

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Education for Critical Consciousness*. Trans. and Ed. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Seabury, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Seabury, 1970.
- Gross, Bertram. *Friendly Fascism: The New Face of Power in America*. New York: M. Evans, 1980.
- Hashimoto, Irvin. "Structured Heuristic Procedures: Their Limitations." *CCC* 36 (1985): 73-81.
- Irmsher, William. *The Holt Guide to English*. Second Edition. New York: Holt, 1972.
- Keith, Phillip M. "Burke for the Composition Class." *CCC* 28 (1976): 350-54.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Burkeian Invention, from Pentad to Dialectic." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 9 (1979): 137-41.
- Kneupper, Charles W. "Dramatistic Invention: The Pentad as a Heuristic Procedure." *RSQ* 9 (1979): 130-136.
- Lentricchia, Frank. *Criticism and Social Change*. U of Chicago P, 1983.
- Luebbering, Ken. "Literacy, Power, and Freshman Composition." *The Writing Instructor* 4 (1985): 71-79.
- Rose, Mike. "The Language of Exclusion." *CE* 47 (1985): 341-59.
- Shor, Ira. *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life*. Boston: South End, 1980.
- Young, Richard. "Arts, Crafts, Gifts and Knacks: Some Disharmonies in the New Rhetoric." *Reinventing the Rhetorical Tradition*. A. Freedman and I. Pringle, eds. Conway, AR: L&S Books, 1980. 53-60.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Invention: A Topological Survey." *Teaching Composition: Ten Bibliographical Essays*. Ed. Gary Tate. Fort Worth: TCU Press, 1976. 1-43.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Paradigms and Problems: Needed Research in Rhetorical Invention." *Research on Composing: Points of Departure*. Eds. Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell. Urbana: NCTE, 1978. 29-47.

**"PERSONAL NARRATIVE,"  
"ACADEMIC WRITING," AND  
FEMINIST THEORY: REFLECTIONS  
OF A FRESHMAN  
COMPOSITION TEACHER**

Irene Papoulis  
University of California, Santa Barbara

Linnette, a student of mine, approached me with a troubling question last spring. We had just finished a three-course freshman composition sequence, during which Linnette had gone through a dramatic change. She had arrived at college with a fixed idea of the kinds of things one was forbidden to do as a writer—for example, use the word "I"—and her papers had been careful and ponderous, excruciatingly awkward even as they clearly wished so deeply to be successful. Her personality in class had matched her papers; she had frowned almost continually, raising her hand only to ask detailed questions about what I "wanted" or to repeat in her own words something I had said. Because I worked under Peter Elbow as a graduate student, and have been deeply influenced by his teaching methods, I was not the sort of college English teacher Linnette expected. She strug-

gled with me in the beginning, almost begging me to be more critical of her in a conventional way, to tell her what to do. She discussed her papers in groups with her classmates because I required her to, but her resistance was clear; her aim was to interact with The Teacher, and she came to my office hours frequently, doing the best she could to force me to give her "corrections" about her writing. Gradually, though, I got through, and it dawned on Linnette that all I really wanted was for her to take responsibility for her own ideas. By her second quarter she had picked up beautifully on this and wrote fascinating, subjective papers that examined a wide range of philosophical issues. She became an active member of her peer discussion group and worked very hard on her essays, reworking her ideas until they became more and more intricate.

In spite of her metamorphosis, Linnette's facial expression at the end of her third quarter composition class reminded me of the way she had looked when I first met her, and the question she asked revealed a very real concern: "What am I going to do when I have teachers who don't want me to think of my own ideas? I'm afraid I'm going to go back to my old way of writing. Not every teacher is like you, you know—most of them have a set way they want us to write." I tried to assure Linnette that good writing is good writing and that surely any teacher would be pleased to see her personal interaction with the ideas of a course, but at the same time I was worried for her. In spite of the fact that many people in the field of composition accept what Maxine Hairston has described, quoting Kuhn, as a "paradigm shift" in our ideas about what it means to teach writing, we still tend to worry a great deal about the teachers in other disciplines who are committed to the old paradigm. Because we want to initiate our students into college-level discourse, we feel we must coach students to write for teachers who demand writing that is expository and objective—i.e. abstract, not connected in any obvious way to the writer's experience, and taking a strict "thesis and support" form—since we are worried that those teachers will penalize students who try to do anything differently. Linnette's fears, in other words, are valid—the vast majority of people who decide what is right for students continue to promote a strict and limited conception of what makes legitimate academic language.

