

none of this is sufficient in itself, to cultivate the opportunity for exercising what might be called a "language of one's own." The word of the other, Bakhtin reminds us, becomes one's own only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Before this, "the word...exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions. It is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own" (293-4).

The final assignment for this unit, then, attempts to provide the student with an occasion for a purposeful use of acquired knowledge, as well as a context that might allow for the kind of appropriation Bakhtin refers to.

FINAL ASSIGNMENT

This assignment asks you to provide a general overview of the knowledge you have gained about the neurological condition known as prosopagnosia. Your audience is next semester's English 102 class, who, like yourselves, will also explore, research, and discuss the same topic. Your papers should include a minimum of three sources, two of which may be taken from your assigned readings.

My purpose in devising this assignment is, to some extent, a selfish one. Simply put, I hope to receive two or three good papers that might serve as useful introductory material to the unit we have just completed. You might find it helpful to assume that *your* paper will be the first exposure to knowledge about prosopagnosia that next semester's class will receive. You might also find it helpful to think about what kind of paper or article would have been useful to you at the beginning of this unit.

In any case, you will need to make some decisions about the kind of knowledge you wish to convey, and, given the situation outlined above, how best to convey that knowledge to an audience of less-informed peers.

Once more, students are asked to assume a teaching role with regard to their peers, thereby reinforcing the dialogic methodology introduced at the beginning of this unit. Also, students are confronted again with the necessity of *readmiring* their former selves as a way to glean a sense of audience for this assignment. But perhaps most importantly, students are faced with the task of having to choose their own perspective on the kind of knowledge they wish to convey — a choice inextricably bound to whatever understanding they have of their own intentions. Whether the individual student prefers to review current empirical knowledge, or to write an extended definition, or to relate a human interest narrative, or to submit a piece of scientific reportage, such a choice will inevitably reflect that student's judgment regarding the *best way to know this subject given this situation*. And that choice, in turn, cannot help but to express itself in a chosen language, a voice that ideally complements the chosen perspective.

None of this is to say, of course, that having once completed this unit students will possess identifiable voices of their own. Indeed, style, as conceived here, is situationally determined and is thus meaningless when discussed as an abstracted or generalized quality. Still, as writing teachers, we can at least provide rhetorical opportunities for our students to express themselves in language appropriated for their own purposes. In so doing, we convey to our students a belief that stylistic awareness develops through social dialogue, but that the former also, as Richard Lanham observes, makes possible dialogue with ourselves, and thereby enables us to foster a keen self-

consciousness about human perception and knowledge (132).

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INTERNATIONALIZING THE FRESHMAN ENGLISH CURRICULUM

Carol Hovanec
Ramapo College

In "Becoming Literate: One Reader Reading," Dennie Wolf reflected that literacy is:

a mercurial thing, conditioned by time and place. Colonists were literate enough if they could sign their name, or even an X, on loans and deeds. When immigrants arrived in large numbers in the 1800's, educators urged schools to deliver "recitation literacy" to the foreign children who filled the schoolrooms. That literacy was the ability to hold a book and reel off memorized portions of basic American texts, such as the opening paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, a part of the Gettysburg address, or some Bryant or Longfellow. With the coming of World War I, and the prospect of large numbers of men handling new equipment in foreign countries, army testers redefined reading. Suddenly, to the dismay of men used to reading familiar passages, passing the army reading test meant being able to make sense, on the spot, of never-before-seen text. Currently, that kind of "extraction literacy," so revolutionary in 1914, looks meager. Finding out who, what, when, where, or even how simply does not yield the inferences, questions, or ideas we now think of as defining full or "higher" literacy. (1)

In my opinion, this "higher" literacy goes beyond deciphering, or even critical thinking, to knowledge of one's own heritage and history as well as that of other nations. But many educators across the country have found that their students know very little about their own surroundings or the world at large. In fact, the young come to college with such poor backgrounds in history, geography, and the common knowledge once taken for granted by educated individuals that the situation has become a major crisis. Anecdotes of student errors are quoted regularly on campuses and in the press. One of my

colleagues, for example, told us that a freshman in his class thought that Darwin wrote a book entitled *Origin of the Fetus*. But, the situation is no laughing matter and has dire implications for the future of our nation. In an attempt to remedy the situation, many institutions have added or redesigned literature, history, and other courses to update them for the 1990s. What should be included in them — or if they should exist at all — has been a continued issue for debate and has important implications for freshman composition.

