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ABSTRACT

Written in narrative form, a study examined the impact of using writing as a learning tool in an upper-division college course in Seventeenth Century literature. The study investigated: (1) student writing samples of both informal and transactional writing forms; (2) the impact of writing-to-learn on course objectives; (3) the impact of informal writing (annotations, personal reflections) on students' ability to analyze material; and (4) the impact of other informal writing activities. Analysis revealed that the use of writing-to-learn shifted the emphasis from content to critical thinking. Informal writing helped students not only to "unpack" dense metaphoric language to reach clearer analytic insights--it also helped students to engage texts on a more personal level by allowing the literature to intersect with their own experiences. Informal writing also helped to develop students' ability to synthesize larger masses of material. This use of informal writing was significant because it nurtured critical thinking skills and allowed students to find their own voices in their writing, which gave more vitality to their transactional writing. (Five figures are included.) (MM)

"This Gift of Celestial Honey": A (W)rite of Passage into Renaissance Studies

Written in narrative form, this study demonstrates the impact of using writing as a learning tool in an upper-division course in Seventeenth Century literature. Samples of students' writing illustrate how both informal and transactional forms of writing enhanced students' mastery of the material and allowed me to clarify and modify my own objectives as I watched students grapple in language with their own understandings of texts. In terms of its impact on course objectives, the use of writing-to-learn shifted the emphasis from content to critical thinking. The study looks at how informal writing (annotations, personal reflections) helped students not only "unpack" dense metaphoric language, and hence reach clearer analytic insights, but also engage texts on a more personal level by allowing the literature to intersect with their own experiences. The study also looks at the impact of other informal writing activities used to develop students' ability to synthesize larger masses of material. This use of informal writing was significant not only because of it nurtured critical thinking skills, but also because it allowed students to find their own voices in their writing, a discovery that rendered their transactional writing all the more vital.

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May 18, 1988

"This Gift of Celestial Honey": A (W)rite of Passage into Renaissance Studies

> The Empirics, like ants, gather and consume. The Rationalists, like spiders, spin webs out of themselves. The Bee adopts the middle course, drawing her material from the flowers of the garden or field, but transforming it by a faculty peculiar to herself. Such should be the activity of genuine philosophy. . . . Look then for this gift of celestial honey, and say not, with the sluggard, "There is a lion in the path." Shake off the chains which oppress you and be masters of yourselves.
>
> (Francis Bacon, "Refutation of Philosophies")

What does it mean to "know" the Renaissance? What does it mean to "teach" the Renaissance? What do I mean when I ask students to "learn" the Renaissance; when I say my hope for them is that they "master" the Renaissance? For that matter, what does it mean to "know" and to "teach," to "learn" and to "master" anything? As I began planning my writing-intensive course in Seventeenth-Century literature, I thought I had answered these questions adequately. I had ceased asking them. But my involvement with Writing Across the Curriculum and my use of writing as a learning tool in a writing-intensive advanced literature course have encouraged me to explore these fundamental questions much more profoundly than I ever had in the past. In the hope of gaining some new clarity on these questions, I'd like to reflect on some of my experiences and some of my students' experiences during this course, for their story is my story. Through their writing, their generosity in sharing this experiment with me, and their marvelously rich and varied gifts, my students helped me to re-examine what it means to learn and to teach. In particular, I'd like to look at how language, both written and spoken, shaped our learning, our experience of Seventeenth-Century literature, and my own teaching.

My "course description and goals" spelled out fairly clearly, I thought, what we would learn this semester and how we would proceed. To achieve these goals, we would engage in four different types of writing activities: a reader's log, in which students were to annotate as they read each text, write an informal personal response to each author studied, and write a brief critical essay on each author; focused in-class writing exercises to generate thinking; an extended research project to acquaint students with critical theory and literary scholarship; and essay mid-term and final exams. That seemed clear enough and quite simple at the time.

But Donne's ominous words which I had chosen as an epigraph for my description should have alerted me that I'd be doing some wrestling of my own.

> And new philosophy calls all in doubt,
> The element of fire is quite put out;
> . . . . . .
> 'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone.

I hadn't anticipated the impact writing would have on my relationships with students as they grappled with their own thinking. A lively dialogue sustained by their writing and my responses to it drew me more intimately into their learning process. Since there were only eight students in the class, I was able to cultivate this intimacy. I began to feel closer to the marrow of their thought and feeling.

The closeness that was beginning to develop between us made me realize all kinds of things I ought to be teaching and wasn't—in fact, didn't know how to teach yet. Even the students' writing on the mid-term exam made me realize that I was not successfully teaching them the things I was holding them accountable for. Something was happening here. The tight coherence of my syllabus would have to give way to individual needs and my growing sense of

what I was really after in this course. The elaborate artifice of the fiction I had shaped for myself and expected my students to live out was "all in pieces." Something was happening, I think, because the students' writing was making me much more aware of how their minds were working and of what I needed to teach them. They were teaching me how to teach.

