

BOOK REVIEWS**Beginner's Mind****Judy Halden-Sullivan, Book Review Editor**

As we proudly celebrate *JAEPL*'s twentieth anniversary, I believe the *ethos* that distinguishes our journal is what Suzuki Roshi describes as "beginner's mind": "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few" (21). At *JAEPL*, we are committed to dismantling preconceived notions; we want to stay wide-open to possibilities for teaching and learning. This issue's reviewed books are effective examples of that openness, reverberating within a lexicon made available in the past two decades. These studies seek to unsettle our understanding of gender, race, non-western wisdom traditions, and our home in the classroom.

For example, the gender wars: while a characterization made cliché in popular media, sadly, this strife is alive and debilitating in, of all places, elementary schools. Elizabeth French visits the gendered conflicts personified in graphic detail by Scott Richardson in *eleMENtary School—(Hyper)Masculinity in a Feminized Context*, a scalding narrative depicting the "boys club," divided female camps, and abused, ill-fated "others" who populate elementary school faculties. As Richardson reveals, a locus generally considered hyper-feminized is, conversely, home to resistant, domineering strongholds of uber-masculine male teachers who manipulate inexperienced new faculty and undercut the collaborative professional support that can foster students' success. Richardson seeks to establish, in French's assessment, "an effective teaching environment where teacher gender is translucent"—a light, French declares, that permits instructors and students to see both themselves and other possible worlds.

The shock of recognition Richardson that makes palpable in his study of gender identity in cultural context is similarly pungent in Wendy Ryden and Ian Marshall's book, *Reading, Writing, and the Rhetoric of Whiteness*, reviewed by Brad Lucas. Ryden and Marshall demonstrate the many ways that whiteness studies, as they are drawn into the teaching of rhetoric and composition, can become a distorting filter, subverting manifold possibilities for thinking. As a matter of fact, whiteness studies, the co-authors contend, seem to persistently undermine their own intentions—to trip over themselves. Lucas affirms this in his review's introduction, noting that "to draw attention to the invisible, oppressive, marginalizing presence of whiteness is to make it visible, but paradoxically that process then places whiteness as the center of attention, dominating that field of vision." Ryden and Marshall address this conundrum, Lucas explains, with provocative explorations of whiteness studies in many contexts: the popular narrative testimonies of liberal white subjects—well-received by whites; gender studies; scripted, much repeated public enactments of whiteness that bespeak not disclosure but instead the "rhetoric of kitsch" (69); *logos*-driven, western European epistemologies devoid of emotion; the unspoken imperialistic motives of Basic Writing; and the "schizophrenia" that erupts from the simultaneous call for both multiculturalism *and* color-blindness. This demanding, far-reaching critique, Lucas claims, prompts us "to keep our analyses ongoing and tempered with voices other than our own."

Conflicts, entrenched stances, persistent blindness—what to do? Can we speak together without mangling the dignity of diverse others? How can we advocate for meaningful change in such a contentious world? Barry Kroll provides surprising Eastern possibilities in *The Open Hand: Arguing as an Art of Peace*. In his study, Kroll details the structure, assignments, and activities he employs to embody non-adversarial approaches to argumentation. As reviewer Candace Walworth explains, herself a student of both Zen and tai chi, Kroll draws from a rich array of non-western wisdom traditions—Asian pedagogies, kinesthetic modes of learning found in the martial arts, meditation practices—to craft a four-hour first-year seminar that makes argumentation visceral, that speaks to students’ minds *and* bodies. Kroll describes his seminar as “a series of conventional classes punctuated by weekly lab sessions devoted to contemplative as well as kinesthetic learning” (114). Walworth analyzes Kroll’s extensive and practical class plans, sample student writing projects, and students’ reflective notebooks to affirm the efficacy of Kroll’s non-traditional stance toward argument. In her review, she asserts that Kroll’s strategies help to re-envision dialogues that engage not just academics, but all of us “in our roles as parents, adult children, citizens, neighbors, friends, and lovers.”

Each of these reviewed books asks us to reconsider the place that animates these complex issues: the classroom. All paths, however innovative or resistant or political, bring us home. As Jeremiah Conway makes clear in his deeply personal testimony, *The Alchemy of Teaching: The Transformation of Lives*, teachers, often preoccupied with the mundane mechanics of instruction, must correct “our blindness to the event of human change” available in the classroom—the little moments of students’ transformation (7). Inspired by his long career as a professor of philosophy, Conway paints poignant vignettes of everyday moments with students that he does not want to forget. His stories, as reviewer Caleb Corkery elucidates, remind us that we sometimes must learn the simplest things last, that we must, in Corkery’s words, awaken in the classroom to “explaining our ideas, listening to each student, watching for where to find the center of the lesson.”