This insistence on expository writing can be justified by James Moffet's 1968 "spectrum of discourse" (47), which is a description of writing activities that parallel cognitive development. Moffet claims that students move "up" the "ladder of abstraction" from descriptive writing, which records what is happening, to theorizing, which records what may/will happen. As one proceeds up this scale, Moffet argues, one moves from personal or private writing (journals, letters) to more abstract or public analysis (published essays). Even though Moffet himself says, as he describes his spectrum, that "no greater value is ascribed to one level than to another" (25), adding later "[t]his whole theory of discourse is essentially an hallucination. Heaven forbid that it should be translated directly into syllabi and packages of serial textbooks" (54). Most writing teachers I know now, twenty years later, agree that students who write in abstractions are far more likely to succeed as college writers than those who do not. Such teachers view personal writing as a necessarily more juvenile kind of writing, something that students must outgrow as they become initiated into the conventions of rigorous analysis.

The denigration of "personal writing," along with the relentless distinction between personal and expository writing, is becoming more and more disturbing to me as I continue to teach in a large, respectable university. I feel increasingly oppressed by

the distinction when I decide what kind of writing to demand from my students, especially because I feel that so-called personal writing can be much more intellectually challenging than writing that merely presents any old point of view and proves it to be true. By "personal writing," or "narrative," though, I do not necessarily mean stories about my cute pet cat named George, or even essays about the time my uncle died and I went to the funeral and learned something about life. Personal narrative, it seems to me, can be an academically powerful tool when it becomes a record of "what happens" as the writer examines an idea. When my students are confused by an issue, for example, I often encourage them, as Peter Elbow might, to write a paper that describes, say, that "first I thought X about the topic, but as I thought further it occurred to me that Y, and then I thought about Z, and now my view of X has changed in the following way . . ." Such a paper is inevitably personal, in that it explains in subjective detail what goes on in the writer's mind. At the same time, though, it can be highly sophisticated if the material under analysis is complicated. How many writers, both novice and professional, cut their own experiences—the interesting and informative stories of their thinking—out of their papers because they want their writing to be academic and end up writing far less profound or compelling pieces? Should I force my students to do so as well? Will Linnette learn to be one of those writers? Must "academic writing" by definition not be personal? Why should colleges and universities continue to perpetuate the enervation of language in the name of academic writing? What scholar has not read an essay in his or her field and wished that once, just once, the author would say directly what she actually experienced personally as a result of her interaction with ideas? Some writers do this, of course, and their writing is admired and read, even if it at times accused of being nonacademic.

William Zeiger, in a 1985 essay in *College English*, puts forth an argument for such "nonacademic" writing. He calls on composition teachers to reevaluate their insistence on what he calls "thesis and proof" (135), or "expository" writing as the only acceptable form for college essays. Zeiger says that "[t]o 'prove' an assertion today is to win undisputed acceptance for it—to stop inquiry rather than to start it" (135), and he maintains that what he calls the "exploratory essay," is a genre that should be revived, because "[i]nquiry, or exploration . . . aims to discover the fecundity of an idea . . . It does not pursue a linear sequence, but holds several possibilities in suspension simultaneously, inviting the inquisitive mind to play among them." Zeiger cites Montaigne's essays as an example of "exploratory writing," adding that such writing "refrains from concluding, not so much because its goal is out of reach as because the best resolution of its issue is multiple . . ." (463). While I wholeheartedly applaud Zeiger's desire to revive the exploratory essay, I am disturbed by his sense that such an essay is necessarily separate from exposition. What I am calling "narrative," or, after Peter Elbow, "telling the story of one's thinking," is potentially every bit as rigorous and sophisticated as an essay that, to quote Zeiger on expository writing, "abhors ambiguity and marches to a predictable conclusion" (461). I would like to explore the ways in which the two genres of essays can inform each other—instead of agreeing with Zeiger that "it is not the writer's reasoning which governs the familiar essay, but the writer's personality," I ask why personality cannot inform writing that asserts an idea, and why reason cannot inform writing that describes ambiguity and doubt. It seems to me that if we pay less attention to the distinction between the two sorts of writings, and instead encourage students to be honest about their thinking and their personal

reactions as a way of exploring ideas in depth, we will get essays that are far more profound and thoughtful than the essays we get when we ask students for *either* their personal *or* their rational thinking.