The logs were particularly helpful to students in their explorations of texts, and they were invaluable to me because I could see students' thinking take shape. In my description of the log (Fig. 1), I asked students to annotate any intriguing or difficult passages. In the logs I would sometimes see a desperate "HELP!" with a scowling "happy face" sketched beside it. Sometimes a student would note a passage that was unclear to him or her, try to untangle it, and then give up. There was no way that I could not know how students were comprehending the material they were reading.

Frequently students would use the annotations to think their way through a question about the text, to unpack dense metaphoric language, or to explore ambiguities and paradoxes in the texts. Often, by the time they explored their question in the annotation, they reached their own answer (although sometimes they seemed not to realize it). One student annotated Ben Jonson's "Epigram 11" about a court flatterer as follows:

> "It" appears to be a person of high station. . . ."Buried in flesh and blood": does this mean that the lord is only human too—or does it mean that the lord is responsible for some rather nasty deeds? That he's consumed by a kind of gross sensuality? . . . Since it's not possible for one to be "dead still" and walk about at the same time, could B.J. mean that the lord's lack of action over any issue might as well render him immobile? (Dr. B: I don't know if I understand that last sentence—and I wrote it. Hmmmm.....)

Writing her way through her own questions allowed the student to appreciate the ambiguities of the poem.

Another student's annotations on a highly allusive (and elusive) crypto-love/hate poem by Fulke Greville aided her comprehension of that difficult piece:

How was he "used"? Were they having an affair and was he sleeping with her? She was the Garden of Eden He had "fallen" from grace because of rumor. . . . Is he saying she's promiscuous? He has some nerve saying vile things about her since he wants the very same thing. The flowery words hide his true meaning and his anti-feminist feelings, if I am correct in assuming all this.

Caelica, I overnight was finely used,
Lodged in the midst of paradise, your heart;
Kind thoughts had charge I might not be refused.
Of every fruit and blossom I had part.
. . . . . .
But that fine soil which all these joys did yield,
By broken fence is proved a common field.

Such annotations provided students with insights that they could then develop more fully in a short critical essay, an informal personal reflection, or, in six cases, the major research project. The above annotation, for example, indicated this student's instinctive inclination to raise the kinds of issues addressed by feminist criticism although she had never heard of it, let alone read any of it. I noted this inclination in my marginal comment to the student. When I met with the student to discuss her research project, I suggested that a feminist reading of the collection in which this poem appears would be a completely original venture and a contribution to Greville scholarship. The student accepted this imposing challenge to do original undergraduate research and pursued an issue of obvious concern to her.

Another student, in annotations on Greville's Caelica, did a remarkable job of tracing the shifts in the speaker's attitudes toward love. So perceptive were the insights that I was able to have the student read the log in class to introduce Greville. The discussion that this generated was much livelier than the polite obligatory remarks that can follow a formal lecture. Out went the Greville lecture. I continued to use the logs in this way. At

least once a week I asked students to read passages from either their annotations, their reflections, or their critical essays. By sharing the responsibility for class in this way, I hoped that I could convey to my students that we are all teachers and learners; that we all have much to learn from one another. I found myself growing in respect for what these students can do.

Although taking annotations while reading is quite time consuming, seven of the eight students wrote in their course evaluations that annotating enhanced their comprehension of the texts, and I think the above examples illustrate its usefulness in their more fully developed writing. In a log entry reflecting on the course after three weeks, one student wrote: "Too often language that I don't understand frightens me—it has scared me away from plenty of poetry. Ben Jonson's language seemed unfamiliar at first; but, as I annotated the poetry it became understandable, even enjoyable." The comments of students on the evaluations designed for writing-intensive courses are germane here. In response to the question, "what did you learn about studying and learning as you took this course," one student wrote:

> I realized that taking notes or keeping annotations as I read is probably the most effective way to guarantee that I actively read a piece. I realized this because when it came time for finals I remembered the literature from this course far more than I did for the two other literature courses I have taken this semester. Not only that, but I also have a higher level of comprehension of these works.

In addition to the annotations, I asked students to write one brief critical essay and one informal reflection for each author. The purpose of the critical piece was to nurture critical thinking and to reinforce the modeling of this skill which I tried to present through the lectures and discussions (Fig. 1.2). For each author we studied, I designed a set of

"possible approaches" which students could pursue in their analyses of texts. The idea was to illustrate the kinds of critical questions that people in my discipline ask so that students would begin considering these same kinds of questions in their explorations of literature (Fig. 2). My purpose in asking students to write an informal personal reflection on each author was to afford them the opportunity to explore their own experiences and deepen their felt responses to literature. I encouraged them to probe and wonder and speculate about their own responses to the literature (Fig. 1.1).