Home to the classroom. This is the locus somehow rediscovered in *every* book review I have assigned in the last ten years. In the midst of continuing theoretical and technological metamorphoses, the classroom, however construed, is the constant: the place of remaking and becoming. I confess I hope this exploration never ends. I mention this particularly to my colleague Dr. Julie Nichols, Associate Professor of English at Utah Valley University, whom we welcome as *JAEPL*’s new Book Review Editor. You may recall Julie as a frequent *JAEPL* book reviewer herself. To all of my reviewers and to all of the editors with whom I’ve had the honor of working in the past decade, thank you for being my guides, my teachers. Now it’s time to start again: Julie, please enjoy being a “beginner”!



Works Cited

Suzuki, Shunryu. *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*. Ed. Trudy Dixon. 6th ed. NY: Weatherhill, 2003. Print.

Richardson, Scott. *eleMENTary School – (Hyper) Masculinity in a Feminized Context*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2012. Print.

Elizabeth M. French, Lebanon Valley College

From individuals to families to communities, in the workplace, the market place, in education and in politics, gender equality and its ensuing dynamics have been hotly debated. Strong opinions on both sides have been pronounced and dialoged. It is a most interesting and compelling conflagration when gender relationships are discussed in the context of an arena that is traditionally feminine and silent: the elementary school. That is precisely what author Scott Richardson examines in his book, *eleMENTary School—(Hyper) Masculinity in a Feminized Context*. This personal narrative of his experiences sheds light onto the masculine perspective of the teacher and administrator in the elementary setting.

The grey covered book provides the typical title information, with an emphasis on the word “men” in *eleMENTary* and a picture that covers half the page of a partially depicted young mustached, bearded man with his tongue sticking out. His eyes are not visible. While the letter collage in the book’s title is attention-grabbing, the picture is distracting and can, in fact, be a deterrent to reading the study. On the protruding tongue are two metal symbols; one is star-shaped, and one is an exclamation point. This photographic illustration is misleading and does not provide an obvious connection to its content. Even after reading the book, the cover photo is unclear. Who does the face represent: male teachers, the “boys club,” the students, or perhaps they are embodiments of the many expletives within the text? The symbols on the tongue are open to interpretation. The cover may not invite potential audiences to read the book.

The narrative, however, is gripping. This study provides a glimpse into the experiences of a male, elementary teacher, Richardson, who felt bullied out of his teaching career because he did not fit into the “boys club” (23). The author’s descriptors and rules for the “boys club” echo reflections in both Michael Kimmel’s study *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men* (2009) and Deborah Sarah David and Robert Brannon’s book *The Forty-nine Percent Majority: The Male Sex Role* (1976), both of which set the stage for Richardson’s experiences and relationships described throughout his narrative. The rules of the “boys club” include: have a penis (151); be hypermasculine (152); engage in “borderwork,” in other words, support gender inequality (152); allow only for the value of one’s own masculinity (153); defend the man as expert (157); and never challenge traditional rules of masculinity (157). Richardson was able to develop relationships with male teachers who were in the boys club and those that were not. He also narrates his experiences with female faculty.

Female faculty members were categorized in two ways: those who taught prior to 2002’s No Child Left Behind legislation—pre-NCLBers—and those who taught after, post-NCLBers (43). The pre-NCLBers were more experienced teachers who, according to Richardson, brought teaching to every child in a situated, hands-on way, unlike the post-NCLBers—less experienced instructors—who taught to a test and were data driven (43). Although teaching differences and opinions existed between the two groups of women, they were willing to work and coexist together in a positive way. Both groups

sought to work with all faculty, either to maintain positive relationships or to satisfy their supervisors (44). The post-NCLBers were more accepted by the boys club because these younger female faculty members needed to feel a part of and be pleasing to the existing faculty and administration. Men who did not fit into the boys club were labeled as the “others.”

In regard to the fate of the “others,” Richardson discusses the experience of Owen, a college friend of Richardson’s. Owen, an openly gay English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) teacher, struggled to interact in the school with his masculine colleagues because he did not fit into the accepted “real men” category. His teaching was genuine and effective, and he had a deep concern for children, but his interaction with the male faculty was unbearable and degrading, leaving him with little confidence. Owen felt anxiety and stress in the workplace. His male colleagues would neither listen to nor accept him, which made Owen feel isolated, alone, and marginalized. At the end of the school year, Owen left teaching for another career.

