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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

Paradigm Shifts

Judy Halden-Sullivan, Book Review Editor

Often our *JAEPL* book reviews focus on studies thematically linked, different books dealing with a single overarching subject. Not in this issue. The texts explored here are rich and ranging, distinctive arguments. What *is* common among these studies is their purpose: they each invite readers to boldly shift paradigms, sometimes, as two of our four reviewers reveal, with questionable promises.

Lauren DiPaula's review of *Mad At School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life* by Margaret Price (University of Michigan Press, 2011) demonstrates nothing short of a radical change in mindset—DiPaula's own. Price's study of mental disabilities in the context of the academy made DiPaula "re-evaluate my scholarship and teaching . . . taking a hard look at what I do." Price interprets mental disabilities—sometimes termed mental illness, neurodiversity, or even madness—as a mode of difference, employing a Disabilities Studies framework. As DiPaula explains, this paradigm shift brings into question the predominant medical vision of mental disabilities as problems that need to be "fixed" so that these individuals better fit into the dominant culture. Price offers practical suggestions for richer modes of inclusion in the academy for both students and faculty with mental disabilities, advising, as DiPaula explains, a culture of compassion, appreciation, and interdependence.

Interdependence in an electronic collectivity is critiqued by William Archibald as he reviews Douglas Thomas and John Seely Brown's *A New Culture of Learning: Cultivating the Imagination for a World of Constant Change* (CreateSpace, 2011). Archibald, a composition studies scholar with specialization in technology applications in the writing classroom, examines the authors' emphasis on using massive, multiplayer online games, or MMOGs, to create "collectives" in which students join in on games like *World of Warcraft* to strengthen their agency—to assume active roles in creating and molding knowledge of the game itself. While affirming that our students are magnetically drawn to and have natural facility with the videogame environment, Archibald questions Thomas and Brown's exclusive use of gaming as *the* new educational paradigm, pointing out its emphasis on agonistic, collective action often at the expense of critical reflection.

Critical reflection and response—and how they should be effectively enacted—are at the heart of teaching creative writing, as Carl Vandermeulen asserts in his study, *Negotiating the Personal in Creative Writing* (Multilingual Matters, 2011), reviewed in this issue by Noam Scheindlin, himself a professor of creative writing. Supported by his own original research into creative writing pedagogy, Vandermeulen recommends a change in emphasis in the creative writing classroom from focusing on publishable products to engaging students' facility with the processes of creative production. As Scheindlin notes, Vandermeulen imports teaching techniques from composition studies to creative writing classes to spur *response*: dialogues inspired by how drafts-in-progress address both their authors and readers as thoughtful co-creators of texts.

Finally, Martin Cockcroft evaluates perhaps the broadest reconsideration of paradigm: a redefinition of a discipline. In their manifesto *Teaching Literacy for Love and Wisdom: Being the Book and Being the Change* (Teachers College Press, 2011), Jeffrey D. Wilhelm and longtime AEPL leader Bruce Novak assert that the term “English department” no longer provides any adequate sense of what is taught in such a discipline. Wilhelm and Novak commit to reinventing “English” as “Personal Studies”—joyful, situated, pragmatic, philosophical explorations of humanity that pursue the many meanings of life, love, and wisdom. Wilhelm and Novak ground their new paradigm in John Dewey’s sense of “aesthetic transaction,” an experience “that is personal, but not merely subjective” (Wilhelm and Novak 12-13), an experience that invites dialogues among authors, their readers, and the worlds both groups of thinkers occupy. As Cockcroft characterizes it in his review, *Teaching Literacy for Love and Wisdom* is an overwhelming amalgam of scientific thinking, philosophies, teaching practices, and intellectual histories, wildly energetic in its “everything-but-the-kitchen-sink approach” to re-envisioning the possibilities of an entire discipline.

Four different studies, four distinctive arguments: all invite mindful conversations that promise to transform students and faculty alike.