One example of each kind of writing from the same log should illustrate the different kinds of thinking and responding I hoped these assignments would encourage. In a personal reflection on Ben Jonson's epigrams concerning the death of his two children, a student writes:

> Those poems which interest me the most concern the death of children. . . . In these poems, Jonson's role of bard is subordinated to his role as a suffering man. Maybe I keep coming back to these powms because I recently lost a friend who was also "too young to die." If there is anything that I've learned since, and anything that Jonson corroborates, it is that there is no easy way to accept the death of a young person. It just keeps haunting you. . . . These are the kind of poems that will, in some way, stay with me life-long.

In the companion critical piece, the student wishes to analyze Jonson's conception of death as suggested by these two poems. She begins:

> Ben Jonson's Epigrams is largely a collection of didactic verse; through these pieces, Jonson tries to educate his audience. Jonson is at his best, though, when he is not bent on didacticism. In his elegies, "on My First Son" and "On My First Daughter," Jonson is not concerned with giving moral instruction to his readers; rather, he tries to come to terms with the deaths of two young children. Together, the poems offer a view of Jonson's complex, ambivalent response to death.

In the ensuing development, the student analyzes the particular response to the death of a child in each poem and then illustrates the salient contrasts between them. By closely analyzing the texts themselves, she attempts to

account for the differences and argues for, in her terms, a "denial of Christian consolation" and a "refusal to be consoled" in the poem on the son. She concludes by drawing together her insights about the two poems and the relating the experience of the speaker to shared human experience:

> As a whole, Jonson's gathering of epigrams urges the reader toward introspection; yet it is Jonson's own inward searching that is most compelling. His elegies for his children combine to give the reader a glimpse into the author's response to death, a response full of painful ambiguities. "On My First Daughter" and "On My First Son" leave the reader hoping that the speaker of these poems, like anyone else who has been touched by death, might one day be delivered of his suffering—to "rest in soft peace."

From watching students' thinking and writing develop in the logs, I began to think that as important as the critical pieces were to their analytic skills, the informal reflections were even more important to the quality of their writing and to much more important things as well. I was struck by the vitality, freshness, and easy grace of the voices I heard in these informal pieces. Students were exploring the unique timbre of their own voices. In these free responses to the literature, students were allowing the literature to touch them, to resonate with their own experiences; they were taking their own experiences seriously and they were taking their responses to the literature seriously. It seemed to me that the informal responses helped students wed their own lives to the literature we read. I cannot speak to the impact this might have on their lives, but I can see how it gave a new vitality to their critical thinking and writing, as the above examples suggest. The voice that students discovered in their informal personal reflections and the marriage of their own lives to the literature they read did not always enliven their critical writing. Too often that voice was stifled and that union severed when they began "serious" critical writing, and this is, perhaps, one of the greatest dangers of schooling--theirs and my own.

But when students felt free to speak in their own voices and explore in their critical writing those concerns that mean the most to them, the writing came to life.

The insights that I gained from the annotations, personal responses, and critical pieces in the logs made it clear that I had to shift the focus of my syllabus from covering as much material as possible to allowing students more time to share their many fine insights with one another by working on the material together in class discussions. A note that one student wrote me in a log entry jarred me, and I knew I had to examine our procedures:

> I'm getting a little confused. We do these poets so fast. I think it's great all the work we do and the intense focus we have but sometimes I'm just so overwhelmed that I can't keep Greville straight from Herbert straight from Herrick (I'm exaggerating of course, but . . .) I really enjoyed Donne—we spent plenty of time with him and he's my favorite. Others, however, aren't really as clear and I think it's because we didn't spend as much time with them. I know we have many, many major people to cover and I'm excited about them, but I still get bogged down and a little confused about who's who and who did what. . . . I hope this doesn't seem too complaining. I really just wanted to express a concern I was feeling with the class work and objectives.

In class I asked the student who had written the log entry to share the ideas with the class, and that started a discussion in which a number of other students expressed the same anxiety. It was clear that we had to do something. These students were diligent; I had been pleased with their work and their interest in the literature so far.

I took a hatchet to my carefully planned syllabus. Out went Thomas Adams. Out went Jeremy Taylor. Out went 'Tis Pity She's a Whore. I was learning from my students what it was I ought to be teaching. They, indeed, wanted to learn about Seventeenth-Century literature: they wanted to think about it more, to take it more fully into themselves and have a coherent sense

of what it is all about. It seemed to me that students needed the opportunity to talk more about the literature and to hear more of it. This needed to become not simply a "writing-intensive" course, but a "language-intensive" course. I was beginning to see ever more clearly the importance of the spoken word in the learning process. Fuller class discussions took over the time relinquished by Thomas Adams and Jeremy Taylor. I prepared more recitations of poems—performances really—to make the texts come alive in the classroom. Students, too, needed to do this so I asked them to prepare poems for recitation and to share them with the class. I wanted our classroom to become a world of words in which students could feel the living presence of the literature in them and around them.