Conversely, Richardson details the experience of another faculty member, Dru, who had similar issues in regard to acceptance, but whose professional trajectory was somewhat different. Dru was considered a geek—gay and feminine—by the boys club. However, the larger faculty liked and accepted him as a leader. Dru was very athletic, a heterosexual, and liked to take charge. But he was the librarian, which was not considered a “real man” position. The boys club bullied him continually, even though he tried to work with his masculine counterparts. Dru sometimes challenged them; this brought consequences and belittlement. He was an effective faculty member with other staff and took his job very seriously, while persistently showing his concern for the students in the school. This was unnerving for the boys club. They did not consider his role as librarian and technology expert to be valuable boys club vocations. They also believed that Dru, by performing his job well, was actively intending to usurp their power. During one incident, Dru had a public confrontation with a boys club member over an educational programming suggestion. As a result, his ideas were sabotaged by the boys club, preventing his recommendations from being carried out. Although Dru did not back down from this and other confrontations, he suffered emotional consequences from this relentless struggle. He was isolated and verbally belittled.

In contrast to the exasperation and marginalization of “others,” Richardson depicts Alex—the new teacher—one of the most unsettling characters in this narrative. Richardson cites Alex as an example of a first-year teacher becoming a member of the boys club while at the same time losing his focus on why he selected the teaching profession in the first place. Without seeking the support of those who could guide a first-year teacher to a successful year, Alex instead chose or accepted the role that the boys club advocated for a fellow member. From the beginning of the first day of class until the school year’s end, Richardson follows Alex’s teaching path. He examines his decisions about students, his personal choices that echo those of the boys club, and his lack of ability to manage his class and teach. As an example, Alex had difficulty guiding his classroom from his first days of school due, in part, to trying to use control and humor, a typical male authoritarian teaching behavior, as noted by Richardson. This strategy backfired. By the end of the school year, his classroom was out of control. In fact, throughout the year, he continued to seek advice from the boys club, which only exacerbated his instructional

and management struggles. His difficulties were later noted in his end-of-year evaluation. Alex was deflated and defeated after his first year of teaching, but he still took his solace from his boys club association. Richardson even wonders if Alex *likes* teaching, as there appears to be no evidence affirming this supposition. Alex questions this himself. Richardson also notes that Alex might have had a more positive year had he sought help from other colleagues and was assigned a qualified mentor. This suggestion is problematic because there is no evidence, according to Richardson, that the school ever addressed this shortcoming or the other situational problems noted. Alex becomes the poster child for the elementary school's culture of hyper-masculinity and its debilitating impact on teaching.

In ways Richardson carefully articulates, each character involved in his experience either contributed to or diminished the entire faculty's main goal of teaching. This goal is reaching all children by caring for and educating each to their highest potential. Collaboration and communication are essential as all educators move together toward the same end. Gender should never, and does not need to ever, get in the way of this accomplishment.

This book is thought-provoking for any educator or leader in this field. One would think that we have moved past our patriarchal moorings when we are instructing children. However, Richardson challenges our minds to survey masculine and feminine roles in the elementary school in a new light. We, as educational leaders and models, need to wake up, become aware, and cultivate an environment of care in the elementary school that fosters an effective teaching environment where teacher gender is translucent: providing a special light through which students see possible worlds (160). Silence is not an option. Richardson's is a splendid study of "eleMEntary" school culture, a microcosm of society in need of humane, productive change.



Works Cited

- David, Deborah Sarah and Robert Brannon. *The Forty-Nine Percent Majority: The Male Sex Role*. NY: Random House, 1976. Print.
- Kimmel, Michael. *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. NY: Harper, 2009. Print.

Ryden, Wendy and Ian Marshall. *Reading, Writing, and the Rhetorics of Whiteness*. NY: Routledge, 2012. Print.

Brad Lucas, Texas Christian University

One of the central paradoxes for whiteness studies, one that stifles their attempts at social change, stems from their emphasis on the white subject as they seek to reveal the pernicious, dominant ubiquity of whiteness. Put another way, to draw attention to the invisible, oppressive, marginalizing presence of whiteness is to make it visible, but paradoxically that process then places whiteness as the center of attention, dominating that field of vision. Throughout their book, Wendy Ryden and Ian Marshall confront this problematic of re-centering the white subject and all the complexities it entails. In doing so, they challenge themselves to work through such paradoxes in their own writing, showing us by example ways to do the same.

Rather than canvassing the scholarly terrain of whiteness studies, Ryden and Marshall offer in their introduction a succinct overview, encouraging readers who are new to (or well-steeped in) whiteness studies to consider the book in the context of our so-called “post-racial” era, “to begin a mapping of whiteness as an interdisciplinary epistemology” that contends with its paradoxes and possibilities, “specifically centered on matters of writing, pedagogy, and classroom practices in a university setting” (9). Ryden and Marshall then alternate authorship for the six chapters that follow, reinforcing their inquiry as an ongoing dialogue about whiteness in rhetoric and composition. First, in terms I will qualify in the upcoming discussion, Ryden interrogates narrative testimony from positions of liberal subjectivity; she teases out the theoretical affinities between whiteness and gender studies; and she situates whiteness studies within the emotional or affective domain. For his part, Marshall challenges the motives of Basic Writing and its conspicuously absent critical discourse on whiteness; he traces the institutional perpetuation of language hierarchies in Basic Writing and its roots in New Criticism; and he examines critical pedagogy alongside the “schizophrenia” resulting from the discourses of both multiculturalism and color blindness.