Price, Margaret. *Mad At School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011.

Lauren DiPaula, Georgia Southwestern State University

Margaret Price's *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life* made me re-evaluate my scholarship and teaching. I had hoped, upon picking it up, that it would have the opposite effect; I had wanted to be affirmed. Instead, I found myself taking a hard look at what I do.

The book is, according to Price, "a kind of smorgasbord, not a single sustained argument that must be read from beginning to end" (21); yet it is indeed an argument, an argument for greater inclusion and access for those with mental disabilities, also referred to as madness, mental illness, neurodiversity, or any of a number of terms—Price gives a list of 10 on page nine. In these chapters, she brings up representations of mental disability in the classroom, the conference, the job interview, and the media (specifically regarding school shootings), showing how these representations are disabling. She also shows how access might be achieved and gives examples of writers who are making themselves heard and the techniques they use to do so.

Price begins the book with the reason that all our minds are not already included in academic conversations, why not everyone is listened to. She contextualizes this lack of inclusion with the help of Catherine Prendergast's term *rhetoricity*, a term Price explains as "the ability to be received as a valid human subject" (26). Price then calls academic discourse itself into question. Her focus on the rhetoric of academia is in part due to her belief that rhetoric "is who we are, and beyond that, it is *who we are allowed to be*" (27). Individuals with mental disabilities, Price writes, "speak from positions that are assumed to be subhuman, even nonhuman; and therefore, when we speak, our words go unheeded" (26).

Price's stance throughout heavily relies upon a Disability Studies (DS) framework. Price explains early on that,

According to DS scholars and activists, disability is popularly imagined as a medical "problem" that inheres in an individual, one that needs to be fixed ('cured') and is cause for sorrow and pity. DS countermands this dominant belief by arguing that disability is a mode of human difference, one that becomes a problem only when the environment or context treats it as such. (4)

Seeing mental disability *as a mode of difference* calls into question the biomedical paradigm, that on which I've based my own research.

In fact, Price does more than call into question the paradigm. Chapter One, which is entitled "Listening to the Subject of Mental Disability: Intersections of Academic and Medical Discourses," also explores how psychiatric discourse—which is not necessarily separate from academic discourse—works to keep out or push down those with mental disability. In a section entitled "Rhetorical Approaches to Psychiatric Discourse," she discusses the rhetoric of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), a book used by mental health professionals to diagnose mental disorders, diagnoses

which are then used by insurance companies in decisions whether to fund treatments. Price is highly critical of the text and the discourse that supports its primacy; in fact, she demonizes it. Rather than analyzing the discourse surrounding it herself, she reviews how others have analyzed the DSM, specifically the DSM-III, which represented a turn that leaned most heavily toward a medical model of mental disorder. What is not taken into account in Price's study is that a reason for the biomedical shift might be that lithium was found to effectively treat bipolar disorder, thereby convincing many of the projected usefulness of pharmacology in the amelioration or control of mood disorder symptoms (see Goodwin and Jamison 699).

Price also introduces readers to the Psychiatric Survivor or Mad Pride Movement, a movement that resists the psychiatric system and its mechanisms of treatment, a system that could be interpreted as a path to healing for some, but a way of being controlled and oppressed for others. I expected Price to critique not only the rhetoric of the psychiatric community but also that of the survivor movement. Instead, she tries to understand her position as that of the survivor. She is conflicted about this stance until a friend helps shift her view of the survivor "as one who has undergone and emerged from some traumatic experience (such as incarceration in a mental institution)" to "one who is actively and resistantly involved with the psychiatric system on an ongoing basis" (12).