The learning I was doing, with the help of my students, about what it means to "know" and to "teach" the Renaissance proceeded apace following the mid-term exam. Heartened by the fine critical thinking that students were doing in their logs and in class discussion, I designed an exam using broad conceptual questions that would afford students the opportunity to use their critical thinking to analyze individual texts and synthesize their insights about several texts in their essays (Fig. 3). I wasn't looking for a "right" answer in the essays, nor did I want students to be concerned about giving "wrong" answers. I wanted the exam to be a learning experience in which students would explore the texts again and re-think them in original ways. I distributed the questions and gave students two weeks to prepare their essays. They were to use their logs and the texts themselves as they prepared their essays. I encouraged them to talk with each other about their ideas before they began writing.

An entry from my own teaching log after the mid-term reveals my own

frustration with the students' performance (only four of the eight students demonstrated the mastery of the material I was looking for):

> The results of the mid-term exam are turning out to be less than encouraging. Some students answered the questions only partially; some gave what appears to be half-hearted efforts. . . .I'm not certain what happened, but something is wrong here. I thought the exam was challenging but certainly within the students' reach. Maybe I was wrong. Students were expected to explore the texts independently and to synthesize their thinking in original ways. I'd say over half the class could not do so with and degree of success. I do think some students simply didnt' try. I'm wondering if the exam itself discouraged them. . . .I want to talk to the class about their performance and see if that gives me any insight.

Most students had a very difficult time knowing when to generalize and when to use specific illustrations in their analysis of individual authors. Consequently, they tended to do too much summarizing to try to articulate the idea they were groping to explain. They needed more practice in trying to see and explain general ideas or trends in the work of one writer; they needed to practice cutting to the heart of the matter when confronted with a mass of material. They also had a difficult time trying to integrate their ideas about several authors in a single essay. After discussing the mid-term with my students I realized my original reading of the situation was simplistic and self serving. Something <u>was</u> wrong. But the problem was in the exam itself, not in the students' motivation or even their knowledge of the material. They had read the texts carefully and critically; that was clear from the consistent work they had been doing in the logs. I <u>knew</u> they knew the stuff. That's what was so frustrating for me--and for them.

I began our discussion of the exam by telling my students that I realized the mid-term exam must have been a difficult and frustrating experience for them. It was clear, from all the other work they had been doing, that they had worked hard to read the material and think about it. So

what happened? In my next teaching log entry, I reflected on the very honest and fruitful discussion that followed my question:

> We had an interesting final discussion of the mid-term exam. I was clearer, I guess, than I had been before about the function of the test as a learning device—an opportunity to think in a particular way. One student said she wants to be challenged and encouraged to think that way, but that if the final is the same kind of test she just won't be able to do it. Another student said that it's too much to expect that kind of thinking after only 3 months of class—after all, she said, I'd been doing it for years. . . . Another student, a senior, said that she had not yet been expected to do the kind of thinking required by the exam. Three students didn't seem to have any particular problems taking this kind of exam, but thought that fewer essay answers would have been better. I agree.

As I thought about what my students said, I began to see more clearly exactly what the problem was. I had assumed that the kind of critical thinking they had been doing in their logs and I had been modeling in class discussions would help them develop the skills necessary for success in the exam. The "possible approaches" were designed to give them practice at this, but I realized that these prompted students to analyze, not synthesize. In addition, the possible approaches rarely asked students to deal with as many works by an author as the exam required them to do, and in class we dwelt mainly on the critical analysis of individual texts. I had assumed that they could take the step to synthesis on their own. And I had assumed that this kind of thinking would be familiar to them since most were Juniors and Seniors. The problem seemed so simple and self-evident now, that I don't know how I ever could have made the mistake in the first place: I had held students accountable on the exam for thinking skills which they had had neither adequate guidance in cultivating nor sufficient opportunity to practice. They had had to pay for my mistake, and I felt terrible about it. I felt as though I had pushed a non-swimmer into frigid water and yelled: "GO

ON, SWIM! All YOU HAVE TO DO IS MOVE YOUR ARMS, AND LEGS, AND HEAD LIKE THIS!