Chapter One begins with a personal account from Ryden’s childhood, a narrative point of departure to discuss Jill Swiencicki’s idea of the “awareness narrative,” an authorial rite of passage in which authors situate their lives (14-15). According to Ryden, narratives revealing an awareness of racism comprise a rhetorical tradition she calls the “whiteness confessional . . . a prerequisite act of self-actualization that seemingly lays the groundwork for dismantling white racist identity, a kind of ‘truth and reconciliation’ strategy of responsible owning of experience from which one can move forward to become a member of the group of antiracist workers” (15). As Ryden has it, the constructed subjectivity and authenticity in such confessionals can help us understand the pedagogy and scholarship surrounding the personal essay (17-18). To that end, she compares Thomas Newkirk’s and Douglass Hesse’s (separately) published accounts of teaching George Orwell’s essay “Shooting an Elephant” to show how the essay typifies the whiteness confessional. Ryden then considers the dynamics of “coming out” and “closeting” narratives with the whiteness confessional, explaining how “the closet” serves both LGBT and white identity as a metaphor for invisibility; however, the former comes

out to embrace a subjugated identity whereas the latter comes out to shed a racist identity “for a new and improved one, thus producing the reclaimed white subject” (27-28). Ryden shows how such confessional narratives create a space for a “ritual reclaiming,” which may account for why white audiences find such narratives so appealing (37).

Marshall begins Chapter Two with a childhood anecdote, illustrating how his British “white” accent overruled his “dark skin color” in the United States (40). Pointing to the absences of African-American Language in the academy and mass media, he argues that Basic Writing “still carries the essential nature of its racist beginnings as a project to sanitize the language of ‘the other’ . . .” (42). Revisiting the so-called crisis of open admissions in the 1970s, Marshall traces how Basic Writing was racialized and linked with political activism, how its mission became “a kind of colonial enterprise to mimic the language and habits of the white established power structure” (50-51). Targeting the whiteness of critical pedagogues (in representation and practice), Marshall follows with a critique of “bidialectalism,” the argument that students should simply learn Standard English despite their linguistic backgrounds (53). Marshall uses the teaching of a Charles Chesnut story to illustrate the challenges to identity and individualism faced by bidialectal students (65). Troubling the concept of dialectical hybridity as an alternative, Marshall ponders whether “basic writers, if allowed to exercise their own language in a reimagined course which takes seriously the notion of multilingualism, would contribute to an institution’s integrity and uplift” (67).

In Chapter Three, Ryden argues that our academic discussions of race, of whiteness, too often “turn into scripted recitations rather than dialogue,” discussions “governed by a rhetoric of kitsch” (69). Through one student’s resistance, she illustrates the “alienating and bankrupt discourse” of liberal multiculturalism propagated by the media (through emphasis on the trivial, ephemeral, and sensational) which privileges the “white dismissal of racism’s continued relevance in American society and serves as a locus of white identity formation” (73). However, like the problematic re-centered white subject, the attempt to define whiteness as *kitsch*—“as false, empty, hollow, *inauthentic*—becomes its own variety of kitsch, essentialized and mired in melancholy, a self-conscious manifestation of its absent presence” (73; italics Ryden). Ryden turns from the classroom to the 2007 media spectacle surrounding radio personality Don Imus and his racist comments about the Rutgers women’s basketball team. However, moving beyond the “scripted” public response, Ryden instead views Imus through the lens of “camp,” revealing him as a self-caricature—a reading not possible by a public adhering to kitsch discussions that prevent meaningful, critical conversations about race (80-83). Challenging kitsch responses to racism, Ryden suggests, can provide us with the critical tools to understand how whiteness manifests itself in our public, institutional, and classroom conversations.

In Chapter Four, Marshall recounts his struggles with colleagues who advocate a writing pedagogy indebted to New Criticism and middle-class notions of correctness: whiteness perpetuated by institutional structures that determine classroom practice through required texts and reliance on contingent faculty. Such retrograde views of language and pedagogy participate in the hegemony of whiteness, what Marshall calls an “enthymematic relationship” in which “the unspoken goal is to maintain the unspoken structures of power and privilege” (107). Such enthymemes also play out in student discourse that “talks back” to the institution, as Marshall shows through the cases of two

students: one who sends a campus-wide email with a racially charged poem about his struggles adapting to college life and another who challenges white identity expectations through reflecting on her working-class background and her concerns about the future (108-14).

