The Fiction of Telling:

Working in the Potential Space of Reading and Teaching

Christopher R. Osmond

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Culture, Curriculum, and Change in the School of Education.

Chapel Hill
2006

Approved by
Advisor: Madeleine Grumet
Reader: Della Pollock
Reader: George Noblit
Reader: Derek Goldman
Reader: Jim Trier

ABSTRACT

CHRISTOPHER R. OSMOND: The Fiction of Telling:
Working in the Potential Space of Reading and Teaching
(Under the direction of Madeleine Grumet)

The North Carolina Standard Course of Study can be conceptualized as a grid of objectives and expectations within which the daily work of public school teachers takes place. Overlaying this grid on the high school literature curriculum is much like overlaying a grid on a topographical map: the grid defines both itself and the spaces between its lines. But the map is never the territory. Part of a teacher's work is navigating the interstices of the grid - figuring out what really exists on the actual ground between the lines and deciding how best to traverse that terrain with her students as it becomes visible. This study explores the energies that reading activates in students' and teachers' private selves and the relationship between those private experiences and the public ones they have when they "talk about the reading" in their classrooms. It also explores the choices literature teachers make when they teach reading. What is the role of high school literature teachers' "off the grid" lives in their "on the grid" practice of reading books with students? The study's principal data are conversations with three English teachers from three public high schools in North Carolina. The diverse literatures of psychoanalysis, social theory, reader response theory, performance theory, and teacher autobiography are explored as hermeneutic lenses. The concept of *jouissance* helps explicate both the role of pleasure in the classroom and its unique relationship with text. The tension between "complicated" and "complex" understandings of language, the liminal and performative aspects of pedagogical choices, and the relationships

of teachers to their institutional authority (here posited as "complicity") are also explored. The educative opportunities that exist in these "potential spaces" are revealed to have profound implications for preservice and inservice teacher education as well as larger policy issues.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

I love to read books. In ninth grade, I was assigned to sit next to Henry in the back of chemistry class. Henry was a strange kid. He was unkempt, funny looking, and bad smelling. I was mortified by the prospect of becoming associated with him and did my best to ignore him in the interest of fitting in.

One day, I noticed that Henry was not paying attention to the lecture, but instead was reading under the desk. I asked him what he was reading, and he showed me the cover of *Breakfast of Champions* by Kurt Vonnegut. While the teacher was engaged with writing on the overhead, he handed me the book open to the page of Vonnegut's doodle of an "asshole" - a tiny bullet hole in the page surrounded by radiating spider cracks as if in glass.

I laughed, then rushed to contain my laughter, which was as forbidden in chemistry class as was looking at a drawing of an asshole – or, for that matter, as was reading the word "asshole," or reading Kurt Vonnegut in chemistry class, or maybe at all.

Henry and I became friends, and we spent our periods in chemistry reading. He brought all the books. He had so many I had never seen. *Hollywood Babylon,* with lurid

photos of murdered starlets, casket shots of celebrities, and tales of the perversions of the rich and famous. Stephen King short stories that were rife with gore and rock and roll references and bizarre sci-fi endings. *Bloom County* cartoons, with bilious but serene liberal animals and hysterically fatuous conservative ones.

I almost failed chemistry; I was so drawn to the thrill of reading something that satisfied my private interest in the scandalous that I could not tear my attention from it long enough to attend to what the ninth grade curriculum demanded of me in science. I was not a bitter, Vietnam-era curmudgeon, nor a Hollywood gossip sheet flatfoot reporter, but reading their work let me find the part of me that could have been. The horizon of what I conceived possible to think and feel was pushed back by these books; I came back from my trip with them with an enlarged sense of my own possibilities.

That experience happened well outside the curriculum. I have had love affairs with books I was supposed to read in school too – but then my experience of reading diverged from the experience the curriculum expected me to be having, and trouble resulted.

On the first day of sixth grade, we were issued a reading anthology like none I had ever seen. It was paperback, first of all, not an industrial-strength bound book like the rest of my textbooks, and the cover featured a tightly framed photo of something textured and cryptic – a knot in a heavy rope, I think. The short stories it contained were all based in reality, but twisted or exaggerated some element of that reality. The result was pure science fiction, as I would later understand. The first excerpt was about a traffic jam so bad that the exhaust choked all the drivers; people got on the roofs of their cars in vain attempts to find fresh air, only to succumb to steadily mounting fumes since there was no way to escape their own pollution. I was horrified and enthralled, so enthralled by this new book of grown-up

stories and the effect their strange vistas had on me that I could not put it down at the end of the assigned reading, but instead plowed through it like a beach novel in the first few days of school.

As the stories were assigned and came due for class discussion over the ensuing weeks, I participated enthusiastically in discussing the stories I loved, but I could not bring myself to complete the comprehension questions at the end of each story as they were assigned for homework. Completing the task of answering each one, in complete sentences, and turning it in to be graded seemed so remote from the energy and dread the stories themselves brought up inside me that I chose not to do them. When it became apparent that I had not done my literature homework for several weeks, there was a note home that resulted in a very difficult conversation with my parents (the first ever about the quality of my schoolwork). I was forced to stay at the dining room table that weekend and complete pages and pages of written work until every comprehension question had been answered in complete sentences.

After that, I still loved to read, but I also understood that reading for school was different than reading for yourself. It required you to be able to render your understanding of texts in prescribed ways, and while you could still have your own private relationship with what you read, you also needed to produce what school expected of you. Sometimes in lit class the private and public experience could overlap – in really great class discussions, for example, when my teacher and classmates talked about how the reading related to something in our own lives, or a real life situation in the news or at school. But I knew from then on that the relationship between public and private reading was a Venn diagram that constantly shifted; something always needed to stay hidden, apart from what was shared.

This dissertation asks questions about reading - the energies that reading activates in students' private selves and the relationship between those private experiences and the public ones they have when they "talk about the reading" in their classrooms. It also explores the choices literature teachers make when they teach reading. Teachers are sometimes reluctant to share their actual relationships with reading in the classroom; they choose what to keep private and what to make public as surely as students do (Atwell-Vasey 1998). Not all the reading experiences students and teachers have make it into school; some of the most powerful reading experiences are completely extracurricular. Teachers play a central role in what happens in classrooms; to the extent that they consider the choices they make about what is shared and what is kept, they negotiate a boundary between public and private reading.

Teachers in the early 21st century work in a heavily-regulated environment, perhaps the most monitored milieu of any era in American public education. The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act ushered in an era of assessment and accountability of student achievement never before attempted. Empowered by the unprecedented technological possibility of monitoring and comparing student achievement on standardized tests state and nation-wide, policy seeks a more direct connection to data than ever before. North Carolina and Texas led the charge for data-driven education, and the compulsory standardized tests that North Carolina students take to demonstrate their achievement are among the longest-implemented tools of the accountability movement (NCDPI 2005a).

It follows that the impact of teacher decisions upon student achievement is of greater interest than ever before. Such interest is manifest in an increased interest in dissemination of teacher practices that can demonstrated as effective through "scientifically-based research"

(namely, "studies that provide the strongest evidence of effects: primarily well conducted randomized controlled trials and regression discontinuity studies, and secondarily quasi-experimental studies of especially strong design" (What Works Clearinghouse 2002). Accompanying the focus on evidence-driven accountability is a companion movement to delineate precisely what learning teachers and students should be held accountable for, and the North Carolina Standard Course of Study is our state's specification of the objectives to be attained in all public schools in grades K-12 (NCDPI 2005b).

We can think of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study as a grid of objectives and expectations – instructions – within which the daily work of public school teachers in this state takes place. Imagine a grid that lists objectives along one axis, with benchmarks of when competence in each objective is expected to be developed along the other. Overlaying this grid on a specific content area is much like overlaying a grid on a topographical map: the grid defines both itself and the spaces between its lines. It becomes possible to rationalize what it will be like to cross that terrain, to gain a sense of perspective and scale, to begin to make decisions about how you might embark upon your journey.

But the map is never the territory. Part of a teacher's work is "navigating the spaces" – figuring out what really exists on the actual ground between the lines and making up how best to traverse that terrain with her students as it becomes visible. Even in the age of accountability, teachers are on their own most of the time, and most of their instructional decisions are made alone, when they are accountable only to themselves and their students. Cuban (1993) documents the remarkable resilience of teacher practice to top-down educational reform, and the closed classroom door has proven to be a most impenetrable barrier.

That impenetrability may indicate not an unreasonable truculence on the part of the teacher, but rather a fact about the nature of the work itself. No worker does exactly what he or she is supposed to, according to the instructions; there are so many decisions that must be made to complete a task in a real-life context that no set of abstract instructions could possibly enumerate all of them. Scott (1998) notes how the intrinsic incompleteness of all instructions is sometimes exploited in the name of forcing employers to value the workers' role in minute-to-minute decisions.

> In a work-to-rule action, employees begin doing their jobs by meticulously observing every one of the rules and regulations and performing only those duties stated in their job descriptions. The result, fully intended in this case, is that the work grinds to a halt, or at least to a snail's pace. ..their action illustrates pointedly how actual work processes depend more heavily on informal understandings and improvisations than upon formal work rules (p. 310).

In other words, the importance of the worker's independent decisions that fill in the spaces between the instructions becomes visible the moment they disappear Teaching is not assembly-line work, but the proliferation of standards to regulate it indicates both the policy will to make it so and the inherent impossibility of reducing practice to instruction-following (Scott 1998).

The analogy between mapmaking, assembly line work, and education is only illustrative of the teacher's relationship to "the grid" as it is visibly enacted within the ambit of formal school operations. In fact, both the grid of the Standard Course of Study and the spaces it defines are constructs devised within the much larger contexts that comprise teachers' lives and students' lives. The elements of life that are "off the grid" – the parts that don't belong *to* school – nevertheless find their ways *into* school. A teacher once told me that just because you don't give a student a break in the middle of the morning doesn't mean he

won't take one. Students get tired, even if the school schedule does not acknowledge their fatigue. Likewise, a teacher who reads a description to her class of a character that reminds her of an old boyfriend will think briefly about her old boyfriend, even if that topic is not on the syllabus. The "off the grid" realities of students' and teachers' lives will come to school, even if there is no official space allotted to them.

What is the role of high school literature teachers' "off the grid" lives in their "on the grid" practice of reading books with students? The question reveals a paradox. People who think about past loves in class are daydreaming, according to the commonsense logic of schooling; mental time spent "off task" is time better spent "on task," and the definition and reinforcement of "focal maintenance" is an important factor in definitions of success in school (as well as the engine that fuels an industry of attention-strengthening interventions). But aren't the "off the grid" elements of our lives the ones that truly interest us? And isn't a tenet of progressive education the value of linking the subject at hand to prior experience – to dovetail what students *should* think about with what they *want* to think about, or actually do (Dewey 1938)? Our "off the grid" passions are what motivate us most intensely, and it can be argued that the students who most successfully meld their real desires with school's required ones are the ones who succeed. If part of a literature teacher's experience is to show students what an authentic and compelling engagement with literature looks like, shouldn't she include the "off the grid" parts as well?

But this conversation begins to make us queasy. For one thing, the pure, unsublimated things we think about and desire don't have a place in school, falling somewhere between "off task" and "illegal" on our internalized continua of "school-appropriateness." What place could the personal associations and experiences of teachers possibly have in school?

Yankelovich and Barrett (1969) list seven commonly-held suspicions about the nature of the inchoate welter of energies within us that psychoanalytic theory characterizes as "id." It reads like a laundry list of why we might want to keep such things out of school, and away from our children.

1. *That the evolutionary side of man's [sic] life (the id) is a "seething cauldron" of unruly impulses pressing for release.*

2. *That all instincts are alike in being quantities of forces.*

3. *That the list of human instincts can largely be confined to sex and aggression.*

4. *That the "id" is "archaic" and serves no adaptive purpose (this function being assigned to the ego).*

5. *That the instinctual is less susceptible to change than the experiential.*

6. *That the id is not affected by experience.*

7. *That culture is inherently alien to instinct.*

But while these descriptors frighten us, they attract us as well. Our contradictory feelings play out in popular narratives of schooling; the uneasy credibility and risky power we accord to teachers who go "off the grid" is manifest in movies that both celebrate and punish them, as well as in the stories of real-life "off the grid" teachers' practice.

Keroes (1999) notes that "novels and other popular texts merit our attention not so much because they transcend our time and place but because they offer powerful illustrations of the way a culture thinks about itself" (p. 3). If this is the case, movies suggest that we think a lot about the extraordinarily successful "off the grid" teacher as a vigilante who employs outrageously unorthodox methods in the name of "reaching students".

In *The Blackboard Jungle*, he is Richard Dadier, a well-educated first-year teacher driven by his compassion for his inner-city students and his revulsion at the refusal of his complacent colleagues to go "off the grid." Curricularly, this means bringing in movies of popular cartoons to use as springboards to discussions about abiding literary themes; physically, this means both visiting his students in non-school locales and crossing restrictions on physical contact in order to defend both a fellow teacher and himself against assault. In *The Dead Poet's Society*, he is John Keating, whose passion for both his subject and his students cannot be contained by standards of propriety at his traditional boys' school; pedagogy that includes standing on desks, assignment of sexually charged works, and whoops and hollers galvanize students into enthusiasm for literature. And in *Mr. Holland's Opus*, Glenn Holland is an "off the grid" music teacher is almost destroyed by the porousness of his boundaries with students, as they lead to the possibility of a romantic relationship with a female student - which, displaying the well-tuned moral compass we intermittently attribute to benevolent outlaws, he avoids.

There are high-profile real-life educational narratives that follow the same contours. Dennis Littky, founder of The Big Picture Schools, wears a cap and earring. He and his teachers enter the real world jungle of inner city Providence; they call their students at home, welcome inner city themes into their classrooms, blur boundaries with their students and defy others to deny them the results they achieve. John Rassias' unconventional "total physical response" philosophy of teaching language is bound up in his own eccentric and irrepressible physicality. Jeffrey Wilhelm (1997) describes his fury at the willingness of his English department colleagues to accept the notion that "middle school boys don't read" and how it compelled him to invent new and dangerous ways of inviting students to express their

reading experiences through art and drama. And, perhaps most famously, Jaime Escalante's unorthodox belief that poor inner-city Angelenos could learn AP calculus and vigorous pursuit of their success brings reality back to film in 1988's *Stand and Deliver.*

In each of these examples – real and fictional - the extraordinary "off the grid" teacher's work is portrayed in stark contrast to the complacency of the "regular teachers" who surround him. Those teachers are revealed as blinded to the capacity of their students to passionately embrace learning, blinded by either their own hopelessness before the socioeconomic realities of their students' lives, the stodgy traditionalism of their "Great Books" curriculum, or their own burnout. A simple contrast between traditional and progressive, moribund and motivated, even young-at-heart and old, seems to hold firm. We celebrate the "off the grid" teachers as saviors of our students from a heartless educational bureaucracy. In the fictional accounts, their saving gestures sacrifice their credibility and careers on the altar of tradition, as youth and enthusiasm is shown to be no match for age and treachery. In real life, these teachers' work is suspect until their extraordinary results cannot be denied, at which point their critics stop calling it "unsound" and begin calling it "unreplicable."

While the list of "poster children" of "off the grid" education is easy to generate, this project is not about rock star teachers. An *a priori* understanding of this work is that all teachers' daily practice consists of a minute-by-minute negotiation with themselves about what to say and what to draw upon in their work with students. Whatever is "off the grid" – even if not particularly sexy, frightening, or threatening – plays a role in those decisions, and this project is an opportunity to articulate those elements and consider their role in education. The popular insistence that the only way to draw powerfully upon life outside of school is

10

through outrageousness obscures the fact that every decision has the potential to engage what is off the grid; while sexy and dangerous elements play a role, so do other quieter ones.

Somewhere between the commonsense understandings of how to pay attention in school, the melodramatic fictions about teaching we tell ourselves, and the contemporary practice of "rock star teachers" on the high-profile fringe, real high school teachers make daily decisions about how to teach about reading. They make daily decisions about how to navigate the interstices in the grid of the mandated curriculum, and they make daily decisions about how to involve their "off the grid" existence in that work.

This study acknowledges our society's paradoxical relationship with "off the grid" practice by teachers. It seeks to elucidate how teachers understand the role of "off the grid" elements in their work with their content, their students, and their institutions. It asks how teachers experience the imperious demands of the curriculum grid in their work in schools, and what they do that allows them to work within it. It posits the spaces "in-between" institutional curriculum structures as "potential spaces," "potential" both in the sense that they may or may not come to be exploited and in the sense of the promise they hold for transformative educational experience. Teachers' use of these "potential spaces" invites us to consider what satisfactions teachers derive from teaching, to explore the nature of the pleasures that maintain them in their practice. This study seeks to understand how teachers regard those spaces, what they choose to do with them, and why the moments in which potential space reveals its power unfold they way they do.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The discourses that illuminate the concept of "potential space" seek to understand the dialectic between public and private, individual and society, and safe and dangerous. They are wide-ranging. In this section I establish a context in which to engage the problem by drawing upon the eclectic literatures that consider its different aspects. First, psychoanalytic and social theories seek to conceptualize these relationships in order to locate the individual within his or her larger environment of society and culture. Second, reader response theory works out how reading engages both the publicly-held text and the personal and subjective engagements with the text in the private act of reading. Third, performance theory provides language to conceptualize the deliberate choices teachers make in the lived contexts of interaction between teachers and students. Finally, curriculum theory explores the relationship of those decisions to teachers' lives and contextualizes this study as participating in that project of understanding the relationship between teaching and experience.

Psychoanalysis, sociology, and anthropology offer useful concepts as we try to understand both the nature of the grid and how teachers work in the spaces.

What is most deeply "off the grid" is that which is deepest within us: our subconscious and the drives that populate it. Freud (1930) conceives of society itself as grid of sorts, established in order to provide structured refuge from the dangers that lurk in our

susceptibility to the elements, to our own physical weaknesses, and to the aggressive advances of each other. Society is established in order to bind us together against these common enemies. Participation in that society, however, requires the subordination of the pleasure principle to the reality principle; it requires the sublimation of our ids into socially acceptable aims. As witnessed above by Yankelovich and Barrett, our drives are perceived threats to the maintenance of civil society. They are seething, undifferentiated, threatening, resistant: *unschoolable*, and dangerous to boot. Their sublimation requires that we convince ourselves that our drives are something other than what they are - for example, that our desire to be loved is transformed into a commitment to love others as ourselves – and that we transform ourselves to take satisfaction from the socially-sanctioned consummations that follow. The result of the internal dissonance that must be maintained between what we want and what we are told we should and must want is the root of neurosis. Freud notes that the "programme of the pleasure principle…dominates the operation of the mental apparatus from the start. There can be no doubts about its efficacy, and yet its programme is at loggerheads with the whole world, with the macrocosm as much as with the microcosm" (p. 25). Neurosis results as the individual's psychological coherence is troubled by the resulting dissonance. For Freud, the grid of civilization lies at the root of our unhappiness; his work seeks to establish both the existence and recalcitrance of those parts of us that bubble through the interstices in the name of better understanding the trade-off we agree to upon joining society.

Freud characterizes external structures as essentially antagonistic to the expression of core drives. Kris (1952) agrees that sublimation of those core drives is a necessary process to the support of civil society, but also conceptualizes the possibility of a productive dialectic between the two. The process of making or experiencing art, he holds, entails the relaxing of

13

normative ego impulses to allow the id to express or respond in alternation with the ego's evaluation of those expressions or responses for their intelligibility, appropriateness, and aesthetic rightness of fit. "Regression in the service of the ego" defines this dialogue of relaxing and evaluating. Kris finds this dialogue a key element in accessing the "psychic energy" of the id in ways that are "purposeful and controlled," and echoes Dewey (1934) in an understanding of balance as a key element of the aesthetic experience, noting that "when regression goes too far, the symbols become private, perhaps unintelligible even to the reflective self; when, at the other extreme, control is preponderant, the result is described as cold, mechanical, and uninspired" (p. 253-254).