So I talked to my students about it again and explained my analysis of the problem. We decided that we'd use the same kind of exam again for the final, but to prepare for it we would spend more time in class practicing this kind of thinking and writing. I also asked the class if they would be willing to help design the questions for the final. I thought that involving students in this process would make them see that this kind of thinking is not really as alien to them as they thought it was. They simply needed to be more conscious that there are different kinds of critical thinking and that they can practice doing them. After the debacle of the mid-term, I needed to restore their faith in themselves and their capacity to succeed. I needed to let them know that I believed in them. I wanted them to "own" the test and "own" their own thinking; I wanted them to feel more in control of themselves and their learning; I wanted them to feel as competent as I knew they were. Truthfully, I had never felt so vulnerable in front of a class as I did when I admitted that I had made an error in such a fundamental matter. You don't give the test before you've taught the lesson. But, if anything, the whole experience brought us closer together as we shared the difficulties of both learning and teaching.

Out came the hatchet again. Out went more texts from the syllabus. I designed several in-class writing exercises that would involve students in small group discussions followed by writing to engage students in the kind of thinking I wanted them to master (Fig. 4). In my lecturing and facilitating of class discussion, I began much more consciously to call attention to the kinds of thinking we were doing. Once again my students were helping me to clarify what it means to teach and my own log reflected this:

> More than anything else, I've learned that what I want to do in this, and any, course is to work on thinking skills. And I'm not quite certain how to do that. At the beginning of the course I was concerned primarily with "coverage" in a writing-intensive course. How was I going to "teach them the Renaissance" in fifteen weeks when I would also be doing so much writing and sharing of writing in class? My primary concerns and subsequent questions have changed. How can I help students think about the Renaissance (or anything else, for that matter), and how can I best use class time, performance of texts, discussion, writing, and responding to students' writing to nurture such thinking?

The students' subsequent performance on the final exam reflected that the exercises had, indeed, nurtured a habit of mind that strained toward complex analysis and synthesis. One student's opening paragraph is representative of the kind of thinking students were now attempting with success:

> The religious ferment of Seventeenth Century England is apparent in the wide variety of approaches that writers took as they tried to explain the presence of God in their lives through their poetry. George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, and Thomas Traherne express quite different feelings toward God. Herbert and Vaughan exhibit a pleading approach to God--each fully recognizes his humanity and wants God to rid him of his sin, much like John Donne, a prominent poet from earlier in the century. At times, however, Herbert conveys a feeling of unity with God despite his feelings of human unworthiness. Crashaw attempts to capture a sense of union with God by describing spiritual ecstasy in sexual terms. Traherne differs from all these poets in his simple, child-like, loving acceptance of God's wonder.

I was delighted with the results of the final. Even the student who had the most difficulty on the mid-term wrote competent essays.

One final experience captures, perhaps better than any other, what my students taught me about the possibilities inherent in our profession--and about the dangers. It left me with a disturbing question about how to challenge my students so that they might explore and deepen their own gifts without losing heart in the process. I designed a directed research project through which students would work individually with me to begin learning the

art of literary scholarship—not just the kind of undergraduate "non-research research" that issues in a litany of critics and a pastiche of other people's ideas (Fig. 5). It was to be an arduous task, I realized, both for my students and for me.

By the third week of class, I had begun working with each student and we continued to meet almost weekly to discuss critical theory, fruitful directions for research, and dead ends to be avoided. As time passed, students began hammering out their ideas about the texts themselves during these conferences. I took students through our library to familiarize them with the tools of research. I did the same for those students whose work required the fuller research facilities of Tech's library. Once students were well into their projects, they substituted for the critical pieces in their logs a written report of their progress and their questions. This way I would know if anyone were in real trouble. As they were writing, I met with them to help with the drafting and revising.

I'm not certain what to make of the results. Three students wrote what I think are exceptional papers for undergraduates. Two of these were accepted for presentation at the Conference on Undergraduate Research at UNC. The third was written by a student who had struggled with getting thoughts down in writing all semester; this student, in fact, hated doing what he called the "left-brained, scab-picking" critical writing in the logs. Yet in his paper he took a daring, original tack which allowed him to bring his love for the visual arts to this project. He speaks with a confidence and ease that give voice to his own intellectual strength and his gift of a painter's eye:

> In his History of Philosophy: The Seventeenth Century, Emile Brehier says of the Baroque that, "No century has exhibited less confidence than the seventeenth century in the spontaneous forces of unbridled nature" (1). ... But certain works of Rembrandt and

> Francis Bacon's Novum Organon are optimistic. Bacon's aim is to completely reorder human knowledge. The sheer scale of such an ambition expresses an optimism. Rembrandt in his biblical works attempts to illuminate or explain the Protestant interpretation of the New Testament (Arnheim 269). Undertakings like these indicate an optimism simply in the amount of energy needed to carry them out, and, perhaps at the same time, a sense of desperation that such work would be necessary. But as we have been discovering about this period, one characteristic of its thinkers is the ability to hold opposing ideas and impulses simultaneously.
>
> My purpose in this essay is to point out some loose similarities and rough comparisons in particular works of Rembrandt and Bacon; specifically, Rembrandt's 1648 version of "Christ at Emmaus" and some of the aphorisms of Bacon's Novum Organon. I am not making an argument for influence. . . . What I do suggest is that Bacon's use of the aphorism ... creates something of the effect of chiaroscuro as in Rembrandt's painting. The aphorism as a vehicle for philosophical thought is, in Bacon's use of it, something of an innovation. It allows readers to see thought emerge in a way similar to the way form emerges in Rembrandt's painting.