Marshall continues the theme of “talking back” in his final chapter, focusing on resistance he faces as a black professor from his white students who “see my examination of race and racism as already implied in everything I say even when the lines of discussion I invite them to pursue do *not* specifically include race” (141). Here, too, Marshall returns to earlier themes, showing the impact of the schizophrenic discourses of multiculturalism and color-blindness. In her final chapter, Ryden also invokes earlier discussions to challenge pedagogies that neglect the affective domain and its role in whiteness studies. She observes that “attempts to confront white racism often evolve around a *logos*-centered epistemology devoid of the emotional considerations that Aristotle and Freire appear to identify as essential to the project of human knowing” (121). Looking to the social dimensions of emotion—as a discursive and rhetorical phenomenon—may indeed provide a way to better understand the production and circulation of whiteness and, perhaps, to enact social change by helping to “move the transformative potential of critical whiteness studies beyond the limitations of a rhetoric of rationality” (135).

Through a combination of theoretical prowess, personal history, and forthright critique, Ryden and Marshall confront the many ways that whiteness pervades rhetoric and composition, encouraging us to rethink and reimagine the practices that contribute to its ongoing production. At first glance, a book-length project on whiteness studies might appear passé, a late addition to the proliferation of whiteness scholarship and its subsequent post-whiteness critics. However, Ryden and Marshall pursue a range of situations that reflect the larger enterprise of rhetoric and composition, ranging from the student writer to the institutional and cultural forces that perpetuate racism. While I appreciated the alternating perspectives from chapter to chapter, I was surprised to find so little discussion *between* them, a missed opportunity for dialogue that doesn’t appear until the brief Afterword. The form of *Reading, Writing, and the Rhetorics of Whiteness*, then, falls somewhere between a co-authored book and an edited collection, but I don’t think the shape undermines their project. Instead, Ryden and Marshall prompt us to keep our analyses ongoing and tempered with voices other than our own.



Kroll, Barry. *The Open Hand: Arguing as an Art of Peace*. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2013. Print.

Candace Walworth, Naropa University

I'm sure I'm not alone among *JAEP*L readers in my desire to design courses that speak to the head, heart, and hands, engaging students in collaborative explorations of "real world" challenges. Yet obstacles to this vision abound: fear, disciplinary habits, institutional roadblocks, and a dearth of practical examples. Occasionally, a pioneering book emerges, illuminating an innovative, integrative approach to teaching such courses. Visionary and field-tested, Barry Kroll's *The Open Hand: Arguing as an Art of Peace* is such a book.

Kroll is the Robert D. Rodale Professor in Writing at Lehigh University, his home base for investigating alternative ways to conceptualize and teach argument. Over five semesters, from 2007 to 2012, Kroll taught "Arguing as an Art of Peace," a first-year seminar, which served as a laboratory in which to explore non-adversarial approaches to argument—"with an open hand, as an art of peace" (2).

In the opening chapter, Kroll introduces three modes of learning—conceptual-procedural, kinesthetic, and contemplative—which are at the core of his course. His course (and this study's subsequent account) is based on an innovative use of a "fourth-hour," a one-hour weekly lab where he teaches mediation, mindfulness, and kinesthetic exercises based on his study of Japanese martial arts, primarily aikido and tai chi. Kroll describes his writing-intensive course as "a series of conventional classes punctuated by weekly lab sessions devoted to contemplative as well as kinesthetic learning" (114).

Kroll's highlights of distinctive characteristics of the course actually provide an excellent summary of the book. For instance, Kroll's first-year seminar *and* his study:

- Include rhetorical tactics and modes of arguing that offer alternatives to the familiar thesis-support patterns of arguing
- Encourage students to analyze their interpersonal conflicts along with controversial public issues, grounding the study of rhetoric in real life conflicts
- Emphasize Asian practices and modes of analysis that expand the usual Western approach to composition pedagogy
- Employ a kinesthetic modality of learning, encouraging students to explore the art of arguing by practicing martial movements
- Incorporate contemplative practices and meditative arts as way to cultivate awareness and equanimity in the midst of conflict (3)

Because the book's five chapters follow the course outline, readers are introduced to key concepts and assignments in the same sequence as Kroll's students. This provides a felt sense of the dramaturgy and choreography of the course. Following the introductory chapter entitled "Clapping In," Kroll includes three chapters based on three assignments, each demonstrating a distinctive approach to argument: "Reframing and Deliberative Argument," "Attentive Listening and Conciliatory Argument," and "Mediating and Integrative Argument." In the final chapter, "Bowing Out," Kroll re-visits the three

modes of learning, providing further discussion of each and examining the impact of the course on students.