I am reminded, as I think about the split between narrative/personal and expository writing, of an essay written by Sherry Ortner in the early stages of the most recent feminist movement: "Woman is to nature as man is to culture." There is a parallel, in my mind anyway, between the view of women in society that Ortner describes and the view of narrative, or "telling the story of one's thinking," in the university. In the minds of some professors, "narrative is to nature as expository writing is to culture." The disparaging of narrative might stem from a deep-seated cultural fear that narrative is farther away from the civilization that we are supposedly protecting in our universities. Though I am wary of carrying my parallel with Ortner's essay too far—obviously, Ortner's overall intention is unrelated to mine—I am struck by the way it works. Ortner begins with the premise that "[t]he secondary status of woman in society is one of the true universals, a pan-cultural fact," and she goes on to discuss the faulty reasoning that results in this fact. Look what happens to some of Ortner's text if we substitute "narrative" for "woman" and "expository writing" for "man" (I've inserted elaborations of my own in parentheses).

Narrative creates . . . from within her own being (my own experience of an idea) while expository writing . . . is forced to create artificially, that is, through cultural means, and in such a way as to sustain culture (77). . . . Children (freshmen!) are likely to be categorized with nature, and narrative's close association with children may compound her potential for being seen as closer to nature herself (78) . . . although not every culture articulates a radical opposition between the domestic (composition classroom?) and the public (university at large?), it is hardly contestable that the domestic is always subsumed by the public (79). . . . Narrative . . . represents lower-level, socially fragmenting, particularistic sorts of concerns, as opposed to interfamilial relations representing higher-level, integrative, universalistic sorts of concerns . . . Since expository writing lacks a 'natural' basis . . . for a familial orientation, (its) sphere of activity is defined at the level of interfamilial relations . . . And hence . . . expository writing [is] the 'natural' proprietor of religion, ritual, politics, and other realms of cultural thought and action in which universalistic statements of spiritual and social synthesis are made. Thus expository writing [is] identified . . . with culture in the old-fashioned sense of the finer and higher aspects of human thought (79). . . . Boys are considered . . . not yet 'really socialized' . . . [until their socialization is] transferred to the hands of expository writing . . . in the area of socialization, narrative performs lower-level conversions from nature to culture, but when the culture distinguishes a higher level of the same functions, the higher level is restricted to expository writing (80). . . . Narrative . . . is afforded direct access to a far more limited range of role choices, and she is afforded direct access to a far more limited range of social institutions . . . Narrative . . . [gets] involved . . . with people as individuals and not as representatives of . . . social categor[ies] (85). Ultimately, both expository writing and narrative can and must be equally involved in projects of creativity and transcendence. Only then will

narrative be seen as aligned with culture, in culture's ongoing dialectic with nature (87).

While it is perhaps unfair to transform Ortner's text in this way, it may illuminate the ways in which our aversion to narrative is grounded in an unfair sense that telling stories about thinking is less profound than speaking abstractly. Ortner's ultimate aim is to illustrate the arbitrary nature of the different view of women – in reality, of course, women are certainly no more "natural" than men; we all have human bodies and human brains. While the distinction between narrative and expository writing might seem much more fixed in a hierarchy than the distinction between men and women, I invite you to consider the possibility that there is something arbitrary about our habit of viewing expository writing – that is, unambiguous thesis and proof – as being naturally more sophisticated and closer to culture than narrative.

To take another example from feminist theory, Simone de Beauvoir's coining of the terms "immanent" and "transcendent" for women's and men's positions in the world, respectively, comes to mind; Ortner herself draws on de Beauvoir as she establishes her argument. Because women are the bearers of children, de Beauvoir argues, they have been seen as "immanent," – i.e. less able of "transcending" culture. Narrative, I think, also seems immanent, because it describes what happens, whereas expository writing goes beyond, transcends, the moment. Of course, one might argue that while women are only *perceived* as immanent, narrative *is* in fact so. But why? It seems to me that my deepest understanding of complex or "transcendent" concepts occurs when someone tells me a story about them. A human engagement with the material, clearly described, is potentially more transcendent, I think, than one which refuses to let the reader in on the processes of the writer or speaker. Furthermore, feminist theory has taught us the danger of assuming that something that claims to transcend is necessarily better or more valid than something that appears to be immanent. The hierarchical distinction between the two concepts, moreover, is highly misleading. One can be immanent and transcendent simultaneously. Telling "what happens" (Moffett's term) can be a profoundly transcendent experience, if one allows oneself to examine the complexity of one's thinking. And expository writing, as any freshman composition teacher knows, can be hopelessly immanent when it draws empty conclusions about its topic – it doesn't go anywhere at all. One can write a profound narrative, and one can write a simplistic expository piece; the difference in quality lies in the degree to which a writer is willing to dig deeper, and tackle more profound issues, not in whether the writer is telling a story or not. But we trap narrative; we circumscribe it and relegate it to the early days of composition classes; we ostracize it from advanced study.