To develop his thesis, the student analyzes and illustrates the way light in a Rembrandt painting causes form to emerge from darkness. Using a reader-response approach, the student then argues convincingly that the aphorism allows Bacon to establish "degrees of certainty" (Bacon's term) that draw the mind toward a reliable perception of the truth. The student's thinking is utterly original and exciting to read.

But not all students fared as well in the long and difficult assignment, and I wonder if the time and effort they invested might have been used in ways more beneficial to their development. More worrisome is my fear that instead of affording them an opportunity to experience success and self-confidence as a learner, I immersed them in a task that was certain to bring disappointment.

Yet I think of the two students who presented their papers at the conference and of what that meant to them: how proud they were of their own accomplishment, how confidently they shared their ideas and words with students from across the country. It was a moving experience to watch these

students step to the podium in full command of the situation, their thoughts and their words and their persons reflecting a joyful mastery of it all. Working with these students through to the end was a joy for me too. I haven't yet the words to speak of it further. How best can I accompany more students on their paths to joyful mastery of themselves?

I'm thinking again, now, of Bacon's words with which I opened this reflection. I've learned much from my students in this course. It has been a rite of passage for all of us, I hope. And it is my hope that I can teach in the way that they've shown me I must. For I have seen that to learn means to become a "genuine philosopher," to use Bacon's terms for a moment. I am asking my students not simply to "gather and consume" course material, though gather it they must. I am asking them not simply to spin abstract theoretical webs, though theorize they must. It strikes me that I am asking my students to make their learning a part of their lives, to confront a bewildering array of information and theory, to take it into their minds, and to transform it into something entirely their own, something they have discovered and care about, something in which they invest themselves, something that has beauty and worth precisely because it has emerged from their precious, individual selves. And that kind of learning, as Bacon suggests, leads to liberation of the self. It is my hope that both my students and I may become this kind of learner.

Fig. 1: Required Format for Reader's Log

The purpose of the reader's log is to afford you the opportunity to use writing as a learning tool as you explore each text we study this semester. Form the habit of having the log with you and using it as you read. The log, which will be collected and evaluated on the date assigned in the syllabus, consists of three components: your annotations jotted down as you read each text, your informal personal reflections upon the texts read each week and the class discussions, and your weekly critical essay. Your annotations while reading and your class notes should provide you material for your critical and personal reflections.

Annotations: Clearly indicate title and author of each text before beginning your annotations. In the far left-hand margin indicate the appropriate page number (for prose pieces), line number (for poetry), or act, scene, and line numbers (for drama) as you note your observations about the text. As you read, you should be noticing striking features of the text such as individual images or image patterns; repetitions of words, ideas or themes; development of plot, thought or characterization; structural patterns; stylistic features; contredictions; ironies; anomalies; paradoxes. Note, as well, places in the text where you have questions or do not understand something. Try to figure out some of these questions yourself in the notes. Jot down any ideas or insights that come to you as you read. Don't worry about correctness or "the right answer"; simply jot down, as quickly as possible, your flashes of insight. Use these annotations as raw material for your critical and personal reflections as well as for your contributions to class discussion.
The annotations should be kept separate from the personal and critical responses.

Fig. 1.1: Informal Personal Responses: As you look back over your annotations, you should take ample time to develop at greater length your responses to the texts read and to discussion of them in class. This part of the log is to be personal; it is to reflect your own honest responses to the readings, the discussions, the direction the course is taking, anything at all related to the course. You may consider this part of the log as a kind of dialogue in which you speak in your own voice to a "receiver of the message." At times that receiver may be the text itself: "talk back" to it; engage in dialogue with it; puzzle things out if you have questions. At times the receiver may be yourself: having been touched or moved by the word, you may want to speak to yourself about yourself. At times the receiver may be me: you may have questions or comments about a particular text, about class discussion, about how the course is moving or how you would like to see it move, or questions and ideas of your own which you'd like to "test" on someone. There is no specific required length on this part of the log. Conscientiousness and consistency of effort, liveliness of response, and intensity of engagement with the texts will be evaluated in this component of the log. I will not look at grammar, structure, spelling, etc. in this part.