I began reading *The Open Hand* with a professional eye, as I was immersed in designing and teaching undergraduate seminars and seeking pedagogical inspiration. As a Zen and tai chi student, I was eager to learn how Kroll incorporates contemplative and kinesthetic learning into a seminar focused on arguing, which on the surface seems neither contemplative nor kinesthetic. Soon I found myself reading for pleasure, relishing the descriptive detail and superb pacing of this 138-page narrative, beginning with “clapping in” on the first day of class, ending with “bowing out” in silence on the last day. As I read, I began to notice my habits as a citizen and family member, observing, as Kroll’s students did, the extent to which I, often unconsciously, resort to the tactics of the closed fist, reproducing the dynamics of an “argument culture” (Tannen). Finally, I discovered common ground with Kroll and his students, working toward the goal of resolving “conflicts nonviolently, protecting everyone (even one’s opponent) from harm” (3).

Although Kroll reports a life-long interest in Asian ideas and practices, he did not begin to study aikido until age fifty-seven, a detail that may inspire readers who, like Kroll, identify themselves as “underdeveloped” kinesthetic learners. Recognizing “the power of kinesthetic inquiry” to teach him (and his students) about argument and conflict, Kroll developed a low-impact version of movements based on aikido and tai chi for classroom exploration. He makes clear to students and readers that he is not an aikido master teaching aikido but rather an English professor who has incorporated kinesthetic and contemplative learning into his teaching and scholarship.

Kroll presents meditation and mindfulness as “practical arts that [enhance] one’s effectiveness in the world, especially in difficult conversations, interpersonal disputes, and arguments about divisive issues” (13). He urges students in “Arguing as an Art of Peace” to move toward rather than avoid controversial issues, asking, “*What can mindfulness contribute when we engage in conflicts and arguments?*” (22; italics in Kroll). Students choose their own topic and stick with it for each of the class’s three papers and modes of argument. As readers, we learn about Kroll’s method in part through excerpts from student notebooks. In these notebooks, students reflect on day-to-day conflicts, examining non-Western concepts such as *yin* and *yang* (receptive and assertive), and applying what they learn to analyze arguments. They also tackle some of the most polarizing conflicts of our times—the global energy crisis, marriage equality, abortion, and stem-cell research, among others.

Kroll’s book helps to dispel a misconception about contemplative education: that it exclusively nurtures solitary activity—retreating to a cave or ascending to a mountain-top—rather than existing on a continuum, ranging from solitary activity to contemplative activism (Coburn qtd. in Grace and Simmer-Brown 6).

Rather than a traditional literature review, throughout the book, Kroll introduces readers to the wide range of influences on his thinking and classroom practices. He embeds his discussion of relevant scholarly sources into the overarching narrative arc. Some readers may be drawn to Kroll’s dramatization of classroom dynamics, others to theoretical linkages in the body of the text and footnotes, while still others will gravitate to the wisdom teachings, as I did.

In the chapter “Mediating and Integrative Argument,” for example, Kroll tells a version of a story about two cooks arguing over an orange. Both cooks insist they need the orange to complete a meal. A third cook enters the kitchen and ends the disagreement by slicing the orange in two and giving each cook half. It seems like a fair deal until we learn that one cook needed only the rind and the other only the juice (95).

Kroll links the dilemma of the cooks, who identify with their “positions” rather than their underlying interests, with the challenge of finding “creative ways to lead opponents from conflict to cooperation . . .” (96). While he acknowledges that some occasions require strong advocacy and confrontation (the closed fist), his purpose is “to counterbalance the emphasis on confrontational argument in [students’] previous training and experience” (126).

One of the book’s strengths is that it reveals the strategies of the open hand in diverse, sometimes surprising, geographical and contemporary locations: in editorials written by local and nationally syndicated columnists; in conflicts students experience with parents, roommates, and professors; in American poetry (like Emily Dickinson’s “Tell all the truth but tell it slant— / Success in Circuit lies”); and Asian literature and arts. This approach grounds the book’s more theoretical discussions, offering a “boots on the ground” appeal to classroom teachers.

The Open Hand concludes with two appendices. In the first, a series of photographs, Kroll’s students demonstrate the movement sequences associated with each of the three modes of argument. I found the photographs and accompanying narrative helpful and think other visual learners will, too. While some of the movements central to aikido—pivoting around and circling in—are challenging to visualize in still photographs, Kroll’s detailed, lively prose helps readers make connections between the movements depicted in the photographs and the “search for less adversarial ways to argue” (12).

The second appendix features three complete student papers, one each of the three assignments, along with assignment guidelines and brief commentary. While Kroll quotes judiciously from student electronic notebooks and feedback on course evaluations throughout the book, I was eager to read examples of complete papers associated with this innovative pedagogy, papers he describes as “some of the best” arguments students produced (149).

