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ABSTRACT

Noting that despite the homogenizing influence of the mass media, the United States remains a land of regions, this focused journal issue celebrates regionalism (especially Kentucky regionalism) by exploring its implications for the teaching of English and language arts. The articles and their authors are as follows: (1) "Literacy and Locality: The Foxfire Model" (C. Stumbo); (2) "Jesse Stuart and the Teacher's Craft" (H. Koring); (3) "Discovering a Literacy Period in Your Own Home Town: Romantic Louisville" (P. P. Buckler); (4) "Transcendental 'Sayers': Louisville's Black Poets" (D. Broaddus); (5) "Guidelines for Teaching Composition Skills to Dialect Speakers" (W. L. Roach); and (6) "Dialect Differences and the Teaching of Writing" (A. Wilson). (NKA)

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INTRODUCTION:

LITERACY AND LOCALITY

Despite the homogenizing influence of the mass media, America remains a land of regions. The six articles in this issue of the Kentucky English Bulletin celebrate regionalism--especially Kentucky regionalism--and explore its implications for the teaching of English and language arts.

Carol Stumbo's opening piece grows out of her own experience teaching writing in eastern Kentucky. In the second article, Heidi Koring discusses the pedagogical insights derivable from Kentucky writer Jesse Stuart's work. The next two pieces move us into Louisville, for a look by Pat Buckler at the city's romantic heritage and a report by Dottie Broaddus on its black poets' community. The last two articles, by William Roach and Allison Wilson, provide insight into the effects of regional dialect on the teaching of writing.

Ken Davis, Editor

LITERACY AND LOCALITY: THE FIREFOX MODEL

Carol Stumbo, Wheelwright High School

As part of a promise to a friend, a young English teacher, tired and discouraged, wrote a letter in the fall of 1966, a letter in which he assessed his current teaching experience with a group of southern Appalachian students. "I find myself totally exhausted at the end of the day--emotionally, creatively, physically, and spiritually and every other way, wondering how I made it through another day...," he confessed to his former Cornell classmate.[1] Survival depended on thinking no farther ahead than one day; completion of an entire year seemed inconceivable. His letter was both an admission and examination of failure. "One class in particular grates. They really do not see why they should have English, and in a sudden revelation several days ago, I suddenly realized I couldn't see why they should have it either," he admitted frankly (26). Most of his students, he went on to explain, would never leave the mountains except in time of war. The employment they would find in the area would require little of them in terms of reading and writing. "They will help with a gas station and love it--that's all they need," he added (26). The truth was that his students saw no connection between what was being taught at school and the types of lives they knew they would be leading later. As a result, they adopted a contemptuous attitude towards their classes and seized any opportunity to miss. The climate was a demoralizing one. "The universal comment is 'I don't care' and they don't seem to. Anyone with a mouth could leave them with as much as I have so far--so why am I here?" he asked his friend (25).

The letter which was written almost twenty years ago expresses the frustration of many English teachers today. The author of the 1966 letter was Eliot Wigginton, the founder and editor of the Foxfire magazine. The question that Wigginton posed to his friend Howard Senzel is one that far too many English teachers find themselves confronting today.

In its simplest form, the question that Wigginton asked in 1966 was how did he go about making what he was teaching in his classroom relevant to the lives of his students, and the mere fact that he asked the question was important. Often, as Eugene Ionesco has written, "It is not the answer that enlightens but the question."[2] In November of that year, Wigginton put his grammar textbooks on a shelf, and the group of students that had driven the young teacher to emotional and physical exhaustion began Foxfire, and for the first time teaching began to make sense to Eliot Wigginton.

In the years that have followed, the textbooks have remained on the shelf, but Wigginton's continuous questioning and probing for better methods of instruction have not stopped. Foxfire has developed over the years into a publishing phenomenon providing a receptive reading public with information about the Appalachian culture, and in the course of its tremendous success, people have occasionally lost sight of the fact that Foxfire originated and continues today as an educational experiment, a suggestion that there are better methods that can be utilized in the teaching of English. That has been overlooked at times--except for Eliot Wigginton and his staff at Foxfire. In the last chapter of his book, Sometimes A Shining Moment, Wigginton reveals the motivation that has been the driving force behind his approach to teaching. He is writing about a trap that he and his staff had fallen into. Too often because the students had completed another magazine, he and his staff had been satisfied. The work was complete and that should be fine.

> And it was not fine, for we sometimes forgot the most elemental rule of all: the goal is not just the production of another issue of a magazine (or the memorization of another rule of grammar, or a list of names and dates, or a series of mathematical formulas, or a set of reasons for the causes of soil erosion), but the acquisition of skills and knowledge that can be applied in different ways, in different situations, and can lead to further growth (395).

What Wigginton and his staff are about at Foxfire is education and the experiment that was begun over twenty years ago continues to raise questions about the validity of the methods being used and to produce results. The children of Foxfire programs such as Tsa' Aszi in New Mexico and Paradise Project in Vermont, continue quietly to demonstrate the effectiveness of Wigginton's approach with groups of students from outside the Appalachian region. Foxfire's survival while educational trends and reforms have fallen by the wayside is in itself a hopeful sign.

The question that Wigginton posed for himself and his students who began the Foxfire magazine is one that is still valid today. In April of 1986, the National Assessment of Educational Progress issued the results of a ten-year study into the status of writing skills in the United States. The group reported "that 62 to 80 percent of the American 17-year-olds tested demonstrated unsatisfactory writing skills depending on the type of writing tested."[3] In addition, the report concluded that 76 percent of the 17-year-olds could not write an adequate imaginative piece of writing, that 62 percent wrote unsatisfactory informative prose, and that 80 percent could not write a persuasive letter. Education Secretary William Bennett had this to say about the report: "This important report shows that the second of the three R's is in appalling poor shape among young people. The reform movement that has begun to show real progress in reading had best now begin to show close attention to writing" (3A).

In the light of these data, perhaps it is appropriate to examine Foxfire as a model that can help us teach our students to write better. Certainly some of the questions that Wigginton has asked over the years about the teaching of this skill are worthy of consideration. What is our role as teachers? How can we use the student's own environment and place to help make that student a better reader, writer, and user of the English language? More importantly, how can we insure that once the skills are learned they will be of value to the student as he begins his life in his own culture? What, if any, is the connection between literacy and locality?

Schools in eastern Kentucky, and for that matter across the United States, continue to battle the problems of literacy, poor attendance, and the intellectual disengagement of students from learning. Some educational experts have come to view these characteristics as symptoms rather than as the true problems of our educational system. Harold Rowe, a former U.S. Commissioner of Education, has complained about the fact that one of the major components that has been missing from the flurry of reports dealing with education is that of motivation. Why are we not looking more closely at the reasons why students do not perceive school as important, why they drop out as soon as it is possible legally, and if they do attend school, why do so many of them become "mental" drop-outs, just putting in their time? According to Rowe, we should be developing strategies to deal with the real problem and once we have done that, all of our other concerns will disappear.[4]

John Stephenson, the President of Berea College, speaking to a group of interested people in the summer of 1985 at an Appalachian conference being held at the school, declared that an educational crisis existed in the school systems in eastern Kentucky. Not many

would disagree with him. Test scores, attendance figures, and drop-out percentages support his statement. Ron Eller, author of Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers, has written the following about the educational condition of Appalachia: "The region is still plagued by a higher school drop-out rate and a percentage of college graduates which is lower than any other region of the country. Sixty-two percent of the region's adult population has still not completed high school, and 30% of the adult population is classified as functionally illiterate."[5]

In far too many schools in the coalfields and mountains of Appalachia, teachers close their classroom doors and teach about the Battle of Bunker Hill, the six tenses of verbs, or the properties of numbers to students, and the same students who have listened to these lectures all day go home to a situation where the father is suffering from black lung, or where the entire family subsists on a welfare check and no one in the family works, or where there is only a grandparent as the head of the household. The distance between the two worlds is great. The challenge that Theodore Sizer puts before educators in Horace's Compromise to find ways to help "young people respect themselves and be respected" is a difficult one.

The starting point for Eliot Wigginton is this one. As he developed his philosophy for Foxfire, he came to believe that he had to include the culture of his students. "Pride in background and roots has much to do with pride in self and with mental health and with never again having to feel apologetic for origins...," Wigginton asserted (Sometimes A Shining Moment, 333).

Debra Watts, a printer from Knott County in eastern Kentucky, grew up with the stereotyping that many Appalachians encounter. She found it in hillbilly jokes, television shows, and in the reporting done about her region. As a young person who grew up in the mountains, she is in a good position to speak of the effects of that stereotyping. It is and was, according to Watts, a concept that only erodes a "people's dignity and sense of self-worth."[6] Very little writing or learning can take place without the sense of dignity and self-worth that Wigginton and Watts speak of, and for better or worse, the student's sense of worth is connected in an integral way to the culture that he comes from.

One of the ways we can help students acquire that sense of self-respect and eventually assist them in becoming better writers is to teach them an appreciation for their own language. For some time, it seemed that educators were willing to accept regional differences in speech. As early as 1973, W. Ross Winterowd had begun to articulate the different attitude that writing theorists were beginning to adopt towards dialects. "As briefly as possible," Winterowd wrote, "I would like to explain why it is conceivable that

instruction in writing can now be more effective than it ever was in the past.... We are ready to allow youngsters to function in their own dialects, and hence we will not wreak the spiritual devastation that a 'purist' attitude inevitably brings about."[7] By 1977 Appalachian scholar Cratis Williams was confident enough of the acceptance of the concept of cultural pluralism that he could declare in an Appalachian Heritage article that the point had been reached where Appalachians could begin to write their own histories and fiction secure in the thought that people were not going to eradicate their language.[8] Despite the optimism of Winterowd and Williams, the acceptance of regional language has not found its way into all classrooms. In far too many instances, teachers still view dialect as a problem to be overcome, not as a resource that might assist them in teaching their students better.

In 1975 in a small book called Moments, Eliot Wigginton wrote the following about his students' interviews with members of the community in Rabun Gap, Georgia: "I also like to do things I hope will begin to open up their ears. As each student transcribes his tapes, I ask him to listen to it carefully--comb through it for eloquent expressions, pieces of wisdom.... In the Mary Carpenter portrait, they found things like, 'Why does Russia and us want t' go to? Ain't the earth good enough for a' body?' From Aunt Arie, they get things like, 'I'm getting old now. I can't quilt anymore. Can't crochet. Can't garden. Can't bottom chairs or make baskets. Can't do a lot of the things I used to do. But I can still love.'"[9] Through this exercise, the Foxfire students are placed in a position where they acquire a healthy respect for the power and beauty of their dialect.

Wigginton uses a quotation from Aunt Addie Norton as a preface to his book, Sometimes A Shining Moment. Her words contain the same type of beauty that can be found in the language of Mark Twain. It is the oral tradition at its best. In the quotation, Aunt Addie Norton is speaking about the way real things are learned: "I tell you one thing, if you learn it yourself, if you have to get down and dig for it, it never leaves you. It stays there as long as you live because you had to dig it out of the mud before you learned what it was." Even if one is oblivious to the wisdom in these two sentences, one is still struck by the sheer force of the language, its movement, and its implied metaphor. When the Foxfire students encounter such statements, their ability to appreciate the beauty of the words has not been damaged by a teacher who is so concerned with correctness that she cannot see other elements. The students are not focusing on possible errors in speech. They are looking for other possibilities.

Wigginton's approach to the dialect of his region is important for several reasons. First and foremost, this approach allows the student to take pride in his own dialect. It allows the student to "see" in a different way. He begins to look for the potential that is in the language. As Brian Garfield has written about the process of the writer: "But it's mainly an attitude: a way of looking at things; a habit of examining everything one perceives..." (Murray, 11). If every time one of these pieces of dialect is uttered, the student is made aware only of its wrongness, we have to ask ourselves what is going to happen to his perception of his dialect and of himself. On the other hand, if we can teach the student to appreciate the differences in his dialect and accept those as valuable, we create a firmer foundation from which he can learn standard English.

John Egerton, the author of Generations, speaking before a group of Appalachian writers at Hindman Settlement School in August of 1985, reminded the talented group of people gathered there that their eloquence of words came not from their own skills, but from the people of Appalachia, from the "honest, unpretentious, lyrical, descriptive, potent words of honest people."[10] Egerton's book is based on the interviews that the writer conducted with about one hundred members of the family of Curtis and Addie Ledford in Kentucky. Egerton, like other writers, recognizes the importance of the language and the events occurring around him. In a recent interview, James Still told how a poem of his called "High Field" came into being. It began when Still decided to help a neighbor of his hoe corn. Still joined the neighbor and his son in the corn field after introducing himself, but he refused any pay for his help. Later the neighbor talked to Still about the incident. "And I just wrote it down. And there's the poem virtually as he said it. See, people are talking poems, you know, when you can hear them," Still said.[11] Over a period of thirty-five years, Still has kept notebooks in which he has recorded the language he hears around him and notes about nature and events that have impressed him. The practice is one that other writers such as Henry David Thoreau and Annie Dillard have used to record the impressions of their lives. In 1861, the poet Emily Dickinson wrote: "The Robin's my Criterion for Tune--Because I grow--where Robins do."[12] The poet knew that her writing must have as its base the world that she lived in. Students who are engaged in oral history projects and who are learning about their immediate world are in a much better position to hear the poems that are being spoken around them than are the students who have been taught only to eliminate those expressions from their speech.

In the spring of last year, I worked with a group of teachers who were preparing a county literary magazine for publication. Our purpose was to identify the best writing from the high schools in

our area. One of the facts that struck me during the course of our work was how little of the writing was centered around the students' real environment and experiences. We had stacks of essays, short stories, and poems that had as their subject matter romantic encounters on far-away islands and sandy beaches, detective stories set in large metropolitan areas, and stories about the horrors of fraternity initiations on ivy-league college campuses. Ignoring the obvious, such as the fact that the closest ocean was located hundreds of miles from us, and that, at least to my knowledge, none of our students had ever visited an ivy-league college, the choices made by the writers surprised me. I wondered how much of the writing had any real meaning to the students. The subjects of coal mining, the very real problems involved in living in the hills, and their unique family situations, these were the elements that I knew made up the daily lives of our students. Why didn't they consider any of these worth writing about? Certainly there was no shortage of issues that could have been the subject of persuasive essays--the broad form deed, the environmental problems of eastern Kentucky, the political system, the values of the Appalachian people--but very few of these subjects found their way into the students' work. I have begun to believe that part of the students' failure to view local issues and happenings as a source for their writing has to do with what they are exposed to in the classroom, the type of subject that is considered appropriate for writing, and the fact that sometimes we do not do enough to encourage students to "see" their place with any real depth.

