

J A E P L

The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning

**Between the Words:
Reading and Writing the Unknown**

Volume 6 • Winter 2000-2001

The Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning

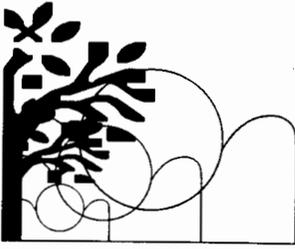
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JAEPL is a nonprofit journal published yearly by the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning with support from Western Kentucky University and Ball State University. JAEPL gratefully acknowledges this support as well as that of its manuscript readers.

Logo Design: Ann and Kip Strasma



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(ISSN 1085-4630)

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JAEPL

The Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning (AEPL), an official assembly of the National Council of Teachers of English, is open to all those interested in extending the frontiers of teaching and learning beyond traditional disciplines and methodologies.

The purposes of AEPL, therefore, are to provide a common ground for theorists, researchers, and practitioners to explore ideas on the subject; to participate in programs and projects on it; to integrate these efforts with others in related disciplines; to keep abreast of activities along these lines of inquiry; and to promote scholarship on and publication of these activities.

The *Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning, JAEPL*, meets this need. It provides a forum to encourage research, theory, and classroom practices involving expanded concepts of language. It contributes to a sense of community in which scholars and educators from pre-school through the university exchange points of view and cutting-edge approaches to teaching and learning. *JAEPL* is especially interested in helping those teachers who experiment with new strategies for learning to share their practices and confirm their validity through publication in professional journals.

Topics of interest include but are not limited to: intuition, inspiration, insight, imagery, meditation, silence, archetypes, emotion, attitudes, values, spirituality, motivation, body wisdom and felt sense, and healing. Articles may be practical, research-oriented, theoretical, bibliographic, professional, and/or exploratory/personal.

Membership in AEPL is \$15. Contact Rose Vydelingum, AEPL Membership Chair, DeVry Institute, US Highway One, North Brunswick, NJ 08902-3362. e-mail: rosevyde@admin.nj.devry.edu. Membership includes that year's issue of *JAEPL*.

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Editors' Message

A defining characteristic of Rembrandt van Rijn's work, one that contributed to his eventual fall from popularity in the mid 1600s, was his masterly use of chiaroscuro. Referring to the play of light and shadow, chiaroscuro, an Italian term derived from *chiaro*, meaning light, and *oscuro*, meaning dark, was first used by Renaissance artists to make figures appear three-dimensional. Rembrandt seized on chiaroscuro, using it to create a penumbra, a shadowy pictorial space that appeared as a boundless, living medium, constantly fluctuating, emphasizing voids as well as solids (Slive). Out of his genius, Rembrandt created atmospheres that half conceal, half disclose the tangible and the intangible, offering a glimpse of the region where the soul may be caught (Wallace).

Rembrandt's paintings place the "truth" of artistic vision not in the light and not in the shadow but between the play of light and shadow. The essays in this volume similarly position "truth"—constantly fluctuating, constantly emphasizing voids as well as solids—between the play of light and shadow, or, in the case of writing and reading, between the words, in the shadow of the words. In the gaps, in the silences between words lies the mystery of the unknown, the unknowable, what many essays in this volume call the "ineffable," the region where the soul may be caught. Each essay in various ways points us to the necessity of dwelling within the shadow between the words, for it is only here that we discover different ways of knowing and being. "[S]torytellers," historian of science Morris Berman tells us, "make [the] assumption [that] human beings are not rational, that they cannot be understood in terms of 'objective' analysis, and that their deepest and most significant experiences are lived on a level that is largely invisible, a shadowy region where the mind and body move in and out of each other in an infinite number of elusive combinations, and that can only be evoked through allusion, feeling, tone, rhetoric, and 'resonance'" (118-19). Such a "shadowy region" is the realm that this edition inhabits.

We open with "New Locations for Discursive Agency: The Story of Anandamai Ma" by Mary Ann Cain. Cain uses graphological chiaroscuro to position us between the real and the unreal, enabling us to relocate our understanding of agency. Cain offers three layered "perspectives"—academic, personal narrative, semi-fictional—reflected in the three different typefaces of the article to highlight that different ways of knowing and different kinds of agentive action come between the words. Mark Smith, in "The Widening Gyre: Images as Central to the Global Village" moves us from the heat and mystery of India to the image-driven realm of our technological culture. He sites us between the word and image, arguing that the rising currency of the image resurrects a literacy reminiscent of pre-Socratic classicism, one that requires of us different ways of thinking of ourselves as members of a global village.

Lynn Briggs, Fred Schunter, and Ray Melvin shift the play of light and shadow to the Writing Center in their essay "In the Name of the Spirit." Plunging us into the dynamics of Respondent and writer, the authors name the "epiphanies" writers experience there as "spiritual," moments when writers (and Respondents) are able to make meanings of lives, as well as of texts. New ways of knowing are

also the focus of Gwen Gorzelsky's "Writing Awareness," but Gorzelsky approaches enlightenment from the perspective of embodied, metaphoric ethnography, an approach to self and other-awareness that embraces a corporeal as well as an intellectual figuration of knowing.

In "A Medical Humanities Course" Kathleen Welch positions us within a classroom designed for medical students who are too frequently pulled into the "impersonality" of medical discourse. Welch shows us how siting medical students between the words of their medical community and the words of narratives and poems related to the practice of medicine offers these students a space to "pause" and validate the emotional dimensions of their clinical experiences.

Phyllis Whitin, in "Inventing Metaphors to Understand the Genre of Poetry" turns our attention to the elementary school classroom and the power of the "in-betweenness" that constitutes metaphor, a linguistic trope that shuttles us between image and word, opening up rather than resolving meaning. Whitin immerses us in her young students' enthusiastic efforts to conceptualize the nature of poetry by using the stuff of poetry—metaphor. Finally, in his figuration of Memory, or Mnemosyne, the mythical Titan who is the mother of the nine muses, William Johnson invites us into "Remembering Things We've Never Done: Memory's Daughters and the Literary Experience." Memory and literature, either through writing or reading, cast us into what Johnson calls a liminal space, a space between reality and unreality, one that offers to us the hope of psychic integration and wholeness.

Rembrandt, that master of the human character who sought to evoke soul within the shadows on his canvas, knew well that life and reality exist within and through chiaroscuro. "Between the idea/And the reality/Between the motion/And the act/Falls the Shadow," T. S. Eliot reminds us, and it is here that human beings understand themselves and each other. These essays seek to create their own chiaroscuro and place us between the words where we might also read and write the unknown. ☺

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