an American soldier in World War II who, mortally wounded, expires in his French mistress's arms in a wine cellar somewhere under Paris. She could tell he was dead when she noticed his "cadaveric lividity." I'd looked it up.

That same year I delivered an address on the subject of "character" at the National Honor Society induction assembly. No one understood a word of it, myself included. It beat me and everybody else. But I thought it was all the more powerful for being impenetrable. It was as deep as I was. And I was so deep, all I could do was sort of stand back in awe of my own mind, like a tourist at the edge of the Grand Canyon.

Senior year of college, I wrote something for the yearbook (I'd been invited to reminisce about my college experience) in which I managed to flatter outrageously and without shame every one of my favorite professors, my composition instructor, Dr. Macksey, in particular. I was desperate for his respect, his approbation. If he didn't like my writing (he said my writing lacked "facility"—and the judgment still hurts "like a razor's wounding edge"), then I would make him like *me*. My writing and myself were one and the same, after all.

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THE TRINITY TURNED WHOLLY: A TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR ADULTHOOD

Carmen Cramer

We have over and over read the same English papers even though the assignment was an open topic: abortion is wrong (or right); capital punishment is wrong (or right); legalizing marijuana is wrong (or right). This is a bit of an exaggeration, but the empty quality of what we take home to read after a couple of weeks of "process" teaching frustrates even the most dedicated teacher and numbs us to the potential energy in student writing.

James Kinneavy gave us a triangle to describe communication that rivals Aristotle's invention, structure, and style in its breadth of application (18-40). Kinneavy is a rhetorician whose theories teach us how to write and speak well. His triangle also transmutes into a structure for explaining the emptiness of student essays; it is an explanation that holds the simplicity of rightness. His diagram points out that the interplay of who the speaker is, with who the listener is, with what the subject is elicits a particular style. If any one of the three points on the triangle changes, for instance if the listener changes from father to mother, the other two change subtly, causing an automatic change in style.

The composition classroom has a deadly effect on style because of the listener. To a student, a teacher is not a listener. The teacher may be personable, even opinionated, but there is a non-human quality to the teacher. The teacher is a function rather than a person; the teacher gives grades.

With no listener, a communication system collapses. Having no listener is different from being one's own listener; journal writing—look at Anais Nin's—can be powerful, primarily because of the listener, who happens to be the speaker. With "teacher" stuck in the role of listener, the student has no sense of audience.

With no sense of audience, the subject that the speaker chooses, or the approach to that subject, matters very little (Washington 219). I label the third point of the triangle "subject" in order to avoid "purpose" which might imply that a speaker says things "for" a listener, rather than "to" a listener. And, essentially, subject evaporates when the listener evaporates. Why say anything at all to no one? One emptiness begets another. This applies to communication in both the writing and the speaking modes.

Supposedly, the audience for this article is full of people interested in teaching English, both writing and reading as well as thinking. Transactional Analysis, a psychological fad whose time is faded, may not seem to have much to do with what you are interested in. TA asserts that inside each of us are three personalities, a child, a parent, and an adult. TA, taken outside of a person, applied onto people who are communicating, makes sense. And when TA overlays Kinneavy's triangle, it explains a lot of the interaction between the speaker and the listener, especially when the listener provides only a negation of audience.

We all have experienced that uneasy moment when during a conversation, often in the middle of one of our most powerful sentences, the host of the cocktail party turns away from us to speak to someone else. The listener disappears; so does the subject, swallowed in embarrassment usually. The feeling within us at those moments explains the problem in the papers of our students. When listener and subject are empty elements, so is the speaker. With no one to speak to causing nothing to say, the speaker becomes the worst sort of hollow spot, the sort where something should exist. The triangle implodes. Needless to say, there is nothing from which to create style.

There are various techniques for an English teacher to use in an attempt to overcome this empty audience phenomenon. Letters to a specific audience are a possibility. But the problem of emptiness in the writing that comes out of a composition classroom runs deep. Altered assignments, or harangues for that matter, only touch the surface without affecting the source. The source of emptiness flows out of the childhood of our student writers and their communication patterns. The source of student emptiness is out of the reach of a teacher, almost. Teachers with broad interpretations of their discipline can reach it, interpretations that include people and everyday life and their own private lives and love and sex—things like that as well as subject matter.