Writing as a process has to begin with what the student knows best: with his experiences, thoughts, and feelings, and a recognition of his own place. Helping students recognize that fact may be the most important responsibility that we have as teachers of writing. "The student writer," according to the authors of Learning to Write, "can no longer be viewed as an empty vessel whose mind must be filled with knowledge and information by an outside expert before she can start to write."[13] James Gray, the founder and the director of the National Writing Project in California, tells a story about a writing teacher who knew exactly what she had to do to develop writing ability. The fourth grade teacher walked into her class and asked her students how many of them had ever been kidnapped by pirates. There were no hands, of course. She asked how many had ever been on a rocket ship that had left from Cape Canaveral. Again, no hands. Then the nature of the questions changed. The teacher asked how many of them hated to get up that morning and how many of them had had an argument with their best friends and felt badly about it. All the hands went up on those two questions. "That's what we're going to write about, all the things that you have experienced," the teacher told them.[14] The result, according to Gray, was that the "kids are writing their hearts out, and they are writing often and confidently" (11). In the end, this approach

determines whether writing will be the exciting process of discovery and communication, or whether it will continue to be the empty exercise that fills students with dread. For the teacher in certain cultures, getting students to write about those experiences may not be that easy. The teacher may have to assist the student in learning to see value in his daily life. "It will take some time for many of them to learn to value the stuff of their own lives as something to write about," state Mayher, Lester, and Pradhl, "but once they do, the power and fluency of their writing will improve dramatically" (38). What programs such as Foxfire are doing is helping students understand the value of their own lives. They are helping to establish the connections between the real world and the classroom and creating learning that is, as Janet Emig has described, "active, engaged, personal, more specifically, self-rhythmed in nature."[15]

Although the students in Foxfire are not engaged in the creation of short stories, poetry, or drama, the foundation is there for such writing. In addition to the language that the students in the program are being exposed to, the Foxfire students are also hearing marvelous stories. "As the events swirl about us, the stories we tell and imagine are the means by which we make sense out of our lives," write Mayher, Lester, and Pradhl (10). Story-telling is a way of building a sense of community, providing a psychological ordering to our lives, and insuring that the tradition of a place continues. Jo Carson, a poet from Tennessee and the author of The People Pieces, told recently of an experience she had at a theater festival in San Francisco when the performers and writers gathered there decided to ignore the day's agenda and tell stories from their own lives. Carson describes the experience in this way:

> The focus of the group changed and there came wonderful stories, not just about yesterday, but stories of things that happened to people in their lives and I enjoyed the day--in my opinion, such stories are the most valuable commodities to trade--but it was no different from what happens regularly around my kitchen table when friends drop by and we trade stories of things that have happened to us, some long past, some just yesterday, and the stories lead to all sorts of different conversations, but the centers of the evenings are always the stories.[16]

According to Carson, it is these stories "that give context" to lives; it is the sharing of them that "makes friends and communities"; and it is the telling of them "that grows human roots" (1).

Last year as my English students and I worked on a series of oral interviews with the people in our community for a magazine, I watched my students listen spellbound as the daughter of one of the

first doctors in the area told a story from her past. One evening just as darkness settled over the hills, her father was visited in his office by one of the meanest, most overbearing men in the community. There was something wrong with his wife and he wanted Doc to come to his house. Everyone knew that the man treated his wife badly, but this time, it was the man who was frightened. The daughter said her father hesitated for a few minutes. He wasn't sure that he wanted to be alone with the man. The husband insisted and finally, the doctor went with him. They walked along silently until they were within a few yards of the house. It was then that the man deserted the doctor. He continued on his way along to the dark house on the hillside. Inside the doctor stumbled over something and fell. He picked himself up and went in search of a light. When he returned, he found the wife on the floor. She was dead.

One of the first things that my students wanted to know, of course, was what happened to the husband. Without realizing it, they were asking for the closure of the narrative. In the daughter's short story, they had been exposed to the creation of suspense, foreshadowing, conflict, character development, and dialogue, all the elements of fiction. In addition, they were immediately involved in the story. It was about their hometown, their place, and their people. Before the interview, the students had known the daughter only as the principal of a local elementary school, a woman who was an authority figure and often inaccessible to them. I did not ask, but I am sure their perception of her was changed after the interview. Some personal information had been shared, passed between them, and the nature of the relationship has changed. Equally important was the fact that my students began to understand that there were stories being told around them and that their culture had something to offer.

Over the course of the year, I saw the same thing happened again and again with my students as they continued to interview people. There were stories of miners forced to meet secretly in the hills at night in order to organize a union. We heard stories of family members and friends who died in the mines when slate or kettlebottoms dropped unexpectedly, and there were tales about men, sometimes outlaws, who lived on the fringes of the law, moving back and forth across the borders of Virginia and Tennessee. As we recorded and transcribed these stories, gradually my students began to tell stories from their own backgrounds. Not only does exposure to the storytelling process provide teachers with the opportunity to discuss the structure of a story, it also exposes students to one of the first phases of writing. According to John Rouse, "Story is everything. All writing of whatever kind begins with narrative. In the first story, the primal story from which all others come, is your own story--your own personal history..." (Learning to Write, 11).

Once students are comfortable with the narrative form, they can begin to make the transition to exposition and fictional writing. According to the authors of Learning to Write, schools should increase the student's "opportunities for telling stories and then for recording them in writing" (12).

James Britton, who has developed a writing program in England that has been successful with children of all ages, believes that we need to extend students' opportunity to do autobiographical writing. According to Britton, autobiography is the matrix from which all writing is drawn (Learning to Write, 12). Linda Flower has stated that this type of writer-based prose, which is essentially what autobiographical writing is in the initial stages, is a valuable act of mental reprocessing of "an earlier thinking experience as a way to recover what one knows."17

Wendy Ewald's Portrait and Dreams illustrates what can be done with children and the autobiographical mode of writing. Ewald, who spent several years working with students from southeastern Kentucky, had been warned by school officials that the students that she had chosen to work with were not only rowdy but also had some of the lowest I.Q.'s within the school. In her work with these students, she discovered that neither of the statements was accurate. These students have created a book that has a series of haunting photographs and some pieces of beautiful writing. At the beginning of the project, Ewald brought in samples of books that other children had made. These were diaries that had been written by children and published only after they became adults. One of the students involved in Ewald's projects kept a diary for over a year. When she first looked at its contents, she was surprised: "For the first month I could not read a thing he had written. There were no spaces between the words and he had spelled everything phonetically. When I deciphered it, I found he had written beautiful passages each day about what he had done, what his hounds had tracked or how the corn field looked during the day."18 The student was responding to the world around him, making use of his own experience, and for the publication of the book, eventually transforming his writing into something that communicated with a larger audience.

The other writing that is included in Eward's book was taken from conversations that she had with the children during the course of the project. The writing makes two points. First, it shows that it became a way for the children to give order to their lives and to deal with some of their dreams and fears. Allen Shepherd writes about a neighbor of his who suffered from cancer of the pancreas and wasted away until he only weighed ninety pounds. "I'm not scared of dying," he writes. "Everybody has to die. I'm just afraid of suffering" (23). Secondly, the writing reflects the feelings the children have towards their place. In the words of Dewayne Cole:

"The mountains are big and I feel good in them. I can go anywhere. Nothing bothers me up there except now they're tearing the mountains up with bulldozers--getting the coal out and making new places for houses" (79). As teachers of English, we need to look at the possibility of using storytelling and oral interviews as strategies for helping students become better writers. We cannot expect that every student we teach will want to become a writer, but we can help make all of our students better writers if we can find ways that will create a sensitivity to place and an understanding of the importance of their own experiences. As Henry James has written in "The Art of Fiction," we need to help stimulate the sensibility "that takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of air into revelations."[19]

With the increasing number of Appalachian autobiographies that have grown out of oral history, the teacher is in a good position to develop an autobiographical unit for teaching. Works such as G. C. Jones's Growing Up Hard in Harlan County and Ellesa Clay High's portrait of Lily Mae Ledford in Past Titan Rock would be valuable books to use to study the form. Certainly the study of the autobiography could be used to introduce students to the complexities of a culture. As Maya Angelou has written: "The autobiographer looks at life through the lens of his or her own life and really uses himself as the jumping-off place to examine the social mores and the economic and political climates."[20] Used in combination with Appalachian autobiographies, works such as Maxine Hong Kingston's The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Childhood Among Ghosts could serve as a vehicle that would allow students to discuss the similarities and differences in cultures. The discussion could also be broadened to include what effects the culture has had upon the structure of the writing itself. In writing her book, Kingston made use of the talk-story tradition that is part of her Chinese heritage. Maya Angelou in her I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings discovered the influence that the Negro preachers had upon her writing. As she has stated: "Throughout my youth I heard black preachers who always speak in prose and poetry, and when it's right, their language soars to the stars" (12). Critics such as Alfred Kazin have made connections between the autobiographical form and fiction. The techniques of the fiction writer often are used by the writer of autobiography and this could lead into the discussion of the differences between the two forms. A comparison between an actual oral history interview and the short story "Wounded Man" that appears in Kinfolks could be used to highlight the differences in the two forms. And all of this literature could be integrated with the writing of students.

Hopefully, we can find better ways of using students' cultures to teach the language arts skills and we will continue to expand upon

the methods used by Eliot Wigginton and the staff of Foxfire. If we are successful, perhaps we can help students gain a sense of their own history and in doing so, increase their sense of pride and dignity. As Wigginton debated some of the deeper implications of the work he was doing with Foxfire in 1966, he wondered whether or not he could help his students acquire a genuine appreciation for their roots and heritage, one that went beyond just the knowledge that Grandpa could make a banjo or that Mom had been a midwife. He attempted to explain what he was after in this way:

> I'm talking about that peculiar, almost mystic kind of resonance that comes--and vibrates in one's soul like a guitar string--with an understanding of family--who I am and where I am from and the fact that I am part of a long continuum of hope and prayer and celebration of life that I must carry forward. Couldn't they get some deepened sense of all this through the kind of work our tiny magazine was pointing us toward, together? Perhaps. (Shining Moment, 75)

If there are moments when I have any doubts about Wigginton's approach, I remember an odd assortment of twenty-five students who began a magazine project in my senior English class last year. Many of them were discipline problems. Many of them were poor readers. Some of them had trouble producing a complete sentence. And I remember what we accomplished together--a sixty-eight page magazine that we all are proud of, but more importantly, I remember the difference in the atmosphere of that classroom. It felt good. Students worked without being prodded. They took pride in what they were doing. Did these students become better writers and readers? Did the project help them with those skills? I know that it did. I watched them read Beowulf and Macbeth once the project had been completed. They approached both self-confidently. Stronger students aided weaker ones and none of them quit and I know that it all came about because we took a serious look at our own place and thought about how what we were doing in the classroom could tie into the place and people around us. In the process, students discovered that they had a heritage they could be proud of and that they could do something important. After that, the demands of English literature may not have been easy, but they were requirements that they knew they could master.

As teachers, we need to ask the kind of questions Eliot Wigginton has been asking and exploring for twenty years, and we need to be willing to live with the word "perhaps" and to test that word out in the "fragile, humane experiments" that allow us to work in the cultures around us. We need to help students find pride in those cultures,

and we may not be praised for our efforts, as Wigginton has pointed out, but at least, we will be doing everything in our part of the globe "to help set things right" (Moments, 131).

Notes

[1]Eliot Wigginton, Sometimes A Shining Moment (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1985) 27.

[2]Donald M. Murray, "Write Before Writing," College Composition and Communication (Spring, 1979) 380.

[3]"U.S. Writing Skills Dismal, 10 Year--Study Shows," The Atlanta Journal and Constitution, 18 April 1986, 3A.

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JESSE STUART AND THE TEACHER'S CRAFT

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When I taught English I was always telling students to "narrow their topic." But in writing these lines about Jesse Stuart, I found it almost impossible to take my own advice. Stuart was an author of amazing range, publishing eighteen volumes of short stories (all of which had been individually published at least once before), eight volumes of poetry, nine novels, eight biographies and autobiographies, two collections of essays, and eight children's books, along with other works he authored, coauthored, and edited. As a result of this monumental achievement alone, it's no wonder he was honored by awards like the rarely given Kentucky Governor's Award for Public Service and the Academy of American Poets Award, as well as by academic awards like the astounding sixteen honorary doctorates he was granted during his lifetime and the critical attention and acclaim he received. At least eight book-length studies about Stuart have appeared, the latest being a comprehensive 548-page critical biography called Jesse by H. Edward Richardson, published in 1984. His writing has been praised by such authors as Donald Davidson, Robert Frost, William Saroyan, Robert Penn Warren, and Thomas Wolfe.

That alone would be a remarkable career for any man, but Jesse Stuart's achievements were by no means solely literary. During his lifetime he worked as a steelworker, a farmer, the editor of his own newspaper, a lecturer, a good-will ambassador for the State Department, and, perhaps most important, as a teacher, principal, school superintendent, and college professor, teaching in all manner of educational institutions from one-room schoolhouses to cosmopolitan universities, and in locations as different from each other as Cane Creek, Kentucky, and Cairo, Egypt. When one considers the breadth of Jesse Stuart's achievements, it's difficult to comprehend that one life could contain them all and impossible to "narrow the topic."

