in interactivity between me and my students. Nevertheless, I strongly believe that when we recognize that our words and actions are restored behaviors influenced and affected by interactivity, we can begin to develop an overall consistent pattern of behaviors that our students grow to expect. Seating arrangement, lighting, sounds, and a host of other contextual elements all, ultimately,

help to create the equitable learning environment this dissertation advocates. Naturally, responding to student writing is, as I argue in the next chapter, an extension of this atmosphere since the mutuality-minded classroom strives to maintain consistency on all fronts.

CHAPTER FOUR
CO-INTENTIONAL COMMENTARY: SITUATING PARALLEL TEXT AND
SIDESHADOWING WITHIN THE MUTUALITY-MINDED COMPOSITION
CLASSROOM

In a humanizing pedagogy the method ceases to be an instrument by which the teachers (in this instance, the revolutionary leadership) can manipulate students (in this instance, the oppressed), because it expresses the consciousness of the students themselves. A revolutionary leadership must accordingly practice co-intentional education. Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. (55-56)

Paulo Freire

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Pedagogies that strive for mutuality do not “free” students by investing them with personal authority that is autonomous. Instead, such pedagogies enable agency by demonstrating that the choices students make and the freedoms they have are situated in social interaction. (140)

David L. Wallace and Helen Rothschild Ewald

Mutuality in the Rhetoric and Composition Classroom

As I see it, most traditional response methods/studies fall short of mutuality because of their inability to consider how the teacher/responders’ verbal and nonverbal behaviors influence students’ receptions of their comments. And, as I argue in the last chapter, is it crucial that we as teachers develop consistent verbal and nonverbal behaviors when teaching in the classroom, making a conscious effort to construct both a persona and an atmosphere that our students can grow to trust. From my perspective,

consistency is paramount when constructing an equitable learning environment where teachers and students act as co-constructors of new knowledge. Part of this knowledge, undoubtedly, occurs as a result of the interplay between the student's written text and the teacher's comments to that text, which, I maintain, is an extension of the teacher-student relationship present within the classroom environment. Basically, if we want our students to participate in an equitable dialogue with us on the page when using parallel text or sideshadowing, then we must first nurture an equitable teacher-student dialogue in the classroom. This dialogue begins with our ability to create a comfortable, open-minded learning environment where students feel integral to the task of building new knowledge. In particular, Wallace and Ewald outline three influential factors (classroom speech genres, course architecture, and students' interpretive agency) that affect our students' ability to take on the role of subject-knowers in our classrooms. This next section briefly details the importance of considering classroom speech genres, course architecture, and students' interpretive agency when asking students to become co-constructors of new knowledge.

Understanding Mutuality

In the first chapter of this dissertation, mutuality is defined as “teachers and students sharing the potential to adopt a range of subject positions and to establish reciprocal discourse relations as they negotiate meaning in the classroom” (Wallace and Ewald 3). And, as Wallace and Ewald reveal, part of this negotiation process hinges on our ability as teachers to create equal discourse relations (what Wallace and Ewald refer to as *classroom speech genres*) with our students in the classroom. This position of

reciprocity asks us to move away from transmission-based models of teaching where teachers dominate the knowledge making process and, instead, develop classroom environments that champion teachers and students as “co-constructors of knowledge” (7). And, like Paulo Freire, I believe that reformulating classroom speech genres promotes the act of sharing, positioning both teachers and students as subject positions integral to the development of new knowledge.

Another equally important aspect affecting mutuality in the classroom is the teacher’s ability to redesign *course architecture* with students. Wallace and Ewald define course architecture as follows:

The management of assignments and activities that make up the day-to-day procedural functioning of the class and, in particular, the ways in which classroom assignments and activities encourage (or discourage) interaction among disciplinary knowledge and students’ varied knowledge and experiences. (11)

And, like classroom speech genres, negotiation and sharing are both integral to course architecture. Wallace and Ewald offer four considerations when considering course architecture: 1) How much input will students have in deciding the amount of class time spent on such activities as teacher-led discussions, peer review, workshop sessions, and student presentations; 2) How much input will students have in the choice of textbooks or other readings for the course; 3) How much input will students have in the kinds and topics of writing assignments; and 4) How much input will students have in the criteria used to assess their performance and determine their grades? (12) Now then, the previous considerations are just a few of the ways we as teachers can begin to negotiate control

with our students over course architecture. For me, the key to this aspect of mutuality is to encourage students to take an active role in developing in-class activities and assignments, positioning them as co-constructors of the overall course design (in addition to co-constructors of knowledge).

The final element influencing mutuality is *interpretive agency* or the act of “bringing one’s prior experience to bear in the construction of knowledge” (16). Interpretive agency, like reconstituting speech genres and redesigning course architecture, places equal importance on developing equity between teachers and students, positioning knowledge construction at the “intersection of students’ varied experiences and disciplinary knowledge” offered by the teacher (17). Consequently, valuing students’ interpretive agency makes their prior experiences part of the learning process, affording them the ability to make connections between themselves and the disciplinary knowledge being presented.

A central element connecting all three of the previous aspects is the recognition of students as subjects on the part of both teachers and students alike. The teachers’ ability to view their students as co-constructors of new knowledge is an on-going process of reflection and compromise, which requires teachers to be self-reflexive and critical of their own verbal and nonverbal behaviors in the classroom. That said, a teacher’s willingness to share power with students is only half of the equation. The other half, students viewing themselves as subjects, presents its own unique challenge. In particular, one of the biggest challenges facing teachers wishing to enact mutuality is the fact that most students may not be used to entering the role of co-creator or subject. Students are, in many ways, comfortable with assuming the role of knowledge-recipient and may

resist, at first, the role of subject-knower. With that, it is important that we develop opportunities early in the semester that help students adjust to their new roles as contributing orators. In particular, it is worthwhile to explore how we as teachers can instill confidence in our students during class time, creating moments for all of them to develop oratorical fluency as speakers. This, I believe, is crucial when encouraging students to be subject-knowers rather than knowledge-recipients.