Way back when, when we are infants, we are smart. We are smart enough within a few months to realize that if that big per-

son holding the bottle becomes so irritated as to go away for good, we are in trouble (Sanford 39). The survival tactics of infants are highly susceptible to reinforcement. We learn quickly that a fearful scream or a smile draws that big person closer. For us to live, that person has to like us. So we learn to please, and that learning continues as we acquire language.

Pleasing a parent is what a child has to do. Learning to please is typical learning in childhood; most likely, it is good learning. Pleasing requires all types of skills: anticipation, intuitive analysis of another's thoughts and desires, the reading of non-verbal cues. These skills play worthy roles in a lifetime of communication.

Of course, we do not always try to please parents when we are young. We get mad at having to be dependent on parents, at having to say what they want to hear instead of what we want to say, so sometimes we break loose angrily with our own thoughts and desires. Very rarely do we get our way, however, with our tantrums. Parents learn quickly not to listen. Our voice and our anger, neither is of real importance because they are from a child. Parents save their emotions and their energies by not listening. Even Dr. Spock advises parents not to listen, thereby collapsing the communication triangle. He calls it refusing to give positive reinforcement to anger or to whining.

In essence, parents refuse to acknowledge our existence when we reveal our true thoughts and reactions; we feel as if they let us die – for an instant – when they refuse to accept our words or desires. We are not heard. We are spanked, or told "No," or yelled at. Crafty children learn to sidle up to difficult subjects, almost apologizing for saying something that is not pleasing. Some get louder, wanting to be heard. Other children learn to keep silent on those subjects.

The parents are the parents, after all. They have size and power, they have generations of models, they have the need to continue civilization, as well as their own sanity, on their side in the battle for who listens and who speaks and about what (Sanford 40; 42). But parents help establish a pattern for a child in which she assumes she must please or else not be heard; it is a communication pattern which defines childhood, a communication pattern that the smartest children learn best and earliest. The pattern establishes that it is safe, i.e., right, to please an authority figure. It correlates that it is dangerous, i.e., wrong, to speak to an authority figure.

To please, a child fuses his "self" with his parents'; this is the way he acculturates (Haimowitz 35). However, without a "self" of his own, he learns emptiness in communication early on, and the triangle is no triangle. He knows from experience that "speaking himself" does not please (Corder 19). Only speaking what the big person thinks, what the big person wants, what the big person knows to be appropriate, is safe. So the speaker is silent, acting only as a mirror to the listener, who would not really listen anyway if something from the self were said. But if the big person is not pleased, survival seems threatened and he cannot allow that.

Then children begin to age; the smartest ones come to college, and to English classes, just at the age when they are going through another angry stage. They want to be who they are and say what they have to say, instead of acting as the pleasing child. However, the child has to wait for adult status that comes from having a good job or from having a family – these are things which are being deferred until later and later in life. It was not so long ago that 18 was the age of responsibility; now the tradition of college has pushed the age to 22 or older if graduate school is part of the scenario.

The extended childhood gives people more practice at their communicative pattern of pleasing, more practice at being empty, because they have many extra years during which they are in subordinate and childlike positions to parent-surrogates, to authorities. They also have many chances to get angry at an authority for their emptiness, as well as guilty and apologetic for being unpleasing to that authority who has command of their survival. This is how they, unfortunately, develop the idea that they must "accommodate" an audience, rather than speak clearly to a specific audience (Park 249). The move off to college is one instance of many when children are in a double bind of wanting to be themselves and of wanting to be pleasing enough to survive.

Of course, in college, survival is metaphorical, concerning grades and scholarships, recommendations and skills, instead of the literal survival of food and shelter. But the pattern holds: it is wrong to speak to that big person. By college time, "speak" is also metaphorical; a student speaks and writes. However, she does not "speak herself" out loud; her very essence remains quiet; perhaps she refuses to know herself because she wants only to say pleasing things in her English class essays.