Nevertheless, this article will follow one "thread that runs so true" through the many-colored tapestry of Jesse Stuart's life, his experience as a teacher, distilling and expressing the philosophy of education he formulated throughout his work, looking particularly at how his theory of teaching applies to the teaching of English. To do this we will look at Jesse the student as well as Stuart the teacher. In fact, the two are inseparable because for him, teaching was the most important learning experience he could have, as he indicated in the autobiographical novel Mr. Gallion's School, which, he wrote, was "dedicated to ten thousand high school youth who taught me more than I taught them."

In Stuart's educational scheme, teachers cannot hide behind their positions or the subject matter they teach, but must interact honestly with their pupils, teaching not solely by direction, but also by example and inspiration. Stuart wrote:

> Good teaching goes beyond the expected.... I like the word dimensional.... A good teacher must be an inspiration. He must approach his pupils in many different ways to inspire them. If he can excite and inspire them, half the battle is won. (Gallion, 46-47).

When he was a student, Stuart was blessed by such inspiring models who became lifelong friends.

While in high school, he became discouraged with algebra. His teacher, Lena Wells Lykin, nourished him with a shrewd mixture of challenge and encouragement by saying, "Jesse, are you going to be a quitter?" while prophesying cannily he would write a book some day (Richardson, 34). Robert Hatton, high school superintendent, taught young Stuart more than science and geometry. Many years later in the biography To Teach, To Love, Stuart remembered:

> Here was a teacher who taught us beyond his subject matter. He lectured to us on honesty, manners, morals. He lectured to us about going to college and amounting to something in life.... He changed our lives by creating in us ambitions and creating in us a sense of purpose." (56)

Ambition and a sense of purpose led Stuart south from his home in Greenup County, Kentucky, in search of higher education. He ended up in a small Appalachian college, Lincoln Memorial University, in Harrogate, Tennessee. Here, too, he found teachers who instructed

and inspired, teachers whose relationships with their pupils endured beyond graduation. Of his speech instructor, Earl Hobson Smith, Stuart remarked:

> If I speak within a hundred mile radius of Lincoln Memorial, my teacher and friend Earl Hobson Smith will be there with a pad and pencil and grade me on my speech. He is always a teacher with his students (To Teach, 119-20).

Another instructor, Harry Harrison Kroll, gave Stuart the direction and inspiration to write fiction and poetry, both by his classes and by his example as a publishing author. A man of unbounded energy, Kroll found a one-hour class period far too short a time so, as Stuart remembered, "Our little group of so-called creative writers met two nights a week.... We'd read and argue for two hours, or into the night" (Richardson, 71). Kroll urged his students to write "Like you talk," saying, "you learn to write by writing," and, "Crank 'em out, boys. Get your ideas and crank 'em out" (Harvest, 18).

Probably because relationships with inspirational teachers like Lykins, Hatton, Smith, and Kroll had been so important in his own life, Stuart placed great emphasis on the value of individual attention, both in his fiction and in his teaching career. In his stories about teaching, extra attention or a vote of confidence helps the shy pupil succeed and find that special ability or skill that will ripen into a vocation as, for instance, Dave's love of science becomes in the story "Split Cherry Tree," or gives a pupil that sense of self confidence that enables her or him to achieve in the world beyond the family shelter as in "Eustacia" and "The Moon Child."

People helping people, the nurturing of individual talent, the encouragement that can change lives through the creation of a sense of purpose and ambition are at the core of Stuart's educational philosophy. These qualities point to yet another basic to Stuart's writing and thought, the centrality of the individual. In the world of Jesse Stuart, the human spirit is paramount.

The human spirit is shaped by experience as well as by inspiration of role models. So many of Stuart's short stories record lessons the protagonist, Shan, learns from experiences, both good and bad. Stuart relished experiences and sought them, from his first forays "beyond dark hills" to later lecture tours in the Far East.

Of course, his experiences weren't all happy adventures He grew up in a family that knew poverty and hardship, painfully chronicled in the short stories and autobiographies. Stuart began working on his family's farm almost as soon as he could walk. He began laboring for hire at an age when today's youngsters are involved in school and play. He wrote:

> I walked five miles to my work and back when I was nine, ten and eleven years old and worked for a quarter a day. I don't know how many hours we worked. I know I went before daylight and got back after dark.... Later I worked in the steel mills, ten hours at night for forty cents an hour ... In college I worked, too, for twenty cents an hour... (Rebirth, 161).

The college, of course, was Lincoln Memorial University where Stuart and other students worked on the farm, crushed rock for the road crews, laid waterlines from Cudjo's Cave to the town of Harrogate, and formed and baked bricks to build the Faculty Apartments. At the same time, Stuart was taking courses, sitting up half the night discussing poetry and spending the other half writing it. Somehow during his college career he found time to run on the track team, to sing in the Glee Club, to do missionary work in Poor Valley, to edit the Blue and Grey, and to write a suitcase full of fiction and publish several poems. He was described in 1928 in The Mountain Herald, at that time an L.M.U. publication, as "a poet who shows some promise along literary lines. He has earned his expenses doing all kinds of manual labor and is 'kitchen mechanic,' washing pots and pans..." (Mountain Herald, 27).

His own labor made Stuart value work as a positive experience, not merely as necessary toil. All his life he was proud of his physical labor, and he tried to instill an equal pride in work among his students. In Mr. Gallion's School, work is a privilege, not a punishment. The students at Kensington High are astounded with what their principal says about repair and maintenance work needed on the campus:

> Only honor pupils will be permitted to work.... You who have grades under B need your time in the classroom to keep your grades up.... You know, pupils, work is honorable. You will never be assigned any work as punishment.... You learn from doing just as you learn from books (104).

Stuart saw no conflict between physical and intellectual endeavors. "We were workers, doers, and ambitious dreamers," he said proudly of the L.M.U. class of '29. "Competition at Lincoln Memorial University was great," he added. And here he is speaking about intellectual as well as physical competition. He was as proud of the prizes he won in the creative writing contest at L.M.U as he was of his victories in cross-country and the two-mile ("L.M.U., Past and Present," 40-41).

Just as Stuart saw no conflict between physical and intellectual training, so he saw no conflict between competition and cooperation. In an interview with the author Dick Perry, he said of his students:

> They can have both: the love of competition and the love of doing it to improve themselves. I have taught kids to love one another when I was teaching. But I taught competition, too (11).

And competition with cooperation is central to Stuart's educational philosophy as he expressed it in his three books about teaching. In The Thread That Runs So True, Mr. Gallion's School, and To Teach, To Love, competition is yoked with cooperation as students band together in teams on the playing field and in the classroom, gaining a sense of identity and pride through their joint efforts.

But experience is more than a vehicle for competition. It is a primary teaching aid. Stuart describes his discovery of experiential learning in The Thread That Runs So True when he taught arithmetic in a one-room schoolhouse. He had the beginners make their own flash cards by pasting numbers from an outdated calendar onto cardboard. "While I went on with my other classes these children were busy. When recess came they wanted more to do rather than go out to play" (Thread, 39). Stuart the novice teacher discovered that his pupils learned their numbers in remarkably short time, far faster than they would have using commercial teachers' aides. This direct, experiential learning, basic to Stuart's teaching technique, appears in many of his works. In "Split Cherry Tree," the children learn about nature directly, out of door catching their own biological specimens rather than relying on textbooks or plaster models. Years later, in The Year of My Rebirth, Stuart recalls the lesson his daughter Jane learned about insects:

> I asked her how many legs a grasshopper had. She didn't know. Instead of looking it up in the dictionary, she went out and caught one. She drew a picture of a grasshopper and wrote a two-page

> description. She described him as a minor kangaroo, because of the powerful legs with which he did his jumping. If she had looked up grasshopper in the dictionary or a science book, she would have found out how many legs he had. But she wouldn't have seen with her own eyes how far he could jump or the pair of legs which reminded her of a kangaroo's. I know, because I compared her description to the ones given in two dictionaries. Hers was the best (204).

Perhaps most important, Stuart found all experience valuable because it is the basic stuff of human life. His writings cover the gamut of experiences, humorous and tragic, great and petty. And he described them all with the same sense of importance and gusto, believing, as he wrote to his friend, the author August Derleth, "...the little things are immortal and are with us forever" (Richardson, 340).

More central to Stuart's educational philosophy than learning from inspiration, than cooperation with competition, or than direct experiential learning is nature as teacher. Stuart called his father, Mitch Stuart, "earth-educated" although he had no schooling. Mitch and his wife, Martha, made certain their son respected and understood the land. This respect and understanding was far more than the general, fuzzy romantic benevolence many of us feel toward "the great outdoors." The senior Stuarts were demanding t achers, and nature was their discipline and their classroom, as we see in this incident from The Year of My Rebirth when Jesse explains how Mitch taught his granddaughter Jane to "read" nature:

> "Daddy, come here," Jane said. "I want to ask you something.'
> She was sitting with an open notebook in front of her. She had filled twenty or twenty-five pages in her close handwriting, and, between the pages she had pressed a collection of leaves and barks. I knew my father hadn't been cleaning many water holes for the cattle that day. I knew what he had been doing. He had been teaching Jane from the only book he knew.

Stuart continues:

> Neither my father nor my mother ever looked into a scientific book on wild flowers, plants, and trees.... But the whole face of this upheaved earth...was their book.... Before any of us entered school, we could

> identify from ninety to ninety-five percent of the trees by leaf and bark and the flowers by petal and stem and leaf....
> Occasionally my mother would find a flower she couldn't identify. She would dig it up carefully and set it in our yard. Then she would ask everybody who came by what kind of a flower it was. Since the flower was put before us as a strange one without a name, we worked hard to find the answer. We couldn't rest until we had identified it... (192-93).

It's no wonder Stuart's writing teems with natural images. He speaks of men "as high as a Kentucky pine" and women "as solid as these hills." In The Year o' My Rebirth, natural images are emblematic of eternal verities.

The agricultural emblems which appear so often in his poetry and fiction appear, too, in his educational philosophy. In Mr. Gallion's School, the antagonistic principal, Gus Riddle, accuses Mr. Gallion of being too lenient in disciplinary matters. Gallion replies with a pastoral metaphor:

> The teenage years are tender and crucial ones. Now is the time to save them. This year a pupil will be an obnoxious weed, while next year you won't know him. He'll blossom like a flower.

Using the same image, Gallion reflects:

> These are our children.... We are responsible for every last one, good, bad, or indifferent.... The weeds must blossom as well as the flowers (86).

Just as the farmer is responsible for cultivating and conserving his land, so the teacher is responsible for cultivating and conserving his pupils. In another exchange between Riddle and Gallion, the principal responds to Gallion's patriotic words about colonial ancestors who conquered the Appalachian wilderness by saying:

> Now we have another wilderness to conquer, Mr. Gallion. We have a wilderness of youth. If all of our teachers in here feel as I do, they're

> plenty tired of trying to save some of the culled trees.

George Gallion responds:

> A youth should know where he is going while he is still young, so he can get a head start. If he doesn't know where he is going, we should help him find his way. His mind should not be left a culled young tree in the wilderness, but he should be given some attention. As teachers, it is our duty to help cultivate these half-choked and half-starved trees and give them a chance to grow (94).

Later at a riverboat graduation party, Gallion remarks to his wife:

> On this River Queen dancing tonight are young men and women who are going to amount to something in this world. And had they been let to grow up like corn in fertile earth but never cultivated, they would have been outlaws instead (133).

The satisfaction of the teacher who cultivates his students is like the pleasure the farmer gets in cultivating his corn. Stuart described this pastoral relationship of man and the land implicitly in most of his fiction and poetry, but he speaks of it directly in The Year of My Rebirth as he depicted his first venture into the fields after his heart attack.

> There is no other feeling for a man like having power in his body and exerting it in some creative way and seeing what he accomplishes as he moves along. No wonder a man brags about what he can do in the fields (227).

The same sense of creativity and accomplishment which prompted the farmer to cultivate the land prompted Stuart the teacher to cultivate the young people placed in his charge. The same love and respect the farmer brings to the land, Stuart, the teacher, brought to the classroom. He told Dick Perry, "I love to teach. I like high school youth. I don't know why it is, but I just like 'em," adding:

> I have this feeling when I'm in a classroom, teaching. I'm the father of everybody there.... With me, they're going to get a fair deal.... I'm going to teach them and help them.... No one should ever teach school just to get through the day. The day is too important. Teaching is of the heart as well as of the mind.... You have to love to teach. It's as simple as that (11-12).

His English classes at the high school and the college level were taught using the same "simple" love, of both teaching and writing, that he applied to his work in school administration and his teaching of other subjects. He taught reading through reading and writing through writing. What could be simpler than that? Using as a model Miss Madden, the English teacher at "a very small high school that I headed," Stuart adopted as his first principle in teaching literature that the "first object was to get their (students') interest" ("Teaching Example," 22). To get students' interest, Miss Madden and Stuart helped them place stories in historical and social context, taking "them back into another day and time, to when and where the story was created" ("Teaching," 22), using field trips whenever possible to bring a story to life. Because Stuart felt that "America is the home of the short story" ("Teaching Short Story," 24), so it would be easy for students to place stories in their cultural context, and probably because it was a genre which he, as teacher and as author, felt at home with, he seems to have stressed it in his high school classes. The short story was also a perfect choice for Stuart's teaching techniques because of time limitations; the class could read and react to an entire short story in the space of one period.

Love of literature, an emotional reaction, not an intellectual understanding, is the first response Stuart aimed for from his students, followed by a sharing of that love within the classroom community. Stuart describes the student's love of literature in emotional, even sensual language when he describes his high school reading as, "I feasted on the poetry of Robert Burns" (Richardson, 42). He recalls Harriett Hatton praising his own writing as containing "a flavor of the soil," and refers to their discussions of literature as "earthen" (Richardson, 42-43). As a teacher he aimed at the same deep, emotional reaction from his students, choosing short stories and poetry which would elicit an emotional response. "I like to hear rich laughter in my classes," he said of his classroom literary discussions ("Teaching the Short Story," 24).

The teaching of writing, like the teaching of reading literature, is firmly grounded in reaction. Stuart fondly recalled Miss Hatton's high school "Theme Days" when her students could read their essays aloud.