Impressive as the final papers were, I was most inspired by the insights Kroll excerpted from the reflective notebooks, which demonstrate students’ struggles with the tactics of the open hand—“reframing, attentive listening, and mediating”—and their breakthroughs (5). For example, a young woman, locked in destructive conflict with her father about the challenge of paying for college tuition, steps out of the habitual fight or flight pattern, beyond “the closed fist of confrontation or the passive hand of avoidance,” demonstrating an ability to balance assertiveness and receptivity (131, 133). Kroll notes that these seemingly small shifts in perspective are surprisingly powerful. This example, among others, demonstrates how his teaching strategy of focusing “on the continuities between everyday disputes and argumentation about social issues” can affect change (6).

The Open Hand merits wide readership among liberal arts faculty, as it contributes to the fields of rhetoric and communication, conflict resolution, composition, and contemplative pedagogy. It is especially relevant to those teaching college-level courses on argumentation. As Kroll addresses learning to “make thoughtful *choices* about how

to argue with others, especially those who oppose or disagree with us” (124; italics in Kroll), readers beyond academia can also benefit. In our roles as parents, adult children, citizens, neighbors, friends, and lovers, we all face these challenges that Kroll mindfully articulates.



Works Cited

- Coburn, Thomas. “The Convergence of Liberal Education and Contemplative Education— Inevitable?” *Meditation and the Classroom: Contemplative Pedagogy for Religious Studies*. Ed. Fran Grace and Judith Simmer-Brown. Albany, NY: State University of New York P, 2011. Print.
- Tannen, Deborah. *The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue*. NY: Random House, 1998. Print.

Conway, Jeremiah. *The Alchemy of Teaching: The Transformation of Lives*. Boulder, CO: Sentient Publications, 2013. Print.

Caleb Corkery, Millersville University of Pennsylvania

Inspirational stories about teaching are familiar to us as educators. Narratives convey our work in ways that quantitative measures could never express. And classroom stories have proven to be persuasive. As movements to assist poor, such accounts as Samuel Freedman's *Small Victories*, Tracey Kidder's *Among Schoolchildren*, and, of course, the film versions of written accounts from urban classrooms, such as *Dangerous Minds* or *Stand and Deliver* have inspired marginalized school districts. Teach for America, on its tenth anniversary, communicated its successes by publishing their stories of helping students in disadvantaged communities.

Narratives about human transformation have helped fuel a missionary zeal for equity in education. But isn't such dramatic potential always present in our classrooms? Do we need to have students rescued from isolating poverty and racism to recognize the power of human change in the classroom? Jeremiah Conway, in his recent book *The Alchemy of Teaching* challenges educators to recognize "our blindness to the event of human change" (7). Conway presents incidents that awakened in him the "enormity of the educative act, the ways in which teaching intersects with lives" (7). But he brings a pressing exigency with his recalled experience. Since education research is dominated by factual reports and theoretical models, stories of change go unspoken (11). He worries that "the human transformations occurring at the very center of teaching are liable to slip like water through our fingers" (11). Conway aims to remind us of the true power of what we do.

Excavating classroom experiences to refocus the profession is nothing new. It would be hard to name a teacher-scholar who hasn't invoked classroom experience to influence the rest of us. And who can even keep us teachers from recounting our weighty deeds? Conway's contribution is unique, though, since he doesn't focus on himself. Instead of explicating pedagogy, he captures his interactions with students and their unexpected results. He's not portraying noble deeds; he's witnessing serendipity. His message: great teaching moments can happen when you stay tuned in. Though his examples come out of his experience teaching philosophy, he provides a broader context to help us connect his observations to our own disciplines.

Conway uses Bruegel's *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* to frame his purpose. The painting, reproduced in the book, depicts a routine moment in 16th-century Holland. We see a farmer plowing, a fisherman casting a net, a shepherd tending a flock. We see ships passing by. Amid these focused pursuits are the legs of Icarus as he plunges into the water. No one notices. As Conway describes, "his death [is] hardly a ripple on the ocean's surface" (3). Icarus, from mythology, had tried to escape the tyrant King Minos with great ingenuity, making wings of feathers glued with wax. When he soared too close to the sun, his wings melted, and he plunged into the sea. Conway describes the story as one of transformation—"the human endeavor to overcome what imprisons us, the courageous flight to freedom, the overlooking of limits, and the terrible plummet we risk" (4). But in the painting no one notices the boy. This spectacular lesson has no

impact on the rest of us; we're too busy doing our jobs. Conway relates this scenario to our students, who make dramatic leaps and also fail spectacularly, yet we pay them no mind. He describes the print as issuing a warning: "if educators merely instruct (that is, ply students with information and tools without paying attention to the people who will use them), then institutions of learning may succeed only in creating more clever tyrants, more aggressive Minotaurs, more cunning labyrinths" (7). We must notice how our students are attempting our lessons, observe their experience and join in with them. He points this out for our own benefit: "Teaching is an act of service, and service cannot be sustained without resentment unless there is deepening awareness of what factors make such desire to serve possible. Disconnect teachers from human transformation, and the love of teaching diminishes" (9).