Overall, however, a Disability Studies stance may be the most useful and hopeful in the discussion of mental disability. Price asks persuasively, "What does 'participation' in a class mean for a student who is undergoing a deep depression and cannot get out of bed?" (5). Price is concerned with movement in kairotic spaces—where rhetoric is drawn from the immediate resources of the moment in context, movement which is more complicated for people with mental disabilities (60). She defines such spaces as those that are "characterized by all or most" of the following criteria: (1) real-time unfolding of events; (2) impromptu communication that is required or encouraged; (3) in-person contact; (4) a strong social element; and (5) high stakes (61). This precedes the most compelling part of the book where she discusses seven ways to redesign "the classroom's kairotic spaces" to be more inclusive. Among her suggestions: be explicit with expectations; use multimodal communication; hold office hours in person and in online chat (90, 96-97).

Price then examines other kairotic spaces—those which academics regularly engage in, including the job interview and the academic conference. Such high-stake places are not always accessible. She offers "recommendations for professional practice," including etiquette advice such as posing the open-ended, situation-centered inquiry, "What do you need?" instead of a closed yes/no query such as, "Is there anything I can do?" (129; 133). But especially interesting is her discussion of productivity and collegiality, both of which are sometimes considered at odds with mental disability. In fact, Price asserts, "The notion of *collegiality* itself is regularly *defined against* mental disability" (114). People who aren't collegial are often supposed to have a mental disability or illness of some type.

Next, Price analyzes school shootings and violence, looking carefully at representations of two recent school shooters—one from Virginia Tech and the other at Northern Illinois University. Price reveals the narratives that underlie explanations of the tragedies. A common one, for instance, is "that madness can be overcome, and that the key to this process of overcoming is *control* or *containment* of the mad person by means of medical treatment or incarceration" (153). This narrative then leads us down the slippery slope

of removing basic rights of people with mental disabilities in the name of “safety.” In exposing these narratives, she points out that they do nothing in helping us end the violence. Instead, Price finds hope in acknowledging that the shooters were fellow students and acknowledging the tragedy of what happened—to humanize and try to understand rather than dehumanize and expel the madness.

Price’s following two chapters bring up what she calls “microrebellions,” examples of people with mental disabilities who resist their lack of rhetoricity. She analyzes the use of first, second, and third person pronouns in three autobiographical, “transgressive” texts by people with mental disabilities (176). It is inconsequential which disabilities they have—what Price points out is that they are engaged in an act of rebellion and resistance in writing in an alternative way. Price introduces the term *counter-diagnosis* to mean a strategy by which “the autobiographical narrator uses language . . . to subvert the diagnostic urge to ‘explain’ the irrational mind” (179). “The counter-diagnostic story does not merely parallel or replace the conventional diagnostic story,” Price says, but “it ruins it altogether, attacks its foundations, queers it” (179). In pointing out pronoun use, she shows how autobiographical writers with mental disabilities subvert what we, the audience, think we know. For instance, the use of the pronoun *I* does not necessarily bespeak a unified self and does not progress through a linear narrative; it appears disorganized, embodying an “unruly existence” (180). Price calls for more study of autobiographies by people with mental disabilities because such “will refigure key assumptions of autobiographical discourse, including rationality, coherence, truth, and independence” (179).

Price then presents information about three independent scholars who have mental disabilities, highlighting the fact that much of academia can be inaccessible to persons with mental disabilities.

What Price ultimately creates is a space in which research on mental disability will be heard. She does this in two ways: (1) furthering a serious discussion on mental disability and academia, and (2) arguing for better access for scholars with mental disability so that such scholars can enrich the profession. She ends the book, claiming: “If we wish to change the educational system, we will need all our minds” (234).



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Thomas, Douglas and John Seely Brown. *A New Culture of Learning: Cultivating the Imagination for a World of Constant Change*. Charleston, SC: CreateSpace, 2011.

William Archibald, Millersville University of Pennsylvania

At the beginning of *A New Culture of Learning*, Thomas and Brown posit this question: “What happens to learning when we move from the stable infrastructure of the twentieth century to the fluid infrastructure of the twenty-first century, where technology is constantly creating and responding to change?” (17). Their response to this question, which has everything to do with the current information explosion, is to encourage everyone in education to get their game on. In their project to “gamify” education, they appear to have given over learning to the machines (see Feiler).