> I had an audience. First Mrs. Hatton, then later, pupil by pupil joined my audience, and I had them laughing or weeping. Words had power. I knew it (Harvest, 11).

"Theme Day" became as part of Stuart's classes wherever he taught. He stressed publication, too, in school newspapers and literary magazines as well as national publications. If a school was without a publication, he started one, as he did at the American University in Cairo.

His experience teaching in Cairo is illustrative of Stuart's teaching technique as it shows how he employed the dictum "write about what you know" outside of his Kentucky home. Carl Leiden, a colleague of his in Cairo, remembers:

> He had a way of helping foreign students rediscover a new pride in their ethnic backgrounds and in the culture in which he was a guest. He adjured them "to cherish their history, their religion, their art, their family--and he urged them to write about it all, not as an American would write, but as an Egyptian, a Greek, or an Italian would write" (Richardson, 395).

Stuart explained his teaching of grammar and form by using a model employed by Mrs. Lanning, a teacher he emulated:

> She taught grammar in such a way that it became a concrete thing. Each part of speech was somehow related to building materials and carpenter tools.... Mrs. Lanning and her pupils, after acquainting themselves with tools and materials, built a house. First they worked on a sentence that was a part of the foundation.... Then they tied a number of paragraphs together to make the whole of a house. And when they had finished the process they had an essay, a theme, a story ("Teaching," 22).

Although in many ways the model is a dated one, it is extremely interesting to students of modern rhetoric for two reasons. First, it stresses writing as a process and the essay as the product of this process. Secondly, not expressed but implied by the metaphor Stuart and Lanning use as the vehicle of teaching, the end product

must be personal and practical. Like a custom-built house, it expresses the personality of its owner-builder and fulfills one or more individual needs. For Stuart and his students, these needs are individual expression, as he found in writing his poetry and fiction; self discovery and definition, as implied by his goals with his Egyptian writing students; and, crucial to the processes of writing and of teaching, a generous and equal sharing of one's strength and experience with one's classmates or pupils.

Stuart the author and educator was no radical innovator. He invented no new program of education to revolutionize the American school system. Instead, quietly and effectively, he synthesized, combining commonsense, effective methods he experienced in his career as pupil and tested as a classroom teacher. What he gives today's educators is no new key to effective classroom management. Instead, he presents us with a gentle reminder of educational goals and methods which have consistently proven their effectiveness and worth for generations of students and teachers. His books and articles about education in America and his example as an educator remind us, finally, to do, or re-do, the obvious: examine our own educational experiences to find those things that worked, the moments that moved and inspired us. Then recreate these with our students. It's a simple plan, not an easy one. But it works at any grade level, with any subject, and with any group of students. Like most of Stuart's homespun wisdom, it's efficient, it's effective, and it's as enduring as the Kentucky hills he loved.

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DISCOVERING A LITERACY PERIOD IN YOUR OWN HOME TOWN: ROMANTIC LOUISVILLE

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Growing up in southern Vermont made it quite natural for me to identify with certain aspects of American literature. Since I shared the New England countryside with Robert Frost, his poetry immediately struck familiar chords. When he died, he was even buried in my home town. A few miles south of us, the Berkshires held the memories of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville, and a thirty-minute drive allowed the same view of Mt. Greylock enjoyed by the latter as he labored over Moby Dick. Boston and its neighboring villages of Concord and Salem lay just a few hours beyond, so that Walden Pond and the Witch House were practically at arm's reach, adding an important element of concreteness to the writings of the American Renaissance. To the west, upstate New York with its Dutch origins and Indian history made the works of Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper seem more real. L al history and culture constantly recalled our early American heritage, and in high school and college it seemed but a short step from Plymouth Rock to Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys, or to Rip Van Winkle or the Scarlet Letter. Shirley Jackson lived in the next township, North Bennington, and although I wouldn't suspect its citizens of an annual stoning, in my mind's eye it will always be the village described in "The Lottery."

When I moved to Kentucky, I discovered a different local history and literary heritage. Although Louisville existed during the Revolutionary period, George Rogers Clark was admired chiefly as a pioneer and settler, Daniel Boone and Jim Porter were the larger-than-life heroes, and the primary historical focus was on the rugged lives of pioneers, the gracious lifestyle of the ante-bellum South, and the excitement of the steamboating era on the rivers. The difference between colonial New England and pioneering Kentucky was particularly clear during parades or other public

festivities. Whereas in my hometown the marching units often wore tri-corner hats and knee breeches, carried thirteen-star flags and played fifes and drums, in Louisville the parades featured an abundance of coonskin caps, fringed leather costumes, horses and long rifles; floats were populated by gentlemen in silk top hats and belles in hoop skirts, while Negro spirituals and Stephen Foster's sentimental melodies were heard everywhere. William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty and Robert Penn Warren were the writers with whom my students identified, and the traditions of folk tales and oral histories were common. Clearly, those columnists and culture analysts who believe that American society has been homogenized by network television and Hollywood haven't traveled much, or have never stopped anywhere long enough to notice the differences among regions.

The same diversity observable in American life, heritage, and culture exists in American literature. Choosing among such rich variety is generally the first challenge of teaching American literature; the second is finding a way to help students make connections between themselves, with their modern perspectives and notions of civilization, and poems and stories which have sprung from other historical periods, often with far different cultural values. One way to accomplish this second goal is to present literature in its socio-historical context, rather than as a series of isolated pieces of verbal art. We do this when we show movies of Jason's capture of the Golden Fleece, when we describe the life of the historical Caesar in connection with Shakespeare's play, or when we differentiate between Chaucer's Friar and Colonel Sanders's fryers. I happen to have a painting of a raven perched on a bust of Pallas, which I drag to class every time I teach Poe's poem. Once my students recover from their surprise that anyone would own such an item, they seem to appreciate the visual aid, since few homes these days are ornamented with classical sculptures.

Looking around, one can often find local traces of a particular period, or writer, or theme, which will stimulate students to recognize their own affinity with an otherwise distant time and place. As has already been mentioned, Kentucky has a pioneering, steamboating, plantation past which has often been turned to good use by teachers of history and literature. In addition, Louisville itself has some remarkable remnants of the American Romantic era which can serve as supplementary texts for classes studying that literary period.

Since the Romantic impulse was so widespread, and evolved over many decades, a clear and concise definition is impossible, yet scholars have delineated some of its predominant features, which include a deep love of nature; a focus on the self and the individual; a fascination with the supernatural, the mysterious and the Gothic;

an absorption with past cultures, especially the medieval; a love of the picturesque and exotic; a profound sense of idealism and morality; and a passionate nationalism. Nineteenth century art, architecture, social philosophy and history, landscape, and fashion mirror many of these same qualities in varying degrees. In Louisville, at least a dozen familiar sites, accessible to the public, reflect enough of these Romantic earmarks to be perfect backdrops for a lesson or an entire unit in American Romantic literature. They constitute part of the local expression of a broader American view of the world, and they can become the connecting point between today's students and their own literary heritage.

Perhaps the largest and most familiar of these locations are found in the Louisville park system, chiefly Cherokee in the east, Iroquois in the south, and Shawnee in the west. Frederick Law Olmsted, the last century's leading environmentalist and landscape architect, designed these parks in 1891 as "a treasure of rural and sylvan scenery...available to those escaping from the city" (Olmsted Associates 13). By the time he came to Louisville, Olmsted's connection with the naturalist movement had been long established. At the behest of nature poet and influential publisher William Cullen Bryant and prominent journalist Horace Greeley, Olmsted had laid out New York City's Central Park in 1857; in the ensuing years, he had designed 37 parks, 16 community plans, 14 college campuses, and the Capitol grounds in Washington D.C., and had led the campaign to preserve such natural wonders as Yosemite Valley and Niagara Falls (Fitzpatrick 59).

The concept of the public park, an open, green, natural space in the midst of the ugly, industrial-age city, embodied many of the socio-political ideals of Romantic thought, and Olmsted was its leading architect (Fitzpatrick 59). His intellectual heroes were Ralph Waldo Emerson and Thomas Carlyle, two of the primary shapers of Romantic philosophy (Fein 4). Consistent with his Romantic, naturalist ideals, Olmsted's plans for the local parks called for Iroquois to have "a sequestered character--a treasure of sylvan scenery...(with) the grandeur of the forest depths in which (one) may wander musingly for hours...and from its upper parts, fine, broad, distant prospects are to be had." Shawnee was to possess "broad and tranquil meadowy spaces...offering areas of turf to be inexpensively kept in a suitable condition for lawn games," and Cherokee's plan was for a place of "refreshment to be had in the contemplation of superb umbrageous trees...distributed naturally upon a gracefully undulating green sward" (Fitzpatrick 62-64).

These intentions clearly reflect sentiments Emerson expresses in Chapter One of Nature:

> To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society. I am not solitary whilst I read and write, though nobody is with me. But if a man would be alone, let him look at the stars.... Nature is a setting that fits equally well a comic or a mourning piece. In good health, the air is a cordial of incredible virtue. Crossing a bare common, in snow puddle, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration.... In the woods, too, a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough, and at what period soever of life is always a child (Baym et al. 826-27; Nature, Ch. I).

The purpose of the environmental movement was to preserve natural areas for the health and refreshment of generations to come.

Thus the parks in Louisville demonstrate the concrete effects that nineteenth century Romanticism has on today's lifestyle, because, even though mowing machines have replaced flocks of sheep as grass trimmers, and automobiles have replaced horse-drawn vehicles, people of all ages are still drawn to Olmsted's carefully designed green spaces to commune with nature, themselves, or one another. A quiet park corner provides a perfect setting for reading poems like William Cullen Bryant's "The Yellow Violet," whose first verse reads:

> When beechen buds begin to swell,
> And woods the blue-bird's warble know,
> The yellow violet's modest bell
> Peeps from the last year's leaves below.
> (Baym et al. 812)

Or James Russell Lowell's, "To the Dandelion":

> Dear common flower, that grow'st beside the way,
> Fringing the dusty road with harmless gold,
> First pledge of blithesome May,
> Which children pluck, and, full of pride, uphold,
> High-hearted buccaneers, o'erjoyed that they
> An Eldorado in the grass have found,
> Which not the rich earth's ample round
> May match in wealth--thou art more dear to me
> Than all the prouder summer-blooms may be....
> (Baym et al. 1947)

Perhaps in the park one can experience personally some insights similar to those Thoreau discovered in Walden's woods:

> Our village life would stagnate if it were not for the unexplored forests and meadows which surround it. We need the tonic of wildness,--to wade sometimes in marshes where the bittern and the meadow-hen lurk, and hear the booming of the snipe; to smell the whispering sedge where only some wilder and more solitary fowl builds her nest, and the mink crawls with its belly close to the ground. At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be infinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by use because unfathomable. We can never have enough of Nature (Baym et al. 1779; Walden, "Spring").

The Romantic spirit longed to experience the intense emotions of the Sublime, often achieved through contemplation of the natural universe, by finding the world in a grain of sand. A sentimental soul could reach the desired intensity of feeling through meditating on the Beautiful and the Sublime. As Edgar Allen Poe explained in "Philosophy of Composition," the poignant emotion aroused by melancholy was close to the ideal Romantic experience, and the most melancholy topic was Death, especially Death combined with Beauty. Although Poe believed that poetry about the death of a beautiful woman would excite the most melancholy feelings, the contemplation of death combined with the glories of the natural world was a favorite Romantic topic. Accordingly, the "Graveyard School" of poetry, which focused on Death and Beauty as expressions of the Sublime, developed, and by the middle of the nineteenth century, the same aesthetic sensibility began to construct lovely, naturally landscaped cemeteries in place of the traditional churchyard.

An outstanding example of this type of burial ground is Louisville's Cave Hill Cemetery. Built in 1848, Cave Hill Cemetery was planned by Edmund F. Lee, a leading designer of the "rural" cemetery, which he defined as:

> a place of resort, and an embellishment to a town of no ordinary character, by being located in the midst of rural scenery, and by affording susceptibilities for the tasteful display of works of art and offerings dedicated to the memory of the dead. ...but what is of vastly greater importance, it would become in due time

> a school of virtue, teaching by the examples of the dead, and a nursery of all the pious and tender emotions of the heart, on the due cultivation of which, the preservation of social order, of religion, and of our dearest privileges mainly depend (Thomas 8).

Although surrounded by the city, Cave Hill Cemetery is a nature lover's paradise, a unique blend of botanical garden, wildlife preserve, and burial ground. Its ponds attract flocks of migrating waterfowl, and its plantings include some specimens rarely seen in the Western Hemisphere. Moreover, its tombstones, mausoleums, and other sculptures offer three-dimensional testimony to the changing attitudes of times past and present. Founded in the Romantic sentimentality of the mid-nineteenth century, Cave Hill is an ideal demonstration of that era's impulse, a perfect illustration of the ideas embodied in that classic example of the American school of "Graveyard Poetry," William Cullen Bryant's "Thanatopsis." By visiting Cave Hill one can:

> Go forth under the open sky, and list
> To Nature's teaching, while from all around---
> Earth and her waters and the depth of air,---
> Comes a still voice---... (14-17).
> (Baym et al. 810)

which instructs the hearer in the lessons of death. This "rural" cemetery is naturally beautiful, inspiring landscape certified that those buried there would not desire a "couch more magnificent" (33). Furthermore, by reading the names on the memorials, one can find a compact lesson in local history, for many well-known personalities are buried here, including George Rogers Clark, the giant Jr. Porter, John Keats' brother, George, Henry Watterson, and Colonel Harland Sanders. Cave Hill's tombstones read like a roster of prominent Louisville families, for they bear the names Speed, Macaulay, Grinstead, Galt, Brown, Zorn, duPont, Seelbach, Bingham, and Atherton, among others. One can feel in this cemetery the relevance of Bryant's meditation on death:

> ...Thou shalt lie down
> With patriarchs of the infant world---with kings
> The powerful of the earth---the wise, the good,
> Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,
> All in one mighty sepulchre.---The hills
> Rock-ribb'd and ancient as the sun,---the vales
> Stretching in pensive quietness between;... (33-39).