The chapters of this book tour us through classroom moments Conway does not want to forget. We see the narrator observing a young woman's turn around in class after personalizing Socrates's cave story; trying to maintain communication with a student who perceives Conway as a secular humanist unable to see Truth in the Bible; observing a terminally ill student pursue her degree—to name a few. These incidents reveal the struggle and resulting change that learning brings. We see Conway encountering students who seem disaffected, frustrated, or sad. We watch him navigate the interactions that lead to a meaningful outcome, for both student and teacher. But he's not giving us a master lesson. He's showing us examples of staying engaged. Sometimes he's part of the challenge to be overcome; sometimes he helps guide the student through. What's important is that he *notices*. Conway demonstrates how attentiveness to the student's experience brings opportunities to witness and assist the great leaps our students undertake. He helps us see where the openings might be around us. For instance, we see a student unprepared for a class presentation show up in his office the day the assignment is due. Conway reframes the task by focusing on a single character in the reading. The student agrees, though feeling forced to accept. But, after the presentation, she confesses to poignant insights she made connecting the character to herself. This marginal student even remained in contact with Conway years later about her development in relation to this character. One sees in Conway's examples a discernible attitude rather than a distinct pedagogy. As Conway explains, "Educators enact such care in having the time to talk and the patience to be silent, in the observance of faces, in the willingness to alter plans in order to better engage the students in one's midst" (134).

Conway's advice channels the power of the humanist tradition. He invokes the individual's drive toward self-awareness and creativity as a guiding principle for good instruction. He also places wonder at the center of transformation as students deepen their understanding of a subject by recognizing their ignorance and prejudices. He frames this message as a warning to our confidence in technology: "Cultivate the humanity of the young or the advancement of technology will do us little good and considerable harm" (153). These are refreshing, well-timed messages to temper today's press toward online teaching and statistically quantifiable learning outcomes.

One critique Conway briefly addresses is the problematic power of the teacher. Though educators are in a position to influence students, they do not always know what is best for their students, such as which transformations are important to their lives. Critics such as Stanley Fish claim that the power differential thus directs the students'

choices and behavior. Conway responds that the teacher role is suggestive and assistive. He concludes this discussion by returning to his main point, "Participation in such transformation is one of the great delights and responsibilities of teaching" (134).

However, Conway does not address the significance of the instructor's power in shaping the student's response to the course. Students may interpret Conway's classroom stance as an expectation to please his eye for transformation. Students may be eager to interpret and deliver on the teacher's subtle expectations of student performance. Asking students to connect their personal lives to the course could exert such pressure. Rhetoric and composition scholar Anne Ruggles Gere points out this problem in personal writing genres. As Gere explains, students perceive and deliver on the expectation that their "narratives carry a certain revelatory kick . . . perceived as breaking pernicious silences" (204). Providing openings for transformation may only bring out a *performance* of change.

None of Conway's examples suggest students "gamed" him by performing a change to succeed in the course. However, Conway's depiction of student transformations draws on totalizing universals, without accounting for how family and ethnic culture might influence the meaning of education and self-development. Assuming universal values of transformation through education can put minority and first-generation students into more marginalized positions. Lisa Delpit calls these assumptions "additional codes of power" that prevent students from succeeding who do not already possess them (294). Conway might consider how his conception of transformation could be seen through the eyes of students less familiar with the humanist tradition.

The Alchemy of Teaching offers a valuable contribution to current thinking about higher education. Simply committing these stories to scholarly literature helps to expand, if not correct, the current conversation about the goals motivating educators. Additionally, Conway taps into the optimism that inspires many of us to join this profession. We must revel in the subtle yet abundant growth of the people we teach, both to cultivate our students' progress but also to marvel at our fruitful work. Through the pressures to meet university strategic goals, accreditation standards, and satisfactory student evaluations, Conway reminds us that our achievements are in "the trenches": explaining our ideas, listening to each student, watching for where to find the center of the lesson.



Works Cited

- Dangerous Minds*. Dir. John N. Smith. DVD. Hollywood Pictures, 1995.
- Delpit, Lisa. "The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children." *Harvard Educational Review* 58.3 (August 1988): 280-98. Print.
- Fish, Stanley. "Will the Humanities Save Us?" *New York Times*. 6 January 2008. Print.
- Freedman, Samuel G. *Small Victories: The Real World of a Teacher, Her Students & Their High School*. NY: Harper, 1990. Print.
- Gere, Anne R. "Revealing Silence: Rethinking Personal Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 53.2 (Dec. 2001): 203-220. Print.
- Kidder, Tracey. *Among Schoolchildren*. NY: Harper, 1990. Print.
- Stand and Deliver*. Dir. Ramón Menéndez. DVD. Warner Brothers, 1988.