The movement to make the established canon global is the result of a revolution in education that began in the 1960s and 1970s when students demanded more relevancy in the standard curriculum. At that time, a large number of required courses were dropped and majors restructured; but the programs that replaced them were often hastily put together and of questionable quality. To remedy this weakness, many institutions launched new general education packages, the majority of which restored previously removed western civilization and great books courses. However, on a number of campuses, younger professors, often themselves products of the '60s, questioned the inclusion of predominately western and male authors and demanded changes which would invigorate these courses to reflect more sensitivity to gender, race, and alternate cultures.

At my own institution, a four-year undergraduate liberal arts state college which I think is typical of many across the nation, the impetus to add a more international/multicultural focus began when a professor in the women's studies program made a motion to the Faculty Assembly that we include at least one non-western work in all courses. The motion passed — but it then fell to the disciplinary committees to find appropriate selections. The process was helped along by a large grant from our state department of higher education which enabled many of us to attend summer workshops to find material. I participated in two seminars, one funded by the state and given at a nearby college, and another sponsored by the National Endowment of the Humanities and located at a large university in another area. There were twenty-four faculty members at both these seminars, and we were exposed to a number of new authors and cultures which we were urged to bring back to our campuses and, like missionaries, to fight the battle to substitute them for well-known monoliths.

Based on the letters and reports we exchanged, new or revised courses were mounted at our respective institutions, some with only one or two changes in a year-long sequence, others completely reworked to include many non-western authors. Of course, the majority of these were literature offerings — just as almost all of the participants in the workshops I attended were literature faculty. But, as someone whose primary interest is composition, I was determined to make changes in the writing program as well — even though there were even more difficulties to overcome in my discipline.

One of the concerns I always must deal with on my campus is the choice to use literature at all to teach writing. This has been debated at many schools since composition became a separate discipline more than two decades ago, and many of its proponents felt that it should be divorced in content, as well as faculty and pedagogy, from the traditional English department. Although I agree that composition should be taught by specialists, I do not agree that literary works have no place in the syllabus for I feel that fiction, poetry, and drama can add a rich stimulus for reaction and invention. However, these works must be a means to an end — and not an end in themselves. They must be used to teach skills — and the composition course in which they are texts must not be a disguised literature offering. Another of my problems is ensuring that a change will have a lasting impact not just on an isolated course but on the entire program. To effect this kind of impact, the writing instructors meet regularly to share ideas and discuss pedagogy and overall planning. As director

of the program, I received a grant last year to write a handbook so that we could formalize our plans and materials and ensure that our work achieves as much permanence as possible. All of our composition sections use identical readings which has the advantage of giving a new author wide exposure and creating a dynamic environment in which hundreds of students will be reading and talking about the same work at the same time. On the other hand, the possibilities for plagiarism, conscious or unconscious, are increased — and assignments have to be carefully designed with this drawback in mind.

If one does use literature to teach composition and wishes to make some adjustments in the semester plan to add a global perspective, the choice of texts depends on how they are to be integrated into an existing sequence of assignments and how they can be used as tools for strengthening writing skills. On my own campus, we have a year of freshman English, the first semester a study of argument and the second critical writing. The basic text for College English I, the argument course, is a collection of readings on current issues, but we end the semester with a short novel, as a transition to the following course and to show how literature also can present a position. In College English II, we require four primary works: a Greek drama, a medieval poem or short social history, a Shakespearean play, and a modern novel. Both courses are a part of our general education program and are planned to interface with other subjects, so that writing and learning across the disciplines occur. Freshmen take "packages" with College English I, Social Issues, and College Seminar all dealing with current problems in society. College English II is planned to complement Western Studies and Reading in the Humanities, which deal with the same four periods. In both English classes, the unit on the novel seemed the best place to address the original mandate of our Faculty Assembly — for this is a popular genre in many nations, and since the cultural and political background are often integral to the narrative, more accessible than poetry or drama.