Eisner (1985) echoes Kris in his defense of teaching as an art, and his work, while not explicitly psychological, serves to articulate the relevance of Kris' formulation to our understanding of teaching. He notes that, like artists, teachers reach a level of accomplishment after years of work, make judgments based upon qualities discerned during the process of working, draw upon routines and repertoires in a balance between automaticity and improvisation, and build upon unanticipated events as opportunities for new experience. Eisner thus makes an important connection between "off the grid" drives and their potential role in educational decision-making: inasmuch as teaching is like an art, it subscribes to a process of "doing" and "undergoing" that both invites the energy of the subconscious and seeks to moderate it through judgment and experience.

Despite Eisner's work and other recent authentic acknowledgments of aesthetic processes in teaching practices (Greene 1995), Grumet (1988) notes that historically artists have been allowed a commitment to their off the grid perceptions, an indulgence that is not afforded to teachers.

Although the aesthetic sensibility, like child nurturance, had been rooted in the pastoral childhood of the nation, as the line was drawn between those who produced the culture and those who received and rationalized it the antinaturalism movement that developed in Europe after 1910 transformed the artist's relation to common perception…although artists escaped the cage of nature and made it over the wall to where it was legitimate to reveal "the ordinary as strange and in need of some explanation," teachers, who by now were predominantly women, remained ensnared by the supposedly "natural" imperatives that established parameters for their experience, perception, and expression (p. 85).

The resistances to public perceptions of teachers as artists who might relax cultural boundaries in order to access more powerful insights is historically troubled, history that helps illuminate our paradoxical embrace and resistance of those teachers who choose to do so. Nonetheless, it seems relevant to note how many of the "off the grid" teachers portrayed in American films work within literature and the arts, as if to acknowledge the specific role of "off the grid" emotions in authentic engagement with the arts and literature. Eisner's work also adumbrates an understanding of the drives as subject to the will of their owner. Neither artists nor teachers are at the mercy of their drives. However, when Kris accounts for the excessive art of mentally ill patients in terms of ego weakness he echoes the same ambivalence toward "off the grid" teachers detailed above. As in the movies, when the "id is insufficiently modulated" (or a teacher gets too "out there"), madness (or at least trouble) comes close on its heels. Freud and Kris provide the psychological theory that explains the origin of our cultural conservatism about how teachers should comport themselves in the spaces of the grid. Sublimation demands that the drives of the id be completely redirected in one instance and moderated "purposefully" in the other, and both processes flirt with aesthetic vision, neurosis, and madness. The stakes are personally and culturally high when practice leaves the grid; the water gets very deep, very fast.

These psychological perspectives of the grid conceive it as the structure of the society we share; for Freud it is repressive, but necessary, and for Kris it represents that civilized nature from which we regress in order to access deeper impulses which can then be evaluated and prepared for public consumption. The grid may be also understood as a tool by which order is imposed upon unruly organic phenomena.

Scott (1998), an agrarian sociologist, reveals that the same issues trouble measurement and control in civic planning as in education. He notes that the first task of a government seeking to administer a society is to render it "legible" from its perspective (p. 25). Such legibility requires a standardization of the symbol systems used to communicate meaning. Local measurements are irreducibly local, linked to the specific circumstances from which they have grown; they must be replaced by standardized units of measure that have universally agreed-upon denotations that correspond to values held by the administration. For example, a distance that may be locally understood as "three rice-cookings" – a length of time based upon the assumption that distance is valuable in terms of how long it takes to travel it, and based upon local rice varieties and cooking customs – would be replaced by "two miles," a measure corresponding to distance in terms of topographical space and dependent upon the standard definition of "mile" as specifically defined and monitored by the administration. Regularity is highly prized from the administrative perspective, as it makes possible projects like census-taking (through the creation of categories like race, gender, relationships, and level of prosperity) and agrarian control (through the delineation of the land and its workers' capacity in terms of acres and bushels). The topographical grid (and its quantitative counterparts, the spreadsheet and the histogram) is therefore the most desirable structure for what one seeks to administer, as it is comprised of regular and

predictable units whose constituents can be regulated. Administrators are confident that such projects make the people and the land "legible," and based upon that legibility they are able to make decisions for the good of the state.

Those measures, however, depend upon the adequacy of their categories. The categories the state chooses to employ must describe the variety that actually exists: they must be sure to measure the right things. Just as a map must leave some features out, lest it become a "Map of the Empire whose size [is] that of the Empire, and which coincide[s] point for point with it," categorization must exclude some features in the name of others (Borges 1946). Those attributes that categories do not include become, *de facto, invisible* to the state. If relationships elided from state categorization of agricultural assets are essential to the productivity of the land, the land will not produce, and the scheme is doomed to fail for reasons the administrators will never be able to see.

Educational and agrarian administrators seek to accomplish the same goals through the imposition of grids upon those organic entities they seek to administer: the establishment of universally accepted units of measurement that correspond to the values they consider important and that have the capacity to quantify achievement of those goals. The belief is that once achievement of goals is quantified, it becomes possible to pinpoint shortfalls, remediate unproductive practice and replicate productive ones, and establish accountability for output according to what can be seen. But in both situations, what is rendered legible does not necessarily represent the qualities most worth monitoring, and relationships that are supported in organic systems have been put asunder in standardized ones.

> By themselves, simplified rules can never generate a functioning community, city, or economy. Formal order, to be more explicit, is always and to some considerable degree parasitic on informal processes, which the formal scheme

does not recognize, without which it could not exist, and which it alone cannot create or maintain (Scott, p. 310).

Such issues highlight the presence and importance of that which cannot be seen. While the institutional temptation is to react managerially by creating additional formal accounts of those informal processes as they become apparent, such additional effort will create new interstices in which informal processes will take root. As the embattled local leader Princess Leia told the bureaucrat Darth Vader as he sought perfect regulation of her people's world, "the more you tighten your grip, the more star systems will slip through your fingers" (Lucas 1977).

Scott elaborates a useful alternative to formal, state knowledge that may also illuminate efforts to theorize how teachers function in the interstices of the grid they inhabit. "Métis" is a Greek word that implies "a wide array of practical skills and acquired intelligence in responding to a constantly changing natural and human environment" (Scott p. 313). The term elaborates a distinct type of knowledge, in contrast to its platonic counterparts "techne" (technical knowledge which can be reduced to precise and invariable rules from self-evident first principles) and "episteme" (the first principles themselves). To acknowledge "métis," however, would require an institutional will to leave some part of the grid undrawn, and that would require an institutional accommodation of the risk of not knowing what would happen there.

Psychology and social theory provide an understanding of "public" issues of conceptualizing the grid: the ambivalence of the relationship between the grid and the drives it seeks to regulate as well as the tensions between those who administer the grid and those who populate it. The grid serves to articulate two "private" levels of interaction in the high

18

school literature class as well: the process of reading itself and the social transactions implicated in the commonsense practice of "talking about the reading."

Rosenblatt (1938) first maps the territory of reading as transaction between an individual and a text instead of a simple act of decoding worked by a reader upon a text, thus initiating a study of reading process called "reader response theory" which is sustained in the work of Iser, Holland, Bleich, and Fish.

Rosenblatt's assertion of the primacy of the individual experience reveals the same "otherness" in the text that Ricoeur (1976) seeks to account for in his hermeneutic theory. Ricoeur notes that the creation of text is a "transcription of the world, and transcription is not reduplication, but metamorphosis" (p. 42). The text – the metamorphosed, iconic representation of experience – is "at a distance" from both the writer and the reader, and the reader's task is to overcome the estrangement from that text by reappropriating it. "To reappropriate is to make "one's own" what was "alien;" the distance between reader and text must be overcome by the reader's reinvestment into the text some aspect of him or herself.

> Distanciation is not a quantitative phenomenon; it is the dynamic counterpart of our need, our interest, and our effort to overcome cultural estrangement. Writing and reading take place in this cultural struggle. Reading is the *pharmakon,* the remedy, by which the meaning of the text is "rescued" from the estrangement of distanciation and put in a new proximity, a proximity which suppresses and preserves the cultural distance and includes the otherness within the ownness (p. 43).

At the core of Rosenblatt's theory is the understanding that including "the otherness within the ownness" encompasses both "efferent" and "aesthetic" elements. "Efferent" reading seeks only to find in the text that which may be gathered from the reading and brought to some future application (from *effere*, "to take away"), while "aesthetic" reading includes the experience of what is happening in the reader's mind at the precise moment of

19

reading - associations, sense impressions, tangents, the lived experience of reading any text –

as also implicated in the process of making meaning with the text. Rosenblatt understood that

reading does and should move on a continuum between these two poles, and that some

situations demand only an efferent reading (for example, a mother reading a bottle of poison

her child has drunk seeks information to "take away" on how to save the child's life and

nothing else). However, her conceptualization reveals a paucity of interest in the aesthetic

reading experience in school reading instruction, where focus relies only on "taking away"

information that might be regurgitated on assessments. Rosenblatt's reconceptualization puts

a "now" into a reading experience which some might understand as a process concerned

exclusively with "later". She points out that contemporary reading instruction and evaluation

focuses on the ability to extract "efferent" meaning from texts, not the ability to construct

"aesthetic" meaning. Among reader response theorists, Rosenblatt is the first to indicate that

the meaning of the "grid" of a text is understood through the "off the grid" elements it

evokes.

 Iser (1978) works in the space created by Rosenblatt to bring the phenomenology of

the aesthetic to the reading process. Iser understands that a work of literature is understood in

the same way as a work of art. Following Ingarden's theory (1961) that one who perceives a

work of art creates a cognitive "aesthetic object" that incorporates only those qualities that

support the aesthetic experience of the actual art object, Iser postulates that the reader

cognitively constructs an "aesthetic text" in response to the experience of the actual text. The

meanings that this "aesthetic text" comes to possess are a synthesis of Rosenblatt's elements

of experience. Iser notes that texts incorporate "gaps of indeterminacy" - lacunae that arise in

the diachronic experience of text and are alternately resolved, troubled, or held in abeyance

according to the unfolding information the narrative provides. A reader experiences both "retention" (continuing access to a condensed synthesis of what has been read) and "protention" (the anticipation and prediction of what might come next) in the process of making meaning through the temporal act of reading. In the act of reading, aesthetic and efferent aspects accumulate; a word, image, or association may be no more than a "pit in the marble" that the narrative lets drop off the retentive horizon, or further information may invite the reader to recall the previous aspect and construct a new meaning based on new input.

Iser's use of aesthetic theory reveals that the process of making meaning from text is not a single integral act of decoding, but instead shifts under the continuing barrage of input and is synthesized as the reader moves through ever-changing horizons. Iser's formulation helps theorize an individual "in-between space" – analogous to Ingarden's "aesthetic object" – in which internal impressions and external realities interrogate each other within a space of possibility and construct new meaning that refracts back upon both. If Rosenblatt posits the text as a grid and the reader's experience of it as what happens in the gaps, Iser further elaborates that work in the interstices in terms of self-orientation to what has gone before and what might come next.

Holland (1975) agrees with Iser in his assertion that readers create their own meaning from texts through an interactive process, but diverges in believing more that each reader brings his or her own subjectivity to that process. This means that the meaning made by each individual reader of a text will inevitably be an expression of the reader's "personal style" (p. 214). He argues that Iser seeks to define a more predictable reader, one created by culture or even by the text itself. Holland's "reader" is irreducibly singular, as he or she seeks to satisfy

his or her specific desire for pleasure, interest in specific themes, and desire for a particular kind of reading experience specific to the reader's psychological makeup (p. 209). The "terms of subjectivity," as Holland names one of his chapters, are resilient from text to text for each reader; they constitute that reader's "identity theme" and predict the experience a reader will have with a text.

For Rosenblatt, Iser, and Holland, the text is a grid, and the meaning we make of it is what we do in the gaps. Likewise, the communal aspects of meaning-making in literature class – what we do when we "talk about the reading" - participate in a thorny debate regarding the "negotiation" of meaning in reading, by which is meant negotiation between the individual experience of reading and the class's discussion of what it "means," usually in monolithic terms. Again, the heuristic of the grid versus what we do within it is illustrative of the relationship.

Bleich (1981) develops the democratic possibilities of a conceptualization of reading as negotiation. He suggests that reading texts together invites a constant sharing of subjective understandings of meaning, which in a community of mutual respect will lead to negotiation, a concern that there be a conversation about what a text "means." This is problematic because even a communally negotiated understanding of the meaning of the text becomes monolithic; Bleich's critics say that all he has done is replace the fetishization of "correct meaning" with the communal feitishization of "consensual meaning." In other words, inasmuch as meaning is negotiated in a reading community it ceases to be reader-response and begins to be subject to a new unitary orthodoxy. From this perspective, the classroom performs the function of providing a common realm for the expression and dissemination of what is within us: inner is strained through public opinion, policed, regulated.

Fish (1980) follows a similar line of thinking to a very different conclusion: he finds the text itself disappearing in a welter of subjective response, and while discussion of the many individual meanings of a text in a community reading may serve to broaden and enrich individual meanings, no consensus is desired or possible regarding meaning. His answer to the question the title of his book poses ("Is There a Text in This Class?") is a radical "no," Any unitary understanding of what the "text" constitutes vanishes beneath the weight of a polyphony of experience. Bleich and Fish represent different perspectives that follow from reader-response theory (and, indeed, different notions of the implications of reading for democracy); the first a description of meaning-making as resulting from interchange and the second a description of meaning-making that perseveres despite interchange. Both seem enriched by grid / off-the-grid characterization as tension emerges between monolithic meaning shared by the class and private meaning which is either advanced and argued for or kept to oneself in defiance of apparent consensus.

Reader response theory is the discourse that seeks first to acknowledge, then to account for, what happens between texts and readers. The concepts that strive to explicate the events that transpire between reader and text also come to hand when exploring interactions between teachers and grids, between students and teachers, and between life and school.

This study is about reading, but also about the larger issues reader response theory addresses: the relationship between inner and outer, the larger diversity of sense-makings that comprise a literature class that settles down to "talk about the reading." The "efferent / aesthetic" tension of Rosenblatt, the "protention" and "retention" of Iser, and the role of one's "personal style" in Holland's sense in the shared negotiation – or not – of meaning as described by Bleich and Fish, all provide lenses to consider the interaction of "grid and

teacher" as well as that of "text and reader." The teacher is interpreting the grid as the reader is interpreting the text; these processes are phases in the experience of interpretation.

Teachers perform their interpretive practice in front of classrooms, and one of the weaknesses of reader response theory – is that it does not address the performative aspect of teaching. The performative decisions teachers make are "off the grid" elements of practice that function "below the radar" of institutional attentions and interests. Sourced in the subconscious, illegible to institutional oversight, they are the "betwixt and between" elements of practice that reside in the interstices of the metaphorical structures that govern teaching and reading.

Turner (1969) conceives "liminality" as that phase in an individual's development within his or her culture when he or she is in transition from one cultural role to another, a position that likewise makes such individuals "neither here nor there, betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (p. 95). The threshold is the place of potential: it's where things could go either way.

Turner's description of the spaces of liminality enriches our understanding of the potential held within the "off the grid" places of teaching and reading. He notes that liminal spaces are spaces where structural and social norms are relaxed and blurred, where time, space, and permission are extended to engage with deep questions about the nature and purpose of existence within one's culture, where information is communicated through underdetermined, aesthetic representations that encourage diverse interpretation, and from whence participants return to their culture transformed by the experience of being there.

Liminality as described by Turner is a space of potential that can be accounted for and anticipated. It is precisely the predictable effect of liminal experience that gives rites of

24

passage their cultural value, as the unpredictability of the period is understood to be worth

the added value its participants bring back to the culture upon assuming their roles in society.

One is reminded of the Amish period of *Rumspringa* - the Pennsylvania Dutch word for

"running around" - a time in which teenaged Amish are encouraged to "sow oats" through

embracing worldly ways, after which they may choose to return with their curiosity satisfied

and their commitment to the life of the order reaffirmed. Predictable ritual indulgence serves

to cement more personally-sustainable and society-sustaining values in its citizens.

But there is additional power in "betwixt and between" experience beyond that which

is anticipated, value that Kershaw (1999) traces to Turner's distinction between "liminal" and

"liminoid" experience. The latter of these is elective, and as such traces resemblance to

carnivalesque pleasures and powers described by Bahktin (1968). Whereas liminal

experience fosters the development of *comunitas*, liminoid experience, as choice, supports

the individual. While no hard and fast boundary exists between the two, the elective nature of

liminoid experience associates it more with individual choice, that which one might do to

offset one's own experience and perspective from that of one's fellow citizens. While it still

has unifying potential, it inches along the continuum toward individual autonomy; it is also

the pole that distinguishes "theatre" from "ritual," as the former is entirely elective.

The classroom is a liminal space, "the passage from domestic and maternal

nurturance to public institutions and patriarchal identifications" (Grumet 1988, p. 33). This

space has always been suspended between public and private, and going to school is partly

the passage between the two. The deliberations of teachers always includes if, and how, they

will perform that transition; how their performance reveals their perceptions of how this

domain is in-between. Decisions about how they are gong to do it raises questions about what

is stake in their response, and issues of their own investment in that transition - what they hope to gain from it - include the pleasure and satisfaction that they derive from that practice.

Something extra that goes beyond what is expected creates a surplus: it stands in excess of the norm, and that which is in excess of what is required or expected brings with it both promise and risk. As the Chinese ideogram for "risk" also connotes "opportunity," so does liminoid experience carry with it possibility of pleasure or pain, satisfaction or disappointment, safety or danger. The dangerous potential of excess is termed *jouissance* by Bell (1995), borrowing from Lacan the term he opposes to *plaisir* as an unbounded pleasure (corresponding to female orgasm) in contrast to the pleasure of complying with phallic expectation (the Rule of the Father). *Plaisir* consists of sufficiency, the satisfaction of having met objectives within acceptable parameters; *jouissance* opens a rich vocabulary of "potentiality as well as immediacy, excess as well as completion, desire as well as satisfaction in sexual, literary, political, and economic realms" (p. 108).

This is the language of "potential space" writ large, the realm in which the "off the grid" teacher might work when his or her decisions about what to share and what to keep private go the edge of propriety. To its power can be attributed the extremest of our school memories: the day the teacher cried about his divorce or cursed like a sailor when he stubbed his toe, even the day we learned of a classmate's death or the fall of the Towers. Pleasure and pain are both possible effects of *jouissant* practice – all the dangerous emotions that we eschew in school in favor of "the kind ones and the sensible ones. Trivial, leveling kindness. Shallow, self-justifying sensibleness" (Lingis 2000, p. 188). Kind and sensible ideas will keep our children safe. We can all agree on these watery, ecumenical emotions; stronger stuff might offend sensibilities and creeds, preferences and allegiances. The cultivation of *jouissance* in the

public school classroom may be, after all, absolutely inimical to public schooling, since consensus and ecumenical harmony is the only mean toward which conservative public institutions may regress. But Lacan himself noted that *jouissance* is not cultivated, but only glimpsed from the corner of the eye; an acknowledgment that it might exist, and might invigorate teacher practice by its fleeting presence, might be all that can be hoped for, but it might be enough.

To open the understanding of teacher's "off the grid" decisions to *jouissance* is to admit the teacher's body to education, and the fit is not an easy one. The grid, after all, is a cognitive construct. Just as the "Matrix" of the eponymous movie is a virtual construction of intelligence that keeps its populations' bodies in suspended animation, so is the teacher and student body excluded from the grid lest it complicate its symmetry with messy, organic idiosyncrasy. To do educational work "off the grid" is to inhabit corporeally a space designed only for mental tenants, to effect a Cartesian reversal by putting being before thinking.