The authors recognize an anxiety in society about the glut of information, and they perceive a lack of response to these changes by educational institutions, which together actually creates an opportunity, they say, to change education. The way they wish to assuage this anxiety and affect change—by literally playing around—makes their book problematic and frustrating.

A major source of this frustration for readers of their book is the implied notion that technology has agency—that it responds to causes and is propelled by its own purposes. This implication sets up a solution to a problem that the technology seems to have actually caused. Their reasoning goes like this: we are being forced to process more and more information, and our educational system as it is cannot do the job; therefore, educational culture has to change. But, in this logic, the effect—the overload of information—becomes the source of our difficulties, so that technology then needs to help us deal with a problem it has caused.

But doesn't the machine have agency only when we give it over? A technology like the Internet has inundated us with information that we must manage so that we can create knowledge that is abundant and useful. What Thomas and Brown suggest is that these changes produced by information technologies have created a moment when we need to abandon traditional ways of learning in order not to be overwhelmed. However, their recommendation seems to overstate the problem and simply manifests the seduction of the new. Giving in to the newest new thing does not preordain its usefulness but merely describes its current power of suggestion.

What occurs to Thomas and Brown when they listen to technology's siren call are “frameworks”—structures that will allow us to function in this changing world (18). They propose a “new culture of learning” that is made up of these structures that contain (1) “a massive information network that provides almost unlimited access and resources to learn anything” and (2) “a bounded and structured environment that allows for unlimited agency to build and experiment with things within those boundaries” (19). The new culture of learning combines these two elements and (literally) plays off of them.

The authors make a point of highlighting the educational usefulness of massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) like *World of Warcraft* that contain collectives called Guilds where players band together to “engage in complex raids” (109). These games force players to learn strategies that allow them to succeed in battles with other players.

The game is a simulated war that provides the sweep of a real war. It pulls and pushes players along until one side wins. There is no doubt that players in *World of Warcraft*, who simulate real soldiers fighting in real wars, have a certain amount of agency when it comes employing strategies, but a war itself can be considered a machine that crowds out human agency and destroys what gets in its way.

In *New Culture of Learning*, the online game *World of Warcraft* provides the only viable model for Thomas's and Brown's learning environments. The problem I see with this model starts back with the idea of agency. If, on the one hand, they say the machines have agency, and on the other, we have "unlimited agency," then there must be the ability to opt out, to stop playing. We might not choose to leave agency to the machines and decide not to be part of this new culture of learning. And if we do that, are we out of luck, coping with and learning in the twenty-first century? Not likely. Instead, I prefer to see the authors' proposal for a new culture of learning as just one option. In the most generous sense, the authors describe a way to continue playing and not simply a way to win (Carse 3). And, as an option, it needs to be critiqued along with the older educational system that they say it replaces.

In their new culture of learning, the authors invoke an environment where "teachers no longer need to scramble to provide the latest up-to-date information to students because the students themselves are taking an active role in helping to create and mold it, particularly in areas of social information" (52). This environment they call a "collective." And they distinguish it from a community in these ways: "where communities can be passive (though not all of them are by any means), collectives cannot. In communities, people learn in order to belong. In a collective, people belong in order to learn" (52). While it's true that many online collectives encourage learning, so do most physical classrooms. Nothing special distinguishes online-learning collectives, which work as well as physical communities when they work at all. What disturbs me is the agonistic spirit that is foundational to many gaming collectives, a spirit that would likely transfer to the sort of learning collectives the authors envision.

These collectives are exemplified, as we've seen, by MMOGs like *World of Warcraft* (107). It is not an accident that our students flock to such games; they grew up playing video games. Our students desire to play games motivates much of what Thomas and Brown say in their book. Games are one of the trendiest learning tools of the moment, but they are also evident as a strategy for society-wide learning. There are games played as psychological therapy, as dieting programs, as ways to recover from injury, among others (Feiler). The tendency to use games as vehicles for learning is based on the undeniable fact that our children have learned very practical skills playing games. For instance, if you listen to anecdotal evidence, children today learn to read because they want to know how to play a game better. Those of us of a certain age learned to read because we found books that thrilled us. Books provided worlds where our imagination could explore and develop. Our children find these opportunities in the world of games.