Many carvings in the cemetery express nineteenth-century sentimentality, featuring weeping angels, cherubs which mark the graves of infants, urns draped for mourning, and Victorian female figures dropping flowers. Samuel Clemens parodies such sentimentality in Huckleberry Finn, with his portrait of the Grangerfords' melancholy daughter, Emmaline, who "kept a scrap-book when she was alive, and used to paste obituaries and accidents and cases of patient suffering in it out of the Presbyterian Observer, and write poetry after them out of her own head" (324: ch. 17), but Clemens's aunt, Mary Goggins Hancock Saunders, the model for Tom Sawyer's Aunt Polly, is also buried in Cave Hill Cemetery.

Nineteenth-century Romanticism did not limit its expression to the natural world, however. Its interest in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance caused a major shift in American architectural styles from the neo-classical purity of the Greek temple to the fantastic arches and turrets of the Gothic cathedral, the massive walls and crenellations of the medieval castle, and the rectangular shapes, eyebrowed windows, and low-hipped roofs of the Italianate style. Louisville businesses prospered after the Civil War, so their successful owners built for themselves splendid Victorian homes in all the popular styles of the age. Many of these structures are gone, but numbers of others still crowd the streets of Old Louisville and the Cherokee Triangle. St. James Court, with its central square and fountain, probably has the most elegant and completely preserved exterior.

However, thanks to a rather eccentric Louisville family, the Brennans, the public now has regular access to a Victorian house whose interior, as well as its exterior, remains much the same as it was late in the nineteenth century. This home was occupied by the last member of the Brennan Family until the early 1970s, after which it was entrusted to the Filson Club, which now conducts public tours. Located at 631 S. Fifth Street, between Broadway and Chestnut, the house has been described by Louisville historian George Yater as "a slice of the lifestyle of well-to-do 19th Century Louisvillians, preserved miraculously intact three-quarters of a century after the end of the Victorian era" (42). To a student of American Romanticism, the home embodies many of the qualities prized by the Romantic spirit of the last century. Built right after the Civil War in the Italianate, Renaissance Revival style, the house is decorated and furnished with lace curtains and red velvet swags, Tiffany table lamps and crystal chandeliers, and massive furniture which includes an enormous carved, Renaissance-style bedroom suite custom made for the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876.

Dr. Brennan's library conforms remarkably to the description of the narrator's chamber in "The Raven." The bookcases display dozens of "volumes of forgotten lore," and the corniced shelves exhibit

busts of the Romantic intellectual favorites, Virgil, Dante, Homer and Shakespeare, as well as images from classical mythology (not of Pallas Athena, however). Some busts do stand above the chamber door, the room is dim and shuttered like Poe's, and it lacks nothing of the poem's atmosphere except the "silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain." Throughout the house one can see other prominent elements of Romantic influence, including the Brennan family crests depicted in stained glass in the bedroom windows. The parlor's heavy and ornate decor features busts and other images of Napoleon and Josephine. Napoleon was a Romantic hero partly because his dominating personality and excellence as a military strategist made him a virtuoso, and partly because he epitomized the expansionist impulse which was a strong element of American nationalism, expressed chiefly in the effort to conquer the West. Napoleon's downfall and island exile inevitably appealed to the Romantic preoccupation with isolation and alienation. The Brennans named one of their six sons after the French emperor.

Another pervasive element in the Brennan house parlor is the Egyptian-style furniture, including an Egyptian funerary table and carvings of sphinxes and other designs consistent with the Romantic love for the exotic and occult. Nineteenth-century interest in Egypt was stimulated by a series of contemporary excavations and the discovery of the Rosetta Stone by Napoleon's army in 1799, but Romantic writers like Poe found in Egyptian lore an iconography appropriate for the Gothic genre. Particularly in "The Fall of the House of Usher" does Poe employ an underlying system of Egyptian mythology, found in the initiation ritual of the Mysteries of Isis and Osiris as they were understood by his own age (St. Armand 69).

A tour of the Brennan House includes a sound-and-light show which tries to capture some of the atmosphere of nineteenth-century living, and a multi-media program which offers fascinating glimpses of the city during that era. To make this immersion in Romanticism complete, there is some suspicion that the house is inhabited by a ghost. Could it be Lenore?

Still other spots in Louisville provide Romantic sights and insights. The original structure of Churchill Downs, with its distinctive turreted cupola outline, clearly resembles the covered platforms erected in the Middle Ages for the comfort of spectators at tournaments. On Fifth Street just a block or two north of the Brennan House, one finds the Catholic Cathedral of the Assumption, the purest example of Gothic revival church architecture in the city. Another nineteenth-century Gothic church, St. Louis Bertrand, stands in the Limerick area at 1104 S. Sixth Street, not far from Central Park. It imitates the decorated English style of architecture, and features two Norman towers. The Speed Museum, adjacent to the University of Louisville Campus on South Third Street, has

a gallery of nineteenth-century paintings. Most of these are portraits, but some feature exotic subjects like harems, and one is a landscape by Thomas Cole, the nature artist portrayed with William Cullen Bryant in Asher Durand's well-known painting, "Kindred Spirits."

The Filson Club itself, located in the former Ferguson Mansion at 1310 S. Third, is a treasury of nineteenth-century art and artifacts. Its main staircase features a Romantic waterfall landscape by Louisville artist Carl Brenner. The club's library contains a wealth of information about all aspects of Louisville history, and behind the main building a historical museum has been built in the carriage barn.

Finally, Louisville's Romantic spirit was expressed in words most significantly by the poet Madison J. Cawein, whose two dozen [illegible] published verses testify to his popularity. William Dean Howells described Cawein's poetry as "all but painfully alive with memories, with regrets, with longings, with hopes, with all that from time to time mutably constitutes us men and women, and yet keeps us children" (Vaux-Royer 6). Edwin Markham likened [illegible]in to Aldrich, Keats, and Lowell: "Mr. Cawein's landscape is not the sea, nor the desert, nor the mountain, but the lovely inland levels of his Kentucky" (Vaux-Royer 6). His poetry covers a broad range of Romantic topics, however, as found in the exotic "Senorita," the religious "Mater Dolorosa," the Shakespearean "Leander to Hero," the horrific "The Dream of the Dead," the quaint, "The Ruined Mill," and the picturesque, "Along the Ohio." Madison Cawein, too, is buried in Cave Hill Cemetery, and it seems most suitable to use his words to illustrate the way Romanticism found its local expression:

Along the Ohio

Athwart a sky of brass rich ribs of gold;
A billion bulk the wide Ohio lies;
Beneath the sunset, billowing manifold,
The purple hill-tops rise.

And lo! the crescent of a crystal moon,
And great cloud-feathers flushed with crimson light
Drifting above the pureness of her lune,
Rent from the wings of night.

. . . . .

No marvel that the warrior's love waxed flame
Fighting, for thee, Kentucky, till he wound
Inseparably 'round thee that old name
Of dark and bloody ground!

But peace to those wild braves whose bones are thine!
And peace to those rude pioneers whose moon
Of glory rose, 'mid stars of lesser shine,
In name of Daniel Boone!

"Peace! peace!" the lips of all thy forests roar;
The rivers mutter peace unto thy strand:
Thy past is dead, and let us name thee o'er,
THE HOSPITABLE LAND! (Blooms of the Berry 73-74)

As they explore the impact American Romanticism had on national culture, Louisville students can enjoy these remnants of its influence on local life as well. But this kind of remembrance is not unique. Most of us live in cities, towns, and villages that preserve something of the ages which have gone before, and those souvenirs can be used to enhance the study of American life and literature by making connections between today's students and yesterday's ideas.

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TRANSCENDENTAL "SAYERS": LOUISVILLE'S BLACK POETS

Dottie Broaddus, St. Meinrad College

When I first moved to Louisville from a small town, I was quite taken with its size, and mistakenly believed that I could become lost in anonymity. It didn't take long for me to realize the folly of this belief. Louisville is a rather large area that comprises intimate communities--sometimes neighborhoods such as Crescent Hill or Valley Station or the West End, but more often communities made up of people with similar interests.

The six poets that I interviewed for this article are representative of this kind of community--the Black literary community, which includes writers, poets, playwrights, producers, storytellers, and other artists in the Afro-American tradition. The selection of these six poets was arbitrary, but I believe they fairly represent the philosophies of the larger community. The six all write in genres other than poetry--some write fiction, some plays, some monologues. They perceive themselves, however, and are perceived by others, as poets. They are Umar Aki Williams, George Ann Berry, Mildred Gazeway Hawkins, Capri (Robert Louis James Hawkins), Estella Conwill Alexander, and Karen Davis. Even though they do not live in the same neighborhood (Estella, for example, has recently moved to Frankfort in order to teach at Kentucky State University), they maintain close contact with one another. George Ann and Estella have written collaboratively. Umar acknowledges Capri as mentor, a master poet who has been a primary influence on his work, and Karen acknowledges Estella in the same way. When I arrived for my interview with George Ann, Mildred was visiting. During my interview with Capri, Estella telephoned In short, these poets know in detail the work, the disappointments and successes, the creative processes, the personal philosophies, and the life styles of every other poet in the group.

As I interviewed these poets, I was struck first by their honesty, by their willingness to share their ideas, their aspirations, and their frustrations with me, a relative stranger. And as I reviewed the interviews, I realized how remarkably similar their perceptions are. Their ability to make connections among their work, their politics, their spirituality seemed to me to be remarkably transcendental. Can it be that these poets, minority writers in 1986, share ideas expressed by the transcendentalists one hundred years ago? This question led me to Emerson, that visionary who not only perceived the transcendental way, but also articulated it so well. In "The Poet" he isolates three different kinds of people, "the Knower, the Doer, and the Sayer." "The poet," he says, "is the sayer, the namer, and represents beauty" (Selected Prose and Poetry, 123). The process of becoming a "sayer" is expressed by Karen, the youngest member of the group, in an excerpt from her poem "Baptismal."

I was saved when I opened a book
and somebody by the name of
Langston Hughes
wrote a poem.
A few others delivered messages
and their name were down
Nikki Giovanni
Gwen Brooks
Maya Angelou

There was a blank space
and I wrote my name there.
Now that I'm saved,
I, too, can deliver the word.

"The word" for these "sayers" is written, of course, out of their own experience; therefore, it is often too direct and too controversial to suit the tastes of the dominant culture. Mildred says, "We can't write from anything but experience. If we have to work, take care of the family, deal with problems, we can't write about flowers." George Ann remembers an incident at a Round Robin Workshop for several poets where white poets were initially stand-offish and even arrogant toward their black counterparts, yet sought them out later for conversation because they were fascinated with their direct approach to the subject. "How did you do that?" she remembers them asking. George Ann says, "Our work is rhythmic, it's alive. We write from our soul, from our guts."

This kind of gut-level, uninhibited approach to writing is perceived differently by publishers. Mildred, who recently is writing more fiction than poetry, says that one publisher criticized her work for being "too straight forward," while another liked it because it was "natural" and had no "big words." Not being able to determine the expectations of publishers creates particular problems for black writers who want their work to be read by a wide audience.

However, Capri notes that "poets don't necessarily need to be read--they need to be listened to." Being heard is particularly important when "the word" is political, as it is for these "sayers." They, like Emerson, are first of all poets, but they are also orators who need a listening audience, an audience who can read or hear open-mindedly, an audience that can be persuaded. George Ann says, "I write in a vein that exposes problems.... We're so bogged down by what is happening to us that it spills over into our writing. Our politics rises up and engulfs us." An example of this kind of persuasive, political poetry is George Ann's poem "Star Spangled Blues."

In dawn's late light
Red men chant in blue,
While bleeding drops prove white
In twilight's gleaming.
In dawn's late light
Black men sway in polyrhythm
Under a desecrated oak,
In twilight's gleaming.
In dawn's late light
Grey men drink dregs
That steeped the dreams
Of a fostchild's folly;
Singing off keys song,
In the land of the free
To haunt a Frenchman's tongue.

Of all the poets in this group, Umar is the most self-consciously political. He calls himself a "grass-roots" poet, one who evolved from the culture of the masses as opposed to what he calls the "European elitist culture." Because the European culture dictates standards of taste, black artists either conform to the norms of their former masters or face that their art will not gain a wide audience. Umar believes this kind of effect is felt more deeply in the literary arts, but he also finds it in visual arts and music. "Black painters," he says, "many times cannot sell their art, but are instead commissioned to paint portraits. Musicians must play

either 'top 40' or 'cool jazz' rather than 'avant-garde' music. This kind of dominance has a stifling effect on the creativity of all black artists."

In addition to having their work ignored, disapproved of, or rejected by audiences who are steeped in the European tradition, these black poets often cannot gain acceptance from other blacks. George Ann says, "Our rejection is twofold. We're rejected by both white and black." Umar expands on this idea by noting that "Louisville does not encourage its writers, particularly its black writers. Talent, ability, and production act at a grass-roots level, but in many cases, outlets don't exist. Those that do exist are neo-colonized by arts groups.... Black artists' organizations have allowed themselves to become neo-colonized by arts councils. These organizations have failed to find an arts constituency among black people who can serve as patrons. Many black people, who are themselves wealthy, do not see the validity of the grass-roots black culture." The belief that one's work will be rejected by both groups results in the black poet feeling overwhelmingly disenfranchised. Capri says simply, "My audience is either lost or unknown."

Yet Capri continues to write, and his writing, because of his experiences, is fused with the visual arts. He began as a teenager to draw and paint pictures, but his focus changed in 1950. He says, "I was in confinement, and some Mexican kept talking about Omar Khayyam. Finally I read The Rubaiyat. I got high off the language. Then I started writing letters for fellows. They would pay me to write their girlfriends. I wrote a poem for one fellow. The girl fell in love with the writer. She knew he didn't write it. Then he started disliking me. After The Rubaiyat I stopped drawing. I realized that a poem is a painting, the words you exchange for colors.... I draw better with words than with a pencil. I can create an original painting that nobody ever thought of." Therefore, for Capri "the word" is not only heard but also seen as he illustrates in "In Search of Music at Andre's Disco."