However, finding suitable novels can prove to be a formidable task. The workshops I attended generated numerous bibliographies,¹ but the participants, like myself, found ourselves with the problem of somehow learning about, reading, and criticizing not one, but several new bodies of literature in a very short time. What had taken us several decades to read and study in our own literature, we were now supposed to master in a few weeks. The only solution was to cover what we could and share expertise, discovering in our intensive discussions that a new canon of authors emerged — distinguished writers who were very well known outside of England and America and who offered challenging possibilities for our curriculum. I realized my task was not as difficult as I had thought because I was looking for only two changes, not the ten or twenty needed for a world literature course. As we reformulated our syllabi for the concluding session of the seminars, I also discovered that certain authors were constants in everyone's plans and seemed to have qualities which would suit them for many different purposes, including my own. They were at the top of the list of the suggestions which I brought back to our writing committee. At a marathon meeting where we made our choices for the following year, we decided on *The Vendor of Sweets* by Narayan, an East Indian novelist, for College English I and *Ceremony* by Leslie Silko, a female Laguna Pueblo author, for College English II (Native-American culture is considered to be non-western). The former is a brief and provocative study of the generation gap, mixed marriages, and the conflict between spiritualism and materialism. Silko's novel is a longer and more difficult selection which analyzes a World War II veteran's traumatic readjustment to American and tribal life.

Unfortunately, after having made our decisions carefully, we then encountered a practical barrier which is the bane of anyone

trying to choose an out-of-the ordinary text — these books are not always in print, published in this country, or translated. Although our choices were listed in *Books in Print*, they were not available by the time we sent in our order. The first alternate for the Narayan, *Annie John* by Jamaica Kincaid, was also unavailable, and we had to go to our next choices, which were by better-known authors who were in print.

So, two Septembers ago, we presented students with *A Chronicle of a Death Foretold* by Gabriel García Márquez in College English I and *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe in College English II. Márquez's novel is a brief, intensive mystery with a great deal of local color and a wealth of information on Colombian life; Achebe writes about a self-made Ibo chieftain whose pride becomes his downfall when he has to confront white colonists. We found that the Colombian novel was a good choice to round off the instruction in argument by illustrating how deductive, inductive, and logical skills could be applied to a new medium. The African work dealt with many of the same themes studied in previous periods such as the destructive effects of violence, the importance of status, and the domination of women.

To teach the new novels, we had guest speakers (from Colombia and Nigeria) talk to our faculty group, and we shared ideas for collaborative exercises to help students engage the texts and write about them productively. First, to ensure that the texts were actually read, we formulated questions which could be answered either in an informal log, which would not be graded, or as a finished assignment (instructors chose whichever format they preferred and generated their own topics). These were both personal and general. In my own case, I first asked students to find something about the novel they didn't understand, found surprising, or felt was "true" to their own experience. My other questions were very specific, eliciting information on plot and locale. I also asked for comparisons to previous selections as well as determinations as to why the work had a certain time scheme. Students were also encouraged to find passages which they felt were particularly descriptive and even images they found appealing. The answers usually varied in length, some requiring only a word or two, others complete paragraphs. We used the in-class discussion of the questions as a way to help students discover the new work and the culture gradually, often as it related to themselves. The instructor can facilitate the discussion and make sure that salient points are brought out, but we feel that lecturing should be kept to a minimum. The best classroom configuration for this lesson is to have students sit in a circle, so a true atmosphere of participation is achieved. Follow-up activities can include group workshops to generate topics for papers or to research ideas for oral presentations. These short oral reports can elaborate on background material and aspects of culture (such as religion) which may need more explanation. Groups can also be encouraged to find films and videos to include in their reports — and even ask foreign students from the author's country to be guest speakers. It is very exciting for the foreign student to be the center of attention and for the class to hear this "peer" expert speak. It is difficult for students to plagiarize the answers to our reading questions or buy papers since there are no study guides or published "Notes" — and critical material is difficult to obtain. Many of our instructors like to generate their own topics — or guide groups in their development of them. Some of the topics were intriguing. One faculty member asked her class to define "civilization" and explore how each of the four periods covered in College English II had analyzed and presented such concepts as "civilized," "barbarian," "primitive," and "pastoral" and to determine what the authors' preferable lifestyles were. Another related *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* to the previous discussion of capital punishment and asked students to compare the Latin-American view of honor and justifiable homicide with our own practices. In