The sense of learning in the collective has a retro feel to it. For most of the mid to late twentieth century, we've been advised to join a collective niche, told to specialize as a bulwark against the anxiety of change. Change fills us with dread and makes us hunker down in our knowledge silos and become distanced from the consequences of our work. Those who have worked on systems from the atomic bomb to the Internet have not

been able to see the sort of unintended consequences that their projects produce. And it has been just the sort of collective action these systems have generated that the authors promote as solutions to the heavy burden of information and the lack of practical learning that is going on—collective action often without critical reflection.

It remains debatable whether we want to structure our educational system on the basis of game playing. There are those—the authors being two such people—who say we have to change how we teach because our students are different and learn differently. They're gamers. I am of the mind that learning within a gaming environment is just another way to learn, that we should provide these opportunities but not eschew more traditional ways of learning just because our students don't have experience with them.

The authors argue that the only way to learn in 21st-century—a time of constant change—will be to learn in renditions of gaming collectives that we establish in our classrooms, and we should adapt to teaching our students in this way. I believe this is short-sighted and counterproductive. The technology has changed us and will continue to change us, but we have always adapted to these changes in the past and will continue to do so. What has not changed is how we learn from each other. It's not a matter of becoming more machine-like; it's a matter of becoming more human and more critical. We still need teachers to pattern and encourage ways of thinking critically. When we are overwhelmed by technology, the answer to this anxiety is not to let it absorb us. Instead, let us provide still, quiet places for people to step back and see how change affects them and what they should be doing to learn from this change. Abdicating our responsibility for our own agency in the face of the information maw is not a solution, and this book, as far as it suggests such a route, should be ignored.



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Vandermeulen, Carl. *Negotiating the Personal in Creative Writing*. Clevedon, Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2011.

Noam Scheindlin, City University of New York / LaGuardia

Creative writing is flourishing in American universities. The Association of Writers and Writers Programs lists 852 writing programs, an increase of almost 40% from 1994 (Fenza). But this is only part of the story. Now that creative writing courses have become common, if not standard for students in all majors, more students than ever are taking creative writing courses during their college career.

Such an increasing emphasis on creative writing in college curricula would seem to offer new ways for approaching critical thinking and reflection. Creative writing courses have the potential to offer students an additional semester of experience and instruction in writing beyond that of their composition course. They could permit students to build up a repertoire of expressive and compositional possibilities that could be applicable in nearly any course of study. Yet Carl Vandermeulen, in his fine new book *Negotiating the Personal in Creative Writing*, argues that these possibilities are not being exploited enough.

The problem, Vandermeulen argues, is that the prevalent model for the college creative writing course is the traditional writer's workshop, popularized by such institutions as the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference and the Iowa Writer's Workshop. Vandermeulen contends, however, that such workshops were not designed for the novice writer but, rather, for the writer who has already demonstrated a commitment to the practice. Further, Vandermeulen argues that this model remains entrenched in a romantic paradigm which takes as its premise the notion that good writing can be honed, but ultimately cannot be taught to those who do not demonstrate talent to begin with.

Vandermeulen, however, is less interested in isolating the few "geniuses" from any given creative writing class and much more in activating "the process by which students with lesser talents might nevertheless become persons who write" (9). Yet, if this is to be the case, then the discipline of creative writing would need to cultivate precisely what so many instructors of creative writing proclaim is unnecessary: a pedagogy. In stark contrast to the traditional workshop, which is organized around the authority of the successful writer-instructor as the model to emulate, Vandermeulen stakes out his position clearly: "Trying to teach without pedagogy," he writes, "is like trying to live without literature" (9).