Countless works in feminist theory (Chodorow and Gilligan, for example) discuss the ways in which women often have a different way of experiencing and articulating the world than men do. This "different way" is not exclusive to women, of course; many men, when they read, for example, *In A Different Voice* find that their sense of morality is similar to the "network" approach that Gilligan describes as outside Kohlberg's male-identified scale. One important value, then, of the works of feminist theorists is that we now have more and more explanations, in different disciplines, of what a "non-hierarchical" or "network-based" view of the world might look like. We are learning, in other words, to notice ways that people and concepts can be immanent and transcendent at the same time. Such an understanding has caused what might be called a paradigm shift in

academic thinking, and it can affect composition theory in the way we view narrative. If we move away from the hierarchical notion that the development of writing skills is linear, and reexamine the components of each stage of the so-called scale of development, we can begin to accept personal writing as potentially just as important as writing that uses pure abstraction. This acceptance is all the more crucial now, moreover, because of the current so-called "chaos in the disciplines."

From the debate at Stanford about the "great books" course to many sessions at the annual MLA meetings we hear that something unprecedented is happening in academia lately: there is a revolution in our attitudes about the nature of any field of study. It is not necessarily clear what "history" means anymore, let alone "literature" or even "text." As a recent PhD in literature, I find this trend alarming – unlike the academic I dreamed I would be, I don't feel that I can take my place in a noble tradition of scholarship – instead, when I write about literature I feel as though I'm entering a chaos of competing factions, where there is no single respected judge who can explain the ground rules.

I suppose my alarm is shared by many scholars, but our confusion seems minor when I compare it to what a beginning freshman, who has only an extremely rudimentary sense of what learning is in the first place, must experience. The news that all categories are breaking down must be deeply disturbing to that freshman, and it must cause him or her to wonder what the point of study is in the first place, apart, of course, from the fact that a college education will probably get one a better job. I've noticed a bemusement in my students about the chaos in the disciplines, and, unlike their teachers, perhaps, those students' practical and logical conclusion is that it doesn't matter, that if there is no such thing as history they might as well not care about history at all.

Because I am working from the assumption that academic study is in fact important, even crucial, to the functioning of our society, I am horrified when I hear students respond in this way, but at the same time I sympathize with their perspective. I think their apathy is a logical result of the ways that most undergraduate teachers deal with the current chaos in the disciplines. One way is to attempt to keep the news from students as long as possible – to pretend that history is still fixed and hope that by the time they get to graduate school (if, of course, they ever do) students will be better equipped as intellectuals. This way is favored by teachers who themselves want to pretend that the academy is as fixed and venerable as it always was and that learning can still proceed in a linear fashion. The problem with this approach, though, is that it denies issues that students cannot help but discover for themselves, even as the teacher attempts to ignore them. Students can easily spot and turn away from an "old-fashioned" teacher. Another pedagogical choice is to be perfectly frank with students about the chaos and leave them to fend for themselves, throwing up one's hands and explaining that no one really knows what to do about all the discontinuity in academic study. While honest, this approach doesn't give students much of a handle to grasp onto and tends to foster the sort of apathy I described above. A third option is to train students, even freshmen, in subject-specific methods of writing, operating from the belief that the current specialization of fields requires that before students can write in a given discipline they must be trained extensively in the jargon and conventions of that discipline. This option assumes that the chaos of the academic world is so pervasive that the only way one can come to terms with it is through ignoring all but a small part of it. This method might be workable for advanced undergraduates and graduate students,

but the problem with imposing it on younger students is that it precludes their own exploration of their ability to figure things out in their own terms. It causes them to imagine that all intellectual writing must necessarily follow strict, preestablished conventions. Surely this isn't true! Surely the best writing results when a writer is able to understand and articulate his or her subjective responses to the world!

Composition theory offers teachers a fourth alternative to what I am calling the chaos in the disciplines. The only anchor, as far as I'm concerned, in a sea of disintegrating disciplines, is the student's own fund of knowledge, opinion and responses. Because there are no longer any universally accepted academic groundrules, the exploratory essay, with its focus on the writer's own thinking, is a very important form of academic discussion. A fundamental assumption of the new paradigm of composition theory, at least as I learned it from Elbow, is that students are more capable and full of ideas than they know themselves to be and that it is up to the teachers to enable them to tap the rich but unarticulated life experience that they already have. We must acknowledge and assert that we do this not only for their performance in the composition classroom but for their performance as students in all the fields they encounter after they leave us. In order for this to happen, though, we have to find a way to influence Linnette's other teachers.