Bolstering Student Confidence and Oratorical Fluency

The preceding chapter outlined the importance of recognizing teaching as a restored behavior consisting of strands of verbal and nonverbal behaviors. And, as teachers, we should be attentive to how our words and actions shape the overall classroom environment. Additionally, it is also necessary to examine the students' role within this space, since, as Freire reminds us, teachers and students "are both Subjects" in the liberatory classroom (56). In particular, we need to create more opportunities for our students to verbally share their ideas and writing during class, especially if our goal is to develop a dialogue with them on the page using parallel text and sideshadowing. And, naturally, the student's voice is a vital component of the previous response strategies.

In "Performing Writing, Performing Literacy," Jenn Fishman and et al. examine the importance of having students perform their texts in the composition classroom:

That performance should be a primary teacher of literacy is not as far-fetched as it may at first seem. After all, gesture, movement, and talk have been part of literacy learning since the advent of reading and writing instruction, and we should all hear in our minds' ear the recitations and

orations by ancient grammar and progymnasmata exercises. (244)

In the last chapter, I mentioned the importance of having students share their freewriting each and every class. For me, this oratorical practice stems not only from my experience as a musician and an M.F.A. graduate, but it is also informed by antiquity's approach to teaching writing using *progymnasmata*—composition exercises preparing future citizen-orators. James Murphy's *Quintilian on the Teaching of Speaking and Writing* offers an exquisite account of Marcus Fabius Quintilian's approach to teaching using progymnasmata. According to Murphy, Quintilian wrote *Institutio oratoria* ca A.D. 95, providing a comprehensive “rationale for rhetorical education based on reading, speaking, and writing” (vii). In Quintilian's textbook, education for the future citizen-orator begins with pre-school training focusing on “rules of syntax and what we would call today ‘literature’” (Murphy xxii). It is during this time that the “*grammaticus* or teacher of ‘grammar’” begins having the young pupil perform the elementary exercises found in Book I of *Institutio oratoria*, which is divided into twelve chapters (xxii).

According to Murphy:

The *grammaticus* has the boy recast fables and poems, thus reworking the ideas of other men. Then he advances to using his own ideas in the amplification of weighty aphorisms (*sententiae*), and in the development of maxims (*chriae*). In other essays he learns to discuss the characters of men in the exercise known as *ethologia*. During this period, the student also takes lessons from a professional teacher of enunciation—from an actor, in fact. (xxii-xxiii)

This early coaching from a professional actor illustrates the fundamental role

performance played in writing instruction, reiterating that perhaps performance's role in literacy is not as "far-fetched as it may at first seem" (Fishman et al 244).

Murphy reveals that during this early stage of instruction, "A major feature of this education program is *imitatio*—the careful following of models until the student is prepared to branch out into his own inventions" (xxv). As a musician, this period of imitation resonates with my own experience developing as a drummer. My approach was/is rather simple: listen to my favorite drummers and copy everything they do until it becomes engrained in me. Presently, I continue this imitation, diligently listening to and practicing the unique sounds of my favorite drummers. Drummers like Carter Beauford, Matt Cameron, Chad Gracey, Dave Grohl, Taylor Hawkins, Stephen Perkins, and countless others, shaped me into the drummer I am today. And, without a doubt, my maturation as a performer occurred while attempting to imitate the best qualities of each musician, eventually transcending into my own distinct sound. Taylor Hawkins of the Foo Fighters reiterates my own process of imitation in a recent interview in the September, 2011 issue of *Modern Drummer*:

I have no rudimental training. My rudimental training was Rush's *Exit Stage Left* and the Police's *Zenyatta Mondatta*. I emulated my heroes. I played along with those records. That's how I learned. *Ghost in the Machine* and *Zenyatta*, those were my two Police bibles. Copeland is definitely one of my major heroes. (47)

Like Hawkins, I place tremendous merit on emulating my own heroes. My artistic journey began with assiduous observation and practice before spreading my artistic wings and composing my own material. In a recent interview with Daryl Hall on the webcast

“Live From Daryl’s House,” John Rzeznik, lead guitarist, vocalist, and frontman for Goo Goo Dolls, reiterates the importance of imitation for the developing musician:

You have your idols and you do everything you can to cop everything you can from these people. And, if you stick with it long enough, one day, that little piece of you comes into that. It creates a paradigm shift and moves the music forward. (Episode 42)

Rzeznik calls attention to the moment that all developing musicians, myself included, hope to experience at some point in their journey; specifically, the moment when we realize that we have transcended our models and moved into a space that is completely our own. This space also has the potential to be present in the writing classroom.

