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Remix Perspective: Transdisciplinary Insights for the Art of Writing

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REMIX PERSPECTIVES:

TRANSDISCIPLINARY INSIGHTS FOR THE ART OF WRITING

by

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read REMIX PERSPECTIVES: TRANSDISCIPLINARY INSIGHTS FOR THE ART OF WRITING by Marianne Rogoff, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Transformative Studies at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

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ABSTRACT

How do creative writers transform the complexity of life into literature? *Remix Perspectives* presents a *bricolage* synthesis of transdisciplinary insights for workshop leaders and creative writers, appropriated from selected artistic and literary voices from more or less the last hundred years. Seminal concepts from arts such as painting, poetry, dance, music, and photography are gathered here as they inform the arts of literary fiction and creative nonfiction. Thinkers from philosophy, psychology, literary theory, complexity, and metaphysics address the inner and outer realms where the work of the writer is generated and goes forth.

DEDICATION

To my hundreds of students, for being willing

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INQUIRY QUESTION / THESIS STATEMENT

"How do creative writers transform the complexity of life into literature?"

The rough, raw material of lived experience becomes smooth, textured writing through the imaginative, iterative processes of *draft, craft,* and *critique* (except when, every so often, a first draft is just brilliant). *Remix Perspectives* presents a *bricolage* synthesis of transdisciplinary insights for literary fiction and creative nonfiction writers who wish to transform the complexity of life into literature. Selected concepts that have served as lively interrogators in the dominant disciplinary discourse of world literature over more or less the last hundred years are juxtaposed with informative ideas from other arts and sciences, consciously chosen as they have inspired my own practice as a creative writer, scholar, and professor of writing and literature. They are gathered here to stimulate fresh approaches to the art of writing.

The intended audiences for *Remix Perspectives* are writers, readers, students, and workshop leaders in undergraduate education, MFA programs in creative writing and literature, and post-graduate writers groups, retreats, and conference settings. Writers at work in such places typically aspire to move language into the lyric, aesthetic dimensions found in other forms of art; thus, the voices are drawn from visual culture, dance, and music as well as literary arts. Literary writers also tend to explore depths of personal expression, memory, and existential meaning, hence the inclusion of psychologists, philosophers, critics, theorists, and spiritual teachers.

Integral arts-based methods for conducting and composing the research may be summed as *A/B/C: Appropriation* of carefully chosen (and cited) quotes; *Bricolage* of selected quotes into themed REMIX chapters; and short *Cartography* essays to introduce each chapter, singling out one or more seminal concepts from the last hundred years of world literature and the arts as centering points for each REMIX that follows.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR METHODS

Appropriation / *Bricolage* / Cartography

The *content* of this study covers component aspects of the art of writing: The Practice, The Parts, and The Purposes sections address generation of new writing, the elements of stories, and uses for literature, while The Process and The Pedagogy sections discuss transformations of form and style, workshop culture, and criteria for critique. The Panorama chapters position the work of literary writers on the map of twentieth- and twenty-first-century *zeitgeists,* exploring the western history of representation in the arts, multicultural voices, and the writer as a reciprocal actor within complexity.

Using remix as the *form* for presenting the research simultaneously represents my original contribution to scholarship on twenty-first-century authorship, which questions the very notion of originality, especially in these techno-times of infinite one-click availability of textual materials. The appropriated remix form is a transgressive style that could be called *Uncreative Writing,* the title of Kenneth Goldsmith's 2011 text subtitled *Managing Language in a Digital Age.* In *Remix Perspectives,* hand-picked quotes from selected voices present a century of transdisciplinary insights and lend themselves to reading in a nonlinear way, as coherent fragments, noticing what resonates, much like absorbing language poetry or pondering the sources and new contexts for a visual collage. My choice to "patchwrite" in this way is offered as a creative response to the sheer abundance of pre-existing language (Howard xvii).

> Patchwriting is . . . a process of evaluating a source text, selecting passages pertinent to the patchwriter's purposes, and transporting those passages to the patchwriter's new context. Patchwriting accomplishes a (re)formation of a source text by providing a new locale and thus new meaning for source material. It is a form of verbal sculpture, molding new shapes from preexisting materials. It is a form of *pentimento,* in which one writer reshapes the work of another while leaving traces of the earlier writer's thought and intentions. (Howard xviii)

Note that I am not advocating that creative writers adopt remix as a method for producing their own stories, novels, memoirs, or essays, although they are invited to play with found texts and explore the history and contemporary versions of hybrid forms. My desire here is to enact an experimental form for scholarly writing, inspired by improvisational jazz riffs, hip-hop sampling, and cubist and dada-comedy collages by artists like Picasso, Magritte, and Duchamp, among others, because such forms are reflective of our complex, de-centered century. Where visual artists have used the word *collage* to describe the creative process of re-assembling found materials in new ways, or may speak of "quoting" from someone else's artwork within their own painting, musicians describe similar acts of re-use as *mashups, sampling,* or *remix.* In practice, such terms have fine distinctions in meaning, and my use here of terms such as *appropriation* and *bricolage* also may be variously defined depending on the artistic genre. In the field of literature, for example, poet William Carlos Williams described the task

of writing his epic poem *Paterson* as "to *make* a poem" *(Autobiography* 392), and there are numerous other literary precedents for this method of building from pre-existing fragments. I settled on the word *remix* here to reference the music in writing, and invite readers to enjoy the alternately harmonious rhythms and jangly tensions that can emerge from juxtaposing disparate parts to produce a new whole.