addition to using the novels as material to study and write about in these ways, a variety of other composition exercises can be based on different passages. Groups might analyze the language in a description, find metaphors, sensuous diction, parallelism, and even note sentence variety and the use of punctuation.

In teaching non-western literature, I also cautioned the instructors to be wary of certain psychological and conceptual problems. One can't just add a new author from a different culture to an established course without rethinking his or her position because the new work may change one's approach to teaching western texts as well. Also, one must try to find a middle ground between the two extreme views students often have of cultures foreign to their own. Many see cultures as so radically different and odd that they dismiss them. Others see all humans as essentially the same when superficial differences are overlooked. The inaccuracy of both views should be stressed.

In evaluating their experiences reading and writing about non-western literature at the end of the semester, students said they liked the novels a great deal. Certainly, they seemed to become more sensitized to the new cultures, which after all was our purpose in choosing non-western works. For example, in my own class, some students were initially shocked by the Ibo tribe's treatment of deformed children (they let them die by exposure). Yet, when they remembered that the same attitude occurred in *Oedipus Rex*, and another student pointed out that this "defect" was more than counterbalanced by their humane and reasonable use of individual combat to substitute for all-out warfare, they spoke no more of the "primitive" Africans. Another professor said that her students "really enjoyed the novel. We had some valuable discussions on preconceptions about Africa." Also it provided "the advantage of a broadened perspective. Many of the students come from a narrow world view." Another said that:

Things Fall Apart is so richly detailed that it gives the students many opportunities to experience concrete images that carry thematic importance. There are so many characters that all the students in the class can identify with (even if they don't like them all). I am consistently amazed by how shallow their understanding of imperialism is — the novel really helps them with this. And, of course, the sexism really heats the discussions up. There are many universal themes. It's great for father and mother/son/daughter relationships, friendships, loyalties and family obligations, and individual vs. communal morality.

Another, commenting on Márquez, said:

I was apprehensive with the assignment at first. Although I thoroughly enjoyed reading *Chronicle* on my own, I felt that the students would not appreciate the novel for several reasons. There are far too many characters for such a short work. The time shifts are often sudden and confusing. There are surrealistic elements which elevate the novel to a level of sophistication beyond the grasp of many college freshmen. Fortunately, I was mistaken. The overwhelming majority of my students responded positively to the assignment and, indeed, surprised me with their probing insights and skillful evaluations of the work. The novel's success was due to many factors. It's short, and therefore able to be read more than once. Márquez uses clear, direct language, something all students should try to emulate. Márquez's "chronicle" style is intriguing because the novel really doesn't follow the chronology required of such a work. It led to interesting discussion.

As we enter the third year of our new composition program, we have found that choosing textbooks is becoming easier because publishers are now aware of the interest in international/multicultural themes and they are producing some excellent new collections with a much wider choice of authors. One of these anthologies contains sixty short stories from thirty different countries; another redefines American literature by including Canadian, Caribbean, and minority groups traditionally excluded.² Another publisher has developed an extensive list of non-western literature complete with study guides.³ Also, there are bookstores which are beginning to specialize in the new collections which are appearing.⁴ These and others which are being published soon will offer a broad selection of authors and genres, with accompanying instructors' guides and teaching aids. These texts will eliminate the problems we encountered in availability, and they will offer a wider range of choice. In fact, we have decided to use the new anthology *Sudden Fiction International* (mentioned above) for both College English I and II next year. Authors from six continents and thirty countries are represented, including Argentina, Guatemala, Poland, the Soviet Union, Japan, China, Australia, Botswana, and others. We intend to designate certain sections or stories for each level and decide in our first meeting various ways in which they can be taught. Although in both courses, we have felt the best location for our unit on fiction was at the end of the semester, we may find that with short fiction we can intersperse selections with other assignments. We may run several pilot sections to see how effective this alternate scheme is. Also, in College English I, we want to introduce the students to non-western ideas earlier in the semester. At present, we teach them to develop positions on current issues such as gun control, capital punishment, and animal experimentation. But our selections and focus have been limited to American authors and publications. We are considering trying to broaden our perspective by not only using appropriate stories from the anthology but articles from newspapers and magazines illustrating how the issue is viewed and dealt with in other cultures.