A pedagogy is needed, he argues, because creative writing courses in college should focus on the process of writing, rather than the product. As such, creative writing pedagogy has much to learn from the college composition course, where students are not expected to come to the course with a product ready to be critiqued. Much of Vandermeulen's book involves a thoughtful re-shaping of these practices to meet the needs of creative expression. Yet Vandermeulen maintains that a pedagogy for creative writing by no means requires that the course be less rigorous or less challenging. Rather, in shifting the emphasis from product to process, he offers an eminently practical approach to helping students both generate content and engage in the kind of critical response and reflection that fosters attentive and rigorous revision. For Vandermeulen, the life of a creative writing class is not in the encounter between students and the finished text, but rather, in the dialogue between writers that the text elicits. It is from this notion that the book gets its

title: the successful creative writing class, Vandermeulen argues, is always a negotiation of the personal; it is the place where apprentice writers struggle *together* to express themselves in a shared medium. The classroom, then, is the place where the product must confront its own pliability and permeability as process.

At the book's core is a survey of teaching practices and instructional goals of American creative writing instructors: respondents rate a series of statements regarding their approach on a continuum of importance. They are also asked to comment on their challenges and frustrations, and on their triumphs. Drawing on this survey throughout, Vandermeulen proposes a series of practices that could serve to reconfigure the creative writing workshop, offering strategies for facilitating students' responses to each other's work and for reflection on their own work. Other chapters address possibilities for rethinking the role of the instructor in the creative writing course and offer useful approaches to grading, to responding to students' work, and to managing cases of "pretentious" or "blocked" writing (153). While never departing from his focus on practice, Vandermeulen draws on a wide array of theorists to make his point, from compositionists such as Peter Elbow and Patrick Bizarro, but also from literary critics and sociologists such as M.M. Bakhtin and René Girard.

The book itself is true to the dialogic method that its author advocates. Vandermeulen draws liberally on the comments of survey responders throughout, turning the book into a kind of polylogue of experiences in the classroom. As such, the book becomes a compelling collective narrative. Vandermeulen does not critique the responses that he presents; rather, like a good classroom facilitator, he tells his story through the careful juxtaposition of these responses: behind the plurality of classrooms to which the reader of this book is privy, resounds the gentle but unwavering voice of the author/teacher, who ultimately draws out the lesson.

The juxtaposition of responses is revealing. For example, Vandermeulen asks his respondents to rate the claim, "Students should want to publish and master the craft of the genre well enough to become more likely to be published." Only 7% of those surveyed for this issue saw this as "highly important" (14). Yet a clear majority responded that "Whole-class workshop/critiquing of students' drafts" is "highly important." If, to the bulk of respondents, the *product*, as a publishable text, is less important than the process, nonetheless, Vandermeulen's point is that the whole class critique in which the writer traditionally remains silent and receptive, was in fact created not to further the process, but to evaluate the product! It is out of this disparity that Vandermeulen carves the space his book occupies. Vandermeulen delicately and gracefully points out the inconsistency, and then proceeds to offer an alternative.

Vandermeulen delineates three tenets of the traditional writer's workshop and then "translates" these practices into those that would be more appropriate for the college creative writing workshop. The first indeed addresses that longstanding tradition of the writer's workshop: the whole-class critique. Vandermeulen recommends that this should be replaced with small "writer's groups." Because the focus here is on the cultivation and development of apprentice writers, the group workshop, he argues, provides a more nourishing environment for this work. With the risk of marginalization lessened, students would be more confident and, thus, less likely to be stymied by a competitive atmosphere for which they are not yet ready.

Vandermeulen also advocates replacing the workshop critique with that of the *response*. Instead of evaluating each other's work, students offer their groupmates narratives of their reading; they provide an audience that helps to mirror the writer's work so that he/she can know whether what was written has made its way all the way over to the reader. Vandermeulen provides a series of extremely useful rubrics that help students past the good/bad duality and into the role of the engaged reader.