When drifting back to the discussion of composition, Quintilian solidifies the importance of imitation in early literacy development:

From these authors, and others worthy to be read, must be acquired stock words, a variety of figures, and the art of composition. Our minds must be directed to the imitation of all their excellences, for it cannot be doubted that a great portion of art consists of imitation—for even though to invent was first in order of time and holds first place in merit, it is nevertheless advantageous to copy what has been invented with success. (Murphy 132)

Clearly, Quintilian’s teaching approach represents Freire’s “banking concept” of education where “students are depositories and the teacher is the depositor” of knowledge (Freire 58). Unlike Quintilian, however, I am not advocating that students should solely attempt to model the “excellences” of recognized writers or teachers for that matter; rather, I am advocating that teachers should encourage students to model one another if

the goal is to position them as subject-knowers. Like Freire, I am concerned with creating a liberatory environment where students begin to value and appreciate their own thoughts and perspectives rather than attempting to digest mine. However, rather than completely dismissing antiquity's approach to teaching writing, I would like to reconfigure Quintilian's use of imitation in order to fit the mutuality-minded classroom by using the practice of freewriting.

Encouraging Students to be Subject-Knowers through Freewriting

Undoubtedly, the common thread adjoining all of my courses is freewriting. In fact, every one of my classes begins or ends with a freewriting session, which explains why one of my former students gave me the nickname "Johnny Freewrite," a title I proudly accept. This widely accepted practice in composition classrooms encourages students to express their ideas and thoughts without the shadow of correction looming over them. The concept of freewriting reflects Elbow's (and many other expressivists) preoccupation with bolstering individual student voice. In many ways, this activity creates the space for students to explore and express themselves through writing. And, while the activity itself merits many benefits, I believe it is what happens after they write that is most important when encouraging them to be subject-knowers. Like interpretive agency, freewriting has the potential for students to "engage perspectives that are different from their own, whether those perspectives are expressed by a teacher or by a peer" (Wallace and Ewald 19). Incidentally, freewriting can be situated within a social context simply by having students share their writing with the class. For me, this act of sharing allows each student to "engage perspectives that are different from their own,"

while still being able to express their individual perspectives. This seemingly insignificant act of sharing is actually quite fundamental when getting students to accept the role of subject-knower in the classroom. Moreover, this daily routine lays the foundation for successfully implementing parallel text or sideshadowing as response methods. Allow me to clarify the importance of freewriting using a brief example from my own class.

It is no mystery that John Rzeznik of Goo Goo Dolls is one of my biggest influences as both a writer and an emerging guitar player. As a writer, Rzeznik's lyrics capture many of the qualities I try to impart to my writing students: a clear introduction and conclusion, a balance between internal and external details, a clear sense of audience, and a strong, distinct voice. And, since my College Writing class is situated within the genre of music, I often build freewriting activities around Goo Goo Dolls songs/videos as a way for my students to practice expressing their individual opinions, as well as negotiate meaning with peers. For example, one activity centers on identifying internal and external details (internal details include the inner thoughts or feelings of the speaker, while external details consist of everything happening outside or around the speaker). And, for most song writers, internal and external details are the essential building blocks for the songs they craft.

This past semester, I used countless songs and videos—chosen by both me and my students—to frame our many freewriting sessions. In particular, one stands out for me. It was the second day of class and I wasted no time diving into Goo Goo Dolls' song "Slide." It is worth noting that this freewrite is unique because I chose the song for the activity rather than negotiating the selection with my students. My reasoning for this is

simple. On the first day of the semester, I ask my students to share their favorite band/artist with the rest of the class, writing down each of their selections. In turn, this list of bands becomes my guide for developing freewriting activities, incorporating *their* music into the overall class design. With that, I usually need a few weeks to properly develop freewrites using the unique selections of my individual classes, which is why I have a few established songs/activities for the first weeks of class. In this case, “Slide.”

For this activity, I first asked students to open their journals and draw a single line down the center of the page creating two columns. Next, they were asked to write “Visual Details” above one column and “Lyrical Content” above the other. Their task, as I explained it, was to listen to and watch the song/video, while taking notes in each of the columns in an effort to construct an interpretation of the song/video. I should mention that our syllabus began with the lyrics to “Slide,” so they already had the lyrics in front of them during the activity. After watching the video twice, I asked students to begin formulating their own interpretation of the song based on the two completed columns. Finally, my students were asked to share their interpretations with the rest of the class, offering students the opportunity to contribute their ideas/thoughts. It was during this time of sharing that antiquity’s *imitatio* comes into play. In particular, students were beginning to hear how their peers developed and constructed knowledge, which was or was not similar to their own. Perhaps most importantly, though, students that had a stronger grasp on the given song or video had the ability to become models for larger class community. In this case, one of my students (toward the end of the discussion) offered a unique interpretation based on the video’s visual details and the song’s lyrics, which persuaded many of his peers to reconsider their own understanding of the song’s

meaning. He emphatically declared that the song was about abortion, citing several key pieces of evidence to support his overall analysis, while most of his peers decided (with little supporting evidence) that the song was about a girl running away from an abusive parent to get married. At that moment, he unknowingly assumed the role of model, giving his peers a chance to witness how he developed his interpretation based on evidence rather than opinion. And, it is moments such as these that we as teachers need to be cautious. I could have easily interrupted the discussion before this student had the chance to offer his interpretation. Yes, my students would have gained many of the same insights on why the video and lyrics point to the subject of abortion; however, it would have confirmed for them that the teacher is the one with all the right answers, placing them in the position of knowledge-recipient. Instead, I remained silent as my students shared their ideas, allowing them the room to negotiate a collective meaning without my voice directing the conversation. It was not until after all of my students spoke that I began to share my own insights on the song/video; however, I made it a point to build off of their offered ideas, reiterating for them that, yes, they are valuable contributors to knowledge construction in our class.