This communicative pattern in a student is natural; its duration is not (Crusius 121). Initiation rituals in some countries break the pattern, at least for a young male, announcing to adults that now they must listen to him; he is not a child. The youth learns through such a ritual that he will no longer die if he speaks himself, instead of speaking pleasingly. (He may find out that he still pleases some listeners when he speaks himself.) But in our culture the pattern is not formally broken. In fact, it is reinforced throughout the structures of our culture. We have innumerable institutions which reflect the child/parent structure, beginning with one of the most influential: our religions. No matter who we are or what we want, we must speak and act the way that God the Father wants or we will die. That is Christianity, putting primal survival onto the communication pattern of submission and silence, of repeating back "right" and safe ideas to the parent, of pleasing. Death, quite literally, is the punishment of not pleasing.

The pattern continues in the business place, with the boss/employee structure. The "yes man" is a prototype who exemplifies empty speech, speech which communicates the listener's world rather than the speaker's world, in order that the speaker can survive within the subordinate and dependent structure of the employee (Tingle 344). The employer listens to nothing unless it is pleasing; she need not listen. If she were not pleased by something he said, her means of not listening may be his termination, "termination," a word very like "death." He has no difficulty confusing survival with secure employment, even though he will not die, nor lose his job most likely, if he speaks himself.

The traditional husband/wife structure is the same. The wife may be angry, may manipulate to get her way, but always ends up feeling guilty or apologetic if she says her own mind too clearly, because she envisions that her survival depends upon keeping her husband pleased with her, pleased enough that he does not go away – a pure reflection of the child who stays selfless and empty, rhetorically, in order to keep Mama and Daddy from running out (Sanford 49).

Consider this example. The song comes on the radio, with the lyrics, "I'll die without you." The hot romance between any two people causes each to relate to such a line. He is Darren; she is Suzanne. He beleives words that please Suzanne will keep her near to him. Darren speaks what she wants to hear because he is

a sensitive and caring man; he knows what makes her happy. But he hides his truest reactions from her, afraid that she will "know" about him, that she may not like him, that she may leave. Darren will die if Suzanne leaves. At least, he believes this. However, Darren gets frustrated from hiding himself and bursts into anger at Suzanne over the cost of the second glass of wine that she orders at Antoine's during their year-together anniversary.

Darren is repeating a communicative pattern he learned years ago. He approaches the relationship as if he were a child rather than as an adult who will continue to live when he exposes himself, when he speaks himself to another, even if that other person does not like what she sees and hears, even if she goes away. Such consequences do not, in reality of the adult world, threaten a person as much as does a person's own refusal to acknowledge and express his or her identity. That is self-negation. However, that is a lesson that structures in our society do not teach well.

Suzanne is part of one such structure. She too learned the parent/child communication pattern when she was small; she too has not out-learned it (Haimowitz 27). When she hears Darren speak to her in a pleasing way, it pleases her. However, she also knows that it is empty speech. She gets used to Darren as an empty speaker and as an empty being who has never shown her anything of his true nature, so she stops listening to him. She takes on the parent role in the communication pattern. And there they are, reinforcing one another – Suzanne not listening because Darren has nothing to say; Darren not saying anything because Suzanne does not listen. Chicken; egg.

Darren can just as easily be a student, and Suzanne the teacher. Each is empty and the communication triangle collapses. No matter how apologetic Darren becomes for his angry outburst, Suzanne listens less, and he becomes more silent about his true identity. The pattern is not one that breaks itself from mere duration. After all, Darren and Suzanne are past puberty already. Still, she only knows how to communicate with the "him" that is what she has wanted to hear. He still only gives out empty speech. Actually, Darren is dead, rhetorically at least, long before any imagined reaction from Suzanne occurs (Laib 580).

Understand that "survival" and "desire" are different. Darren saying to Suzanne that he needs her is expressing his desire clearly; Darren saying to his lover Suzanne that she must never leave him is demanding her response with his survival attached to it. She deserves to know his desires; she also deserves to be able to formulate her own response, to be able to respond as an adult instead of as a responsible or guilty or burdened parent.

These scenarios picture a pervasive rhetorical structure in our society. In communication between two people when one's survival depends on the other's pleasure, neither speaks as an adult (Sanford 39). Having never broken the well-learned rhetorical pattern between parent and child, any two people revert to that pattern when dependence on the response of the other is the point of the communication. However, the point of adult communication is to speak oneself. Others' response to that communication is just the others' response; no survival is attached to it.