The relationship of the body to language is uniquely important in discussion of literature class; although written text is not spoken text, the interaction between the two is the exact stuff of "talking about the reading," and as such both must be considered. Language shares our insides with those who inhabit our outsides, and to the degree that it provides an adequate analog for the pre-verbal impulses that drive it, we may say that it is a means of communication. Dominant conceptions of the nature of language hold that it is an essentially arbitrary symbol system, and that the degree to which signifier and signified correspond to each other is an index of the communicative efficacy of language. According to such understandings the adequacy of the correspondence may be subject to question, but the integrity of language's essentially symbolic nature is not (Eagleton 1983).

However, neat categories that characterize language as symbolic blur immediately when we find our words failing us. When we cannot find the word we want to speak, we struggle, often comically showing language's imprecision by invoking one of our culture's many whimsical placeholder words ("whatchamacallit," "hoozydinker," "dooflatch"), and almost always accompany our frustration with gesture, as if the movement of our bodies might be able to conjure the correct term out of thin air. Vernon (1979) describes this role of gesture as essential.

> Speech needs gestures, to open up the stubborn resistances of the world that refuses to be spoken…they are a measure of the imperfect structure of language, or rather, of the imperfect intersection between language and the world, an intersection ruptured by jagged edges, holes, and cul-de-sacs (p. 20).

To reintroduce an understanding of text as "scription" of an act that begins in the body is to maintain an open door between body and mind, *jouissance* and *plaisir*, that is uniquely possible in the discussion of literature. "What is lost in transcription is quite simply the body," notes Barthes, "which, in a dialogue, flings toward another body, just as fragile (or frantic) as itself, messages that are intellectually empty, the only function of which is in a way to *hook* the Other (even in the prostitutional sense of the term) and to keep it in a state of partnership" (1985, p. 5). The reinvestment of written text with the attractive energy and compulsion for community that informs speech is a manner of off-the-grid practice. It stands as one possibility that might result from following openness to *jouissance* all the way to its prohibited home, the body.

Grumet (1995) notes that when she worked with teachers in sharing their stories of schooling, "the classroom was our scene. Their stories shifted our view to yet other scenes, and my questions and their reflections often moved beyond the scenes of the narratives to scenes that they disguised or elided, the scenes against the scene, the *obscene*" (p. 40). She

borrows this image from Blau (1977), who describes every scene as "a pressure toward a surface" which "makes you wonder what's behind" (p. 40). This "obscene place" – the backstage, the "behind" - is inhabited by the conflicting forces of teacher's intentions regarding their students' welfare, their own pleasure, and their obligations to the institutional and cultural values of school. What shall I do to enlarge my students' understanding? How shall I gain the satisfaction I need? What shall I do to maintain the place of authority that allows me the space to think about such things? The acknowledgment and enumeration of these several, competing allegiances – to student, to self, and to institution – all impact the teacher's chosen persona. An understanding of teaching as performance invites further theorization and seeks an additional vocabulary. The "obscene" is where teachers decide how to "dress themselves up" before going on stage before their students. How do they choose what to wear?

The work of schools is about bodies interacting with institutions, and efforts to formulate that lived experience as it interpolates with content is the field of curriculum theory. This study seeks to answer questions about how teachers conceptualize their work within the structures that demarcate their practice. In qualitative studies of teaching, Inclusion of autobiography has been instrumental. This study will not be an autobiographical analysis of educational experience, which describes a discrete method of discerning the relationship between experience and practice (Pinar 1994) but it will rely on three teachers' understandings of their actions, and the act of articulating those understandings.. This section will consider other work in the field of teacher autobiography in the hope of establishing the "neighborhood" in which this study seeks to build, although the house may look like nothing else on the block when it is finished.

While the question of experience in school usually focuses on the student (Jackson 1968), educational research has been improved by a greater interest in the lives of teachers and how they experience their practice. Questions of teachers' relationships to their practice have been posed elsewhere within the autobiographical strands of curriculum theory. In a chapter on "Curriculum as Biographical / Autobiographical Text," Pinar et al (1995) outline three streams of scholarship that seek to understand curriculum thusly, which he characterizes as "autobiographical theory," "feminist autobiography," and "efforts to study teacher's lives." The latter of these streams serves as the most immediate context of this project, and three categories are suggested to organize work in the area.

Personal practical knowledge is the combination of theory and practical knowledge born from lived experience, "the body of convictions, conscious or unconscious, which have arisen from experience…and are expressed in a person's actions" (Clandinin 1985, in Pinar et al 1995). It adjoins Shulman's "pedagogical content knowledge" (1987) in its assertion that knowing how to teach is context-specific, but goes further in locating that specificity within the personal as well as the disciplinary. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) describe this knowledge in geographic terms, a "professional knowledge landscape" that is well-suited to the metaphor because of its variety and inclusion of different people, places, and things (p. 2). This geographic term diverges considerably from the "grid / topographical map" comparison made earlier in this proposal; while Connelly and Clandinin also propose "out-of-classroom" and "in-classroom" components in this landscape, the "out-of-classroom components" include those structures imposed upon the classroom by forces and administrations beyond / above the classroom, while the "in-classroom" components are, "for the most part, safe places, generally free from scrutiny, where teachers are free to live their

stories of practice" (p. 2). Personal practical knowledge is expressed through stories,

including "sacred stories" that present valuable truths, "secret stories" shared only with

trusted colleagues, and "cover stories" told in order to appease administrative forces so that

"sacred" and "secret" stories may continue to be told uninterrupted (p. 3).

 Elbaz (1983) delineates the nature of personal practical knowledge further by establishing a

taxonomy of its elements that includes content (propositional knowledge of self, of teaching,

of subject matter, of curriculum development, and of instruction), orientation (situational,

personal, social, experiential, and theoretical), and structure (ordering principles, rules of

practice, and broad, metaphoric statements which enable effective deployment of practical

knowledge).

In contrast, collaborative autobiography elaborates a theory of autobiography as

educational praxis, by which is meant the quest for a unity of experience in which the

teacher's whole experience is read into the present teaching situation. Butt, Raymond, and

Yamagishi (1988) propose a collaborative method of autobiography that encourages

reflection on the nature of the teacher's working reality, how the teacher thinks and acts

within that reality, how the teacher's work life experience and personal history has brought

him or her to that reality, and how he or she wishes to become in the professional future.

Autobiographical praxis is characterized by its breadth – its quest for understanding of the

relation of *all* the individual has undergone to present teaching situations – in contrast to

which personal practical knowledge is seen as a reductive and instrumental understanding

that eliminates understanding the personal in favor of understanding the immediately useful.

Goodson (1991) contributed work in biographical studies of teachers that is in

contradiction to the other approaches outlined here, since one of Goodson's key concerns is

the preoccupations of his colleagues with teacher's lives only inasmuch as they are expressed in their teaching practice. He does not believe that the way to understand practice is only to focus on practice; rather, he finds it more sensible to examine teacher's work as it is a manifestation of teacher's lives. Goodson wishes to "assure that the teacher's voice is heard, heard loudly, heard articulately" (p. 139). Extending this intention by comparing teachers to declaiming folksingers, he notes that for him, "the people who sang the songs were more important than the songs themselves. The song is only a small part of the singer's life, and the life was usually very fascinating. There was no way I felt I could understand the songs without knowing something about the life of the singer" (p. 138). Therefore, Goodson's work is less "instrumental" – i.e., focused on the knowledge that leads to teaching decisions – than it is interested in the teacher's life beyond the classroom. Goodson applauds the inclusion of the "personal" in Clandinin and Connolly's formulation of personal practical knowledge, but he bemoans that "again the personal is being linked irrevocably to practice. It is as if the teacher *is* his or her practice" (p. 141). Goodson argues that the refocus of emphasis has tactical advantage and works in favor of the teacher; studies of classroom practice highlights "the most exposed and problematical aspects of the teachers' world at the center of scrutiny and negotiation," and it would be less threatening to examine "teacher's work in the context of teacher's lives," an assertion which Pinar et al (and I) find confusing (1995, p. 564).

Schubert and Ayers (1992) share an understanding of teacher's work as narrative with Clandinin and Connolly; they propose a theory of teacher lore as "stories about and by teachers" that "portray and interpret ways in which teachers deliberate and reflect" and "seeks to uncover teaching philosophies embedded in teaching practices" (p. 9). It is characterized by a fluid definition, fearing that too explicit a theoretical framework would

"separate learning from spontaneity," but it allows that teacher lore is anecdotal. In contrast to personal practical autobiography, the distinction between voice and interpretation is blurry, since teachers and commentators both inhabit dual roles. Its emphasis is upon the value of unofficial, learned knowledge. Echoing the value of "Métis" as defined by Scott, teacher lore seeks to catalog the lived experience of teachers in the name of asserting its idiosyncratic, situated nature; echoing Goodson, it seeks to serve as an anodyne to the quest for "best practices" in its emphasis upon the personal.

Work in teacher autobiography that seeks to understand the relationship between teacher's lives and their practice seems to trace an arc between exhaustive taxonomy / objectivization and exhaustive biography / subjectivization. Teacher lore seeks to establish a middle ground between these two by taking refuge in subjectivity, but by prizing the local above all, it excuses itself from hopes of generalizability - and some biographical studies don't seem interested in the teacher as teacher at all. It seems that endemic to each of these theories is a polarization: either teacher decisions are seen in terms of their instrumental efficacy or recast in comfortably non-binding, anecdotal, personal terms. It is challenging to assert the value of that which is not institutional and still remain in the world of the theorizable.

Grumet (1990) explores possible sources of this issue in her exploration of voice in education. While Goodson would have the teacher voice heard loud and clear, Grumet cites Silverman's ascription of the qualities of "loud and clear" to the confident, male voices heard in the totalizing narrative of voiceovers, while the female voice in film is hidden "inside" the film, "intertwined with images of the female body, emphasizing female sexuality and undermining her role as meaning maker by placing visual emphasis upon her body as an

object of desire". The teacher's voice is further "burdened by nostalgia; the maternal voice in educational discourse is prey to sentimentality and to an audience that consigns its melodies to fantasy, no matter how compelling." I hear the nostalgic marginalizing of teacher's voices in the relegation of their work to "stories" and "lore." These are alternative discourses to the quantitative and objective voices that dominate educational practice, but they are not compelling ones; they are "appeal[s] for recognition that petition phallocentric discourse but does not challenge its control."

Grumet posits another understanding of the potential of teacher and student voices, one ideally suited to "their texture, their presence, their connection to the bodies that schools sequester in gym lockers and teachers' lounges": in other words, their habitation in the interstices of schooling.

> One that hears the narrative voice not as a petitioning appeal or exhibitionistic gesture, but as a stream of negativity, constantly challenging the generalizing, hegemonic discourse with the inflections, images and sounds reminiscent of preoedipal or what Kristeva calls "semiotic" discourse. In this version the female voice is an echo of the maternal voice, the sonorous envelope within which we come to consciousness, from which we differentiate as ego grows into identity (unpaginated).

Thus reframed, teachers' accounts of their experience might be accorded tactical power as reminders of life as it is lived in schools, knowledge that is too specific to be scientifically assertable but too universal to be dismissed as mere subjectivity. No body is without a navel, a reminder of its ultimate provenance from the body of another. Similarly, no practice of education is without its traces of the maternal and the embodied, the "sonorous envelope" into which we first learned to speak. This study, then, will explore this "in-between" status of teacher narratives as the locus of their epistemological value; thus

conceptualized, they are both objective and subjective, both science and art, and may be seen to inhabit a rhetorical middle place of their own.

Grumet's work opens the possibility of a final strand of autobiographical scholarship (the one this study hopes to join): work on the relationship of teacher's experience of reading to their classroom decisions. In contrast to teacher biography, this field accommodates a complex enough view of "the personal" to support robust theory.

Atwell-Vasey (1998) acknowledges that the split between public and private reading that I learned about with Henry and in my sixth grade reading fracas outlines a split that runs deep within secondary language literature education: students learn the double-mindedness of their reading from the structure of their classes. The field of secondary English education has historically taken marching orders from university English departments, where acknowledging individual readers in large classes is almost impossible. Furthermore, the New Critical imperative to establish objective means by which literature might be accorded the respect of other rigorous, "scientific" disciplines has ensured the subordination of individual reader response to the meaning of "the text itself" as it emerges integral and insulated from intentional and affective fallacies (p. 25-26).

Unfortunately, Atwell-Vasey finds that the institutional imperatives of teaching reading are at odds with the reasons teachers decided to enter the field in the first place. The teachers in Atwell-Vasey's study come to teach reading because of their desire to foster in their students the same powerful experiences with reading that they experienced. However, the emphasis they are modeled in their university classes comes to impact their own practice.

> They try to provide space in private journals for students' perceptions, but these are often left unread, ungraded, and underdeveloped. These private forums are usually marginalized from mainstream curriculum activities that are "counted" for grades. Students' personal responses are written as exercises

and facts about literature are learned for grades, but reading literature is rarely brought to bear on the reality and the future of the world. The teachers recognize a sad irony in that they remember how important books have been in helping them imagine their futures, but they do not know how to bridge the gap between student's private reading and the public classroom (p. 35).

Atwell-Vasey examines the autobiographical work of three teachers as they reflect upon the ways they try to bridge this duality in their classrooms. This study is informed by two themes about the relationship between public and private reading.

The first is a conceptualization of bringing private reading to the surface in terms of the Kristevan imperative to move from the unconscious order (the "chora") to the symbolic order. Kristeva, like Kris, subscribes to the transformative power of the unconscious and its role in compelling creativity, and sees art and literature as "the privileged place of transformation or change" (p. 134), the place where the private reality may be made public. Literature invites the reader to cross the transom between public and private and share symbolically (through classroom language) the meanings that have been made from the reading.

Atwell-Vasey notes that for one of her participants this transition is not an easy one, since the symbolic terms available feel inadequate to the task. That participant writes:

I am a creature who mediates life with words. To do that, I have to be working out of a reservoir into which I dip and select in order to make public representations – but everything in me says, it's better not to bring it all to the light of day because the creative part, the pattern-formation, has to go on underground. Analysis is a necessary death…perhaps [the analytical] is the more appropriate and fruitful realm of language [for pedagogy,]…and reading in school just wasn't reading, that's all. And maybe it shouldn't try to be (p. 135).

The first theme, then, offers both potential and a caveat: reading and discussing literature has unique transformative power, but the analytic terms available for the

description of experience are so inadequate that there may be an absolute disconnect between private and public so broad that it cannot be bridged.

The second theme is the rationale developed for the importance of teacher's involvement of the "off the grid" elements of their lives in Kristeva's reconfiguring of the Freudian "third term" (p. 105). Freud understood the role of the father in the child / mother dyad as oppositional, and that the child develops toward embracing the father in a repudiation of the maternal in favor of the paternal. Kristeva agrees that the "third term" represents an essential broadening of the mother / child dyad to include the larger world, but posits that it represents a broadening and strengthening of the maternal bond in which the child acknowledges and learns from the mother's attraction to the father. Repudiation of the one is not a precondition of bonding with the other; instead, the modeling of attraction and interest in the world beyond the child teaches the child how to build her own complex of relations with the world outside the maternal bond without forsaking it. As Atwell-Vasey conceives of relationships between teacher and student in Kristevan maternal terms, the modeling of strong attractions to the world outside the ambit of the classroom serves to model for the student the satisfactions of forging such relationships for him or herself. The teacher's sharing of her own investment in reading the world outside of class models a powerful "narcissistic position" for students; by "leaving the room" through her own reading and interests, she informs students that "[their] horizons must always recede beyond the text or the class. The focus of the curriculum needs to be on the interpretation of worlds beyond the classroom and the page, worlds that we are actually trying to make habitable" (p. 167).

Similar questions about how teachers and students interact around texts are engaged by Sumara (1996), who leads four secondary English teachers in an eight-month reading

group and conversation that begins with the question, "why do we read books with other people?" One of the books read is *The English Patient*, which in turn features a crashed pilot whose copy of Herodotus' *Histories* has served him as a "commonplace book" for most of his life. The text has been read, marked, and annotated as part of a daily focal practice, resulting in the book becoming prosthesis of sorts – an extension of his self-identity" (p. 48). The intermingling of reader and text in this example becomes the impetus for the development of a theory of reading as a "structural coupling," the ongoing conversation between living beings and their environment wherein each simultaneously determines the other. Reading thus becomes an embodied action: "We don't just read to add new knowledge or experience to our lives, we read in order to find a location to re-interpret past experiences in relation to present and projected experiences" (p. 239), a temporal understanding of reading that echoes Iser. The image of "unskinning" is borrowed from *The English Patient* - "she unskins the plum with her teeth, removes the stone, and passes the flesh of the fruit into his mouth" – to describe the process through which teachers seek to peel back the layers of "schooling" that impede private meanings from coming forth into public classrooms.

Sumara's (2002) analysis of current curricular practice suggests that books we read in school are presented as "closed," meaning not subject to individual interpretation, while private reading is "open" to personal response; even when reader-response theory is introduced into literature classes to invite "open" readings of assigned texts, those same texts are presented as "closed" in terms of their analysis according to traditional literary conventions (main conflict, tragic flaw of the protagonist) (p. 33). The ways in which the meanings of texts serve to constitute, and be constituted by, their readers serve as the model for a pedagogical model of "liberating constraint": the objects of shared delectation serve as

the pretense for an ongoing interpretive project "that admits that knowledge and human identities continually co-specify each other" (p. 69).

The diverse literatures of psychoanalysis, social theory, reader response theory, performance theory, teacher autobiography provide widely diverse lenses through which to explore the question of how teachers experience the demands of the curriculum grid in their work in schools and what they do that allows them to work within it. The heterogeneity of these literatures invites cross pollination among them, a profligacy well-suited to the study of a phenomenon as complex as the intersection between teacher, student, and text within the lived situation of school.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH PROCEDURES AND LIMITATIONS

The study's principal data are transcripts of a series of interviews with three English teachers from three public high schools in North Carolina. Two of the teachers are women, one a man; one is in his first year of teaching, one in her fifteenth year, and the third in her third decade of practice. They teach at three public schools in North Carolina, one rural, one urban, and one in a university town. Teachers were recruited through emailed invitations to high school English teachers as listed on the publicly accessible web sites of high schools in three counties in North Carolina. Responses of interest were answered by follow-up phone calls, at which time an initial appointment was set at the teacher's school to meet and begin discussing the project. Teachers were entirely self-selected; the first three to respond and agree to participate in the study were chosen to do so. This selection process, nonetheless, generated a cohort that included two ninth-grade remedial English teachers, a similarity that may be worthy of future of study as discussed below.

Each of the interviews was begun by sharing the following five questions as an introduction to the purposes of the study:

1. What is "the grid" in which teachers understand themselves to work?
2. What do they do in the spaces the grid defines?