I can recall another time when my one of my students became a model for her peers during a freewriting session. It was the fall of 2010 and I was two weeks into the semester teaching another College Writing class. At the time, we were exploring the sensory detail “taste” through a brief but challenging freewriting session. Their task was to describe the taste of chocolate or peanut butter without using the phrase “It tastes like....” When it came time to share their writing many of my students struggled with their description, which prompted me to consider interjecting with my own example to

help them. However, I resisted the urge to intercede and tried my best to remain silent, hearing the chant of Rumi's poem "Say I Am You" echoing in my mind:

There's a path from me to you
That I am constantly looking for,

so I try to keep clear and still
as water does with the moon.

Then, it happened. One of my students began reading her description for the class, offering a rich description of chocolate. As she read her piece, I began scanning my students' faces as they listened to her detailed account. At that moment, I noticed some of the remaining students (those waiting to present) hurriedly making a few last minute changes to their own descriptions. And, as we continued around the class, many of the remaining students were able to use her description as a model for their own. It was then that I realized I was witnessing mutuality in action. My students were learning from one another rather than exclusively from me. And, without question, I continued to see this type of learning occurring over the course of the semester in all of my classes, reinforcing, for me, that Freire's notion of student-as-subject is possible.

For me, the first two weeks of the semester are crucial to enacting mutuality in all of my classes. With that, I employ freewriting to help my students enter the role of subject-knower, while also fostering a supportive community of readers and writers. Of course, this supportive environment is not just a product of freewriting; to a certain extent, it is also an outcome of the verbal and nonverbal behaviors I perform on a daily basis in the classroom. Freewriting, as I see it, is a useful method for encouraging students to take an active role in developing their own voice as both subjects and writers; however, freewriting alone does not assure individual interpretive agency among

students. Simply put, if we want our students to truly believe that, yes, they do have interpretive agency, then consistency must be cultivated on all fronts, especially when it comes to their written assignments. In particular, we must encourage students to become co-responders of their own writing, creating opportunities for them to interact with the comments we make as reader/responders. In my estimation, freewriting helps prepare them for this position by giving them the opportunity to develop their voice within the social space of the classroom.

Situating Parallel Text and Sideshadowing within Mutuality

As I mentioned in Chapter One, Bizzaro's parallel text offers student writers insight into what type of reader their text created. Consequently, this technique asks teachers to enter the role of *a* reader rather than *the* evaluator, offering a reader-response to the student text. With regard to Welch's sideshadowing, the goal is to encourage a dialogue between the reader and writer. To achieve this conversation, students are asked to write their questions, thoughts, and perspectives in one of the margins of their paper before handing it in to the teacher. Upon receiving the paper, teachers consider student commentary while crafting responses in the corresponding margin. The result is a shared space for both the writer and the reader to negotiate meaning. However, simply implementing parallel text or sideshadowing certainly does not guarantee cooperation from our students, which is why I place such importance on freewriting and sharing. We must prepare our students for the role of co-responder by creating moments during class that promote this often unfamiliar position of subject-knower. And, like teacher behavior, student behavior also needs to be consistent. Simply put, if we want our students to enter

into the conversation that both parallel text and sideshadowing invite, we must first give them the opportunity to experience this role on a consistent basis. For me, sharing freewrites every class is one approach to helping students develop into subject-knowers.

After spending several weeks performing regular freewriting sessions with students, it is now time to put parallel text and sideshadowing into practice. And, rather than deeming one of the following techniques superior to the other, I prefer to implement both in the mutuality-minded classroom, creating what I refer to as *co-intentional* responses to student writing. Co-intentional responses, as opposed to traditional teacher-responses, consider the input of both the writer and the reader as the essential elements affecting the revision process. Part of this process asks that both the reader and the writer enter a dialogue with one another through written comments. And, it is through this dialogue that mutuality begins to surface. To begin moving toward co-intentional responses, I find it useful to first offer a parallel text to a student's draft before moving into sideshadowing. Like Bizzaro, I enter the role of a reader, offering my students insights into what kind of reader their text created. I think this is particularly useful for early drafts, since it allows students the opportunity to witness the affect their words have on a reader/audience. On paper, my parallel text or reader-response occurs in the right margin, offering a glimpse into how I constructed the meaning of the text. In turn, each of my students can read my reaction as a reader and decide whether "this reading, upon reflection, is what he or she hoped would result from the text" (Bizzaro 76-77). The next step in this process, sideshadowing, comes after the student revises. Upon revising, I then ask my students to submit another copy of their paper. However, before submitting their work, I ask them to comment on their revised paper using the left margin to explain the

changes they made, as well as any concerns they may still have. These concerns often resemble the following comments, “Johnny, I really like my introduction, but I am not sure if I used enough external details to place my reader in the situation,” or “I tried to revise my conclusion so it would connect to my introduction, but it still doesn’t work for me.” Incidentally, I use these and other comments as a guide for reading their latest draft, considering both the revised text and the accompanying comments while responding to their writing. The result is a dialogue between me and the writer, where the goal of the conversation is a text that meets the expectations of both the writer and the reader/teacher. In essence, the writer and the reader are able to direct the text together, co-intent on creating the writer’s reality for each particular piece.

At this point, the time spent every class having students read their freewrites aloud begins to truly pay off. In particular, they are actively developing individual voices both within the larger class community and as writers, which signals to them that, yes, they are each subject-knowers. As a teacher, I can engage each of these unique voices with my comments, offering responses that are anything but “rubber-stamped.” And, if I have developed consistency with my verbal and nonverbal behaviors in the classroom, my voice as a reader should be familiar to each of them as well. This co-intentional response approach fits the mutuality-minded classroom model, since it repositions the students as unique subjects actively constructing knowledge with the teacher, rather than resistant recipients of the teacher’s knowledge.