Finally, Vandermeulen argues against the long tradition that the writer whose work is being discussed must remain silent. Rather, he suggests inviting the writer whose work is under consideration to speak. In this way the writer can ask targeted questions of his/her readers, questions that might, without the dialogic situation, not otherwise be formulated, let alone answered.

While the target of this book is naturally the college creative writing instructor, this book could be productively used in other spheres—no reason why the pedagogy Vandermeulen advocates could not be put to use in the high school creative writing class as well. Likewise, many of the practices that Vandermeulen proposes could also be re-deployed in the college composition class.

Yet the approaches that Vandermeulen offers might be equally effective even for workshops designed for practiced and accomplished writers. The “workshop poem,” for example, has been roundly criticized in recent years for its generic quality. Vandermeulen's call to emphasize the writing process over its product might go a long way to rejuvenate the kind of writing that is being produced in these settings. Indeed, process-based writing might not only produce better writing but new kinds of writing.

The novelist and poet Georges Perec writes that “literary history seems deliberately to ignore writing as practice, as work, as play” (97). Vandermeulen's book brings us back to the scene of a work's creation, and to the practice and play involved in it. He reminds us that writing is, in fact, made by writers. In *Negotiating the Personal*, he makes a respectful, but earnest case, for defying convention.



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Martin Cockroft, Waynesburg University

While Jeff Wilhelm and Bruce Novak's *Teaching Literacy for Love and Wisdom* is not supersized (a modest 250 pages, including backmatter), its authors' ambitions are. The front cover bears a visual hint of what's to come, featuring side-by-side photographs: a teenage girl sitting in the grass reading next to a photo of a more sophisticated, apparently liberated young woman, sans book and backlit by the sun, looking heavenward, arms spread like Kate Winslet's Rose on the prow of the Titanic. A subtitle rises above both of them: *Being the BOOK and Being the CHANGE* (emphasis theirs). Four pages in, the authors include epigraphs from the likes of Walt Whitman, Mahatma Gandhi, Franklin Roosevelt, and Albert Einstein—and that's just table setting; later, Wilhelm and Novak announce plans to rename the discipline of English, which they validly claim no longer "offers anything close to an adequate description" of what is taught and devote a chapter to synthesizing science, philosophy, and pedagogy "in a way no one has done before us" (21, 50). What the authors lack in page count they more than make up for in confidence and the sheer scope of their agenda.

In their introduction, "Among Schoolteachers," Wilhelm, prolific author and Professor of English Education at Boise State University, and Novak, Director of Educational Projects for the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning (and longtime leader in AEPL), give rationale for their go-big approach. We're in trouble, they say. Standards-based primary and secondary education, with its emphasis on accountability and results, has drained nearly all the joy out of classroom teaching. Worse, students themselves view school as "a barren way station, . . . a locale to pass the time, turn the pages, and get the credit" (Christenbury qtd. in Wilhelm and Novak 9). At the same time, the authors find the other of "two schools of thought," the critical theory approach that has dominated university English departments, to be valuable but ultimately ineffective, best at instituting "highly intelligent forms of anarchy" (52). What is needed, they say, is a third way—one that remembers the formation of people (as Sheridan Blau notes in his forward, even Nazis read great books) and one that can capture the public imagination and institute positive, lasting change. This third way will "foster the kinds of teacher thinking and educational conditions . . . that make being alive worthwhile" and "provide a coherent, readily communicable view of education" (8). Pursuing this path is their focus in this study.