3. How do teachers talk about the relationship of "off the grid" elements to their content?

4. How do teachers think students experience the "off the grid" elements of their class?

5. Can teachers recall moments when their "off the grid" work seemed profoundly important? Why was it?

The "concepts of "on the grid," "off the grid," and "potential space" were also explained, using the following diagram.
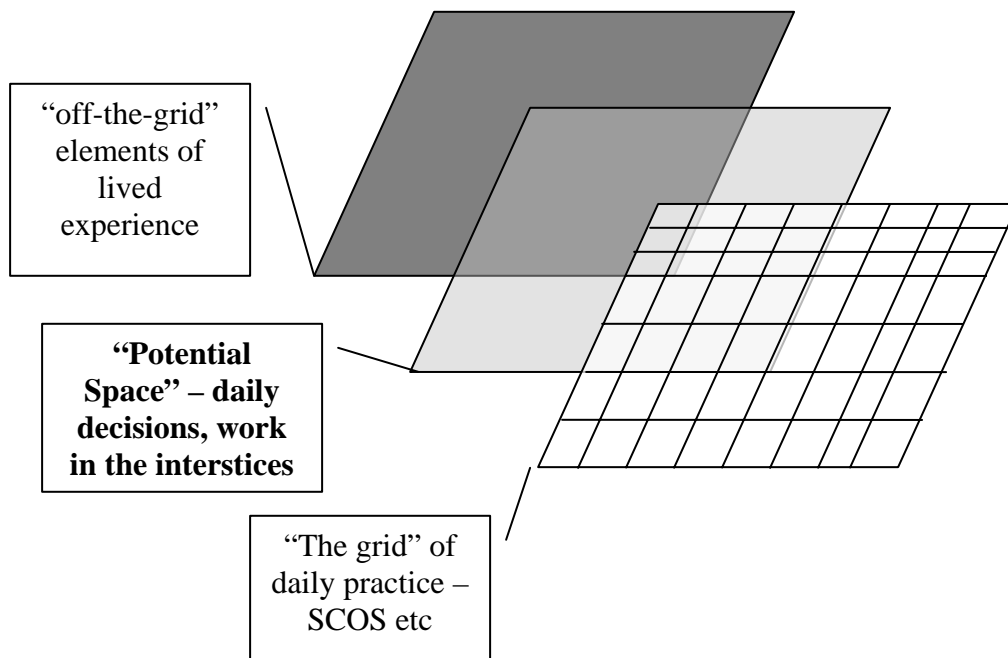
Each of the conversations then flowed from this framework, with both teacher and myself invited to reflect on current or remembered experience to speak to these questions or to pick up a story that had been begun in our last meeting. I conducted three face-to-face one-hour conversations with each teacher over a three month period, with some email and telephone communication in-between. Each conversation was recorded, then transcribed and

member-checked with the teacher at the subsequent visit. I engaged each teacher in three conversations, each of which lasted one hour, for a total of nine one-hour conversations that served as the data of this work. The five questions provided an initial framework in which the teachers were given opportunities to reflect upon their experience and their own evolving understanding and critique of the framework provided. They allowed me to situate the concepts that I wished to explore in this dissertation as practicing teachers experienced them. I needed to anchor these concepts in their understanding and practice, a process which corrected some of my assumptions and revealed levels of meaning and relationships not anticipated. Pseudonyms were used in all write-ups of this conversation and throughout this dissertation.

This study's method of working with the resultant texts resembled literary criticism, inasmuch as that endeavor acknowledges that texts emerge from specific contexts, and can subsequently be understood by subjecting them to analysis from specific perspectives. These texts were "conversations"; they were not exhaustive enough to constitute ethnography, nor crafted enough to be represented as narratives. Rather, they were several interactions that I initiated and participated in guiding through consideration of our separate experiences in shared remembrance. The approach was initially phenomenological, seeking to understand the phenomenon of the grid and its permutations through conversations derived from lived experience of those who function in it, then reading those conversations through the lenses of diverse other perspectives. Husserl's attempt to capture the essence of experience through rigorous reductions is vulnerable to the critique that his method, if indeed possible, would lead to abstract idealism (Moran 2000, p. 145). Rather than seek the idealized essences of Husserlian phenomenology, I share the conviction of his critics that the lifeworld can not be

reduced to decontextualized structures. What the method that I have used here shares with phenomenology is the effort to stand away from the natural attitude of everyday schooling and teaching and to use the theoretical lenses of social, psychological and performance theory to interpret the phenomenon of teaching on and off the "grid". As such, the method has evolved to be closer to hermeneutics than to pure phenomenology. It embraces the history of phenomenology as a way of investigating reality, holding a steady skepticism of categories in its evolving conceptualization of the nature of the phenomenon at hand. The evolving interpretation of that understanding feeds back upon its conceptualizations in a constant effort that is ultimately epistemological. It seeks to establish truth "not as judgment, but as revelation," seeking with Heidegger "to replace the view of knowledge as a kind of intellectual representation with a new view which sees knowing as a sub-species of a kind of concernful dealing with the world" (pp. 235-236).

My autobiography has played an important role in this research. I own it as the genesis of this inquiry, which stems from questions that I struggled to answer in my work in classrooms. Gadamer sought to acknowledge prejudice as the inevitable anticipation that we bring to experience.

> For Gadamer, our prejudices do not constitute a willful blindness which prevents us from grasping the truth; rather, they are the platform from which we launch our very attempt at understanding (p. 248).

I acknowledge the presence of my own subjectivity and intentions in the text, and submit my own memories to the same scrutiny as those shared by the teachers who participated in the study. It is my own story that serves to focus and narrow the conversations; I acknowledge seeking out more information about those experiences which seem to parallel mine, as my research process participates in the hermeneutic cycle of

bringing prior understanding to bear upon the process of present understanding. Knowing becomes the unveiling of "being" through the medium of language; interpretation of the experiences shared with me becomes the extrapolation of past understanding into the future, which in turn suggested the next questions to pursue.

These conversations served a dual role: not only were they about discovery and data collection, but they also served as invitations to reflective consciousness for each participant, giving teachers a chance to develop a metaframework for the pedagogical, personal, and political choices that impact their practice. This result might be described as the development of a "tactical consciousness," the heightening of awareness of the structures that inform one's practice and one's power to work within them, a metacognitive shift accompanying the transition from "limit situation" to "generative theme" that constitutes praxis (Freire 1972).

My history also raises cogent autobiographical issues in conducting this inquiry. I self-identify as a student and teacher who embraced the value of "off the grid" experience early on. This invested status implies an agenda, an ax to grind regarding the inhibiting role the "grid" plays in the lives of students and teachers who inhabit it. These positions need to be named and considered as, in addition to my self-identification as "student" and "teacher," I self-identify as "researcher" in the name of exploring these issues from a less-invested position. The challenge of identifying and bracketing those other agendas is a present issue in the work.

My own experience is thus another lens through which to understand teacher practice. I am not willing to write in a strict philosophical mode about teaching, since curriculum theory is rooted in practice, which in turn is contiguous with life as it is lived inside and outside of schools. The challenge has been to juggle the several language codes at work at

the intersection of teaching and philosophy, the language of practice and the language of theory. It would not have been difficult to impose one upon the other. Instead, this research represents an effort to sustain a conversation between them, a conversation in which both are enlarged and challenged, each one refining and respecting the boundaries of the other. Theory of *jouissance* helped me to understand Andrea's practice, but Andrea's practice also helps me broaden my understanding of *jouissance*. Frameworks of "complicated" vs. "complex" knowing help understand the different practices of Andrea and Suzanne, but their practice works to reveal new tensions in that duality. Theory and practice feed back upon each other, with each enlarging the understanding afforded by the other.

I bring in my own voice to acknowledge my own perspective, not as a limitation but as the engine of this inquiry. Those stories I share from my own experience appear in italics, to mark them as separate from those of the teachers. The confessional tone of my stories reveals that they have already been passed through the analytic categories that I am brining to my study of the teachers' accounts. The introduction of my own perspective and my own experiences provides an historical aspect that situates all else I have learned, read, and written within the context of a lived, temporal process, giving voice to what Gadamer termed the "effective history" or "history of affect" that clings to them. As "there is no 'neutral standpoint' from which we can observe the interaction of interpreter and tradition" (p. 279), I choose to consciously articulate my own experience as part of the sense-making endeavor of the study. This choice also echoes Iser's understanding of how we read, situating the specific intersection of text and reader between "retentive" and "protentive" horizons that retain essences of past experience and use them to interpret and predict those that are yet to come. Simultaneously, I strive to keep my voice from slipping into imputations of intent or private

experience. I can know my heart and my own reactions to situations we discuss, but I cannot know theirs. Like a good teacher, I work to practice respect and empathy for their stories, but acknowledge my apartness from it; while I have been "in the stuff" too, my "stuff" is not theirs, and I work to avoid too-easy conflation of their experience with mine.

Generalizability is a limitation of this study, but only inasmuch as the study focuses on the experiences of a few teachers in order to understand experiences common to many. The directions opened by this study have far-reaching implications for preservice teacher training, inservice development, and policy decisions concerning assessment of teacher practice. Another key limitation of this study is my outsider status to the everyday realities of teacher practice. While I taught high school literature for seven years before beginning graduate study, my experience differs from that my co-researchers, and my ability to fully capture their lived experience could be compromised by these differing backgrounds. Member check of interview notes and drafts were used to mitigate this issue.

CHAPTER IV

PERSONAL CONTEXT AND EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

When I was an undergraduate, I took a course in "Verse Reading and Writing" from poet Tony Connor, a gruff coal miner's son from Bristol who seemed surprised and bemused by the turns in his life that had brought him to a tenured position at a swank New England college. On the first day, he told us that his class was not about free verse, but rather that we would be expected each week to complete a work in an established poetic metric - a sonnet, a villanelle, a sestina. "I hope that by the end of the semester you will have learned the liberating power of constraint," he growled, as we cowered before his heavy accent and his intimations of great lessons to be learned at the feet of structure, balance, and order.

As is probably apparent, I feel personal and professional ambivalence toward the institutional constraints of schooling, and for the same reasons that part of me resisted Tony's declaration. On the one hand, I resent its reductions: the reduction of teaching craft to lists of best practices, the reduction of instructional support to class size limits, the reduction of professional development to whatever new intervention promises to deliver measurable results according to the election timetable of current power brokers. The drive to replicate, to generalize, and to distill does unforgivable violence to what I feel is the irreducibly personal project of schooling: a student and a teacher, together.

On the other hand, I feel respect, even nostalgia, for the grid this study seeks to bring into relief. Ellsworth (1997) states that curriculum only works when you are who it thinks you are, and that when you are not who it thinks you are it strives to "norm" you to its expectations. But I also suspect that teachers' and students' relationships with the normative aspects of the curriculum are more complex than that. I suspect that teachers share my personal ambivalence toward the institutional expectations that structure their work with students, alternately celebrating and resenting them as constant companions in their lived experience of teaching. Constraint can liberate in teaching as well as in poetry; limits to time, scope, and content can clarify and focus as clearly as rhythm and rhyme conventions. I remember days as a teacher when I chafed against the end-of-class bell that interrupted a rich discussion and celebrated the next period when the same bell put a boring or uncomfortable one out of its misery. How teachers feel about the constraints of the grid is not always clear.

This study invites exploration of the full range of the relationship of teachers with the grid within which they practice. It also welcomes and supports confusion and inconsistency about exactly what teachers feel about that relationship. With Miller (1990), I "reject a fixed notion that, once 'found,' one's voice is always able to articulate oneself, to pronounce one's identity, and to be heard" (x-xi). With Grumet (and against Goodson), I propose that once that voice is found, its most lasting work may be not in the clear, strong tones of the voiceover narrator, but rather in the insistent, interstitial negations and reminders of the lived conditions from which the grandest theory springs. This study invites articulations of all the complexities and contradictions of working within a structure. Work on teacher experience tends to focus on the limiting aspects of the curriculum, the places where it misses through

bureaucratic fervor the real relation and priority of work with students. In contrast, this study

hopes to draw out the full range of response to the grid.

Olney (1980) quotes Pascal in asking some crucial questions about the role of

autobiography in teaching.

> Is there such a thing as design in one's experience that is not an unjustifiable
> imposition after the fact? Or is it not more relevant to say that the
> autobiographer half discovers, half creates a deeper design and truth than
> adherence to historical and factual truth could ever make claim to (p. 11)?

The retelling of a life in school makes it a performance in which some aspects are

elided and others emphasized in the name of crafting an effective pedagogical intervention.

This creative process exemplifies the relation between teachers, students, and curriculum as a

series of transformative moments born of the estranging effects of regarding that which is

new, reflecting its implications back upon your self, and integrating that which is unfamiliar

into new familiarity through the process. The "potential space" of teaching practice offers the

possibility of transformation to its participants through the articulation of the ambiguities of

one's relationship to oneself for others, for whom that articulation provides new insight.

When the object of delectation is the infinite richness of oneself in relation to one's practice -

the lived experience of "doing" and "undergoing" that is working in the media of content and

students - the opportunities for transformative experience are exponentially richer.

This study is an opportunity to join teaching colleagues in a wide ranging exploration

of teaching experience that seeks to name the ground against which the grid of institutional

experience figures while simultaneously accommodating the tentativeness and mixed

feelings that true self-examination will always entail. It seeks to develop deeper

understanding of and commitment to the role of the personal in courting transformative

moments for students and teachers, moments in which horizons are pushed back and they are

able to see new potential in themselves. Such moments are especially valuable in an

educational milieu that acknowledges them only when their outcomes correspond to that

which is measured. Einstein said, "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not

everything that can be counted, counts." It is hoped that this work will make a valuable

contribution to the language used to account for the uncountable, making its place in school

that much more secure.

In *Schooling Desire,* Kelly (1997) cites a passage from Andrea Kaplan's teaching

memoir *French Lessons* in which the author considers the core dilemma of this research.

> *"How do I tell [students] who I am, why I read the way I do? What do students need to know about their teachers?"* In her initial question, Kaplan addresses her own desire to have her students know her as their teacher…yet the tone of these questions suggests a yearning for something prior to the possibility of having others – in this case, students – know her; it bespeaks a longing to know herself and to be able to discern the relationship of her reading practices to that self…she brings us, paradoxically enough, not only face-to-face with the limits of language as a means to erase the lack that is this desire to tell but, also, with the necessity of proceeding, nevertheless, with the fiction of telling (p. 55).

Is it possible to alternately embrace the security and certainty that the grid affords you

and resist and resent its structures? Can you continue to function as a teacher while you

inhabit this middle space, contributing your voice to your students' and colleagues'

development as a coherent element of the grids that constitute their experiences? Or can you

only talk when you are certain of what you want to say? These are the questions this study

ultimately seeks to answer.

CHAPTER V

THE GHOST OF PLEASURE: *JOUISSANCE* AND TEACHING

In my second year of teaching, my office window overlooked the back of my school, and one day at lunch I watched two of my ninth grade girls walk through the gate and down the alley. Their pace seemed too quick for heading to the convenience store, so I trailed them to discover them sneaking a cigarette behind the dumpster. I marched them to the office, their ears burning with shame, for the humiliation and harsh penalty that followed (the call to the parents, the suspension).

I was happy to turn them in, honestly. It was a laudable decision: kids should not smoke, most smokers start in their youth, I was doing them a great service. I was myself a smoker struggling to quit, and I had been sharing my own story and feelings with my students, my own small brush with the ferocity of addiction. My attitude towards smoking was well-known in class. I was the wrong person to catch you smoking - or maybe I was the one most likely to understand.

I loved these girls, loved their intensity and curiosity, their daily volatility of mood and personality. But at the moment of decision as to how best to deal with the smokers, I think I also hated them. I hated them for their right in youth to smoke with impunity as I did, to indulge their fantasy that they were grown up and cool in comfortable remoteness from consequences. I was like that too, when I started, and I hated them for having the pleasure

now denied me by my knowledge. And another element must be named: I hated them for distracting me in class, for stirring in me the unspeakable desire of attraction toward a student. It got to me, but I was intent on not acknowledging my desire, even when I found it driving my anger.

All of this came to bear on the moment of decision for me: the doctrinaire pleasure I would take in busting them (they were caught dead to rights); the righteous pleasure I would take from saving them from a life of addiction (who could fault me? As the ineffectual teacher says on South Park, "Smoking is bad, m'kay?"); the sadistic pleasure I would take from submitting their bodies to the whim of my authority as I marched them into the front office (a textbook case of the sublimation of forbidden desires into socially sanctioned ones).

So I busted them. Off they went. I felt drained by the experience, the invasion of my predictable school day by so many unexpected, overwhelming forces. Not being able to have a cigarette, I bought myself a diet soda and sat on a bench, trying to collect myself.

In French, the terms *plaisir* and *jouissance* denote two types of joyous experience. The first denotes satisfaction, the joy that comes from completion, "topping off," meeting expectations; it is associated with those pleasures that can be verified by cultural norms. Experiencing adequate satisfaction from them affirms one as "normal," in tune with the larger civilizing project of society.

Plaisir is contrasted by *jouissance,* which is unpredictable and disruptive pleasure; its intensity can destroy as well as satisfy. While the former affirms norms, the latter disrupts them: "*plaisir* results, then, from the operation of the structures of signification through which the subject knows himself or herself; *jouissance* fractures these structures" (Middleton 1990). Taubman (2006) plays out some of the implications of the term.

Jouissance, as Lacan defines it, exceeds pleasure or is an excess of aggressive enjoyment that is beyond pleasure and is tied to pain…*jouissance* can also designate a kind of ecstasy tied to loss of control and rational consciousness, and secondarily to violence, either emotional or physical. Such ecstasy can result from intense suffering – think of the mortification of the saints – or from surrender to the thrill of risk, or from the unbridled release of aggression in the service of a good. …*Jouissance* can also be experienced by fulfilling the letter of the law in the service of one's secret pleasures. …*Jouissance* can also designate the pleasure that results from a transgressive act because of its transgressiveness. It is in this sense that the degree of pleasure is in direct relation to the price one must pay for it (p. 29).

Pleasurable experience can be understood to run on a continuum between *plaisir* and *jouissance*, and Taubman's catalog suggests that a moment of *plaisir* can become *jouissant* through a shift in degree, motivation, or context. This is the moment where rigid compliance begins to give intrinsic pleasure, for example, or the moment where the transgressive becomes thrilling precisely because it is transgressive, the moment that Fagen and Becker (2000) have in mind when they describe "enjoying the tyranny of the disallowed". These pleasures are not cultivated, but rather happened upon; they do not grow from the ground, but rather crash in through a window. To the degree that they can be predicted, they cease to be *jouissant*.

The danger of *jouissance* is one of its core traits, and one of the reasons it is so hard to name its place in education. It lurks on the excessive edges of education, a sense of possibility that both enlivens and threatens the quest to ensure that students have learned a verifiable "enough."

{*Jouissance*} does not exactly exist, according to Lacan, but it *insists* as an ideal, an idea, a possibility thought permits us to envision. In his vocabulary, it "ex-sists": it persists and makes its claims felt with a certain insistence from the outside, as it were. Outside in the sense that it is not the wish, "Let's do *that* again!" but, rather, "Isn't there something else you could do, something different that you could try?" (Fink 2002).

The potential of *jouissance* "haunts" our daily experience, simultaneously exemplifying that word's imputations of transcendence, menace, and evanescence - we desire it, we fear it, and we don't know when it will come.

All this means that exploring the role of *jouissance* in the rational, objectives-driven milieu of education is challenging if not quixotic. Education values elements of unpredictability when they can be rationalized as part of a greater productive project. - for example, Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) popular formulation of "flow" prizes the pleasure of "losing oneself" as an important aspect of creative endeavor, and research on critical thinking values brainstorming and relaxing of associative boundaries in the name of encountering unexpected solutions (Perkins 2000). However, such work values these experiences in the context of clear goals and consistent feedback that locates the self-losing and boundary-blurring in relation to those goals. *Jouissance* is intrinsically the obverse of goal-oriented practice, potentially beginning at the moment when experience "exceeds" the normative and veering quickly into unknown territory. What does *jouissance* bring to classroom practice? Is its "enlivening" sufficient compensation for its "threat"?

One of the teachers I worked with embodies an understanding of the potential of *jouissance* to bring pleasure in the work of school to herself and her students. Her practice offers an example of how to work "in the grid" of educational expectations while still remaining attentive to the peripheral possibility of *jouissant* experience that flickers in the corner of her eye. She feels that to the extent that education is about the cultivation of possibility, *jouissance*, fully dedicated to the articulation of possibility, *jouissance* can be a welcome, if disruptive, addition.