In the spirit of celebrating the individuality of our students, it is equally meaningful to consider what makes us as teachers unique from one another. We all have pursuits outside of teaching that help nurture our individual spirit, which can be

integrated into our teaching practices. With that, the subsequent chapter explores my love of music and how this passion informs/shapes my overall approach to teaching writing, as well as how it is a natural conduit for enacting mutuality in the classroom.

CHAPTER FIVE

ATMOSPHERE OF THE OPPRESSED: USING MUSIC TO LIBERATE STUDENT WRITERS

Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything.

Plato

Close your eyes. Imagine you are nestled in your favorite chair, comforted by the words of your favorite song playing softly in the background. You are surrounded by friends eager to listen to your ideas and thoughts; no judgment, just support. Over the last several weeks, you have grown to enjoy this place. It is a space that offers solace and comfort each and every time you step inside. No, you are not at the local coffee shop sipping your favorite caffeinated beverage; you are in my writing classroom. Welcome.

In Chapter Three, I explained how I manage specific variables (adornment, facial expression, eye contact, gesture, paralanguage, locomotion, position, posture, proximity, and context) associated with nonverbal communication in an effort to create a relaxing environment for my students. And, as I argue in Chapter Four, this equitable environment—along with my verbal communication—has the ability to encourage co-intentional responses between me and my students when using parallel text and sideshadowing. These co-intentional responses fit within the mutuality-minded classroom because both the teacher (responder) and the student writer are positioned as subjects, making the creation of each text a mutual endeavor. Of course, this reciprocity amongst

me and my students does not simply happen over night. It is a gradual process that continues to evolve over the course of the semester. And, part of this evolution hinges on our ability to generate consistency between our verbal and nonverbal behaviors when interacting with our students. In addition to the previous features, I play background music during class sessions to further promote the presence of mutuality, while also achieving the “coffee house” effect I previously mentioned. Specifically, I use Pandora Radio to create individual stations for my students based on their musical tastes. I then alternate among these stations throughout the semester, playing background music that is familiar to each of my students. With that, the following discussion offers a step-by-step account of how I create these stations, as well as how this unique feature of my class further encourages mutuality. However, before detailing this approach, allow me to briefly explain my own connection to music and why it has become a fundamental component in all my writing classes.

Using Music in the Mutuality-Minded Classroom

Have you ever heard a particular song and felt like it was written exclusively for you? Did the singer’s words and emotions seem to align perfectly with how you felt at the time? If so, then you, like me, have experienced that magical moment when the singer crawls deep inside your psyche, expressing the very emotions that you have been struggling to convey. During some of my darkest moments, music was the one thing that always pulled me through. Whether it was battling depression or accepting the collapse of a failed relationship, music was/is always there for me. To be clear, though, music represents more than just refuge from the many problems we encounter in our daily lives.

It can be a source of joy, excitement, inspiration, and countless other emotions. And, much like performance, defining my ardor for music is equally difficult to capture and define in a few sentences. Therefore, in keeping with the spirit of musicality, I will use poetic language to express my relationship with music. Here is my poem, “I Am Music.”

I Am Music

I am the soil’s sugary fragrance
a mid-summer’s rain,
fresh, reborn.

I am the sun’s affection
blanketing the sodden earth,
the gentle weeping of the stream.

I am autumn’s breeze,
a funneling dervish of leaves—
dancing colors of amber, indigo, and honey.

I am soft silence
awakened by a whisper...
winter’s gentle breath
beckoning: *come closer*.

I am the downy ocean foam
quenching the shoreline’s thirst—
the water’s edge
a path to follow.

I am your silhouette’s armor,
a respite from the sun’s burn—
healing days scorched by speech.

I am joy, pain,
laughter, and melancholy...
I am Music,
drink me in.

“I Am Music” captures exactly what music means to me. And, while I can speak to my own connection with music, I recognize that it positions itself differently within peoples

lives, making it unique—to some degree—for each of us. For instance, some people enjoy jazz, while others listened exclusively to country. At the same time, though, music—regardless of the genre—has the ability to bring people together as well. And, like mutuality, music celebrates both individuality and universality, offering students and teachers alike the opportunity to have both unique and shared experiences. And, it is this toggling between individuality and universality that makes music such an ideal medium for channeling mutuality.

Encouraging Classroom Speech Genres and Interpretive Agency through Pandora Radio

Throughout the semester, you will hear music playing in the background during all of my classes; specifically, Pandora Radio. Pandora is a unique internet radio site that creates personalized radio stations for individual listeners through the use of a Music Genome database. According to Julia Layton:

Pandora relies on a Music Genome that consists of 400 musical attributes covering the qualities of melody, harmony, rhythm, form, composition and lyrics. It's a project that began in January 2000 and took 30 experts in music theory five years to complete. The Genome is based on an intricate analysis by actual humans (about 20 to 30 minutes per four-minute song) of the music of 10,000 artists from the past 100 years....When you create a radio station on Pandora, it uses a pretty radical approach to delivering your personalized selections: Having analyzed the musical structures present in the songs you like, it plays other songs that possess similar musical traits. (1)

To begin using the program, you simply type in the name of a favorite song or artist. Within seconds, the Music Genome begins analyzing the musical attributes associated with songs typical of the artist/band, continuously searching for songs by other artists that fit this mold. In addition to the Genome, Pandora also provides listeners with the opportunity to *like* or *dislike* a particular song using the “thumbs-up” or “thumbs-down” icons conveniently located at the top of the player (Layton 2). Like the mutuality-minded classroom, this feature makes listeners active participants in the construction of their stations, affording them the opportunity to control (to a certain degree) which songs are being played. Listeners can also add other songs or artists to their customized stations, expanding the overall scope of music being selected by the Genome. So, how does this work in my classroom? Well, the first step is finding out the musical tastes of each of my students, which occurs on the first day of class.