I saw the black painted walls
with the cracks that you can't;
I saw the coal black lights
as they glowed on the show-back paint;
I saw the black feet move; Moving - Growing - Sweet!
I cut me down some sugar on 18th Street
with the throw down niggers
in the throw back heat.

Estella emphasizes the determination of black poets to continue to write despite their disillusionments at not being read or heard. "To understand the nature of the Poet Black," she says, "we understand as well the fierceness of the machine to squelch it. Black artists continue to perform--but more painfully--continue to be Poets Black."

George Ann is somewhat optimistic about the audience for black writing increasing. She believes that the success of Stephen Spielberg's production of Alice Walker's The Color Purple has given black writers hope that the trend may be changing. "Spielberg has stumbled into something new. Perhaps white audiences can now begin to enjoy some of our skills."

This is especially true in Louisville where an interest in Walnut Street, now Muhammad Ali Boulevard, has been revived. Walnut Street was the center of life for blacks before Urban Renewal began in 1954, and older blacks in Louisville remember it fondly. In 1985 under the direction of Kenneth Clay, the Kentucky Center for the Arts sponsored a "Midnight Ramble" series which included a performance of George Ann's play "My Main Man...and Things." As part of the Walnut Street celebration George Ann and Estella collaboratively wrote a poem that illustrates Louisville's Afro-American tradition. The title is "Footin' It Down the Block In Louisville," and the following excerpt is the last stanza.

(Be Bop Shabam De Ibblyop Obleop
Oop Shabeebop...)

Footing it down the block--Sixth and Walnut to Thirteenth
and wherever
Footing it where survival ripped the bop in the times that
seemed forever
and two and three was the same as one and me in eat shops
and the street
and business met the midnight sun with a thriving heavy beat
where almost everybody was homebody--you don't have to knock
where energy rich and dark pulsated real through the block
and life forces transfused and folk fused together--it was need
skin was grafted onto skin by the times that made us bleed
and folk greeted each other "What's happening" at the daily
gathering
the unity still unrecognized till after the scattering.
Footing it down the block--Sixth and Walnut to Thirteenth
and wherever
Footing it where survival ripped the bop in the times that
seemed forever.

(Be Bop Shabam De Ibblyop Obleop
Oop Shabeebop...)

Kenneth Clay, the Director of Cultural Diversity for the Kentucky Center and himself a poet, understands the black artists' need for an audience. He, like George Ann, is guardedly positive about the future for black writers. He explains that he took an "aggressive approach" to developing an audience among blacks for his "Midnight Ramble" series by visiting bars, barber shops, and other black businesses as well as speaking to church groups and other black organizations. As a result, blacks turned out for his series, as well as some whites. "At first the audience was 95 percent black," he says, "but as the series developed, it was almost fifty-fifty."

In the meantime, until a wider audience develops for black poets, the "sayers" in this group continue to "deliver the word," continue in Umar's words to "live like poets--to operate with creative integrity, to synthesize experience, to be propelled by work." They write not because they want to, after all, but because they have to. Capri says his writing is a way of "catharting," a word he used many times in our conversations. He says, "I have had experiences that I've had to get off my chest. Writing keeps me from picking up a shotgun.... If I didn't have escape through writing, I'd probably be doing life in prison or be in a grave."

Estella's reasons for writing are primarily spiritual. "We cannot talk culture or politics," she explains, "without talking spirituality." She perceives her writing as a "level of response that sounds like a call. It's a response to all the voices I live with and breath with. But it's also the answer, a response to the Divine. We, as artists, are engaged in this call-and-response dynamic." At another point she says, "Life is like looking through the depths of a prism. Each of us sees something different. As a black woman poet, the vision is demanding because it is a view not necessarily seen or reflected by the outer culture, but it is the view that is mine to utter anyway."

The "hearers" for her utterances may be small, perhaps a group that invites her to speak or read for a special occasion such as Black History Week. She is pleased to be invited by such a group, but she needs another group of "hearers" as well. "It is not the end-all to be on somebody else's agenda," she says. "To stay in touch with reality, a poet has to sometimes do her own calling. Make it home. You construct the message, you call the circle into being. Then you not only give energy--you get it back."

Emerson exhorts poets to persist, to "stand and strive, until at last rage draw out...a power by which a man is the conductor of the whole river of electricity" (139). Energy given and received creates the current that gives these black poets their power and their consolation.

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GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING COMPOSITION SKILLS TO DIALECT SPEAKERS

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Angle contends that the aim of teaching composition to dialect speakers should be to "provide them with effective communication skills and to help them recognize that the individual who harbors hope for success must be able to make himself or herself understood to the educated people of the society" (145).

Also, the individual must be made aware that limited language skills limit possibilities. Thus, an initial general guideline for composition instructors is that they bring to the classroom appropriate attitudes and strategies to help build success. They should not spend an inordinate amount of class time trying to eliminate impediments from dialect students' language.

In her observations about characteristic features of the work of inexperienced writers, Shaughnessy notes that some non-dialect students share many of the same errors with the dialect speaker, namely, the ommitted "ed" ending and the problematic "s" plural form. American-born Jewish, native-American Irish, and Chinese-American students, she states, exhibit some of the same linguistic features which clash with many of the same stubborn contours of formal English evident in, say, the writing of black students (91-2).

Thus, teaching dialect students necessitates the same methods and attitudes employed in teaching non-dialect students. This, then, should be a second guiding principle for composition teachers. As Ramsey observes:

> Not a semester goes by that someone does not come to me with a paper in hand, face in contortion, and say, I have a black student who doesn't know how to write. Dialect problems. What should I do? When we sit down

> to look at the paper, I ask my concerned friend to point to the dialect features: a double negative here, a non-standard be there, but, all in all, few real dialectal problems. Most of the time the paper is indeed poorly written, but the problem is usually that the student simply does not know how to write a paper (199).

It is important to emphasize that dialect speakers have been and are being taught effective composition skills. Several programs presently in place are proving successful. Other general guidelines can be extracted from an examination of two such programs:

1. McMurray College (Texas)--Carroll describes the process approach taken there. Instructors emphasize the need for a great deal of writing and for the preservation of it in portfolios (journals). Hence, their own writing will provide students with the best text for their writing development. Students pick one or a part of one writing from their portfolios to be worked into a sustained piece, they divide into small groups, with each person inviting help on the parts considered problems; other students acting as listeners take notes, commenting and suggesting after each reading. This peer assistance readies the writers, Carroll explains, for their first reformulation. She then explains correcting, revising, and rewriting to them and urges the making of copies of their writing. During a following session, students read each other's pieces, advising according to a student editing guide.

Carroll affirms that accepting writing as a process makes it easier to deal with some of those problems we encounter--the double negative and the non-standard be, as mentioned, plus getting students to add the s to the third person singular and the ed to the past tense. She makes an important point too when she observes that when a particular problem is widespread it should be taught to the class as a class weakness, and when it is an individual problem, it should be taught individually. One way to accomplish the latter, I have noted, is with conferencing, which always impresses better than the yards of red marginalia we are accustomed to smearing on our students' essays. Knoblauch and Brannon make much the same point when they urge that teacher commentary on papers be "facilitative rather than merely evaluative" (289). And written comments, they suggest, should simply be a part of the teacher's ongoing dialogue with the student.

2. Howard University (Washington, D.C.)--Nembhard contends that the reading and writing programs for the large black student population of this university have been successful because they involve teaching practices that "de-emphasize the students' inadequacies' (79).

Freshmen in the Howard program write a diagnostic essay at the beginning of the semester. (I suggest the second or third class meeting, when the feverish confusion of the add/drop period has subsided.) Classroom instruction proceeds based upon the results. Here, I would suggest that prior to instruction the instructor compile and subsequently distribute to the class a list of general problem areas that derive from the diagnostic essay and that he or she can teach to. In effect, then, this catalogue of concerns would serve as the nucleus for whole-class instruction and would also afford students the opportunity to consult independently their composition handbooks. Students would thus be provided with a syllabus based on real rather than perceived needs.

Nembhard notes that the Howard program provides extensive opportunity for the students to read and write, most of the time in class where they have the direct services of the instructor acting as consultant. This in-class help is, I feel, an extremely important component and one that is not, unfortunately, stressed at every institution. Students must be required to do some of their reading and writing in class. As Lindemann observes, inexperienced readers and writers need this opportunity during which the instructor can provide help during the actual reading and writing, serving as guide and reference source (239). As students' reading and writing matures, their dependence on the teacher diminishes. The baton of responsibility for learning passes to the student, where it should rightly remain.

In the Howard program, according to Nembhard, the accent is on the process of reading and writing, with all the phases--prereading, writing, planning, peer commenting, rereading, and revising--coming into focus. The program, she notes, is highly successful in improving reading and writing competencies without damaging self-esteem (80).

Another guideline for composition instructors is to play upon dialect students' interest in dialect itself to stimulate concern for reading and writing. Freshman anthologies are filled with short stories, poems, and plays that depend upon dialect to achieve their effects. If this use of dialect is examined, students may become more interested in the literature being studied and in their own language use. The following short stories and poems should prove useful.

Philip Roth's "Defender of the Faith" can be used to heighten students' interest in language. The main characters in this story are drawn together because of their Jewish heritage. The basic trainees--Fishbein, Halpern, and especially Grossbart--use this heritage to try to gain special favors from their sergeant, Nathan Marx. And they are successful to some extent. Early in the story,

Sergeant Marx reflects: "I had been fortunate enough to develop an infantryman's heart, which, like his feet, at first aches and swells but finally grows horny enough for him to travel the weirdest paths without feeling a thing." It is chiefly through Yiddish dialect, and the memories evoked in Marx by hearing these words, that Fishbein, Halpern, and Grossbart are at least partially able to undermine the infantryman's heart that the sergeant had so carefully cultivated.

At the very beginning, Grossbart manages to lead Sergeant Marx into using the term "shul," confirming his religious bond with the trainees. Later, Grossbart's saying "Good Shabbus" causes Marx to stop and think: "One rumor of home and time past, and memory plunged down through all I had anesthetized, and came to what I suddenly remembered was myself. So it was not altogether curious that, in search of more of me, I found myself following Grossbart's tracks to Chapel No. 3, where the Jewish services were being held." Grossbart continues to strengthen the Jewish bond by using words like "leben," which Marx recalls was his grandmother's term of affection for him, and by talking about "Yeshiva," "gefilte fish," "Seder," and "matzoh."

By examining Roth's use of dialect, students can gain understanding of these conflicts within the protagonist. And they may gain a greater sense of what dialect is--that it may be regional, social, or, in this case, religious. Such awareness should give students a greater exigency if writing papers on Roth's story. Further, it may lead to discussion and writing on topics like the influence of dialect in establishing ties with individuals or groups.

William Faulkner's "Barn Burning" should catch the interest of freshmen. They can become intrigued by the strange behavior of Abner Snopes and by the emotional conflict with his young son, as he is torn between "the old fierce pull of blood" and his growing awareness of his father's errors. The students can be directed to Faulkner's handling of dialect.

Three dialects appear in "Barn Burning": so-called standard speech in characters like Major and Mrs. De Spain, uneducated white speech in the Snopes family, and uneducated black speech in the De Spain servant and in the "strange nigger" whose message is repeated to the judge at the trial that opens the story. The Snopes family has interesting characteristics in phonology, morphology, and syntax: "hisn," "ourn," "hit" (for it), "hawg," "tote," "lemme be," "fixing to." Faulkner's portrayal of non-standard black dialect is in evidence with speech rhythm and on dropped word endings: "He say to tell you wood and hay kin burn....that whut he say to tell you;" "Wipe yo foots, white man, fo you come in here. Major ain't home nohow;" "I tole him to."

Examining these speech patterns in "Barn Burning" can contribute to the students' interest in the story in several ways. Social classes are represented by the dialects of the characters. By reading the dialogue, students should be able to understand something about the place of the Snopes family in Faulkner's fictional society. This understanding can help students (especially male students) better comprehend the motivations and conflicts of both Abner Snopes and his son. In addition, discussion of the differences Faulkner portrays between uneducated black and uneducated white speech can lead to debate about whether such differences did or do exist. Students should be able to say a great deal about how language can determine status in society. They should be able to tap their own prior knowledge and thus relate to some of the resentment Abner Snopes felt. This realization reinforces what Angle said earlier about limited language skills limiting possibilities in life.

Analysis of Faulkner's use of dialect in "Barn Building" can result in various oral and written assignments. Greater understanding of the levels of society he has depicted may lead to better papers on theme or characterization in the story. Discussion of the features of black and white speech may motivate students to write papers involving library research or oral research. In any case, studying the dialect in the story can increase the students' understanding of the story and can heighten their awareness of the social and cultural dimensions of language.

A consideration of the father-son relationship in the story can also make for interesting assignments and activities, one of which is role-playing. This relationship is an integral part of the story and one characterized by a lack of communication. One half of the students in the class could assume the boy's role and the other half the father's with the intention of establishing some sort of dialogue between father and son. A hypothetical situation could be set up in which the boy has an opportunity to sit his father down and ask him all of the questions he is now too timid or reluctant to ask. The father, then, would have a chance to explain, for example, his bitterness and mistrust of authority. Sure to be an important factor in such an exchange would be the father's lack of education as reflected in his dialect.

Like "Barn Burning," Richard Wright's "Almos' a Man" can catch the interest of freshmen, for it too uses dialect to make a statement about social class. In addition, students can become involved in the plight of the protagonist, seventeen-year-old Dave Sanders, as he struggles with outside forces and himself to achieve manhood. Three dialects are present in "Almos' a Man": standard English in characters like Jim Hawkins, uneducated white speech in the character of Mister Joe, and uneducated black speech in the Sanders family.

Analysis of dialect in the story can result in the types of assignments mentioned earlier in reference to "Barn Burning." Unlike "Barn Burning," however, the author of "Almos' a Man" is black. Here, then, it should be easy for dialect students to lock into a sense of identification with the author. In this regard, biographical data on Wright becomes important and could be relayed during a prereading session. Students should he interested to learn that, with the world seemingly opposing him at every turn, the young Richard Wright became literate, a reader of good books, and finally a skillful writer.