I first meet Andrea on a teacher work day, and she takes me to her classroom: cinder block standard, but with two windows that open onto a gorgeous blue winter sky. The room is dominated by six chairs and desks in a circle; a whiteboard notes "15 principles of test-taking" and a list of rules that includes "no sleeping – EVER!!!" There is a single spider plant in the corner and several rotating stands of paperbacks, each slot holding one title; the wall are intermittently decorated with small pictures of mandalas from a one-a-day calendar. From the ceiling in one corner hangs a large off-brand television, incongruently new, next to a standard institutional clock with a yellowing face. I note the loud hum of the ventilation system, which will kick in intermittently during all of our conversations, obscuring my recordings and never failing to annoy me. Andrea never mentions it.

This is the first year that Andrea has taught in a traditional 9-12 public high school, but she has more than twenty years of experience in education, with most of her teaching in community colleges and prisons. Andrea holds a BA and MA, and mentions that she has four kids and eight grandkids, which seem incongruent with her indeterminate age (I later discover she is 58). She is tall and thin, with white hair and the piercing blue eyes of someone who sees and seeks. Andrea works with those who struggle in school. Her students are fourteen to sixteen-year olds who were held back a grade earlier because of their failure to pass 8th grade End of Grade tests. "They know they are dumb," she says – "they are sensitive to the fact that they have been held back, they know something about them is not right. I am paid to get them ready to pass the test, to "tweak" their reading ability, to teach them vocabulary." Her days are spent with groups of four or five students sitting in what she characterizes as a "graceful circle," working on reading and writing skills in small group and one on one interactions.

As both a Canadian francophone and a student of literary criticism, Andrea is very familiar with *jouissance* in both its theoretical and conversational contexts, and she volunteers her own, colloquial definition. "*Jouissance* is linguistically 'getting it on.' It is women talking. There's a place women go in conversation where there are so many open doors, so much movement of language and understanding – it's joyful, it's assuming that everything said is valuable. In one word, it's bliss." Andrea's definition of *jouissance* is Kristevan in that it is less about a Lacanian focus on disruption than it is about a sense of constant possibility that exceeds symbolic representation. Grumet (1988) notes that in Kristeva's *About Chinese Women*, her sense of the semiotic includes an example from Chinese history.

> Despite the 8,000-year-old repression of a putative matrilineal and matrilocal culture, contemporary Chinese women may be able to draw upon the deep streams that have run through their history, lining them to a cultural and historical epoch in which preoedipal symbiosis and continuity of internal and external structures were political realities rather than psychological repressions (p. 18-19).

In the context of *jouissance* as inclusive of access to these "deep streams," it is striking that I first meet Andrea at the end of a teacher work day, and she immediately takes me to meet a colleague of hers who also "works off the grid." While the teacher demures on being part of the study on the grounds that she is a special Ed teacher, she supports the project and recognizes its contours. "I love talking to her," says Andrea on the way back of her room after our chat. "I should have been here working but spent the whole day talking with her. Oh well, I'll grade papers all night if I have to – it's the collegial relationship that is most soothing on a day like this." In her cultivation and valuing of relationships with other teachers, Andrea seeks out connections that support the semiotic as well as symbolic functions of her practice. Such alliances serve to support the sort of practice she most values:

a condition in her classroom of freedom, of way leading on to way in joyous, unfettered sharing of meaning through language and the meanings of language, with no corner left unexplored.

Andrea is committed to an expansive engagement with the words and texts that make up the purview of her course. Her definition of *jouissance* fractures normative structures of classroom work as the setting and meeting of clear expectations and is watchful for the moment of potential when it might become something more to the satisfaction of herself and her students.

Andrea teaches vocabulary as part of her work with students. Vocabulary instruction is one of the most clearly "on the grid" functions of teaching English, comparable to spelling in elementary school in its predictability. The readily isolatable quality of a word's meaning in assessment may be why SAT prep books usually include a preponderance of lists of words that were used on previous tests, as well as copious practice in strategies for conquering the tortuous analogies the test uses to assess vocabulary skill. It would appear that learning vocabulary is primarily a matter of determining the required definition, remembering it, and rendering an appropriate, if decontextualized, derivation of that definition upon demand.

Andrea, however, teaches vocabulary differently than I have ever seen it taught. She creates a list of terms from the reading vocabulary exercise, some of which she combines into other terms (e.g., "traditional", "values", "traditional values"). They go to the dictionary together to review the definition provided there and Andrea explains her own perspective about what they word might mean, what it implies to her, even the spatial and associative matter that adhere to the word in her understanding of it. "Explicit," she says; "you watch X rated movies; I know you do – when you see the orange screen that says "explicit material,"

what does that mean?" A shared definition of "implicit" followed. "It was very complex," says Andrea. She taught "escalate" by miming standing on a platform, then stepping to a higher one. She reprises this performance for me in the empty classroom, and I am struck by how evocatively she is up on tiptoe, balancing precariously as she "escalates" to the next invisible step so I may know somatically how the word represents a complete lifting to the next level.

Following this shared exploration, Andrea proposes a distilled definition to them to write down, often no more than one word. She will include in this list words that do not appear in the text, but that she finds herself using when discussing it ("you need to know what it means when I say it; otherwise I am just wasting my energy"). She then asks them to use the word in written sentences, which are in turn discussed and compared to the distilled definition all are learning. She assesses their understanding of these words with a test that everyone must take until they demonstrate complete mastery of the words. "To really understand what any word means takes a lot of "fetch and pull," says Andrea. "An isolated definition is useless in the real world." She felt confirmed in this approach this year when she heard a student use one of their vocabulary words in the hall ("he said something to her, and she punched him, and before I knew it escalated"). "He didn't cringe when he said it!" she says – "it just came out!"

Andrea started a dissertation in literature before leaving graduate school to return to teaching. She reports that she spent the better part of a year writing the ten-page introduction to that project, time mostly spent culling, refining, and condensing her work, until she was left with "the center square of a very big quilt." After the defense, her advisor told her he wished she had put in more of what she knew. She reflects that his answer made her realize

that she honestly didn't know what to leave out. In academia, "it is so hard to know what

goes without saying. I thought I was giving them only the part that was relevant to the project

at hand, but it turned out they wanted to see everything."

When Andrea teaches vocabulary, she leaves nothing out. Her understanding of

jouissance –the "place where there are so many open doors, so much movement of language

and understanding" – also incorporates Kristeva's (1975) theory of language's symbolic and

semiotic functions. This division establishes that language transcends its denotative capacity

to include glossalic properties, thus attributing a "heterogeneousness to signification [that]

operates through, despite, and in excess of it and produces in poetic language "musical" but

also nonsense effects that destroy not only accepted beliefs and significations but, in radical

experiments, syntax itself" (p. 101). I see in Andrea's vocabulary work a commitment to the

heterogeneous and glossalic potential of words, which includes a willingness to use her body

to perform meanings that elude perfect denotation in language. Vernon (1979) notes that our

bodies leap in to fill the void of signification left when words fail us. We gesture when our

speech becomes animated; the degree of emotional import that invests our message serves to

modulate the intensity of gesture used. It is as if our bodies mean to highlight the

incompleteness of language to fully convey the meaning that, after all, originated within

those same bodies; the body leaps to fill the gap.

> I think of gestures as impulses that well up from inside me and move outward,
> only to be caught in the net or web of my body, which distributes them across
> its surface…if language organizes the world, and the world resists language –
> if there is a tension between the world and language – the human body is this
> tension itself, and gestures are its visible vibration, the graph of its
> oscillations. Gestures are they key to the relationship between language and
> the world (p. 19).

Andrea works in the *jouissant* space unique to embodied knowing by freely bringing her body to bear on the task of communicating the full meaning of the word; in the process the word fills her, and she is that much more "in the stuff" of her content. She loads her explanations with physical experience, helping their import settle in her students' bones.

Andrea's vocabulary list includes terms that are not found in the text, but are terms that Andrea needs to use to talk about what is happening in the text. She explains that she needs to have an authentic engagement with the text in order to teach it, and part of that engagement includes the ability to use the terms that, for her, are intrinsic to describing that experience. They belong on the list of words her student must know, since meaningful use of them is essential to her pleasure in teaching.

Andrea illustrates that a teaching disposition conducive to *jouissance* has as its prerequisite a respectful acknowledgment of the role of one's own pleasure in pedagogical work. To take pleasure into account when making pedagogical decisions is to establish an "alternate register of value" in one's classroom, one that asserts one's right to one's own satisfactions. Teacher satisfactions are supposed to be of the virtuous and self-abnegating variety, the sort of satisfactions that model a productive ethos to children. Phelan (1997) notes Apple and King's research that established the duality of "work" and "play" in the kindergarten classroom.

> Work is always compulsory, and it begins and ends at the designated time…it is diligence and perseverance that are rewarded, not the work itself…it follows that work [is defined] in opposition to, rather than in tension with, the erotic. Work demands rationale behavior and the control of impulse and desire; work promises long-term rewards rather than immediate, momentary pleasures…impulse and desire are rewritten as inattention. Momentary pleasures are replaced by the pressure to be ready for the first grade (p. 82).

This shift from the satisfactions of play to the satisfactions of work yields two notable results. First, it effectively accomplishes that sublimation essential to the maintenance of society (Freud 1930). Second, it relegates judgment of the quality of endeavor to an external rather than internal source; work is "done" and "good" when the same force that made it compulsory pronounces it so, not when it feels right to the doer.

The alternate conception of motivation and satisfaction suggested by the introduction of *jouissance* into teacher practice is well explicated by performance theory. When Bell (1995) argues for an aesthetics of pleasure, she is arguing *against* an aesthetics of performance in which the audience judges the "performance competence" of the performer, an aesthetics in which the performer is accountable for the skill and accuracy with which a performance is carried out, especially as regards its faithfulness to a performance's referential content. Just as Rosenblatt and Barthes argue for an expanded understanding of reading that values the text as supplemental to the reader's experience, so does Bell seek to establish a different understanding of accountability, one that privileges the pleasure of the performer – pleasure to which, Bell makes clear, he or she is entitled.

> [This aesthetics] displaces questions of responsibility with questions about rights. In this libidinal economy of pleasure, access, participation, and ecstasy are not "granted" by a literary text or an audience, but are the performer's rights in an aesthetics centered in pleasure…the performance process starts by metaphorically and literally 'stealing the text, smuggling it into the libidinous economy of pleasure, starting with this permission one gives oneself" (p. 110).

Teachers who value *jouissant* experience in their classroom establish an alternate register of value in their classroom, and first among these changes is the enumeration of their own satisfaction as one of the required elements of the class. According to Bell, if a teacher is to open herself to the possibility of *jouissant* experience in her classroom, she must assert her right to it. Such a decision may bring its own challenges, as it involves either appeasing

or defying the normative structures of school that assert the right to judge "performance competence" and reserving such judgments, at least in part, to make oneself regarding one's practice.

A teacher's desire for her own satisfaction initially seems to be at odds with desire for the satisfaction of her students. Desire is not welcome in the classroom, bringing as it does fear of violation of trust and boundaries, of deep taboos. Colher and Galatzer-Levy (2006) note that "one consequence of caution about the expression of desire in teaching is a detached classroom in which students and teachers pretend engagement in learning," resulting in a "word-oriented, antisomatic ethos" (p. 246). To acknowledge one's own capacity for satisfaction in the classroom introduces the possibility of embodied and erotic experience into the classroom, with attendant risks. In Andrea's case, however, such assertions have been met with either support or tacit indulgence. Assertions that "life in classrooms focuses on the containment of desire and pleasure" may not be as pervasive as expected (p. 246).

Andrea asserts her right to *jouissant* experience by literally making space in the curriculum for it, laying the groundwork that supports her students' joining her in her own pleasure-based practice. It is not a permission that was given to her; it is a right she asserted, and in doing so it appears her students and institution reformed around her need to have it accommodated. It also seems that making this assertion creates a counterintuitive result. She gives liberally of herself in a context where she asserts her right to her own pleasure; what she gives in that environment generates more of what she needs, with the result that she is sustained and energized.

When Andrea says that in *jouissance*, all doors are open, I am reminded of how some of the doors in Bugs Bunny cartoons open onto thin air, leaving Yosemite Sam to plummet to the ground. To bring *jouissance* into the classroom as a teacher is to take responsibility for your own decisions; it sometimes means stepping out of the safe building that is school expectation and into the thin air of the consequences of your own choices. Andrea's practice has caused her to fall in the past; administrators do not always understand her choices, and she has experienced clashes with authority around her unorthodox approaches. Andrea takes risks in her practice, but her risks are concomitantly met with unprecedented results for her students.

The ninth graders I busted for smoking had participated earlier in the year in our class reading of Till We Have Faces by C.S. Lewis. A retelling of the Cupid and Psyche myth we had been reading, it is foremost a consideration of the pleasures and terrors of being "consumed," ravished by a force greater than oneself. It is the story of two sisters: Orual, the reasonable one, is certain that the faceless creature coming to her sister, Psyche, in the night is nothing but a bandit set upon her destruction in the name of his own pleasure. But Psyche knows in her heart that he is a god, and gives herself up as his handmaiden, content to be chosen and validated by one so great. These two approaches to faith and trust had galvanized my ninth graders, and the intensity of the parallels between the book and my own life at the time were too pointed to leave out. "What consumes you?" I had asked my students, and mined my current experience with chemical dependence to share how I felt about being "consumed." They contributed their personal narratives about their own passions, the way those passions both fed and overtook them. It was an amazing discussion, one that still burns incandescent in my mind. It was a moment when what we all really cared

63

about in our "out of school" lives seemed perfectly illumined by something we were reading together. The text enabled a discussion of those things that we never would have had without it, as we returned again and again to passages of the book that described and explained our own experience, or brought our own experience to bear on understanding the experiences of the characters. The relevance of literature to life was unquestioned; more powerfully, the connection between all of us, despite our differences in age and experience, fed us all. We were set free by the text, but still tethered to it; in that safe space we could range free to connect as we never before had.

Andrea struggled with "what to leave out," as does an English teacher whose personal life might connect with what the class is reading. What happened when I brought my smoking struggles to my reading of *Till We Have Faces*? How much of what a teacher really experiences in reading does he or she wish to share?

The common-sense understanding of reading is that it is a process of discerning meaning from agreed-upon symbols, and therefore remote from such a question. To do the work of reading from this perspective, we need to be very adept at deriving the predictable, measurable meaning a text contains. When Rosenblatt (1939) described school reading as overwhelmingly "efferent," she emphasized that texts in school are regarded in terms of *what should be taken away from them*, not the quality of experience we have *while we are with them.* Concerns with reading in school usually begin with whether our students are "getting the reading." Even the teachers most invested in their students having personal relationships with literature must establish how much they need to "get" before they can start to have other experiences. And so as teachers devise tests to determine how much of they reading students are "getting," it follows that we benchmark an acceptable level of "getting" as adequate, and

anything more as desirable but superfluous. Jackson (1968) notes that the grid's power to determine expectations and achievement of them extends even to the definition of the appropriateness of the student's own internal life ("the hidden curriculum refers to ways in which pupils learn to accept the denial and interruption of their personal desires and wishes"). The impact of the regulation of what counts as legitimate reading has the effect of policing internal as well as manifest experience. Such norming constitutes the foundation of society, as has been well theorized elsewhere (Freud 1930; Foucault 1978).

Rosenblatt goes on, however, to elucidate how reading is also about how the text affects us. This part of reading, the "aesthetic" experience of reading, makes a space for our own engagement with the text, the associations, tangents, and personal meanings the text provokes within us that makes the experience uniquely meaningful to us. These experiences might be considered superfluous to an "efferent" reading, distracting from a text's "true" nature as defined by New Criticism's claim on behalf of the literary work's autonomy, it's "solid and ideally impenetrable structure that demanded from ideal readers a suspension of their own personalities and interests" (Atwell-Vasey 1998, p. 27). Barthes (1975) extends Rosenblatt's line of thought by insisting that reading is all about superfluity. He describes reading as an activity in which we feed our fantasies with those elements of a text that appeal to those fantasies. When we read for pleasure, we behave in very un-school-like ways.

> We do not read everything with the same intensity of reading: a rhythm is established, casual, unconcerned with the integrity of the text : our very avidity for knowledge impels us to skim or skip certain passages (anticipated as "boring") in order to get more quickly to the warmer parts of the anecdote…we boldly skip (no one is watching) descriptions, explanations, analyses, conversations; doing so we resemble a spectator in a nightclub who climbs onto the stage and speeds up the dancer's striptease, tearing off her clothing, *but in the same order*, that is: on the one hand respecting and on the other hastening the episodes of the ritual (like a priest *gulping down* his Mass) (Barthes p. 11).

65

Our minds, when engaged in such reading, are guilelessly promiscuous. We might substitute the face of a friend for a character, envision a favorite locale from our past as a setting., even elide those bits of the narrative that do not seduce us in order to hasten the consummation we most desire. Our only goal in making decisions about what content we take or leave is how it might contribute to our present and future enjoyment of the story. There is a genre of books called "beach books," pleasant diversions into which we escape, or trifles to augment the larger "escape" we have made to the beach. Barthes would hold that to read for pleasure is indeed to "escape;" we are beholden only to our own rules, and we break or enforce them as we see fit.

As explicated by Barthes and Rosenblatt, the reading experience we most value is more *jouissant* than *plaisant.* It is more associated with desire than duty, more about unpredictability than compliance.

This is the reading that was in evidence that day we discussed Till We have Faces; a boundless reading, one where our shared associations returned us over and over again to the text for further material with which to conjure. Unprecedented depth and connection was made possible by its mediation through a text, a "third space" in which the intentionalities of teacher and student were able to meet and commune. The jouissant that lurked outside our discussions on most days came in for our enjoyment, and with it the concomitant thrill of the risk of actually sharing what we cared about, but its mediation by its continued retrenching in the text somehow domesticated it, made it a safe thrill, one that hurt no one. I felt afterwards that I had engaged something mighty, something I wanted to have happen again; I also marveled at the ease with which propriety and danger had commingled, at the way in which all felt safe while taking risks.

Private reading is an open space, an opportunity to follow our fancies and desires to their wildest off-the-grid places, to chase the will o'wisp glimpses of *jouissance* that lurk around the edges of a text's efferent content. From this perspective, text is richly underdetermined, and Andrea's joyous, full-throated explorations of what words might mean, intimate, and hint at is a public manifestation of the somatic, emotional, and transcendent experiences that text can yield. An engagement with text that is open to *jouissant* experience is *a priori* one of involvement, of being invested in the discovery of what text can mean, and mean to you personally.

But while private reading invites private *jouissant* experience, public sharing of a text can not only invite *jouissant* experience but also tether it with the very text that invited it in the first place. Students and teacher return again and again to a shared text as a handle that keeps its *jouissance* part of the classroom, not domesticating the experience so much as framing it such that it can exist in school to the delight of all. Rooted in text, its hints of danger seem less threatening and more intriguing; without a text for us both to grasp, our conversations would have been more frightening and more threatening. Andrea's work with *jouissance* reminds me both of *jouissance's* value in the classroom and its peculiarly effective pairing with the sharing of text. Iser claims that the text anchors the creation of the aesthetic object as an extension of the actual object; so does the text anchor the *jouissance* it produces to school, rendering it enlivening rather than annihilating.

Phelan (1997) notes the relationship between desire and this type of shared educational experience.

> Eros is the drive that impels human beings toward union. The desire for union and communion manifests itself in classroom moments of joy, laughter, and pleasure…these are moments of exuberance and excess for teachers and

67

students, moments that are unreserved, lavish, and joyful (Colher and Galatzer-Levy 2006, p. 245).