After taking the time to introduce both myself and the course, I ask my students to open their notebooks and prepare for a brief freewriting exercise. I begin by asking them the following: In a brief paragraph, name one of your favorite songs/bands, explaining why you have such a strong connection to it/them. This ten minute freewrite is followed by a large group discussion where each student shares his/her writing with the class. This moment of sharing not only breaks the ice, but more importantly, it sets the tone for the entire semester since most class sessions' center around freewriting and sharing. At the same time, I am busy writing down their selections next to their names on my attendance sheet. Upon completion of the discussion, I explain to my students that their choices will help inform the stations I create for our particular class section. And, in the spirit of reciprocity, I finish the first day by sharing one my favorite songs at the moment. For

example, this past semester I used “Here is Gone” by Goo Goo Dolls.

I began by explaining my connection to the lead singer, John Rzeznik. For years, I have found comfort in Rzeznik’s lyrics; many of his songs helped me cope with the personal issues I have faced over the years. “Here is Gone” was particularly poignant for me at that time (and currently), since it conveys Rzeznik’s ability to accept the collapse of his marriage and move on, which I was/am currently struggling to embrace. In particular, the speaker verbalizes something that I have just recently recognized: the person I was with for the last eight years was, in many ways, “never really there at all.” Below is a portion of this song:

“Here is Gone”

You and I got something
But it’s all and then it’s nothing to me, yeah
And I got my defenses
When it comes to your intentions for me, yeah
And we wake up in the breakdown
Of the things we never thought we could be, yeah.

I’m not the one who broke you
I’m not the one you should fear
We got to move you darling
I thought I lost you somewhere
But you were never really there at all

And I want to get free
Talk to me
I can feel you falling
And I wanted to be
All you need
Somehow here is gone

I am no solution
To the sound of this pollution in me, yeah
And I was not the answer
So forget you ever thought it was me, yeah

I’m not the one who broke you

I'm not the one you should fear
We got to move you darling
I thought I lost you somewhere
But you were never really there at all

And I want to get free
Talk to me
I can feel you falling
And I wanted to be all you need
Somehow here is gone

And I don't need the fallout
Of all the past that's here between us
And I'm not holding on
And all your lies weren't enough to keep me here

After explaining my choice, I then played the song/video for the class. I talked about how this song is helped me begin the process of navigating through this difficult time, citing specific lyrics that resonated with my own feelings about my divorce. I find this modeling extremely useful on the first day for several reasons. One, it demonstrates for my students that I am willing to share my experiences with them, which is only fair if I am asking them to do the same in their later assignments. Two, it offers them insights into how they can connect their own personal experiences to specific song lyrics, using the lyrics to describe their feelings (internal details), as well as the external details surrounding the specific event. Lastly, it encourages them to dig a little deeper when explaining their own connection to a song in future class discussions and assignments.

Making Individual Pandora Stations

After sharing the previous song with my students and successfully completing the first day of class, I take some time to review the bands/artists provided by each of my students during our discussion. Thankfully, most of my students prefer similar genres of

music, making it rather simple to create Pandora stations that they all enjoy. Conversely, though, there are students that request artists/bands whose lyrics and content are, in my view, highly controversial and offensive. For instance, this past semester one of my students requested Lil' Wayne, which I respectfully declined due to the overall vulgarity of both the lyrics and the content. Songs like "Hoes" and "How to Hate" are just a few examples of songs that could potentially be offensive to many of my students. Pandora makes it clear that they do not censor the lyrical content of artists/bands in order to "stay true to the artists' original intentions" (Layton 3). And, while I support and agree with protecting authorial intention, I also feel an obligation to the larger class community to preserve the overall integrity of our classroom.

In addition to requests for controversial artists, there are also students that favor music that is obscure or unpopular with many of their peers, creating the potential for discord amongst the group. Simultaneously, though, it also presents an opportunity for negotiation and, in some cases, an unexpected change of heart. For instance, I can recall a particular student voicing on the first day of the semester that she vehemently hated country music. And, unfortunately for her, many of her peers were huge country music fans. According to her, this genre was full of twang-filled melodies consisting of lyrics that centered on a guy's late night escapades at the bar and his unhealthy obsession with a truck. That said, she did concede that she would do her best to suffer through those days filled with country music playing in the background. Admittedly, I was never a country music fan myself, until one of my former students encouraged me listen to Zac Brown Band's "Colder Weather." And, to my surprise, it forever changed my opinion of country music. With this experience in mind, I decided to base an in-class activity on "Colder

Weather” for the next class, hoping that it might change her mind as well. And, like me, she was pleasantly surprised by the singer’s dynamic voice, as well as how the lyrics painted a haunting picture of loss and regret. Now, I am not saying that she jumped out of her seat and began line-dancing due to her new status as a country music enthusiast, but she did/does view this genre differently in light of this experience. Perhaps more importantly, she was able to change her perspective on country music, which, I believe, had some impact on her ability to connect with her peers in our class.

Of course, the above vignette is surrounded by other countless other moments where my students had to display tolerance for both their peers’ differences as well as my own (Sadly, not every student is a fan of Goo Goo Dolls), but that is the beauty of mutuality. It is an ongoing process where teachers and students are in a constant state of compromise, engaging in a back and forth process between what is familiar and what is foreign. And, it is this toggling between teachers’ and students’ knowledge/experience that makes the mutuality-minded classroom unique from transmission-based classrooms.