I recently heard a colleague of mine complain that students in a science course for which she taught a writing section did not have time for the self-exploration of journal writing, because they had "crippling" papers to write! Journal writing, and developing the ability to tap one's own responses, is exactly what prevents those papers from crippling students! Freshman composition courses should teach students to use writing to develop an awareness of and a trust in their own thinking processes. Writing instruction that invites students to "give the teacher what he or she wants" undermines such work. Students who get nothing but directive instruction will be handicapped in their process of learning to think for themselves. I speak from experience—my own education, for the most part, taught me to deny and mistrust my own thinking. Like Linnette, I worry that I am missing something in my attitudes about teaching. After talking to people who are convinced that students who write essays that make generalizations about the world are better students, I sometimes ask myself whether what I've gotten from composition theory is illegitimate. Maybe, in answer to Linnette's question, I do have the wrong approach. Maybe I should in fact teach her to do what she expected to do when she came from high school. Maybe I should assign expository topics, teach prose models, and rest assured that I am providing a service by giving students experience in the kind of writing that will be expected from them in the rest of their college careers. But I can't do that. I've seen too many students, like Linnette, who begin college disparaging their own ideas, and come to make radical shifts in their commitment to schoolwork when they realize that their own perspective is legitimate. I wish, though, that I could do something about all those other teachers out there, in other disciplines, who refuse to believe that students have something to say for themselves. Any suggestions?

#### WORKS CITED

- Beauvoir, Simon de. *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage, 1974.  
 Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1978.  
 Elbow, Peter. *Writing With Power*. New York: Oxford UP, 1981.

- Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1982.  
 Hairston, Maxine. "The Winds of Change." *Rhetoric and Composition*. Ed. Richard Graves. Upper Montclair: Boynton/Cook, 1984.  
 Moffett, James. *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968.  
 Ortner, Sherry. "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" *Woman, Culture and Society*. Ed. Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1974.  
 Zeiger, William. "The Exploratory Essay: Enfranchising the Spirit of Inquiry in College Composition." *College English* 47 (1985): 454-465.

## PEER TUTORS AS POSTMODERN READERS IN A WRITING CENTER

Margaret Morrison  
 University of Texas at Arlington

The bottom line for me as a writing tutor and director of a writing center is that every writer *feel free* to make her or his own meaning. This means that, in interpreting a student's writing, tutors must have a theory of reading that recognizes the dangers of a reader's appropriating the writer's text by projecting or imposing his/her own ideological programs onto the text. The effort to limit projection requires that peer tutors reading students' papers be trained to be as conscious as possible of their own programs or of what Kenneth Burke has called "terministic screens"—the systemic pictures of the world we create derived partly at least from what we value.

Thus, tutors must be trained to avoid occluding projection (a form of "blindness" Marshall Alcorn has spoken of) and to become self-reflectively conscious of their own language systems. In his "pedagogy of knowing," Paulo Freire called this process of becoming conscious of our language systems—e.g., of what, how, and why we write and read—"conscientization," which, in Freire's praxis, combines reflection and action. "Conscientization" and becoming self-reflective about one's own personal language systems is postmodern in the sense that peer tutors learn to foreground the operations of language and understand, for example, that there is no determinate meaning and no "final" closure, the end of a paper always being somewhat arbitrary. These views differ, of course, from modernist new-critical views that a paper is a self-contained product whose form is prescribed and whose meaning is determinate.

The postmodern tutors also learn that the notion of "objectivity" itself is obsolete, that interpersonal transactions and the making of meaning occur in socio-political contexts, and that much of writing and reading occurs in collaboration with others. No one, peer tutors included, most theorists now agree, can be an isolated, distanced "eye" who does not affect and is not affected by texts/persons.

Because writing centers are generally heteroglot social contexts staffed by peer tutors from across disciplines with a diversity of discourses, fortunately, a peer writer can receive a number of different readings of a single text. As a result, peer writers coming to writing centers soon learn how heterogeneous and multiplicitous discourses are in a community of writers. By helping peer writers become aware of and take pleasure in the "various competing discourses that make up their own" communities (Harris, "The Idea" 17), peer tutors and peer writers