Teaching for Love and Wisdom is organized in three parts, each part consisting of three chapters, each chapter divided into numerous short sections identified with boldface headers. Part 1 details the history and theory behind Wilhelm and Novak's key ideas. Chapter 1, for example, provides a fascinating overview of two prominent national education reform seminars, Dartmouth (1966) and Wye (1987), examining the contributions and failings of each. In Chapter 2, the authors pay particular attention to Wye, focusing on the tension between the final report of the seminar's main College Section, which favored an "issue-centered" approach to curriculum, and the work of

two marginalized groups, the Elementary [teachers'] Section and the self-proclaimed "wholistic/Joy" group—three female college professors the authors characterize as voices in the wilderness. Wilhelm and Novak see consonance between these two groups' emphasis on student-centered "truths of personhood" (Moffett qtd. in Wilhelm and Novak 42) experienced in literature and the groundbreaking educational philosophies of John Dewey and his protégé, Louise Rosenblatt. The authors are especially convinced by Dewey's later work, his move away from strict social constructivism and toward what Dewey called "aesthetic transaction": "experience that is personal, but not merely subjective," which engenders powerful relationships between reader and author, self and world (12-13).

At the end of Part 1 and throughout Part 2, the authors attempt to align Wilhelm's "three dimensions of [a reader's] response to literature"—evocative, connective, and reflective—with the book's central topics of life, love, and wisdom. *At the same time*, they align these topic with philosopher Paul Ricoeur's three dimensions of "narrative time," present-past, present-present, and present-future (10-11, 70). They also disclose their proposed reinvention of the English department as instead "Personal Studies" and introduce practical tips and exercises to enact that transformation. For instance, they talk about the importance of "frontloading" assignments, offer a list of "Ten Easy Ways to Ruin Reading" in the classroom, and show how "hotseating" a text's author (role-played by one or more students) helps explain why a writer might have written what she did. If this sounds like a lot to weave together, it is: Chapter 5 alone contains at least 14 different sections and sub-sections. Though it's impossible not to admire Wilhelm and Novak's enthusiasm, I found reading Chapters 4 and 5 straight through to be like spending the day with Richard Simmons; I was almost physically exhausted by the regimen, and I began to wonder whether Part 2 suffers as much as it gains from the collaboration of two brilliant teacher/thinkers: their kinetic energy outstrips their ability to effectively communicate the ideas they most eagerly want to share.

Part 3 consolidates the book's preoccupations by profiling teachers—Wilhelm, Novak, and four others Wilhelm recently worked with—who embody Dewey and Rosenblatt's "transaction" in their teaching. I was particularly impressed by junior high teacher Andrew Porter's use of an alter-ego, "Friedrich Mantooth," to help students understand critical lenses (Mantooth summarizes and interprets a chapter of *To Kill a Mockingbird*) and by high school teacher Debra Smith's articulate thoughts on how American literature creates and critiques a democratic society (164, 167). Though these profiles work a bit like product testimonials, since the teachers have all been closely mentored by Wilhelm, it's hard to argue against the quality of the product these educators seem to deliver. And while their methods might appear subversive to school or district administrators, their pedagogy would surely seem spot-on, if a tad intimidating, to most teachers. Part 3 wraps with a chapter on cultivating a "third space" where students and teachers seek "shared stories, shared life, and shared possibilities" and a final, rangy chapter that settles into a brief consideration and history of wisdom (174).

That chapter, the book's ninth, exemplifies the strength and weaknesses of *Teaching Literacy*. The authors are passionate, their call urgent (as it ought to be), and their convictions grounded by long years of study and practice. They are sold on their ideas and believe we should be, too; "Given all this, one would think everyone would readily embrace 'personal studies,'" they say earnestly in the conclusion (216). But theirs is an

everything-but-the-kitchen-sink approach: just in Chapter 9 we have a look at material excess, military might, and the nature of democracy; a short take-down of the federal “Race to the Top” program, in which schools compete for funding to spur innovation in K-12 education; a detailed list of support organizations for teachers interested in “wisdom in teaching and learning”; and a primer on the flowering of wisdom in the Axial age. In this final chapter and throughout their study, the authors link these subjects admirably, but not altogether successfully, and ultimately dazzle us more with their knowledge and zeal than persuade us of the merit and coherence of their cause.