Teaching practice that is open to *jouissance* in working with texts makes spaces where such "moments of exuberance" might be shared, as communion around the shared experience of a text supports deeply engaging experience. *Jouissance* helps explicate both the role of pleasure in the classroom and its unique relationship with text, inasmuch as that relationship supports "unreserved, lavish, and joyful" moments of embodied teacher – and student – pleasure.

CHAPTER VI.

SCAFFOLD AS HEURISTIC: LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE GRIDS

Productivity is most useful when it can be measured, accounted for, and sustained.

Bees were capable of producing honey long before beekeepers began to harvest it. But Scott

(1998) notes that extracting honey from bee's nests used to be difficult and inefficient,

because the finding and extraction of unknown amounts of honey from naturally occurring

nests usually entailed the destruction of the nests themselves, precluding their usefulness next

season. Modern beekeeping, in contrast, depends upon a rationalized hive design, based upon

easily removable wax cells stacked ten deep in a box, with the exact distance left in between

that bees will use as a passage rather than fill up with more honeycomb. This design renders

the hive "manageable" to the beekeeper, in that its honey production can be judged, enlarged

or shrunk by standard units. Most importantly, the hive's rate of production can be monitored

to ensure that it will survive for multiple seasons. The result is useful, measurable

productivity.

Modern schools, like modern beehives, are complicated places. Davis et al (2000)

note that "complicated" systems are the sum of their parts.

> Their behaviors are planned, directed, and determined by their architectures.
> A familiarity with each of the components that are brought together in such
> machines is all that is required to predict the activity of the resulting wholes.
> These sorts of objects are intended to fulfill specific functions, and they
> operate according to deliberate designs (Davis et al p. 55).

Our culture also believes knowledge is complicated in that it entails the bringing together of components into logical wholes. We tend to describe knowledge in solid, mechanical terms like "building a strong foundation," "structuring an argument," and "acquiring basic skills" (p. 55). These terms belie a deeply held conviction that knowing consists of mastering small elements of knowledge and assembling them rationally into larger ones. The small elements can be named and counted, and their relationship to larger ones clearly mapped; such relationships are "legible," clearly seen and accounted for.

But Davis et al go on to note that the dichotomy of "complicated" and "complex" systems shows us that "legible" reckonings often fail to measure or improve the right things. "Complex" systems, on the other hand, are assemblages of other, smaller, dynamic systems, and their logics are not always so easily deduced or manipulated.

> Economies, for example, emerge from, but are not reducible to, the activities of citizens. The human body arises from, but is something more than, the interactions of a heart, a brain, and other organs. These organs, in turn, are comprised of and supersede collections of living cells and neurons. And so on…these are complex systems. They exceed their components. They are more spontaneous, unpredictable, and volatile – that is, alive – than complicated systems (p. 55).

It is hard to evaluate in a "complex" system, because it is hard to isolate specific elements and manipulate them to produce predictable results. Much of what is evaluated may not be selected because of its relation to productivity but, rather, because of its amenability to measurement (one of the reasons spelling tests continue their dominance of early literacy education). The desirable aspects of productivity itself may be hard to tease apart or even define, such that one is hard pressed to know if one is measuring the right thing, or even if the right thing is measurable.

Knowing what to measure is not a new problem in education. In the sixties it showed up as the "engineering" point of view, which Jackson (1968) remarked as a desirable state of affairs from the psychometric perspective, but perhaps lacking in terms of how well it corresponded to actual practice.

> It is reasonable to ask whether there are any limits to this way of thinking about educational matters. How precise in the definition of his objectives and in the evaluation of his students' progress can or should the classroom teacher become? Are the concepts of wasted motion and inefficiency as useful in the design of new educational activities as they are in the design of a new auto engine? Are there aspects of classroom life that are not amenable to these terms? Questions such as these are of extreme importance as we move toward a better understanding of school life. For no matter how powerful the engineering point of view might be, its usefulness is limited if, under its influence, we are dissuaded even momentarily from examining the total spectrum of classroom events (p. 165).

Jackson is asking a question about sufficiency and surplus, about whether the structures deployed to make sense of school are broadly conceived enough to include what is of greatest value in the "total spectrum of classroom events" or whether it "drops off the map". Andrea's "excessive pedagogy" serves her students in vocabulary instruction by broadening the scope of their understanding from "enough" to "more than enough," providing room for "complex" understandings and uses of language. How can an understanding of "excessive pedagogy" be further augmented by the "complicated / complex" dichotomy? How can the limits of "complicated" approaches to knowing be ameliorated by "excessive" practice, and how can the resultant understanding enrich teacher conceptions of cognition, of their subjects, and of their interactions with students?

When I meet with Andrea for the second time she reports on a month-log project that she has been engaged in: the creation of biographical essays to commemorate Black History Month. She walks me to the wall to show me where the final work has been displayed on a

bulletin board covered in newsprint. The papers were 35% of their grade for the term, and were required to include a cover page, two pages of text, and a bibliography, which she discovered was beyond the abilities of most of her students. "I have never worked harder than I have this month with these kids," she says. "I modeled anal retentive accountability. I wanted them to achieve exactly what I had envisioned for them. I laid it out in lavender."

Each aspect of the paper had specific points assigned, and all had to be completed to receive credit, so Andrea found herself creating many structures to help her students complete each element. "KWL charts" were especially useful; these are tables with three columns labeled "what I Know," "what I Want to know," and "what I Learned," which intend to help students approach their research with focused questions based upon prior knowledge and record the relevant information that is discovered. Also helpful were "paragraph pages" - photocopies of an outline shaped like the mirror-image of Utah, with the upper-left hand corner removed to force an indent.

These structures became central to Andrea's students' completion of the project, but they were not enough. Andrea spent most of the month in one-on-one consultation with students, and as I reviewed their files I saw Andrea's handwriting side by side with the students'. Sometimes I noted that her hand dominated the page, even completing forms and tables, seeming to be the main creator of the content (she acknowledged that "sometimes I wrote down what they said, because they needed to get it all done"). She wondered sometimes whether the structures she created had become too important, noting that at one point students refused to write paragraphs on the computer, insisting that they weren't paragraphs unless they had been written on "paragraph pages." Andrea notes, "Once I started making them, their sense of a need to have it grew large – I probably have created a bunch of

codependent kids. They need to have KWL charts, timelines, graphic organizers – they won't work without them."

I was intrigued by one KWL chart in particular. Every box in the table was filled in the same deliberate student hand, but the entries did not seem to correspond to the headings: "How long have you played for Carolina / to be that good / why did you decide / to stop playing golf? / Did you play in Spain? / Did your parents die? / Were they playing baseball?" I note that the student seemed engrossed in the project, but that the structure was not being used as it had been intended; Andrea agrees, but notes, " no one could say he didn't own that structure, it was his, no doubt – boom boom boom, all filled in!" The student completed several of these pages, and then drew upon his "stack of source" in the creation of his outline, whereupon he began working on how to organize it. "The structure was designed for one use, but used for another," noted Andrea. "It was poetic that even though we had had all this conversation about beginning, middle, and end, he still knew what he was on about –it was impressive."

All of the writing for these papers happened in discrete classes, three groups of student who meet at three different times of the day; they had never met all together at the same time in the same place. To celebrate the successes of the project, Andrea asked her assistant principal for a schedule dispensation to bring them all together to present their papers to each other and celebrate their successes. She agreed, and a 6th period on Friday was designated for the celebration, with necessary leaves from classes secured by the assistant principal so that all could attend, a small sum donated to buy refreshments. I note to Andrea that the schedule seems inviolable to students, but that as adults we understand that it is not immutable, that it can be changed; that in fact much of what seems inviolable to students we

know as grown ups is quite flexible. She concedes that it will be intense to have them all together; "they all know each other's reputations, who is struggling, who is weird" – since she has shared their work with other classes across periods. She notes that "they will see each other in a very familiar room but

new people." Andrea notes that this will be a celebration of students who have "never owned a thing on the grid" having their first school success. That's why there has been the administrative support, she notes; in honor of such unprecedented success, there are drinks and candy, and the schedule gets changed.

When Andrea's students are unable to complete a given level of work, she begins to work one-on-one with them, taking them to the most atomic unit of each expectation and staying with them until they finish it, then moving to the next. In this arduous and time consuming pedagogy, there is not an opportunity for students to stall out; she essentially pulls them through the first elements of the structure until there is an undeniable record of achievement within the structure upon which students can build as they work further.

Such involvement is not easy to reckon with. When I first see Andrea's students' work I notice how much of her handwriting is on it, and my first impulse is that she is either over-involved in her student's work or over-invested in the value of a worksheet. In either case, I have a gut reaction that "she is doing it for them," which initially makes me doubt her judgment. The principle that everyone should do his or her own work remains a core value in schools. As Grumet (2006), notes, "Do your own thing. Individualism. Do not look at his paper. Is this your own thought? We admire autonomy. We admire thinking that is decentered, concepts uncluttered by the complexities of particular contexts or relationships" (p, 220)."

But though her handwriting dominates some of the exercises, it is eventually their work that comes through; I see the dance of both intentionalities in the mix of awkward student printing and Andrea's elegant Palmer script that covers the pages. Work that would have been impossible to complete becomes possible when it is begun intersubjectively. Her willingness to cross this line of student / teacher propriety ("everyone does their own work") seems to create an interpersonal structure that reconfigures the common sense understanding, to the apparent benefit of her students.

Related to this unexpected success with structure is Andrea's willingness to support students in using the structures she provides to alternate ends. The "KWL" chart of one student had not been completed according to the design, a point rich in "complicated" assumptions that she could have stood on in refusing to accept it. Instead, her willingness to accord value to work that did not fit her expectations enabled the student to complete his assignment by using the KWL chart in an unexpected way. While it still seems to me that the way the tool was used is of less value than the way it was intended, two facts remain: that it *was* used, when it may not have been if only certain uses were accepted, and that it *did* support more coherent work, which may have been conducted according to logics that were not readily apparent in the artifact itself. In other words, there may have been systems at work here that are simply too complex to register on the instruments provided, according to the criteria stated. Inability to perceive structure does not necessarily mean that none is there; rather, it could mean that one's "complicated" categories simply do not serve to reveal its "complexity." A lesson of Andrea's practice is the value of providing ample structures to students, and then supporting them in their use - even when those uses may correspond more to obscure logics at the expense of explicitly stated ones.

Andrea works under very clear administrative expectations of what was to be accomplished, but was not given an explicit curricular grid with the expectation that it be used as dictated. I was surprised by how little day to day structure actually existed in her curriculum; it would be more accurate to state that she devised her own curriculum, with institutional support. Andrea seems to have created most of her curricular structures on her own, corresponding to apparently internal mandates about what they need to learn how to do (handle new words, summarize, create a thesis and support it, do research, read a novel). Her sense of how to proceed is iterative; she slows down and goes deeper and deeper based on her estimate of her kids' understanding. While I would have expected a "remedial" class to be more monitored, and afford less teacher autonomy, than one that was "on grade level," the opposite was true. This may also be a function of the peripheral nature of her course; I sense that since no one else has been able to bring these kids' success, maybe she has been given "carte blanche" to do what she will in the hopes that something else might work. Andrea's success has led to an initiation to teach larger, regular ninth grade classes next year, and she is reluctant to accept the responsibility, fearing that the practices which have served her so well in this setting would not translate well to larger, more regulated groups.

It bears mention how ephemeral and unpredictable is the integrity of the structures themselves. Structures do not only "scaffold" learning in a logical sense; rather, they also serve to comfort, to entice, to seduce, to trick students into doing more than they thought they could. As I imagine Andrea's student following his train of associations as he filled out his KWL chart, I am impressed by how his writing seems to be the word-trail of a curiosity that I can see begin to grow, an appetite I am watching becoming stronger as I read.

Langer and Applebee (1986) explicate a commonly-held understanding of "scaffolding" as the provision of developmentally and culturally appropriate supports to students that help them progress. "Teaching," according to Tharp and Gallimore (1988), "consists of assisting performance through the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). [It] can be said to occur when assistance is offered at points in the [zone] at which performance requires assistance" (p. 31). But what a different notion of "scaffolding" this is! Andrea's structures are more like Dumbo's feather than firm platforms: they are imbued with power they do not have, fetishized by teacher and student alike with the ability to facilitate student achievement (remember the paragraph pages). To "lay out in lavender" means to "show something in the best possible light;" it derives from the practice of strewing lavender or other strong smelling herbs near dead bodies to mask their smell. Perhaps structures sometimes serve to mask the rigor of the work students are asked to do, making palatable that which they might not embrace otherwise. When students and teachers hijack such structure from their intended aims they can ride them to "complex" understandings that belie their "complicated" intentions, "complex" understandings that may more authentically dovetail with actual experiences that can actually find their way into the hallways, the buses, and the actual lives of students.

Andrea's experience with structure stands in contrast to Suzanne's; both understand structure as a crucial aspect of helping their students expand their ability to work with language, but their different modes of practice seem to have different effects.

Suzanne is a slight, dark-haired woman with bags under her eyes; when I first meet her, she is exhausted. We sit at student desks in the middle of her classroom to talk; she frequently reaches to touch the desks of the students she is describing as she speaks, evoking

their presence even though they are absent. We are interrupted frequently by four electronic beeps of the P.A. followed by announcements and pages. The huge ventilation vent kicks in every ten minutes. Students wander in too, often working in the back corner of the room without acknowledging us. One wall of the room is dominated by a huge white board with columns of topics and work plans for the monthly newspaper she administers. There is no flexibility in length of paper or deadline schedule, and the week it takes for the publisher to turn the paper around means a week of "dead time" in coverage, "but they give us a deal on printing."

She has been at this high school for five and half years, and taught at other high schools and middle schools in North Carolina for nine years before that. She took two years off in the middle to do a masters degree in reading and literacy, which she says is "weird" among high school teachers because most people with her training work in elementary schools with students who are first learning to read. She notes, though, that most of her students are struggling readers, so her specific training is put to good use.

Suzanne is chair of the English department and teaches two newly-formed classes of about sixteen ninth graders who performed poorly on the state-mandated end of grade test in 8th grade. Suzanne notes in our first meeting that these students' needs should have been addressed and remediated earlier in their lives ("someone chose to pass them on to high school even though they couldn't do the work"), but regardless of past mistakes, it is Suzanne's task to prepare them to pass the end of grade tests upon retake so they can continue successfully through high school. She feels this pressure intensely.

Suzanne asks her students to do quite a bit of independent reading in class, and has them keep journals to write about the experience. She also notes that when she asks her

student to respond to the reading they are doing, the majority of the responses she receives are plot summaries, not personal reactions. She wonders how much of the lack of personal response to the reading is a vocabulary issue; conversation with them leads her to think they have a small store of words that they know, and so cannot understand much of the reading because they don't know what many of the words mean.

A central feature of Suzanne's response to this challenge has been to design a curriculum that "drills down" to focus on building basic understandings of words that will support their further growth. She has focused on Greek and Latin roots with the objectives of improving word attack skills and the ability to transfer word roots to different contexts. In one activity they often complete, she gives the students definitions and has them match the definition to the root. This activity is followed by a series of fill-in-the-blank sentences, accompanied by a word bank containing words derived from the roots. The objective is for the students to practice discerning the meanings of the words derived from the roots from the context of the sentences.

Suzanne notes that the context in the quiz prompts are deliberately overt, consisting essentially of definitions of the roots themselves. She is puzzled by the students' lack of success on this assignment, even after several weeks of working with it. When she initially asked them to do both parts of the assignment for several roots, they rebelled, saying it was "too much to expect," so she scaled back her expectation and asked them to complete only the first part, followed by the second part, and to only do the first three on a worksheet.

Suzanne feels that her students are making progress, but feels that they are moving too slowly, "they are only in the first leg of the trip." She notes that "while I see I am helping them, I can see there is no way they will be able to do the Standard Course of Study

objectives for English 1 next year. I think of them reading the *Odyssey, Romeo and Juliet*, with different sentence structures and inversions, let alone the Elizabethan vocabulary: no way. I can see them saying, "we had that class, wasn't that supposed to help us be able to so this?'" She shakes her head in despair. I suggest that she must be frustrated, doing so much work and using all her specialized skills to give them more structure to improve their reading, with so little apparently accomplished. She says that she started the year thinking, "if I just improve their reading comprehension and word attack skills we'll make big progress." But now she thinks that their problems are much more fundamental, and is considering retrenching her efforts in even more basic foundations, essentially taking steps backwards from where she thought she would start. She also wonders if her objectives may have been unreasonable, since "at this age no one can increase their reading level by a whole grade in just one year."

When her students are not succeeding in a task, Suzanne breaks that task into smaller and smaller bits. This impulse seems to be rooted in a faith that a "complicated" understanding of a task is adequate to make sense of how words work as systems of smaller parts. By "breaking down" a task into its discrete components, it is assumed, meaning will emerge as a composite of the meanings of those components. Mastery of the discrete steps can then be "built back up" into a well-functioning whole.

But Suzanne finds that her students become stymied by the smaller unit of work as well. Their capacity to work shrinks in proportion to the lesser expectation, with the result that the lesser expectation is still not met. The result is paralysis, as the ever-shrinking unit of analysis eventually loses its connection to the larger context of why it matters. A tightening spiral of stimulus and response eventually clamps down, ceasing progress as it regresses to

an infinitely tiny unit of measure and commensurate inability to engage. Total stasis and stagnation result. Especially difficult is that the work of "breaking down" into smaller bits represents immense additional effort on Suzanne's part, and the continuing failure of the class to meet the new expectation seems to mean her well-meaning work is wasted. Suzanne is wrung out and filled with despair, hopeless of ever getting them to "grade level."

I contrast Suzanne's class to Andrea's and am puzzled. Why do Andrea and Suzanne see such different results in their classes? Hearing these narratives against each other makes me question some dearly-held education-school truisms about enlightened pedagogy. If "scaffolding" should lead to students moving smoothly through their "zone of proximal development" into increasing mastery of a skill, shouldn't Suzanne's conclusions that the "ZPD" she judged her students to need was too advanced, and commensurate lowering of expectations, have resulted in improved performance? Likewise, if progressivist principles indicate that students should be given what they need, when they need it, as a natural consequence of the students' own understanding of the relevance of content to their experience, then shouldn't Andrea's intense frontloading of vocabulary and writing structure have overwhelmed and "shut down" her students? Some basic tenets are being troubled here, which invite a reconsideration of the nature of the structures students use to support their students' learning. How do students use their teacher's pedagogical structures?

A crucial difference between Andrea and Suzanne's practice is how they use the structures that they deploy. Andrea uses these structures as a heuristic, a way to help her students understand how to elicit meaning from a word or how to present their thoughts as organize, compelling arguments. They serve as scaffolds that support not just the achievement of a goal, but the incorporation of lived experience into making the achievement

of that goal meaningful, packed tight with all the "excess" relevance and meaning that might otherwise never make it into school. This use of structure supports students' being "in the stuff," because they understand how and where the "stuff" is in them; the relation of school "stuff" to their lives becomes clear, and their role in authentically engaging with it becomes possible. This use of structure stands in stark relief to the use of structure as the goal; the mere completion of the task at hand. Such engagement with structure requires no such investment; the task, and its structure, are remote from experience. They are only tasks to be completed.