In poetry, dialect is less often a crucial element. However, there are opportunities for students to study its significance in some anthologized poems. Writing assignments may result from discussion of ghetto slang in Langston Hughes's "Mother to Son" or James Emanuel's "Whitey, Baby." In the former, the poet uses dialect to convey the poem's extremely powerful central metaphor, the mother's advice to her son that though life "ain't heen no crystal stair," he should not turn from it but continue "goin' and climbin'." Figurative language and the use of metaphor should be relatively easy for dialect students to comprehend, in that they do much work informally with comparisons. Also, though a metaphor involves unlike objects, many such comparisons have become so common through use that the differences are no longer thought of, as, for example, our country being a "ship of state" sailing on troubled waters.

In "Whitey, Baby," a young black man employs dialect to express heartfelt feelings to "Whitey," a privileged female companion on a 1969 civil rights trip:

> WhatCHU know
> bout stayin in the dark
> cause ya cant believe nothin
> nobody says/bout good things
> ya gonna get
> xcep somethin Mama made?

Students can thus be directed to the staccato drive of the clipped language, and how it serves to give the poem its hammer-like drive.

Countee Cullen's "Incident" offers dialect students striking counterpoise to the previous poems, in that it uses educated speech and effective irony to make a simple yet moving statement on the effect of a racial epithet on an eight-year-old:

Once riding in old Baltimore,
Heart-filled, head-filled with glee,
I saw a Baltimorean
Keep looking straight at me.

Now I was eight and very small,
And he was no whit bigger,
And so I smiled, but he poked out
His tongue and called me, "Nigger."

I saw the whole of Baltimore
From May until December:
Of all the things that happened there
That's all that I remember.

With little problem, students should be able to establish the literal sense of the title--the "incident" as a minor, casual event--and the underlying sense--that of the violation of a child's innocence by racial bias as a common, ordinary event. Too, writing activities on "incidents" in students' or their families' lives may follow.

German and Polish words and phrases abound in Sylvia Plath's "Daddy" and James Emanuel's "Women of Warsaw," respectively. In the first, students will discover numerous and increasingly ominous images of Nazism beginning with the introduction of the German summation ach, du (ah, you) in the third stanza. In addition, the poem contains a number of unusual words (e.g., achoo, gobbledygoo) that students could explore in writing.

An account of a grocery shopping trip closes on a complex note of stonelike human courage amid poverty and despair in "Women of Warsaw." Here, students will encounter images of cheap packages of Polish meat ("lumps of Rutkowskiego") conveyed by coined terms such as "pennypackages," "flatpatties" and "lumpnotes" that combine to make a statement on a nation's history, character and spirit. The poem's dash of dialect and imagery should serve to provide students insight into why hope surrounds the sore cares and pressures of Polish daily life.

The pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax of the English and Scottish dialects Robert Burns employs in his famous lyric "A Red, Red Rose" may appear strange to students but, with some guidance, can be understood. The first half of the poem owes much of its charm to the word play on the Old English equivalent for "love." In the first stanza, it is a noun standing for the speaker's lady ("my luve"); later, it is a noun standing for his condition ("so deep in luve am I"); finally, it is used as a verb ("I will luve thee").

Students can also be directed to the hyperbole and metaphor that exist at the center of the poem and are conveyed largely through images exploying reduced forms of words:

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun:
O I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

These striking representations should do much to heighten dialect students' awareness of the limitless possibility and domain of language.

Thomas Hardy's "The Ruined Maid" is a poem whose skill and humor is achieved by its comment-and-response structure. The occasion is a chance reunion in London between two rurally-raised female friends. Melia, the respondent and the maid "ruined" by town life, develops a comic definition of that ruination as she and her ingenuous country cousin lock into conversation:

"O 'Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!
Who could have supposed I should meet you in Town?
And whence such fair garments, such prosperi-ty?"
"O didn't you know I'd been ruined?" said she.

In this first stanza, Melia uses the word "ruined" simply to describe herself. However, in succeeding stanzas, she associates it with elegant dress, polish, leisure, and liveliness. Further, Melia's language is polished and proper until, in the final stanza, in reaction to her friend's desire to have "a fine sweeping gown" with which to "strut about Town," she reverts, with obvious relish, to the vernacular of the country life she led before she was ruined:

"My dear--a raw country girl, such as you be,
Cannot quite expect that. You ain't ruined," said she.

With its abrupt change in speech patterns, "The Ruined Maid" will afford dialect students the comic relief often necessary when struggling with the formal fit of a language. Too, they will witness the delight Melia embraces as she spreads linguistic wings to move easily between formal speech and dialect.

In all of the poems considered, dialect contributes to meaning, and discussion of this dialect can lead to writing assignments directly or indirectly related to the poems under discussion.

For dialect speakers to become effective employers of the language of society, they need be given plenty of opportunities both in class and out to practice and enhance their composition skills. To do otherwise is to do disservice. The guidelines set forth above should help to realize that goal.

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DIALECT DIFFERENCES AND THE TEACHING OF WRITING

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It is clear that the composing of written discourse involves much more than the mere translating of phonemes into graphemic equivalents. But it is also clear that spoken habits can interfere with freshman writers' attempts to communicate in what Shaughnessy refers to as "the dialect of formal writing" (45). The illumination of this latter point through the analysis of numerous samples from student texts is, perhaps, the greatest strength of Shaughnessy's method. As she rightly observes, such immersion in actual student language is favorable, even essential, to the development of a "sense of pattern" in nontraditional constructions (5). Her method appears weak, however, in that she depends primarily on error analysis rather than on contrastive analysis. In other words, her search for universal spoken/written conflict points leads to concentration on complex or illogical formal features to the exclusion of significant standard/nonstandard contrasts, thus prompting the conclusion that the speech habits of all beginning writers are equidistant from the forms and structures of the formal written dialect. This is a surprising conclusion in view of the fact that Shaughnessy's subjects, unlike Cross's "new student" or Roueche's "high-risk student," are described as residents of "ethnic or racial enclaves" (3). Shaughnessy even attempts to affirm the inconsequentiality, specifically, of black dialect/standard English contrasts by illustrating that the written registers of Jewish-Americans, Irish-Americans, and Chinese-Americans can contain unconventional structures similar to those produced by black Americans (91-92). But because such an affirmation can easily lead to the misevaluation of the linguistic capabilities of certain nonstandard speakers, it is my belief that writing instructors must be cognizant of relevant internal and cross-dialectal patterns. Such a statement cannot but appear dogmatic or, at the least, extravagant to those who rarely interact with students whose native language habits diverge significantly from the language of the classroom. I find it difficult, however, to conclude otherwise.

Encounters with various spoken patterns has, first of all, left me with little doubt that regional and social dialects, despite mutual intelligibility, can differ radically not only from Edited American English but from other regional and social dialects as well. A comparison of selected features of the two nonstandard registers with which I am best acquainted will clarify this point. These registers are a black southern dialect that includes most of the Black English features described by Dillard (39-72) and a white southern dialect that resembles the Appalachian English described by Wolfram and Christian (182-90).

Most obvious to the serious observer (but probably least obvious to the average listener and, therefore, least important in terms of oral communicative competence) are the phonological contrasts between these two dialects. A vivid example is the post-vocalic r, which in certain sound environments is seldom absent in the white dialect and seldom present in the black dialect. Thus, there is little overlap between the two systems--one being r-full, the other r-less--but, interestingly enough, both overlapping at different points with the standard dialect. The words officer and vanilla are illustrations:

	SD	WD	BD
officer	r after e	r after e	no r after e
vanilla	no r after a	r after a	no r after a

It should be noted that the r-lessness of this black dialect does resemble the r-less patterns of certain white southerners, an analysis of whose speech habits also reveals no final r-sound in words like officer. An overlap in phonological conflict points does not always guarantee identical resultant pronunciations, however. In such words as unfortunate, for example, white speakers tend to replace the r-sound with an "uh;" black speakers, with a long vowel sound. It should be noted, too, that whereas Crane's research with residents of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, indicates that r-lessness is disappearing from the speech of young white southerners of all social classes (Crane, Yeager, and Whitman 185), no such shift in black patterns has been reported.

The black dialect also contains morphological features that contrast with corresponding features in the white dialect, both systems, once again, diverging at different points from lexically similar standard features. Among the more significant of such inflectional entanglements are the present tense forms of verbs that are considered regular in standard English, as illustrated by the respective possible paradigms of the word call:

	SD	WD	BD
1st, 2nd sing., plur.	call	call	call
3rd sing.	calls	calls	call
3rd plur.	call	calls	call

Here, black present tense forms overlap in the same number of instances with the standard dialect as does the white dialect. But the black past tense forms can diverge completely from the standard, while the white forms correspond exactly:

	SD	WD	BD
All persons, numbers	called	called	call

Verbs that are irregular in standard English further complicate the issue for two reasons. First, the paradigms of both nonstandard dialects often diverge from the standard system as well as from each other. Second, the three systems can contain internal and cross-dialectal features identical in surface representation but different in person, number, or tense. The conjugations of <u>come</u> and <u>run</u> are examples of this phenomenon:

	SD	WD	BD
<u>present</u>			
1st, 2nd sing., plur.	come run	come run	come run
3rd sing.	comes runs	comes runs	come run
3rd plur.	come run	comes runs	come run
<u>past</u>			
all persons, numbers	came ran	come run	come run

Thus, <u>I come</u>, <u>you come</u>, and <u>we come</u> represent only present tense forms in the standard dialect but are indicative in the white dialect of either past or present action. <u>He come</u> and <u>they come</u>, however, are often construed in the white dialect as past tense only. The grammar of the black dialect permits the use of the unconjugated form in all tenses and for all persons and numbers.

A comparison of these two dialects reveals syntactic contrasts as well. One commonly occurring instance is the use of the singular pronoun it in the black dialect and the plural pronoun they in the white dialect in constructions where the standard dialect requires the expletive there: It('s) a desk at the front of the room. They's a man coming up the steps. Another example is the use in the black dialect of there/here + go in expletive constructions requiring there/here + be in the white and standard dialects: There/here go three piece(s) of paper. The most striking instance of syntactic contrast involves the verb to be. In the black dialect this verb not only can appear in the unconjugated form in what seems to be main verb position (It be too crowded in that class) but can also be deleted in most subject + to be + participle/adjective/noun constructions: We going at noon. He gone before we get (got) there. He too short to reach the map. They the only book(s) I see. The white dialect permits no unconjugated forms of [illegible] except where also permitted by the standard dialect and allows to be deletions primarily in questions of the to be + subject + participle type: You going? It is also interesting to note that the white dialect illustrated here, unlike the black and standard systems, permits a-verbing (He's a running) in some constructions that allow to be deletion in black English.

An examination of incidental encounters with two nonstandard spoken systems indicates that the phonological, morphological, and syntactical components of standard English, complex in themselves, become even more complex when considered in light of certain standard/nonstandard contrasts. But it is not the examination of random oral patterns alone that has led me to conclude that such dialectal variation is relevant to the teaching of writing. Rather, this conclusion is based upon extensive analysis of actual written discourse produced by black-English-speaking college students. Such analysis has revealed that certain dialectal or dialect-based features do appear in academic writing, that their presence does interfere with attempts at written communication, and that the expurgation of these features necessitates a pedagogical reorientation on the part of writing instructors.

The first contention, that dialect features do indeed occur in academic writing, is easily illustrated. It was, ironically, in working backward from the puzzling (and, initially, almost incomprehensible) written language of my students that I became acquainted with oral patterns that differed significantly from those of any nonstandard dialect with which I had ever come into contact. The following sentences, extracted from first-day essay pre-tests, contain some of the oral black dialect features discussed above. (Note: For present purposes, all nonstandard features, other than the feature under consideration, have been replaced with equivalent standard forms as indicated by context.)

Phonological Features

(post-vocalic r)

--Doing the night, he fell, twisted his ankle, and lost consciousness.

Morphological Features

(regular verbs, present tense)

--In Grandma's kitchen, the soft springtime aroma mingle with the smell of pineapple cakes, coconut cookies, and lemon pies.

--In spite of his sixty years, my grandfather walk like a teen-aged boy with nothing but living on his mind.

--The large mouthed bass show his dominance over all the other gilled creatures by lunging at dragonflies.

(regular verbs, past tense)

--As he cross the causeway, the interstate look foggy and milky white.

--She was so fat that when she walk, the tile seem to scream, "Get off me!"

--The responses of the girls range from "So what else is new?" to "I know what your problem is."

(irregular verbs, present tense)

--Mr. Pirata spend all his time looking for buried treasure.

--The first girl come out of the dressing room, running and jumping as if her team has already won the game.

--When I get to class, the teacher simply tell me to write a two-page paper.

(irregular verbs, past tense)

--As a child, I eat catsup on my scrambled eggs.

--The boat blow a long steam whistle as it go by.

--After the accident, he have a fractured rib, a sprained ankle, and a pulled back muscle.

Syntactical Features

(expletive)

--Although it had rained throughout the night, it was a crystal blue morning sky by the time we reached the town.

--Here go three reasons why I have fond memories of my grandparents' home.

(to be)

--After a rain at my grandmother's house, the spring smell of watermellon be all around, for the patch _____ not far from the porch.

--His skin _____ the color of a freshly pulled banana.

--My friend Dianne _____ the smartest and most mature person I ever knew.

--Afterward she sat for hours knitting until it _____ bedtime.

It is obvious from the imbalance in quantity of samples that the three areas delineated above by no means present equally significant barriers to the production of standard English features. Phonological interference in particular is all but negligible in the written discourse of students who have spent eighteen years under the influence of the Edited American English of newspapers, magazines, and textbooks. The example cited is, in fact, one of the few consistently recurring forms of this type that I have encountered. It is just as unusual for a black-dialect-speaking college student to generate an r-less spelling of pattern as for such a student (or any college student) to delete the final c in check. Furthermore, of the nonstandard syntactical features mentioned above, few occur frequently (though they often occur consistently) in academic discourse, either because the possibility of their occurrence is minimal (expletive) or because they are stigmatized (the unconjugated form of the verb to be). Only the conflict between the standard English conjugation of to be and the black null form, then, continues to hamper the majority of students in their attempts to produce acceptable written discourse.