Basically, the teacher/student relationship repeats the structure again. To be safe, students say nothing. They fill up pages and pages of paper to fulfil assignments, but they say nothing, avoiding the risk of death, in this case academic death, because a teacher does not like what they say, who they are. Some of them believe that they are saying something; they have performed the empty game for so long that they are completely out of touch with what they do want to say, with who they actually are.

Students learn easily the difference among first, second, and third person pronoun usage when these are attached to the corners of Kinneavy's communication structure; it is, after all, an easy concept. More difficult is clear and full "self" communication. Aristotle's theory of invention helps with this; but more important is students' grasp of the triangle in approaching the more difficult concept of adulthood. In order for them to communicate with vigor – as adults – they must break the parent/child rhetorical pattern in which the speaker's survival depends on the listener's response. Breaking the pattern takes some doing, but it is necessary for clear speech in any situation.

This version of Transactional Analysis gets down to basic Rhetoric, so simply and clearly exemplified by Kinneavy's triangle. A person has no life, no identity in the world or in self, if self is not known and spoken. With no listener, the speaker reverts to reflecting the emptiness before her. This is true even if the speaker only imagines that no one listens. That emptiness is the image of death.

The survival that taints a communication pattern reflects a speaker's dependency on the listener which is out of proportion; it is a subordinate/authority relationship we all know (Sanford 58). It is a relationship that breeds empty rhetoric, if it goes untutored, and we see it clearly in the English classroom. The teacher becomes the parent; the student is the child who feels absolute survival twined into the response he receives from the teacher. Whether the teacher wants to listen or not, the dependent role the student feels will elicit rhetoric that the student thinks will please. Usually that rhetoric is an attempt to say back to the teacher things heard in class, "regurgitation." Or the student writes opinions that supposedly fit her assessment of the teacher's view; generally the student assumes that the teacher, the authority, has the same views as her parents (James 35). It is not even a consideration to analyze her own views for presentation to the teacher, although the assignment is "Explain your point of view about __________."

"I got a 'C'?" the student says. "I must not have understood what you wanted." The student did not speak himself; the student may not even know himself well enough to enunciate that entity; the student may not have an inkling that anyone could want to hear from that "self" or that anyone could hear the difference between himself and emptiness (Sanford 50). The student may not know of the option of adulthood, and will never speak from self.

This of course puts the teacher in a heck of a position. Years of encouraging students to "say" something when they write produce only more nicely written papers about abortion and capital punishment and marijuana. If the teacher wants to listen at one point in his career, this level of frustration about continued empty rhetoric can lead him to statements along the line of, "How can they write? They don't even think." Even the best teacher may stop trying to listen, may revert to making sure that the paragraphs have topic sentences.

So the question is how to stop empty rhetoric in the classroom situation. No, maybe the question is how to get rid of situations that elicit the empty rhetoric response. No, it seems too big a proposition to remove from society or even from an English class all remnants of authority. Perhaps we could change the way parents raise their children? Or maybe people need to learn that dependence does not mean survival; that they will not die if they know themselves and speak themselves? But death is a large case to test. I am not sure anyone wuld take the risk of finding out

whether she might die, literally, if she gets a "D" in English; what will her mother say? Worse, what if he loses his job? Surely that is death by starvation.

The best cure for the emptiness of the parent/child rhetoric which collapses Kinneavy's communication triangle sems as difficult as facing starvation. It is for the child at an appropriate age to learn with the parent an alternate structure of communication. The appropriate age may be a person's present age, whether it is 42 or 18, but any age will do at which a person wants to feel adult and has not yet broken the old communication habits with parents.

"Habit" is the correct word, for a parent/child communication structure with its collapsed Kinneavean triangle is something long practiced. You can probably remember saying, "They won't ever change," about your parents after they implied you do not know how to raise your children well – or some other such example. There is a way a parent can intonate a phrase that pushes a button in the over-aged child starting off a tape-recorded response; over-aged children also push buttons in parents. These buttons are bronzed with age and unrealized reverence. To disconnect them is as difficult as breaking a smoking habit. But they must be disconnected at the source, with parents, before the buttons are inaccessible in other authority situations, including the student/teacher situation.