This distinction helps reveal the tension between "enough and "too much" in their different approaches to vocabulary instruction. Suzanne strives to get her students to understand "enough": "enough" of the roots to complete "enough" of the test to pass. Her practice emphasizes sufficiency. The result of this approach is frustration, followed by slow, incremental progress. Andrea's vocabulary engagement, on the other hand, is about superfluity; while on the one hand her emphasis on reducing the meanings of new words and phrases to brief, straightforward definitions may seem reductive, in fact those definitions are densely constructed complexes of meaning that are worked out through protracted discussions with students about their denotations and connotations, their usages and contexts. The result of this work is that the terms are reduced to their essences, essences that maintain potency as evidenced by their usage. In contrast to Suzanne's evaluation, Andrea evaluates these words repeatedly, administering the same measure until all of her students have demonstrated complete mastery of the terms. Andrea seeks to develop in her students an "impulsive" understanding of new words, "one that they can really use." She takes overhearing a student using a word in daily speech as evidence that her approach – of

focusing on the "superfluities" of meaning that trace from a word and working them around until it has been reduced to an accessible, but richly accurate, meaning – has served to give her students useful understandings of those terms.

The core issue here is that language is a complex system, not a complicated one. When we read, we do not simply decode; rather, we make meaning through the interplay of what we decode with our own experiences as referents, all within a temporal flux that both accumulates meaning for future development and projects new meanings as new text is decoded. I empathize with Suzanne; I remember teaching my students to diagram sentences, then asking them to select sentences from their literature and diagram them, only to watch the logic of diagramming fail to account for the complexity of actual well-wrought prose. Similarly, Suzanne notes that when she encourages her students to use their new understandings of Latin roots to understand words they encounter while reading, they often come upon near-cognates and "false positives" that undermine their confidence in the utility of roots as kernels of meaning. The net result of such efforts is often that students doubt the value of what they have been taught – since it "didn't work" – and conclude that the underlying order of language is either non-existent or they are not smart enough to understand it. It is closer to the truth to say that they are poorly served by the understandings they have.

In our final meeting, Suzanne tells me that, after several weeks of practice, her students are beginning to show some limited progress in accomplishing the discrete tasks into which she has broken the use of word roots, but that the ability to engage in word attack as a coherent action remains out of reach, and that she sees almost no transfer of those skills they have learned to the actual reading she asks them to do. I wonder what the role is of "building

blocks" in learning to read well; certainly some elements must need to be in place in order to get some foothold in decoding in order to start the whole Iserian process.

Competent reading is better characterized by complexity than by complicatedness, but at what point in a reader's development does one model become more apt than the other? If there were a way for these students to both keep their eyes on the whole process of understanding words while still developing facility with the component parts they need to synthesize in order to accomplish it, this breakdown of meaning – and faith that there will ever *be* meaning - in text could be ameliorated. In his dizzying essay on ways that knowledge has been represented in literature, Baker (1995) cites Sherlock Holmes "comparing the brain in its untutored state to 'a little empty attic,' which should be properly stocked: 'a fool takes in all the lumber of every sort that he comes across, so that the knowledge which might be useful to him gets crowded out, or at best jumbled up with a lot of other things, so that he has a difficulty laying his hands upon it" (p. 212).

This image illuminates how we develop as readers and users of language. We "take in all the lumber of every sort" as a matter of both our living and our schooling, and to use language is to acknowledge the difficulty of "laying one's hands" upon what one needs to discern and express meaning. All of us, always, are in the process of constructing meaning from the jumble, and a teacher's work is to support her students both in knowing the value of the jumble and creating a useful index for accessing it. Such an index partakes of both "complicated" and "complex" structures in turn, acknowledging both the ways in which language is like lumber – predictable, stable, stackable - and the multivariate ways in which it definitely is not.

I confess that I longed to find evidence in these conversations of teachers persevering in the maintenance of "complex" relationships with their content despite a bureaucratic system that prized only those successes that showed up on their rationalized, "complicated" indices. In fact, in these teacher's experiences, administrative standards are concerned far less with what goes on in the daily life of the classroom than in what students are able to demonstrate having learned at year's end. Those same bureaucratic systems can be, and are, relaxed to support specific instances of student success, however they come to fruition. The onus of responsibility for discerning the "complicatedness" or "complexity" of given content continues to rest on the teacher: whether she conceives of the structures that inform her pedagogy as ends in themselves or heuristics deployed to support students in understanding the relevance of "on the grid" school matters to the "off the grid" realities of their lives. These decisions are also apparent in the decisions teachers make about the pedagogical persona they decide to present to their students.

CHAPTER VII

THE LIBERATING POWER OF CONSTRAINT: PERSONAE AND COMPLICITY

Teachers choose how to be in their classrooms; they choose the persona they enact before their students. That persona might be a collegial near-peer, or it might be a stern holder of high expectations, someone that students fear and want to work hard for. These two types of teacher practice are clearly marked in popular stories of school (the strict authoritarian of *The Paper Chase*, the benevolent, self-sacrificing companion of *Goodbye Mr. Chips*); each has its strength, as do the countless other performances of "teacher" that are worked out in practice.

Teachers' institutional power is interdigitated with both their pedagogical structures and their quest for their own pleasure; their identification as the school's functionaries is always present, whatever else they may also hope to be. It is the authority, ultimately, that lets them close the door to work alone with students. Their ability to practice is dependent upon their connection with the "grid" that accords them the authority to do so.

Turner (1969) frames "liminality" as a state of possibility. He describes the liminal space as a place where social conventions might be loosed in the name of learning deeper truths, truths that may leave the learner permanently changed and unable to resume the relations that seemed natural and commonsensical prior to the experience (coming-of-age rituals are an example). Kershaw (1999) notes that this "betwixt and between" place of

classroom practice might be better termed "liminoid," because of its non-compulsory nature; he further contradicts Turner in holding that "there is no necessity that we should conceive of the communal, or the collective, as implacably opposed to the private, or the individual; nor that the anonymous – or as recent theoretical fashion has it, the invisible – is inevitably exclusive of the distinctive, or visible" (p. 79). Liminoid space thus construed offers a conduit between private and public experience. The private transformative experience of a teacher's performed reading can become publicly transformative to his students. A teacher's performing of her own reading experience creates an opportunity for students to join her in the potential of the liminal space her performance has created, potential that unfetters them from their conventional understandings of reading to have new experiences and return, transformed, to their own private reading.

Liminoid space, then, is powerful space for public / private connections. But how a teacher chooses to function in this liminoid space of blurred boundaries may threaten her coherence as a representative of the institution itself, the authority vested in her that makes her a credible functionary of the school. Miller (2006) asserts that this role is the teacher's primary *raison d'etre*, and any other claims of intention or effect are strictly ancillary to this bedrock function of the power relations at work in the classroom.

> However tempting it may be to describe our work as teachers as being pursued in the interest of "liberation" or "consciousness raising" or "resistance," the truth is that this rhetoric's appeal is so attractive because it covers our more primary role as functionaries of the administration's educational arm. In the right setting, we can forget that we are the individuals vested with the responsibility for soliciting and assessing student work; we can imagine that the power has left the room…the students, however, never forget where they are, no matter how carefully we arrange the desks in the classroom, how casually we dress, how open we are to disagreement, how politely we respond to their journal entries, their papers, their portfolios. They don't forget; we often do (p. 130).

Karl is in his first year of teaching tenth and twelfth grade English at an upscale public high school in a university town. He is a gregarious, fast-talking man who looks younger than his thirty years. Karl did *Hamlet* in the early spring with his seniors. He's always been afraid of Shakespeare; it was the one C he got in English in college. He didn't realize he was picking the "hardest damn play, but someone else was doing *Macbeth*, so they were the only books available." From the very beginning of the *Hamlet* unit he has been forthcoming with his students regarding his ambivalence about Shakespeare, his own anxiety about understanding it, and his concern that, like him, they won't "get it." As we speak near the end of that unit, he finds that he has come to like the same complexity of Shakespeare that had initially turned him away, and that sharing his feelings with his students was a good decision. "I think it helped my teaching to tell them I was hesitant. I would not have done it with the first book of the year, but now I have a level of comfort and trust with my students and can confide to them, that, initially, I could not make the leap to "teacher" with Shakespeare. I do not have all the answers; I'm not the authority up there."

I note the difference between how he felt teaching at the start of the year and how he feels now and sketch two lines, one representing the curriculum and one the teacher, with arrows showing their development over the passing of time. These lines are close together; Karl notes that at the beginning of the year, the teacher, the book, and the curriculum are indistinguishable to the student, that the only thing the student is thinking about is "what he or she needs to do to get a good grade from THIS teacher, in THIS class, on THIS book". He calls this mode of working "doing school," and opines that his school has an inordinate number of students who excel at it, since "the goal of a college prep curriculum is to get good grades, and good grades are all about identifying the expectation and meeting it."
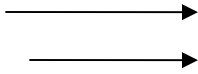
"But," Karl continues, "as you are in the process of reading the book as a teacher and coming in every day to talk to your students about it, you start to get an identity separate from the book – you are a reader of the book too, and you can talk about your own experience as a reader with your students, which creates a sort of space between you as a reader and the book, you as a reader and you as a teacher." We draw the second line so it diverges from the first; both lines now move parallel, on the same axis, but with a definite space in between them.
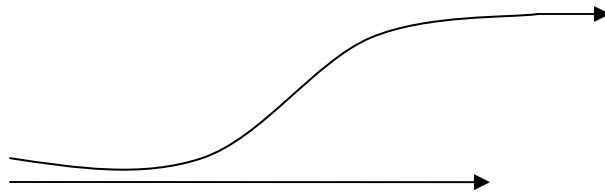
I wonder out loud if this position gives unique power to the teacher: instead of telling students the kind of experience they should be having, or just giving them the book and hoping they have an educative experience, in Karl's model the teacher shows students one kind of experience that might be had, a performance of one way of being in relation to a book. Karl nods. "Now the curriculum is down here and I am up here, looking down on the curriculum just like the students are; my reading experience is like another story that is happening. I am both teaching *Hamlet* and teaching a story of what it is like for me to read *Hamlet.* Until they know this story more, all they know about me is the curriculum. All they

want to know is what kind of grader are you? What do want? Do you want concepts or good punctuation?"

I ask if the students who are most able to understand the story of "Karl as reader" are also the ones who are good at "doing school." "Yes," he says, after a pause. "Maybe to be part of this you have to pass the 'prereq' of understanding the reading and keeping up. Lots of students tune out of the conversation along the way, and they can't do it; they'll probably get something out of class, but they won't be able to make the whole journey. Those are the ones bitching about how hard the final paper is. All they understand is that there is an expectation to write in support of a thesis, not how to come up with their *own* thesis. And if you have been in the stuff all along, then you are intrigued with the idea of coming up with your own question. If you haven't been – then, you can't." He opens his Folger paperback edition of *Hamlet* and shows me the full page of definitions and commentary on each left-hand page that complements the text on the right. "If you don't read that part too, you can't get into it. As a teacher I am reading all of it. I never did that as a student. And they learn that they need to read like that too, because I am."

Karl notes that at the beginning of the year the teacher and the book and the curriculum are all seen by the student as indistinguishable, a smooth face of school-ness presented to the student, whose first job is to figure out how to scale it – "how am I going to get a good grade from THIS teacher, in THIS class, on THIS book." But as his year progresses and he builds more of a relationship with his students, this mechanical and "complicated" view of how to succeed in his class becomes more "complex" as it expands to include the possibility of developing a personal and subjective relationship with the reading. Karl's persona serves to open this possibility by presenting a companion with whom to

identify as a reader, someone to emulate in the process of discovering one's own reading experience.

Karl enjoys a very comfortable rapport with his students; his youthful looks and his interest in popular music and sports sometimes make him feel – and seem – like one of his seniors. At Karl's school, each year the administration puts on a surprise one-day festival. The whole school shuts down, a band is hired, and the whole school has a party. This year, his students asked him for months when it would be - apparently appealing to his "cool teacher" persona to try to get the information out of him - but he wouldn't tell. In the mid-spring, Karl was talking to a group of students when a girl on the student council mentioned that "senior ditch day was going to be two days after Spring Fling," effectively confirming the date of the party and spilling the beans on when senior ditch day – a carefully guarded secret – was going to take place. Karl remembers the moment with a laugh. "She looked up and realized she had given away the senior ditch day to a teacher, and she was mortified – it was so cute. But then she said, 'it's not even like you're a teacher when you are standing here.'" Karl reflects, "I am an authority, but at the same time, I'm not."

The overlap in interests that is an element of his relationship with his students can sometimes be a challenge as well; his collegial relationship with students is not always comfortable or successful. This year, Karl read a short story with his students by Isabel Allende. The story featured a woman named "Beliza" who sells words. Inspired by this character, Karl assigned his students to write a paragraph about someone with great power over words. In the story, Beliza notes that the power of words come from their live performance, not their recordings. This distinction is a powerful one for Karl personally; he feels that live music is very different qualitatively from recordings, and that live performance

captures something essential in music that is usually lost in the studio. In order both to illustrate Beliza's point – and to share with students his own deeply-held convictions about the importance and power of live music performance – Karl turned to one of his personal passions, the music of the band Wilco. One day he played a recording of the studio version of a Wilco song. Then, for comparison, he showed a video of the band in a live performance of the same song. Karl notes that, personally, he is unfailingly moved by that filmed performance; it seems to capture precisely the ineffable power that live performance is uniquely able to convey. "Jeff Tweedy shows all this passion in the live performance that isn't in the studio version – it makes me tingle just to think about it," he remembers. He was certain that this stunningly apt comparison would have a similar affect on his students, and looked forward to the intimacy of sharing it with them and discussing their reactions.

However, the comparison "really flopped," says Karl. Their reaction, and his reaction to it, were complex, high-stakes moments for him. "First of all, they seemed to think it was weird for the teacher to bring such a thing in." He thought that this contemporary music would be quickly accessible to these students, and that perhaps the "hipness" of his musical taste would "win him some points" with the students. "In fact, that didn't happen. They did not like the music, and were unimpressed by the performance itself as well."

Karl reflects on the intensity of his reaction to their failure to respond the way he had anticipated. "It was really important to me. I saw the connections, but they didn't. I thought, 'This sucks!' They saw how important it is to me, and they saw that *I* saw the connections, but they didn't get it." He pauses to think. "It's not their fault. To them it's just some weird guy freaking out on stage. But me, I was kind of pissed – 'what don't you get? This is great!' I found myself unexpectedly accounting for my musical taste to my students. It was suddenly

personal. I was angry at them for not understanding that. I changed the subject and did something else for the rest of the period."

Karl is circumspect about the experience. "I guess even the horrible flop of it was still another step in them getting to know me better. Now at least they know I like weird guys screaming on stage, and you don't get a lot of that in school. And a few weeks later, a student told me that Wilco was coming to give a concert in town; because of that tip I was able to get a ticket before it sold out. She remembered it was important to me. That says something." Still, the experience stays with him. "It kind of hurt, actually. Because it was so important to me and I wanted them to get it, and they didn't."

When reading *Hamlet*, Karl is not only performing his interpretation, but also performing his processes of interpretation. His students are not only learning the meaning of *Hamlet*; they are engaged in the process of getting to the meaning of *Hamlet,* a process that Karl can model for them as a parallel story to the text. Karl works comfortably in this off the grid place, so comfortably that he brings in the Wilco performance as a sources of relevant experience from his off the grid world in order to show the authentic life of an off the grid reader. But it doesn't go the way he thought it would, and he suddenly feels vulnerable; rather than pursuing the possible educative moment, he shuts down, reverting to more traditional, on the grid processes. Why were these two experiences of Karl so different? What is going on here, and how can it illuminate the relationship between teacher's institutional role and her private reading experience?

The teachers with whom Atwell-Vasey (1998) worked find themselves in a similar situation. The relation between their role of teacher-as-reader and their actual reading

experience looms, and they struggle to reconcile the two. April, one of the teachers in her

study, reflects on the conflict.

> Some of what I do [in my practice] is because of my attitudes toward reading;
> some is in spite of it. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that
> conflicting reading selves have formed my practice. One is surely the
> rebellious, introverts, artistic child who created imaginary reading worlds
> safer than the dangerous theatre of human intercourse. The other is the adult
> that uses that solipsistic reading experience as a still-safe base from which to
> reach out to the world (p. 206).

Despite intensely rewarding personal reading experiences, how to bring those experiences

safely into her practice is unclear, since the students seem unable to engage with her as peers

in the journey that she found so satisfying.

> This difficult balancing act is complicated by the fact that most of the kids I
> teach are not ready to do either of these jobs with the required texts because
> they have such a hard time understanding them. …at any rate, my reading
> journal assignments attempt to improve their reading skills and force them to
> encounter the text at some personal level (p. 207).

Ultimately, April finds herself trying to use literature in ways that do not correspond to why

she initially wanted to teach literature.

> My own reading experience is no guide. I do not remember anything I read in
> school…I had either read the things already or I simply didn't do anything
> with them in any personal way…reading in school just wasn't reading, that's
> all. And maybe it shouldn't try to be – maybe it should just be the material
> from which we teach skills. The trouble with that is, it denies everything I
> believe about literature, everything I have formed myself around. So I am in a
> muddle and often feel as though I am preaching redemption to the mystified if
> not resentful unconverted (p. 208).

Karl seems to be working in the same area as April – working to reconcile his actual

reading experience with the one he performs for the benefit of his students, whose degree of

investment and personal attitude toward reading is unstable or unknown. Unlike April, he

takes the additional risk of bringing in the more authentic experience that April elides. Being

"off the grid" means being distant from school sanctioned reading experiences – the "

teaching skills" mode that April describes – and closer to the actual pleasure of reading that Bathes describes, which is harder to justify, more personal and selfish. If students don't like the reading, that's just about the reading. To have one's personal experience rejected is "closer to the bone."

When Tony Connor, my undergraduate poetry professor, spoke of "the liberating power of constraint," he was referring to those creative possibilities that paradoxically appear when choices are limited. Perhaps a similar phenomenon is at work here: when Karl is working "on the grid" of the English curriculum by discussing *Hamlet*, the stable "school-ness" of that text frees him to separate his persona from it and perform himself as its reader in a collegial relationship with his students. The text is so firmly anchored that it can hold him swinging quite wide of it. In contrast, when he engages a text from his authentic "off grid" life, student experience of the text is blurred with student experience of him. Finding himself divested of that authority that mandates students' respectful attention, he finds himself acutely aware of their authentic judgment of the value of what he is bring, and by extension, of him. Paradoxically, he takes most advantage of the authority vested in himself as teacher in the moments when he chooses to distance himself from it, moments enabled by the "grid"-ness of the text at hand. It is at the moment when he finds himself no longer tethered to the strength of the sanctioned text – the moments when his experience is also "liminal," and could go either way - that he "looks down" and realizes he is on his own. He senses his vulnerability; no longer empowered as teacher, he avoids the present pedagogical opportunity - to explore what examples from the students' lives might parallel his own, to debrief the experience - falters, and then retrenches in more traditional school work.

The idea that risky work is harder to do in the absence of structure is supported by

Karl's' thoughts about what it would be like to work in a more "structured" curriculum. Karl

wonders if he would have more opportunities to help his student get "in the stuff" if there

were a more overt institutional expectation represented in his class. In other words, if his

choices were that much more "constrained," would he find a commensurately greater degree

of "liberation"?

Karl's room shares a wall with the twelfth grade AP English classes; at the same time

that he is teaching twelfth grade "honors" English, the class in the next room is completing

the rigorous, externally-imposed AP curriculum. He senses that class has a very different

environment and expectation of focus, a different level of scholarship; he has gotten the

impression that the AP teacher resents the sometimes uncontrolled sounds of his class that

spill over into the hall, interrupting the diligence and anxiety that seems to characterize the

AP room. He characterizes the AP curriculum as "aggressive - hard, with a greater writing

and reading load. There is less time for tomfoolery," by which he means the video clips and

other ancillary materials he likes to bring in. I ask him if he thinks that teaching AP would

give him as much opportunity to perform himself-as-reader; his gut says probably not, since

there would be so many other expectations bearing down on his time. He has a friend who

teaches AP and whose approach to teaching is similar to Karl's, and he reports that he is able

to share more of his personal engagement with the books. "The potential is there," Karl says.