Incorporating Music into Course Architecture with Sweeney Todd

Along with the background music softly playing during class, many of the assignments my students perform throughout the semester are up for negotiation. An example of such compromise can be taken from one of the larger assignments in my introductory composition course. About mid-semester, my students begin watching Tim Burton’s version of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. Now, before you judge my selection hear me out. Yes, the movie/musical is gory at times: however, the scenery, music, atmosphere, and characters make it a perfect fit for the following task.

Specifically, this assignment asks students to enter the role of composer by substituting a song of their choice to play over one particular scene from the film. My students begin this project by watching the movie/musical— paying close attention to how each musical composition informs and shapes the accompanying scene (this usually takes about four to five class sessions when teaching a fifty minute class period). At the end of each class, we conclude with a ten minute freewriting session aimed at identifying why or how the music/lyrics connect with each scene for that class period. In particular, students are asked to recognize how the dynamics (changes in intensity, volume, etc) of each song connect with the plot of each scene.

After finishing the movie/musical, we begin the next class session by negotiating the overall requirements for this assignment. I initiate this conversation by stating that there need to be four content-based requirements that we as a class decide upon by the end of the period. First, I ask them to create a list of ten characteristics that they feel should be in the paper. After completing this list, I place them in groups of four and ask them to focus their individual points into four agreed upon requirements. Next, I ask each group to write their list on the board and present it to the class. Once each group presents, it is time to negotiate which four requirements to enact. Frequently, some of the groups' choices overlap, making it easy to finalize a list. However, in the event that there is dissonance over the remaining requirement/s, it is my job to assist the negotiation process without making the decision for them. Yes, this can be tricky, but no one said mutuality was easy.

After settling on four content-based requirements, we end the class period with a freewrite, which extends into the next class period. Specifically, the writing prompt asks

them the following: Choose one scene from *Sweeney Todd* and assume the identity of one of the characters and, in your own words, reveal to the audience your inner thoughts and feelings, using internal details to voice what has been left unsaid. For homework, students are asked to complete this prompt and be prepared to share it with the class. For me, this writing prompt encourages my students to dig a bit deeper into scene, observing the silent spaces or gaps the writer has left for us to fill. Moreover, the prompt lays the foundation for choosing a song to replace the selected scene, since it focuses the student's attention on the emotions of the character rather than merely the offered storyline. And, after several additional freewriting sessions, class time in the computer lab, and one individual conference with me, my students hand in a draft of their latest masterpiece.

I have grown to really enjoy the previous assignment. It showcases each student's creativity and individual voice, making it an absolute pleasure to read. And, although students may choose the same scene, it is the individual song selection that makes the project unique to each writer. From start to finish, this assignment is a cooperative effort between me and my students to create a unique piece of writing for each individual writer. Whether it is creating a list of requirements for the project or discussing the potential for their song to capture the character's emotions during a conference, this piece of course architecture reflects my commitment to mutuality.

The Musicality of Mutuality

The previous assignment is just one of the many examples of how I negotiate course architecture with my students. Along with course architecture, classroom speech genres and interpretive agency are also achieved by creating individual Pandora stations

tailored to students' musical tastes, as well as incorporating these familiar artists/bands into our daily in-class activities. With regard to in-class activities, I make a conscious effort to integrate my students' musical tastes into the many activities we engage in class. For instance, we spend the first six weeks of class focusing on the art of song writing. In my opinion, some of the best poets are song writers. What I appreciate most about these talented artists is their ability to capture a story within such a small space, which, no doubt, is worth exploring in any writing course. An example of such brilliance is John Lennon's song "Imagine."

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people living for today

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people living life in peace

You, you may say
I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will be as one

Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people sharing all the world

You, you may say
I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will live as one

Here, Lennon explores the possibility of a world absent of religious strife and avarice

within the confines of five, concise stanzas. And, while I do not expect my students to create songs to the caliber of “Imagine,” I do believe that the practice of song writing challenges my students to create stories that are both detailed and concise.

Throughout the first half of the semester, students are asked to write three separate songs that focus on one of the following subjects: a place, a person, or a moment in time. I spend several classes showcasing examples of popular songs (many based on my students’ recommendations) that encompass one of the following subjects. For instance, I used “Empire State of Mind” by Jay-Z and Alicia Keys, and Coldplay’s “Paradise” as examples of songs about “place.” Both activities asked students to formulate their own unique interpretation based on two factors: the visual details present in the video and the lyrical content. Like most of our activities, I play the video first so they can take notes concerning the visual details, then I play the song a second time with just the lyrics on the projector screen. We then engage in a ten minute freewriting session in which each student constructs a paragraph explaining the meaning of the song based on the previous factors. What follows is a large group discussion where each student presents his/her interpretation to the class. These activities, in addition to many others, are just a few examples of how I utilized my students’ unique musical tastes to design in-class activities that would further exemplify the song writing process. Yes, I could exclusively use songs that I am familiar with, which, in many ways, would simplify my teaching; however, it is important for me that each student feels connected to the learning process. Simply, I want all of my students to recognize their role as subject-knowers in our class, realizing that they are not only integral to the construction of new knowledge, but they are also part of the vehicle that transports us to that new knowledge.