It does not matter who begins the process of breaking the empty rhetoric habit, the parent or the child. Because of the workings of the communication triangle, every action has an equal reaction. If the child begins the process, she has three jobs to accomplish in establishing a new adult communication system (Sanford 44; 50): first she must find out what she thinks and what she wants; then she must find sentences to announce these thoughts and wants that are merely declarative, without anger, without assertiveness or apology, without persuasion or request for response, without defensiveness; finally, the child must practice saying these statements to the parent.

In other words, the child must learn to speak himself to the parent no matter what the parent's response is. Survival has to be eliminated from the structure (Jongeward 202). The parent may disagree, may leave, may argue or deny, but the child must understand that those responses are the parent's choice, and have no effect on the declarative statement itself. Most importantly, those responses may alter, but do not eliminate, terminate, kill, or obliterate, the child's life.

These three tasks may seem far removed from the purview of college English teachers of composition and literature. But who else is able to introduce an 18 year old to systems of communication? She must learn that communication is difficult but possible, that each of the three tasks is difficult but possible. We know that the first requires a person to know herself, to get in touch with her inner voice. Such a task is made easier with a quiet time and place, so that all the other voices of conscience can be separated out from one's inner voice. To make it concrete, she can place her right palm on her solar plexus and ask out loud, "What do you want?" More concrete is, "What do you want to do?" or more still is, "What do you want to do for the next two hours?" The person unpracticed in clear communication and clear self-knowledge may have to ask these questions ten or twenty times in a row before she hears an answer that rings with the tone of the inner voice that represents self. Can you imagine yourself making such an assignment? Criticizing and pushing until you help a student hear the difference between tones of emptiness and tones of self?

It is a good thing for them to begin with such concrete questions because they help to assure that the thoughts and wants that surface are not manipulative. Sometimes a red herring creeps into an answer, saying, "I want my mother not to call me every day." This is not declarative, but manipulative, stating a "want" for someone else instead of for self. Self-knowledge, self-control, and self-speaking cause that red herring to transform into "I want to unplug my phone." Specificity, declaration or judicial speech, these are the discipline of our field.

It is then a short turn to accomplish the second job of the process: finding sentences to speak oneself to an audience. The "want" above is a clear, declarative sentence that is appropriate to speak to the parental audience (contrasting with speech "for" the parental audience). Also clear are, "I am going to unplug my phone," and "I have unplugged my phone." In these statements, there is no accusation, no defense, no need for a response from anyone. There is only a verbalization of self, involving no one else. This may be the first clear contact a person has with self (Orwell 129; Moffett 233). If so, the more concrete and time-specific it is, the better. Abstractions can come later. The "first" nature of such a declarative statement may apply to a parent who is attempting to break a habit as well as to a child. It makes no difference. As soon as the sentence is polished to self-perfection, the person needs to say it (Moffett 234). Aloud. Several times. Perhaps he should even write it as he says it. It will feel new on his tongue at first, but like scotch, it will begin to taste good after awhile.

Practice in writing and speaking these things fits a workshop situation. "Imaging," or what used to be called imagining or fantasizing, along with the speaking of the sentence, softens the blow of the third step. If a speaker can imagine the situation where she says this sentence, visualizing the response of the listener, somehow she will feel more prepared (Moffett 243). Worse case analysis: the listener screams hysterically from implication of the statement, then says that the speaker is worthless and degenerate and has no capacity for love, and then says good-bye. Best case analysis: the listener hears the statement, and then asks why, in a tone of voice that offers no judgement but merely interest; in other words, the listener hears and without ulterior motive wants to know more about this "self" that is speaking.

It is time. The "child" must do it. He must start to practice speaking himself. It is best to do it quickly, without a lot of preliminary conversation. Saying a statement of self in a letter or on the phone is watering down the effect of the practice, but these are alternatives for first-timers. Remember Celie's letters to God in *The Color Purple*? Often, the learning is accelerated if the first practice carries little risk of the worst-case analysis occurring. The speaker may want to change the subject or leave after announcing his statement. Some people, however, learn fastest when immersed completely, finding out the worst early on; such people should stand still and quiet after saying the statement to let the blows fall. The purpose of this practice, again, is to show the speaker that he is not dependent for his survival upon a listener's response to him.