"But it would be harder – you have a big test at the end, with a week-by-week schedule to

follow. You have a curriculum, set outcome expectations." But he also speculates that maybe

when a curriculum's expectations are so much stronger and clearer, "you can you go further

with it, you can actually "goof on it" more. Maybe it would be intensely liberating, to teach kids who read all the stuff, all the time and can therefore take it to the next level."

But Karl also senses that with the greater command of "stuff" among AP students comes a rigid, "correct answer" orientation to how they work with it. Since they are preparing for a clearly anticipated assessment, they spend time practicing how to write the answers that will get good AP scores, not exploring the full relationship of the texts to their lives. "The focus would be on the correct answer. What success looks like would be different," he says; "They call it English, but really it's more like math."

Karl knows that being "in the stuff" is not simply a matter of having lots of lumber in your lumber room; students are only "in the stuff" when they encounter it in a liminoid environment of freedom and possibility that seeks to support their connecting it to their own experiences. While Karl would love to work with a group of students who routinely read the "left-hand pages" of the *Folger,* he acknowledges that his practice depends upon the opportunity for him to model his connections to the "stuff" so they can build their own. Being "in the stuff" is not just a matter of knowing things; it depends upon how those things have been linked to one's own intentionality, and that linking is related to the energies attributed to "in-between" places. A stricter curriculum expectation would limit his ability to take on the role of "reader" that has served him and his students so well. At the same time, the strictness of those expectations might free him to do more of the liminal work that is so powerful. It might frame his bringing-in of personal experience with more compulsory structure, this affording him more support in doing the sort of work he finds most powerful with his students.

All of this work, according to Miller, happens in the shadow of the teacher's real reason for being in the classroom: as representative of the institution's power. Teachers are complicit with that power; they derive their authority from it, and can't slip it even when they try to. It comes from what they choose to talk about and how they choose to talk about it. And it is when Karl distances himself from that authority that he notes its lack and rushes to re-embrace it.

"Complicity" is a powerful term for a teacher's relationship to the authority of her institutional affiliations. It captures the sense that the teacher's authority in the classroom derives from her having been authorized by the school to wield that authority, and that there is a commensurate obligation on the part of the teacher to act in support of the school's goals and values. As Miller noted, there exist relationships of power and fealty between teacher and school that can never be dissolved, however the teacher may wish to posit him or herself before students as being a free agent.

It is an ugly word. The Oxford English Dictionary notes that to be complicit is to be "involved knowingly or with passive compliance, often in something underhand, sinister, or illegal"; the state of complicity is "partnership in an evil action," simply enough. Venal implications lurk in the examples: "complicity" is something one is "charged with," and that the charge is something one labors to "clear oneself from." Passivity is its hallmark, as the British government is accused of being "supine and complicit" in an unfortunate matter to which it should have attended more conscientiously. They were caught napping; and their lack of vigilance imputes to them a share of the blame, regardless of their intentions. An "accomplice" - even an unknowing one - is lax and yielding, lacking sufficient vigilance or rigor, content to be exploited or defiled. "Complicity" also turns out to be an obsolete

synonym for "complexity," meaning "a state of being complex or involved"; it follows that which is straightforwardly understood and manipulable is good, healthy, and robust, while that which is resistant to manipulation or interpretation is evil, unhealthy, weak-willed. Emerson is quoted as describing the "complicity and delay incident to the several series of means they employ;" I assume this stouthearted New Englander would prefer a more straightforward, unitary "means," suspicious of motives that might drive anything else.

The contemporary resonances of "complicity" are also illustrative. In the shadow of the Second World War, complicity came to connote the barter of a long-term (often public) good in the name of short-term (often individual) gain through the accommodating the desires of a malevolent force. In the film *Sophie's Choice*, a mother is given the impossible task of deciding which of her children will go to the gas chambers. She is told by the harried guard that if she does not choose, he will simply take them both. In anguish she makes a split second decision: she gives up the girl to save the boy. In this light, complicity is having to do the unthinkable because you are given no other choice, one child "left behind" to purchase the life of another. Something is given, something as or more precious taken away: It is a "devil's bargain," what the conquered do to survive in the new world of their conquerors. In this light it implies self-preservation, not self-advancement. It is at once unforgivable and understandable; a grisly by-product of exploitation.

Mrs. Izzo, my ninth grade teacher, proscribed our notebook format down to the widths of margins and the color of our ink. In an environment beset by rules, Mrs. Izzo found pleasure in their full enforcement. The invocation of her authority to do so satisfied her, and me, with a masochistic satisfaction I derived from fulfilling the letter of her law. I remember the excruciatingly jouissant moment of first writing in that notebook, painstakingly keeping

my letters spaced, feeling her eye on me even in private, her approval as each line was correctly completed, her quick criticism with every mistake. It felt good to be so watched. It felt good to be so correct.

When I was teaching ninth grade English, I was a lot more like Karl than Mrs. Izzo: cool, accessible, conversational. But when it became clear in my second year of teaching that I was beginning to have "classroom management problems," I realized I needed to be able to be someone else as well. I looked around to identify the teacher I felt was the best authoritarian in the school, and decided to "pretend to be Kip" whenever my own methods of keeping order were failing. I adopted his imperious tone of veiled threat, his burning glare, even his college jock posture and body language. I became conversant with how to send someone to the office, and much more liberal with my assignment of students to lunch and after school study halls when they did not produce work on time (after all, Kip sent a raft load every day). When I went into my "Kip" and saw the submissive (and stunned) student reactions it caused, I felt mastery course through my veins. "Now I will be a great teacher," I thought. "Look what I have learned to do." I had figured out how to create the peace and predictability that marked the well-tempered classroom, and I was enlightened enough to know when it was called for. I could still practice with all the sloppy, noisy collaboration and blurry boundaries that felt right, but I knew where the pressure points were now; if I got fed up and had to take the class to its knees I could do so by "going into role". I saw no discontinuity between the two characters; it seemed that the second actually facilitated the first, as it installed a baseline of behavioral expectation, borne of a core fear that things could get ugly if I thought they needed to. If I felt my diplomacy-based control slipping, I

would send in the air strike. I would yell. I would give a time out, enforce a seating chart, give a punitive quiz when I want to humiliate them for not doing the reading.

I was complicit with the structures of school; even though I was ambivalent about authority, discipline, or rules, I still wanted what they could give me. I wanted to have the room quiet when I need it to be, to know that an insufferable class would end with the bell, to be able to send a disobedient kid to the office when I no longer wanted to deal with him. I could see myself making these changes in how I work when I did it. I would tell myself that I was working for the greater good of my students; that I was performing a role of disciplinarian and standard-keeper to give them structure, to make them feel safe because they knew where the boundaries are. I told myself that giving them high standards would mean that when they were done with my class they would feel like they really accomplished something. Discipline is good, I thought to myself. Structure is good. It helps everyone know their place.

Karl seeks to take advantage of his intimacy and accessibility with students by sharing with them those parts of his own life that are genuinely important to him; this gambit feels like an acceptable risk because of the similarities between him and his students in age, background, and temperament. But when it doesn't work – when the role he chooses to play leaves him feeling more isolated from them – Karl finds himself left with strong feelings of betrayal, of his students not keeping up their end of the bargain. He is circumspect in placing this experience in a larger context, but I discern the real disappointment and sense of loss that he feels.

When Karl and I felt vulnerable, we retrenched in the structure that is safe. We went there for security when our other intentions failed us. It is interesting to note that in the

confusion occasioned by Karl's vulnerability, he misses the pedagogical moment of building connections from the failure; the opportunity to draw out what music from his student's lives might exemplify the point he is describing, the chance to debrief why things aren't working and how to do them better next time. He essentially stop teaching because he needs their approbation and can't go on without it. There is tremendous vulnerability in stepping out from behind the authority and persona of the teacher role. This vulnerability reveals how the roles provided by the grid and the standard course of study protect the teacher. The experience exemplifies the truth of Miller's statement: that whoever else a teacher performs him or herself to be, he or she is most truly a teacher, and his ultimate authority and power is related to how closely he remains in the complicit relationship with that status that accords him power.

When teachers choose which persona to perform, they weigh many factors: their responsibilities to their students, to their institutions, and to themselves. Among these, it is the responsibility to the institution that can never be slipped. A teacher can lose track of the pedagogical choices that meet the needs of her students. Of course, a teacher can be "selfless," ignoring his or her satisfactions in the work. But a teacher who refuses to engage with either of these issues is still a teacher, and her institutional authority remains untroubled. The cultural power of a teacher invested in her by her institutional affiliation is often the exact power a teacher interested in building collegial relationships with students most wants to blur. But it always lurks as the bedrock truth of the teacher-student dynamic, the place where things will tend to go in the absence of concerted effort otherwise (and even then, it remains unspoken in the room). As such, it is maybe the hardest to theorize – how can we

look at the water we swim in? – while at the same time the most crucial, implicated as it is in

the choices teachers make in the name of both pedagogy and pleasure.

CHAPTER VIII

SYNTHESIS: "IN THE STUFF"

What we share with students is the human project, which no one can escape,
of transforming the stuff around us into a world we share through the action of
our intentionality (Grumet 1988, p. 124).

Maybe to be part of this you have to pass the 'prereq' of understanding the
reading and keeping up. Lots of students tune out of the conversation along
the way, and they can't do it; they'll probably get something out of class, but
they won't be able to make the whole journey. Those are the ones bitching
about how hard the final paper is. All they understand is that there is an
expectation to write in support of a thesis, not how to come up with their *own*
thesis. And if you have been in the stuff all along, then you are intrigued with
the idea of coming up with your own question. If you haven't been – then, you
can't (Karl).

What does it mean to "transform the stuff around us?" What does it mean to "be in

the stuff"? What are the implications of this research for policy and practice?

Andrea feels that her students are not "in the stuff;" she believes that's the reason that

many of her students fail in school. "The structures of school are such that if you can't do the

work – if you are not a good reader – you can't lay hold to anything that happens there; you

can't make it yours. Subsequently, you disappear – you slide right off the grid."

This is why Andrea asks her students to create mandalas. She gives her students a

blank page with a six-inch circle on it, split into quadrants, and asks them to create something

symmetrical and beautiful. She insists that they not overthink the project, but instead that

they bring to it "whatever they are going through right then -anything that fills the circle is an

authentic mandala." She makes a point not to tell them what to include, and posts them all anonymously so that their expression stands on its own, without judgment. Andrea herself exemplifies this focus on the everyday by making mandalas with her students; one of hers displays features an assemblage of fork and knife designs, indicative of her own desire for lunch at the time. Another student draws the General Lee from *Dukes of Hazzard;* there are representations of musical performers and other pop stars, as well as beautiful geometric abstractions. Their work is displayed anonymously in the class, representations of who her students were at the moment of their creation.

Mandalas do two things for Andrea's students. First, they give them a chance to focus who they are right now on an activity that they do in school, and their result is a school product that is undeniably theirs. It is something in school that they own. It puts them "in the stuff," "on the map;" it gives them a place. The other reason that Andrea asks her students to make mandalas is to practice the kind of investment they need in order to read, a quality of investment that includes both the focus required for decoding text and the willingness to bring their experiences and points of view to the meaning they make of the text. Mandala-making frames reading as a "focal practice," a "site within which personal and cultural interpretive work can be accomplished" (Sumara 2002, p. 7).

This research finds that the teaching of literature is as much a focal practice as is its reading. The quality of "being in the stuff" of teaching literature unfolds along three lines, each of which have implications for our conceptualization of how teachers work. This conceptualization indicates both the kind of opportunities that would support preservice and practicing teachers' development and some caveats that should inform the public's assessment of teacher practice.

First, to be aware of the role of one's pleasure in one's teaching is a way to be "in the stuff" of school. It is to acknowledge the sources of those pleasures when they arise, to seek them out and cultivate them by way of honoring one's own appetite for pleasure in teaching. Part of this pleasure is the acknowledgment of the intrinsic pleasure of "stuff": the distinctly embodied pleasure of working in a medium, of sensing its yield to your touch, of judging your next gesture based on the result of your last through the cycle of doing and undergoing that is artmaking (Dewey 1934). To interact this way with stuff is also to acknowledge oneself *as* stuff; it is to accept one's twinned state as body and mind, and to sometimes lead with the body; "to be, therefore to think" (Osmond 2006).

Second, to be "in the stuff" is to understand the structure of one's discipline as "stuff", to develop mastery of both its "complicated" and "complex" nature and develop the pedagogical content knowledge most appropriate for sharing that structure with one's students. Being "in the stuff" of reading and writing means remaining a student in thrall to it even while functioning as its teacher. Karl and Andrea both remain authentic students of their discipline, commenting on the evolution of the writing process and the unfolding of a writer's craft as it is read to their students. Invested engagement both affords them pleasure and affirms the worthiness of the subject as a focus of attention for their students, inspiring their engagement through example.

Finally, to be "in the stuff" is to acknowledge the ambivalent nature of one's role in the classroom, the play of authority, power, and pleasure that informs choices teachers make as to how they will perform themselves "in role." To understand that, as a teacher, one is "cut from the cloth" of the school, and that one's practice inevitably works in concert with that provenance, is to acknowledge that, ultimately, the teacher's "stuff" is not the same as the

student's. The intersection of the "stuff" of teacher pleasure, of disciplinary / textual structure, and of the performance of institutional power describes the site of the high school English teacher's practice.

Andrea, Suzanne, and Karl's experiences provide perspectives on how one's relationship "to the stuff" is wedded to one's relationship "to the grid." Andrea and Karl both describe experiences of investing their own "stuff" into the curriculum, of allowing their own authentic experiences to commingle with those of their students through the project – of reading, of writing- that they share with them. Suzanne describes a different process, one of divestment of her "stuff" from the task at hand; she and her student share the experience of manipulating remote entities into correct configurations, but as her investment seems limited to assessment of their correctness, theirs is commensurately limited to attempts to give the curriculum what it seems to want.

The mandala is a rich heuristic for the synthesis of that which comprises educational practice and that which "exceeds" it. It offers the opportunity for what "exceeds" school to come into school, in raw or sublimated form. The promise – or threat – of *jouissant* pleasure haunts the daily satisfactions of "life in the stuff" with which we content ourselves. As readers, we bring our *jouissant* appetites to bear upon our reading, promiscuously seeking that which satisfies us and leaving the rest. As teachers, we seek to satisfy ourselves in the personae we choose to perform for our students; our performances weigh the different demands of our institutional obligations and our pedagogical decisions against the mandate of our own pleasure.

Teachers need the explicit opportunity and permission to conceptualize their work as taking place within a "grid" of expectations and their instructional decisions as taking place

at the intersection of their own needs, those of their students, and those of their institutions. Opportunities to reflect upon one's relationship to the structures that delineate one's practice, and to deliberate on both the "off the grid" forces that come to bear and one's choices about how to work with them, need to be introduced as longitudinal reflective strands throughout preservice and inservice teacher education. Such reflection should take the form of a series of autobiographical narratives that are maintained and reviewed throughout a teacher's career. Such a strand would give teachers the opportunity to develop and maintain the metacognitive habit of mind that such work requires and to track – and learn from – the evolution of one's relationship to the "grid" of one's practice through the span of a career. A concurrent activity should be the opportunity for teachers to share these thoughts with colleagues, not in a normative sense of achieving consensus as to the "correct" approach to take to these issues but instead as an anodyne to regulative, official pronouncements regarding teacher practice. These would be a chance for the voices that challenge the "generalizing, hegemonic discourse" described by Grumet (1990) to find each other and affirm each other's perspectives, thus supporting the sort of authentic engagement and intrinsic satisfaction that improves teacher retention at a time when it is desperately needed. These conversations would provide the heuristic that allows the *jouissant* collegial communication Andrea alluded to, a "conversation where there are so many open doors, so much movement of language and understanding," "joyful," "assuming that everything said is valuable."

Likewise, the community's assessment of instruction needs to acknowledge and value the dialectical nature of teaching practice. A professor of mine once stated that the reason why educational reform is so difficult to implement is because everyone has been to school, so everyone knows what it should be like. Common sense ideas about the straightforward,

atheoretical nature of teaching are thereby cemented; since most of the population has witnessed at least twelve years of it, "everyone's an expert." Inviting teachers to articulate their practice in relation to the grid could be an important development in the self-consciousness of the profession, one that serves to "haunt" dominant impulses toward professionalization of teaching as a bid for legitimacy with an alternate narrative that speaks the actual complexity of the lived experience of teaching as it is, not as the "profession" we seek to credential it into. Such articulation of practice would raise consciousness of the challenges of teaching such as they are and build a cadre of teacher advocates able to articulate their ideas, values and needs as a rhetorical force in educational and political discourse. These articulations would represent a perseverance in performing "the fiction of telling" in both personal and public arenas; as teachers find their voices, they may also find exactly what it is they wish to say, and the words to represent it.

Many directions for research emerge from this work. It would be interesting to explore the specific conditions of the teachers involved in this research that permits them the support and indulgence of their administration in their cultivation of "off the grid" practice. How is that administrative disposition inflected by the differences in race and socioeconomic status among the students served by these three schools, and the relative scrutiny that present educational policy subsequently focuses upon the work of each school? My study explored the lived reality of teachers at the "ends" of the spectra of student age and student ability (remedial 9th grade readers and 12th grade honors students); how does the experience of teachers at the "edges" of those grids apply to that of those in the "middle"? Gender also invites further exploration; how do male and female teacher "roles" – especially as they articulate with other dualities ("Rule of the Father" / maternal nurturance) – impact both the

ability to work "off the grid" and the success teachers have in that work? Finally, the "nontraditional" backgrounds of each of these teachers (Suzanne's specialized literacy work, Karl's work in the private sector, Alice's decades in prisons and community colleges) raises crucial questions about the suitability of preservice training to foster metacognitive awareness of the "grid" and its issues. Is it possible to develop these dispositions within the heavily-monitored milieu of No Child Left Behind? How can these matters be translated into the normative agendas of preservice training without losing the hermeneutic attitude that informed this inquiry? If metacognitive reflection upon the grid becomes another educational competency to be mastered, has it ceased to be – recalling Heidegger – a "concernful dealing with the world" and been reduced to merely another "intellectual representation"? How can an engagement with issues this lively be prevented from devolution into normative descriptions of "teacher thinking"? These are some of the directions opened by this study for fruitful exploration.

When Grumet (1988) notes the origin of the word *pedagogy,* she elucidates the terrain that this study has sought to map.

> Like the *paidagogos*, the Greek slave who used to escort his young charge on the walk from home to school, we too pass the children from our kitchens, still sleep-creased and milk-mustached, through the doors of the public institution. We pass them from domesticity to public politics, from reproduction to production, from private life to public life…as a teacher, and a teacher of teachers, a parent, and a woman, I seek a process to transform this passage to another world to a middle place, neither here nor there, grasping both ends of the passage and pulling them together into a knot that refuses their oppositions, dualisms, exclusions, and sacrifices (p. 164).

The teacher who seeks to maximize the liminal potential of this "middle place" evolves from pedagogue into extraordinary *paidagogos*. She walks the path with her charges, structuring their experience of the trip they pass through together such that it is transformed

110

from a task fulfilled into a life-infused process of understanding one's own life, with all its attendant pleasures and richnesses intact.

My characterization of work "in the stuff" of school and recommendations for the changes it suggests, has exceeded commonsense expectations of what school looks like and what teachers should do. But inasmuch as they seek to authentically engage the daunting task that is teaching, these recommendations are efforts that meet complexity with complexity. To teach is an immensely complex project; no less than "to squeeze the universe into a ball, to roll it toward some overwhelming question" (Eliot 1917). This work honors the complex, pleasurable, and savvy practice of the teachers who collaborated in this research and celebrates their daily successes in the "potential spaces" of school.

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