Fig. 1.2: Critical Essay: Each reader's log should include one short (250-300 word) critical essay which follows one of the suggested approaches provided or addresses some other critical question raised by your reading of the text. I will evaluate the rigor of critical thinking in these pieces.

Try to analyze texts carefully and use specific evidence to illustrate your ideas. Don't be afraid to speak in your own voice. Feel free to explore your own critical insights here. I am not looking for a "right" or "wrong" answer. I am looking for clear, rigorous thinking and careful use of evidence.

Fig. 2: Possible Approaches for Bacon's Great Instauration and New Organon

1. Analyze Bacon's conception of the causes which impede the human mind has from understanding nature and assuming its proper power over it. What forces, both within and without the mind, impede the truthful examination of nature?

2. How does Bacon's proposed model for scientific investigation and his whole programme to renovate the sciences seek to combat or obviate the forces that impede the examination of nature?

3. Examine the relation between Bacon's scientific/philosophical concerns and his theological concerns.

4. Analyze Bacon's use of imagery in The Great Instauration. How does he use particular images or patterns of related images to reinforce tone and meaning?

Fig. 3: Mid-Term Exam

Part I: Prepare an oral interpretation of any poem(s) (exclusive of the epigrams), any passage of prose or any portion of a play from the Seventeenth Century works we've studied thus far this semester. Once you have fully understood the selection and considered how you will convey your interpretation of the text through oral delivery, prepare a tape recording of it and submit it with the written part of the exam. Your reading should reflect a comprehension not only of the meaning of the piece but also of its tone and the feelings you think it evokes. If you wish to work on either of the two plays, you may work along with one or more people. Please use a high-quality tape and recorder. The only restriction on the selection(s) is that it must involve approximately 50 lines of poetry or prose.

Part II: Essay Questions. Choose any two essay topics from those listed below, or design your own, and write a carefully considered, clearly articulated, and fully substantiated essay in response to each. Try to stay within a 10-12 page limit. Please type your essays. When thinking about how many examples to use, when to generalize, and when to give specifics, think in terms of this limit. You don't want to write a book, and yet you want to be complete, incisive, and clear about your ideas. There are no "wrong" answers here; I'm interested in seeing your ideas and the ways in which you put your ideas together. Trust your insights and judgments.
You may begin preparing for the following essay questions whenever you wish. You may use any class notes, hand-outs, texts, reader's log entries or other materials in preparing your thoughts on the questions. You may work together in discussing the questions, but you must write your answers on your own. Do not share your actual essays, either in rough or finished form, with other members of the class.

Be sure that you quote adequately from the texts in order to substantiate your

claims and illustrate your generalizations about the works. You should be able to demonstrate not only a mastery of general concepts and an ability to synthesize thought, but also a close familiarity with the texts studied. Be sure that your answers hold together as unified and coherent essays.

ESSAY TOPICS:

1. Examine the varying conceptions of, and attitudes toward, love in the poetry of Fulke Greville, Ben Jonson, and John Donne, in Bacon's The Great Instauration, and in John Webster's The Duchess of Malfi. Be sure you do justice to the complexities of thought, the tense ambiguities, the psychological probings, and the shifting and sometimes contradictory postures of these writers.

2. Consider the whole question of gender roles—both perceptions of, and attitudes toward gender—in Jonson's "A Celebration of Charis," Greville's Caelica, Donne's Songs and Sonets and Holy Sonnets, Long Meg of Westminister, and The Duchess of Malfi. You may consider, among other things, how gender is an issue in these works; how conceptions of gender and gender roles affect the pieces; how each piece implicitly defines gender and gender roles or wrestles with conventional definitions of gender and gender roles.

3. Consider the theological perspective in the poetry of Fulke Greville, Ben Jonson, John Donne; in Donne's Death's Duell, in Bacon's The Great Instauration, and in Morindos. Characterize the theological vision of each writer and demonstrate how this particular theological vision shapes the writers' works. You may want to draw similarities and contrasts among these writers and their conceptions of the relationship of men and women to God.

4. Write a fully developed essay in which you define the neo-classical aesthetic and the metaphysical aesthetic and distinguish them from eachother. You might use the works of Jonson and Donne (both his poetry and prose) as your starting point. Be sure you use plenty of examples to illustrate your definition of the qualities that may be called "neo-classical" and "metaphysical." As we've been discussing in class, you may consider any number of qualities when you define these two literary modes (for example, subject matter, treatment of subject matter, tone, style, conceits, or formal qualities like stanzaic pattern, rime, meter, etc.) You decide which qualities you want to include in your definition. After establishing your own definition of these two literary modes, choose any three other writers or works studied thus far this semester and illustrate how each work illustrates and/or modifies the two modes. You may look at works that you think combine them, modify them, or depart radically from them.