It is not an easy decision to abandon our favorite authors and the tradition we have been trained in, but American universities, English departments, and even composition teachers have been isolated and themselves largely ignorant of the great body of literature which is non-western. That's why it has come as a surprise to many for a Colombian, a Nigerian, and an Egyptian author to win the Nobel prize in literature, for a Chilean woman to top the best seller list in this country, for a Laguna Pueblo woman to win one of the coveted MacArthur Prizes, and for a Mexican to have one of his novels made into a popular film starring Gregory Peck. Yet this recognition is hardly amazing to the rest of the world who feels it is long overdue. America is only one of the many countries on this planet, and it is time that we realized that other people have voices which should be heard, read, and studied by ourselves and our students, too. Internationalizing the Freshman English curriculum is only a small step in this direction, but it will help by opening a door for our students so that they can begin to have an understanding not just of their home towns and states, their country and hemisphere — but of the entire earth.

NOTES

¹The report of the NEH Institute on the Theory and Teaching of World Literature includes discussions of the planning and teaching of new courses by the participants. This report can be obtained by writing to Professor Sarah Lawall, Department of Comparative Literature, South Building, The University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts.

²Jerome Beaty and J. Paul Hunter, *New Worlds of Literature* (New

York: Norton, 1989).

³Heinemann Educational Books, 4 Front Street, Exeter, New Hampshire 03833.

⁴Pandora Book Peddlers, 68 West Palisade Avenue, Englewood, New Jersey 07631.

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I'LL SHOW YOU MY FOG INDEX IF YOU'LL SHOW ME YOURS

T. J. Ray
University of Mississippi

If it is acceptable to begin with conclusions, then let me state that there is no conclusive, statistically valid data to show that the use of typewriters results in measurable and predictable improvement in students' writing skills, Remington typewriter ads notwithstanding. For our study, we followed the careers of umpteen million students from their freshman English experience through ten years of post-college experience. Once each decade we read two hundred words chosen at random from papers retrieved from random garbage dumps around the country. These papers were evaluated by a team of trained experts using a modified holistic system. In order to assure valid response, each reader used a different point scale (4-point, 7-point, 22-point, and the like), and the resultant values were correlated using the NCTE-Umlaut Generation test. [This test has remarkable coefficient correlation with the famous "Nine out of Ten Doctors Recommend Crest" sampling technique.]

Enough already! A pox on all the houses of those who seek to turn the experience of writing into a numerical experience. Damn and blast on those regnostic souls who trust formulae more than their own linguistic sensitivity! I come fresh from yet another CCCC where a legion of papers was presented with the intention of proving or disproving or commenting upon the worth of the computer as a tool in training people to write better. My anger at the pseudo-research I have been stuffed with for the past three days swells my fingers to the clumsy point. Never have so many proved so much with so little expertise: they proved that humanists untrained in statistical modeling should stay away from numerical testing. Most of them wouldn't know a Chi Square from Times Square. The one paper I heard that asserted that the results were "statistically significant" was based on the experience of two semesters by about eight teachers. Back to the garbage dump! One paper was meant to show that writing checkers (Writers Work Bench et al) are not of value in conceptualizing and organizing a work. That is almost tantamount to saying that looking at a menu after one has eaten will provide a better culinary experience. Menus provide guidance before one eats as writing checkers analyze writing after it is done.

What is needed is not another NCTE white paper on the