Where morphology is involved, on the other hand, problems are of such depth and severity that I have rarely received a first-day essay that was totally free of such inflectional digressions. The standard English verb system, for example, as one would expect in view of the number of standard/nonstandard contrasts evident in the

spoken dialects, presents exceptional difficulty for most students. Virtually every sentence in written academic discourse is required, by definition, to contain a main verb--a verb that not only must agree in person and number with its subject but that also must include an indication of tense. Thus, at least one opportunity for the production of unacceptable null forms occurs in every minimum terminable unit involving standard/nonstandard contrasts. And I find it impossible (although admittedly tempting) to reduce such interference to the phonological level. Even those students who make regular use of written zero inflections characteristic of spoken dialect never adopt spelling systems based upon systematic final consonant reduction.

The problem of morphological conflict is compounded by the fact that most college students do not produce consistent written equivalents of dialectal verb forms. Rather, they produce an often confusing and apparently random mixture of black English, standard English, and hypercorrections, as the following paragraphs illustrate. (Note: All nontraditional patterns other than verb forms have been replaced by standard equivalents as indicated by context.)

> My neighbor have some bad habits. He plays his music too loudly, he spit on the ground, and he are very critical of everyone he meets. Worst of all, though, he yell at his children from morning until night.

> For years, the old man follow the same routine. He clean up the house, taked out the garbage, locked up the house, walk around the block, and then went over to a friend's house, where he sat for an hour. Then he goed back home, cook dinner for himself, watched television, and went to bed.

Because so many students have settled upon this interdialectal verb system, morphological interference from black dialect cannot be dismissed as simple failure to provide standard English inflectional endings.

The existence of this hybrid system and its attendant complications has led me to conclude that the presence in academic discourse of dialect-based features can, for most audiences, black-dialect-speakers included, distort intended meaning. Of course, the graphic representations of certain black forms, in and of themselves (the zero copula, for instance, or the null past tense inflection) often create serious confusion on the part of the average reader. But,

just as speakers of various nonstandard dialects learn readily to associate their native spoken patterns with the printed equivalents in first-grade reading books, it is possible for one who is exposed to large, consistent amounts of written black dialect to become unconscious of "missing endings," especially when the surrounding context neutralizes inherent ambiguity. But a mixture of forms in student essays seems universally distracting.

It appears, therefore, that the production of certain nonstandard and hypercorrect patterns has little relevance to student writing processes per se. A given student, no matter how unskilled at the production of written standard English, need not review the entire grammar of that register as a prelude to inventing and composing. In view of the nature of this written language and of the comprehension problems such a nontraditional system presents for the average reader, however, I am convinced that these patterns must be eliminated from the final visible product of student writing activities. I am just as convinced of the obvious past inadequacy of traditional methods to effect this elimination. Each student's habitual nonstandard forms have, after all, weathered conventional elementary and secondary corrective measures, while hypercorrect forms were actually created in reaction to these measures.

Educators, particularly those who teach freshman English, should therefore examine and accordingly revise traditional attitudes toward unacceptable written patterns. Initially, instructors should relinquish such comfortable concepts as "no grammar" and "meaningless language" and become sufficiently acquainted with the spoken dialect(s) of the relevant student population to be able to grasp intended meaning in spite of surface irregularity. They should, in short, be able to discern content in chaos. Nothing seems more misguided linguistically or more impractical pedagogically than to insist, semester after semester, year after year, that a white student who writes Even the old women was ready and willing to attack outsiders who come into the valley is unable to distinguish between past and present time. Or that a black student who generates The sky, which quiet and empty most of the time, invaded only by military planes, helicopters, and occasional hot air balloons carrying leaflets of propaganda from North Korea is unable to produce a complete thought. To view the authors of such sentences as remedial writers--just as a matter of course, solely on the basis of isolated nonstandard constructions, and without an examination of the entire texts from which such constructions originate--is equally misguided and impractical. Instructors of composition may find it helpful, as I have, to concentrate on the production and revision of content before devoting instructional time and energy to the expurgation of unacceptable forms and structures. There seems little point in

translating into a more widely accepted register content that is pointless to begin with. And here again one should familiarize oneself with students' spoken patterns in order to insure proper emphasis on troublesome and deep-seated standard/nonstandard conflicts while avoiding wasteful emphasis on features that do not represent conflict points for the relevant student population.

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SHAKESPEARE COURSE IN ENGLAND FOR KENTUCKY TEACHERS

A five-week course on teaching Shakespeare will be conducted in London, England, next summer by Dr. Ken Davis of the University of Kentucky. The course, for present and prospective secondary and college teachers, will be offered from July 6 through August 10, 1986, under the sponsorship for the Cooperative Center for Study in Britain, a consortium of Kentucky universities.

Titled "Teaching Shakespeare on Page and Stage," the class will focus on the theory and practice of teaching Shakespeare's plays, both as literature and as theatre. Participants will read a number of plays and several books and articles on teaching Shakespeare, talk with British educators in schools and theatre companies, visit sites associated with Shakespeare in London and Stratford-upon-Avon, see several Shakespearean performances, and prepare and share plans and materials for teaching Shakespeare [illegible]. The course will carry three hours of graduate or undergraduate UK credit in English.

Accommodations, meals, and most class meetings will be at King's College of the University of London, though field trips will be taken throughout London and Britain. Britrail passes, which may also be used for independent travel, will be provided.

For further details, write Ken Davis, Department of English, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40506, or call 606/257-7002.

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202/786-0463

TEACHER-RESEARCHER GRANTS PROGRAM

The Research Foundation of the National Council of Teachers of English invites K-12 classroom teachers to submit proposals for small grants (up to $1,000) for classroom-based research on the teaching of English and language arts. These grants are intended to support research questions teachers raise about classroom issues. They do not cover travel, purchase of permanent equipment or commercial teaching materials, released time, or research done as part of a graduate program. Address requests for information and for application guidelines to: Project Coordinator, Teacher-Researcher Grants, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

CALL FOR COPY

The Idaho English Journal is looking for manuscripts about all facets of English language instruction--elementary, secondary, college journalism, reading, library, speech and drama, as well as the teaching of English in a more restricted sense. They welcome articles, stories, poems, book reviews, interviews, cartoons--what have you? The theme listed below is of special interest for the next issue.

Spring issue (March/April 1987): Voice and Readability

Readability formulas have freed readers from murky and graceless writing; but the concept of readability, if misapplied, forces the writer to avoid challenging the reader to go beyond comfortable limits of thought and expression. The concept of voice, by contrast, may be used to encourage writers to avoid the pseudo-clarity of cliche and conformism. The need to balance these two emphases, and take proper advantage of each, is our theme.
Submissions should be sent by February 15 to Okey Goode, Box 891, Lewiston, ID 83501.

KENTUCKY ENGLISH BULLETIN

KCTE/LA STUDENT WRITING CONTEST

Once more the spring issue of the Kentucky English Bulletin will print some of the best writing done by Kentucky high school students. Won't you, therefore, send us copies of the superior writing that your students have done since last year's deadline, January 1986?

WHO IS ELIGIBLE? Any student in grades 9 through 12 is eligible to submit, but may submit his writing only through his English teacher, and ordinarily no more than two entries by any one student.

KINDS OF WRITING: Any type of prose (except research papers and news reports) is invited, as is verse of any type. Critical analyses and explications of the poems and prose pieces found in high school textbooks, as well as essays and the various forms of imaginative prose, are welcome. Do not enter copies of essays submitted in the NCTE Achievement Awards Program.

PLAGIARISM: Full precautions should be taken against plagiarism. Quotations, adaptations, redactions, and parodies should have their sources fully acknowledged.

MANUSCRIPTS--PLEASE SUBMIT FOUR COPIES OF EACH ENTRY: Type all manuscripts (double-spaced, with margins at both edges, on white unlined paper 8½ by 11, without letterhead). The title should be centered near the top of the first page and at the top near the right edge on each page thereafter. The name of the author, the teacher, the school, the principal, and the grade should be written on a 3 x 5 card and clipped to the first page of each manuscript, but the information must NOT appear on the manuscript itself. Because of space limitations, manuscripts should not exceed 800-900 words.

All manuscripts must be postmarked no later than January 9, 1987. Under postal regulations, first class postage is required.

SUBMIT MANUSCRIPTS TO: Dr. Frances Helphinstine
UPO 1244
Morehead State University
Morehead, KY 40351

KHC SUMMER SEMINARS FOR TEACHERS

Kentucky's K-12 school teachers looking for the freedom and opportunity to relax, read, and renew themselves in congenial settings and have all expenses paid, should consider spending two weeks at a 1987 KHC Summer Seminar for Teachers. The two 1987 Summer Seminars will focus on poetry and on race relations.

Poets' letters, autobiographies, and prose writings reflect the voices, themes, and tones found in their poetry. From June 15-26, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, will host "Great American Poets in Prose" where participants will have the opportunity to read, in-depth, the poetry and the prose of some of the American poets who are frequently represented in high school literature texts. Led by Isabelle White and Harry Brown, the seminar participants will examine the prose works of Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams, and e. e. cummings.

Participants in the June 21-July 3 Centre College 1987 KHC Summer Seminar for Teachers will put "Race Relations in Comparative Perspective" by asking such questions as: What are the similarities and differences in black-white race relations in the United States, South Africa, and Great Britain? and How have the values of individuals, groups, and institutions shaped race relations in these three countries? Seminar director Donley T. Studlar and the participants will explore the roles of history, government, the educational system, leaders, and groups in values and race relations.

Kentucky's K-12 school teachers are invited to apply for these summer seminars. Teachers from minority and ethnic groups and those from rural areas are especially encouraged to apply. For more information on contents, expense payments, and requirements, contact the individual summer seminar leaders at the following addresses:

GREAT AMERICAN POETS IN PROSE, Dr. Isabelle White and Dr. Harry Brown, Wallace 217, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY 40475 (606/622-2103 or 606/622-2102).

RACE RELATIONS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE, Dr. Donley T. Studlar, Centre College, Danville, KY 40422 (606/236-5211, ext. 343).

Application forms will be available in October. Application deadline is February 2, 1987; participants will be announced in March of 1987.

JOIN THE KENTUCKY NETWORK OF THE NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT

During the 1987 writing project, participants will:

*experience the writing process by writing their own compositions
*demonstrate effective methods of teaching writing and observe demonstrations of other teachers from all levels and areas of the curriculum
*prepare teaching materials to take back to their schools
*learn about latest research and theories concerning writing instruction
*develop formal and informal in-service programs for teachers in their local schools and districts
*meet occasionally during the school year to continue their active involvement in the program

Writing project participants should have:

*successful teaching experience in elementary, middle, and/or high schools
*a commitment to improving writing instruction
*the desire and ability to influence and train other teachers
*a strong recommendation from their principals

Writing project participants will receive:

*6 hours of graduate credit (optional)
*tuition remission
*$500 stipend
*professional treatment
*individual instruction (A maximum of 20 participants will be selected for each institute.)
*continuing contact with dedicated teachers and university faculty

1987 Writing Project will be held at these universities:

Eastern Kentucky University
Dr. Charles Whitaker
Coordinator, Freshman Composition
Wallace 217
Richmond, KY 40475
606/622-5861

Morehead State University
Dr. Gene Young
Associate Professor of English
UPO 931
Morehead, KY 40351
606/572-5335

Murray State University
Dr. Fred Cornelius
Ms. Doris Cella
English Department
Murray State University
Murray, KY 42071
502/762-4536 502/762-2666

Northern Kentucky University
Dr. David M. Bishop
Ms. Patricia Murray
276 B.E.P. Center
Highland Heights, KY 41076
606/572-5229
606/572-5335

KENTUCKY ENGLISH BULLETIN

University of Kentucky
Dr. George Newell
Ms. Phyllis MacAdam
Room 335, Dickey Hall
Lexington, KY 40506-0017
606/257-3158

University of Louisville
Dr. Marjorie Kaiser
Professor of English Education
School of Education
Louisville, KY 40272
502/588-6591

Western Kentucky University
Dr. Gretchen Niva
Dr. John Hagaman
English Department
Bowling Green, KY 42101
502/745-3043

Dates for each project site

Dates for each project site will be available in February. Projects will be conducted for four to five weeks.

For more information, contact Ellen Lewis, Language Arts Consultant, Kentucky Department of Education, 1826 Capital Plaza Tower, Frankfort, KY 40601 (502/564-2672).

The Kentucky Writing Project is affiliated with the National Writing Project and is a joint project of state universities and the Kentucky Department of Education.

Kentucky Department of Education Alice McDonald, Superintendent

KENTUCKY ENGLISH BULLETIN

CALL FOR ARTICLES

The Kentucky English Bulletin is seeking articles for two special issues in 1987-88:

FALL 1987--WRITING AS A SOCIAL ACTIVITY

With all our recent attention to the psychology of the individual writer, have we neglected the social contexts of writing, within and without the classroom? Some teachers and researchers think so. Articles are sought that explore the teaching of writing from a social perspective, emphasizing the implications of the social environment (whether classroom, workplace, or whole society) in which writing takes place.

WINTER 1987-88--THE HOLMES GROUP AND THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

One of the newest and most far-reaching efforts at educational reform is the Holmes Group, a consortium of college and university education schools commited to exploring the total restructuring of the teaching profession and the preparation for it. Articles are sought that discuss the implications of this effort for the teaching of English and language arts at all levels.

Deadline for both issues is August 1, 1987, though inquiries after that date are welcome. Manuscripts should follow new MLA style, as well as the NCTE Guidelines for Nonsexist Use of Language, and should be sent, in single copies, to Ken Davis, Department of English, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky 40506.

The Spring 1988 issue will consist of winning entries in the KCTE Student Writing Contest, so no need is anticipated in 1987-88 for articles on subjects other than those announced here.