5. Design any question of your own that will allow you to consider from a critical perspective at least four of the writers or anonymous texts we've studied thus far.

Fig. 4: In-Class Writing for Analysis and Synthesis

The purpose of today's work is to analyze closely a poem by Greville, Donne,

Herbert and Herrick in order to distinguish similarities and differences in thought and poetic technique. I'd like you to work together in teams of two toward a perception of what is most distinctive about each writer's thought and his crafting of poems. Each team of two will focus on one of the poets.

The poems we 11 be working on all deal, in one way or another, with the poet's imaginative vision of the "End Time," the judgment day or eschaton—"the last busy day"—as Donne calls it. And each is informed by a clear theological vision. But each poet has a distinctive purpose and so shapes his material in quite different ways. I'd like you to think about both the thought and the shaping of that thought into poetic form.

The poems are: Greville's "Sion Lies Waste," Donne's "The Relic" (you may want to take a look at "At the Round Earth's Imagined Corners" too since that focuses more exclusively on judgment day), Herbert's "Doomsday," and Herrick's "His Winding Sheet."

Read all 4 poems carefully before you focus more particularly upon your own poem. Each team should focus primarily on the poem assigned to it. Analyze that poem closely and then compare and contrast it with the three other poems. You want to work toward an understanding of what is most distinctive about your poet's thinking and his poetic technique. You will, of course, want to note similarities but remember that you are working toward an appreciation of the distinctiveness of each poet.

Each group should read the poems carefully and then discuss its poem for about twenty minutes. Then each member of the group should take ten minutes to write his or her thoughts about the poem. Use the last 20 minutes of class for a sharing of insights. Each member of the class should read what he or she has written.

I suggest you take notes so that you can have full benefit of the insights of the other groups.

Fig. 5: Research Project

Our purpose in this project is to learn, step-by-step, how to do research that will illuminate our reading of literary texts. Another objective is to become familiar with a particular critical approach (methodology) that will help us in our study of the texts we wish to look at. Still another objective is to learn how to put together into a coherent whole our research, our critical methodology, and our intuitions about, and analyses of, the texts we are interested in studying.

In all the suggested projects, I will work closely with each individual so that he or she may fill in the necessary contemporary critical theory, learn the necessary research skills, write several drafts, mull over those drafts, and revise them into final form. We'll set up a couple of orientation trips to McConnell Library and to Tech's Library. I'll ask for volunteers who feel comfortable doing library research to help in the orientation.

Please think about the suggested projects below, but feel free to follow any

interests you've already developed. If you have a particular interest—like music, visual or performing arts; theology, philosophy, science, medicine, psychology—think about ways in which you can bring your interest and knowledge to this project.

Think in terms of about a 10-12 page presentation of what you're researching. We want to keep these projects very narrowly defined so that you can research one thing well within a reasonable limit. Use proper MLA form.

NOTE WELL: All the suggestions below will need to be narrowed considerably. They are intended to give you a feel for the kinds of issues you might want to address. But you'll need to focus in on a manageable amount of material.

Some suggestions for Major Research Projects:

A study of some Seventeenth Century devotional poetry (Greville, or Jonson, or Donne, or Herbert) and Calvin's theology of repentance as seen in Institutes of the Christian Religion or Luther's theology of justification by faith. You might look at two contrasting writers and their recasting of theological thought.

A feminist reading of the treatment of women or men or love in any number of poem or sonnet sequences (e.g., Caelice, Astrophel and Stella, Drayton's Idea's Mirror (1619 version), Jonson's A Celebration of Charis in Ten Lyric Pieces, Donne's Songs and Sonnets, etc.); such a study will necessitate becoming conversant in contemporary feminist criticism

A feminist reading of The Duchess of Malfi or 'Tis Pity She's A Whore or both; such a study will necessitate beoming conversant in contemporary feminist criticism

A use of contemporary French gender theory to try to understand the incest theme in The Duchess of Malfi and/or 'Tis Pity She's A Whore

Original critical work with the sermons of Richard Sibbes; perhaps a reader-response approach might prove effective. At any rate, it hasn't been done before. Study will necessitate use of microfilm and familiarity with contemporary reader-response criticism

A study of the baroque in visual arts and Seventeenth Century prose or poetry or drama (e.g., the poetry of Richard Crashaw, the prose of Jeremy Taylor or John Donne or Francis Bacon, the drama of John Ford)

A study of the music and poetry in John Dowland's Pilgrim's Solace, a collection of songs for solo voice. You might look at the treatment of human love and divine love, at theology or at both. Study will necessitate use of microfilm to some extent. I have a recording of the piece which students may use. This would be really exciting original work.