Probably, the response from the parent will be silence rather than worst- or best-case analysis, silence from confusion in the midst of hearing for the first time tones of truth, or silence because that is all that is called for after a statement. The Kinneavean by-product of this communication is that the listener may begin listening, because there is a "self" there to hear. Eventually, he may respond with statements of his true self, setting up the situation for a genuine, survival-free, conversation between two adults (Haimowitz 25).

No matter what the response, the speaker takes one giant step toward freeing herself from the child/parent communication structure when she completes the three stage process. Then she has to do the whole thing over again. And then again. Many times—until the habit is broken, until the buttons are too rusty to be pushed. Only then will adult communication be an accessible alternative in other authority situations, such as in a romance or marriage, such as in a job, or in the English classroom when a student has to write an essay.

If a student realizes that he is stuck in a rhetorical pattern of communication that is structured on the parent/child pattern, and if his parents are dead, he has a problem. How can he return to the source of the habit to break the pattern? This question serves for others who have outlived their parents and who never profaned the child/parent relationship with statements of self, anyone: a husband or employee, a person who quakes childishly before bankers and judges, or a shopper who buys something without wanting it because the sales clerk has been so patient. Simply, he can find a surrogate on whom to practice or he can practice on his parents in his imagination, perhaps in writing (James 96).

Here I have been talking about students, couching almost everything I say in terms of students and teachers, because I know my audience. These ideas about speaking self in order to overcome emptiness are valid in the student/teacher relationship. However, these ideas apply to us as well as to our students. In our lives, we are often caught in child-like communication; sometimes we compensate by offering parent communication in a few spheres of our lives, perhaps in the classroom, perhaps in the family, perhaps with our colleagues—wherever. Ultimately, to teach writing, in the form of composition or of literature, we have to know ourselves and communicate ourselves as well as we expect others to know and communicate. We have to be adult. That means speaking to an audience instead of for an audience. That means speaking the truth without apology, without manipulation, without survival or demand or anger.

Once we feel the tangible difference between speaking in a safe and appropriate manner and speaking in an adult, authentic manner, we will know the ineffable. Also, we will know more about listening. Then we will lead our students to achieving true communication in which the three corners of Kinneavy's triangle are intact. Every assignment will lead them there, if they are ready to be led. We will teach the essential elements of communicating and the workings of communication patterns. A journal assignment will lead students somewhere important. We will be able to enunciate for our students when they have tapped their own truth and said it badly, and when they have avoided their own truth although they have said it well. Then we will be the authority who does not have to like students for them to feel comfortable about their own survival; nor will they have to like us. We will offer to students, by our example and by our teaching, an opportunity to know an alternative to the parent/child communication system that breeds empty rhetoric.

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ENGAGEMENTS: TEACHING AND LEARNING

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"Some luck lies in not getting what you thought you wanted but getting what you have, which once you have it you may be smart enough to see is what you would have wanted had you known."
Garrison Keillor, *Lake Woebegon Days*

"Anything processed by the mind is fiction."
Paul Fussell in a lecture at the
University of Rhode Island,
Winter 1979

I. Fall, 1969

On a Monday morning at nine o'clock I stride into my first freshman composition class as a college teacher. To this task I come prepared by three years of graduate study, trained to fathom the depths of Melville's art and to discern Hawthorne's multiple vision of reality. My graduate education has also strongly influenced my attitude of what constitutes a college teacher. One must be formal, one must be rigid, one must, above all, have "standards." But that Monday morning as I stand there facing a sea of black faces, the sons and daughters of sharecroppers from rural Virginia, the best I can do is to call the roll, addressing people as either Miss or Mister. I realize that their needs are much more basic than are my concerns about the intricacies of literary form.

The first assignment, a response to a print of Andrew Wyeth's "Spring Sun," produces the following paragraph by Rosemary Adams.

> Experession never showed so wonderful before. Experession never so beautiful. One man may be he has trouble,