In many ways, mutuality is analogous to music. Each song has the potential to create a unique experience for each individual listener, while at the same time it has the ability to challenge a person's beliefs and ideas, perhaps generating a change in perspective. Mutuality works in a similar manner for both teachers and students. It values and celebrates individuality, but it also asks that each of us be open to new perspectives and opposing beliefs. Song writers express their own personal truths or observations, while still offering an experience for each individual listener or group of listeners. Music and mutuality promote the space for individuality and universality to thrive, encouraging self-expression and open-mindedness for teachers and students. For me, music not only promotes mutuality, it *is* mutuality.

CHAPTER SIX

IMPLICATIONS OF MUTUALITY AND RESPONSE: A CONCLUSION

When I arrived in Leonard Hall on the first day of the spring semester for English class, I was apprehensive about what to expect since I've heard many unpleasant experiences from my peers. To my great surprise though, when I settle into the classroom, I was greeted by the kindly face of John Hrebik. Not once in my entire college career have I been approach first, shaken hands with, and asked about myself by a professor. The best part is that this type of geniality continues to occur in every class so far this semester. Sometimes, I wonder how one person can be so cheerful and concerned about others every day. The reason why he tries to be so involved students' learning in and out of class, I think, is because he holds dear that each student is special and should learn in a pleasant environment.

“A Unique Experience: A Professor that Really Cares”

The above epigraph is an excerpt taken from a paper that one of my former students wrote for his Theatre 101 course in the spring of 2012. I can remember this day clearly; I strolled into class that morning to find this young man, and several other students, settling into their seats. I approached the media station (located in the front of my classroom) and prepared to access my Pandora account. It was then that I notice a piece of paper gently resting on the computer keyboard. The paper was folded in half with the words “Something to brighten your day” etched on the blank side of the creased page. And, as I glance up to locate who might have left this unexpected message for me, I noticed the young man smiling and patiently waiting for me to open the page. The paper, as it turned out, was an assignment he submitted for his theatre class, which he decided to write about the impact I had on him as a student. His paper begins with the following:

Unfortunately, you rarely find a professor on a college campus that genuinely cares about their students, learns their names, and interacts with them like peers anymore. The reason why I find a character like this so interesting is because the stigma for college professors is that they are just there to present information, test on it, and then send their students on their way at the end of the semester. This outdated way of teaching creates no personal connection between educator and student. The personal bond between the educator and the student is an essential part of effective teaching.

To be clear, he wrote this paper without my knowledge. It wasn't until after his professor returned his work that I actually read it. And, after reading it, I found myself overcome with emotion. I approached him and thanked him for taking the time to write such a heart-warming piece, as I attempted to hold back the thin film of tears beginning to coat my eyes. I politely excused myself and stepped into the hallway to regain my composure. I was, and still am, truly touched by this student's words. In that moment, I realized that my pursuit of creating equitable teacher-student relationships not only shapes response to student writing, but it also shapes the learning experiences of my students.

My dissertation began as an evaluation of response to student writing and quickly evolved into an unwavering endeavor to put forth a classroom model that not only encourages the teacher-student dialogue Chapter Four advocates, but, more importantly, creates an environment that both nurtures and promotes the well-being of every student in my class. Likewise, if I am looking to encourage mutuality with my students, my written comments need to harmonize with my verbal and nonverbal behaviors in the classroom.

And, as I reveal in Chapter Three, teaching is a type of performance made up of twice-behaved behaviors or restored behaviors that we as teachers can, to some degree, actively shape and manage. To be clear, though, developing more control over our verbal and nonverbal behaviors does not imply that we have the ability to simply produce and reproduce exact replicas of our words and actions. Moreover, no class session can be an exact copy of another due to the constant change in interactivity between me and my students. That said, we as teachers can develop consistent patterns of behaviors that, over time, create a familiar learning environment for our students. This consistency, I believe, is crucial when attempting to develop responses to student writing that are an extension of the classroom environment. My comments and my interactions with students must be in unison, each a reflection of the other. Simply put, I must furnish forth consistency on each front, creating harmony rather than discord between the two. This notion of harmony is at the heart of the mutuality-minded classroom.

Years ago, when I began considering what makes one response approach more appropriate than another, I failed to consider the impact my verbal and nonverbal behaviors have on students' receptions of my comments. In particular, my research has shown me that response to student writing cannot be examined within the bubble of the "student writes" and the "teacher comments." After going through study after study, I realized that if we truly want to offer comments that are particular to each writer and his/her intended text, then it is crucial that we connect this activity to the larger class setting. And, in order to encourage co-intentional responses between teacher and student, we must first humanize our teaching practices within the classroom. In Chapter One, I began by recounting my own experience as an undergraduate student, detailing my

overall disenchantment with the apathetic learning environment I experienced each year. This experience is the reason why I place such enormous importance on making each and every one of my students feel comfortable in my class. For me, creating a nurturing, equitable teacher-student environment is essential if my goals are to encourage students to become subject-knowers and create co-intentional commentary. According to Freire, students “become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow” in a liberatory classroom, which, no doubt, includes the teacher (67).

At the end of this journey, my stance is rather simple: in order for response techniques to truly be effective teachers need to be more attentive to the relationships they cultivate with students in classroom. From my perspective, response to student writing should be an extension of the classroom atmosphere rather than an isolated practice. In essence, my goal is to evoke the same teacher-student dialogue I promote in the classroom when responding to student writing, creating a seamless transition between my voice in the classroom and my voice on the page. If we want our students to participate in an equitable dialogue with us on the page when using parallel text or sideshadowing, then we must first nurture an equitable teacher-student dialogue in the classroom. This, of course, requires us to engage in the ongoing reflective practice of examining how our behaviors in the classroom affect the relationships we create with our students, and, undoubtedly, this level of introspection is paramount in the mutuality-minded classroom.

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