In the creative/scholarly process employed in *Remix Perspectives*, a dynamic relationship is set up between past and present, writer and research, the arts and sciences. Musician and transformative scholar Alfonso Montuori frames the possibilities inherent in this way of working as *creative inquiry:*

> For those interested in a more complex view of inquiry, there is a remarkable challenge ahead, not least of which is reintegrating the creative process, with all its passion and serendipity and subjectivity and transgressiveness, into academic inquiry. ("Literature Review as Creative Inquiry" 388)

Though the word *author* is connected to the word *authority,* the role of the author in any culture and time is unstable, as we traverse the known and unknown, subjective and objective, using the unruly and easily misconstrued (non)material of words. In addition, our contemporary reality includes profound uncertainty about the validity of our sources for truth and our anxious desire to *know.* As a method that represents the postmodern creative inquirer's condition of *not-knowing*, the remix form works in that there is no singular point of view or

voice of *author*ity. Narrative theorists Colyar and Holley have suggested, "The author's is not the only perspective that may be used" (76). They invite scholars to expand "the ways in which data are conceived and pursued," and to develop "innovative textual structures and alternative forms of representation, including a wide variety of presentation styles and strategies" (70). In *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice*, sociology professor Patricia Leavy suggests that arts-based methods can serve to embody the complex relationships the scholar is attempting to represent:

> Arts-based practices are particularly useful for research projects that aim to *describe, explore, or discover.* Furthermore, these methods are generally attentive to *processes.* The capability of the arts to capture process mirrors the unfolding nature of social life, and thus there is congruence between subject matter and method. (12)

The practice of creative inquiry can be intoxicating and as I engaged possibilities I found congruence between my subject matter (creative writing) and method *(bricolage),* yet scientist-philosopher Gaston Bachelard warns against a desire to fetishize or fall in love with our methods. In her preface to Bachelard's *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie,* his editor and translator Collette Gaudin describes his reasons:

> Bachelard never lets his readers forget that the word *method* has a double connotation. It suggests the rigor of a system and the indeterminacy carried by its Greek root *hodos* ("way"); it mixes personal discovery and

> conceptual construction. . . . A method is both necessary and dangerous. As a way of approaching things, of initiating a discourse, it must be guided by principles, but these principles have a tendency to be frozen into a system divorced from its "formation," thereby paralyzing discovery. (xxi)

Taking this warning to heart, as I researched and selected the quotes, organized them into themed chapters, and composed each REMIX, I tried to work rationally yet intuitively, loosely, not worship at the feet of canonized concepts or famous names yet bring in a host of representative thinkers from multiple disciplines. My process for selecting the essential ideas, and who shall represent them, additionally could be labeled *organic inquiry*, an approach to research that includes "alternative modes of knowing such as feeling, sensing, and intuiting in all phases of the research project; . . . [and] the need for letting go of egoic control and preset methodological structures in the service of new knowledge" (Braud 18–19).

The act of appropriation has a long tradition in the visual arts stretching to the early twentieth century, at least. Increasingly, lawyers, courts, and judges have come on the scene to help negotiate "fair use" of copyrighted materials. Among other possibilities, the rules of fair use allow artists and others "to use someone else's material for certain purposes, especially if the result transforms the thing used," requiring specifically that the new thing "adds value to the original" (Kennedy). Defining how much transformation is enough is an ongoing question

of the digital age; for example, in 2010 a New Museum curator built a show around works that "lift, borrow and reframe digital images—not in a rebellious act of stealing or a deconstructive act of critique—but as a way to participate thoughtfully and actively in a culture that is highly circulated, hybridized, internationalized" (qtd. in Kennedy). In composing *Remix Perspectives* through the methods of appropriation, *bricolage*, and cartography, I aim to participate thoughtfully and actively in our diverse and interconnected discourse on the arts. These methods deliberately challenge some conventions of MLA and CIIS dissertation formats. Appendix A contains a detailed explanation of these changes. Appendix B offers criteria for judging the "original contribution."

Following is a first example of the method, whose subject is the method. Dates are included to help ground the reader in time. These voices, myself among them (MOI), debate and defend the practice of appropriation in writing in relation to its uses in the visual arts, music, and other modes of communication, responding to this question: Is it "stealing?"

REMIX: ON REMIX

MOI: How does a scholar portray in words the wealth of knowledge discovered in the research? How does the creative writer portray in words the complexity of lived experience? I am composing a form for the dissertation that represents an experimental solution to the first question, while offering content that suggests many possible answers to the second.

> ALFONSO MONTUORI: Creative Inquiry frames education as a larger manifestation of the creative impulses rather than as the fundamentally instrumental acquisition, retention, and reproduction of information, or Reproductive Learning. . . . It stresses the role of ongoing inquiry, and the active creative process of bringing forth meaning, knowledge, self, and engagement with the world. Creative Inquiry critiques Reproductive Learning, where the student is an empty vessel to be filled by the instructor, and Narcissistic Learning, which places the individual's largely unreflective and decontextualized opinions, likes and dislikes, at the center of a subjectivist, relativistic world. (2006, 4)

TOM BARONE AND ELLIOT EISNER: The utility of this sort of [arts-based] research is based on its capacity to fulfill a second important human need. This is a need for surprise, for the kind of re-creation that follows from openness to the possibilities of alternative perspectives on the world. Moreover, the promotion of this disequilibrium through the obviation and undercutting of a prevailing worldview may also mean a useful sort of emancipation of readers and viewers. (2012, 16)

> NATALIE GOLDBERG: If you read a lot of haiku, you see there is a leap that happens, a moment where the poet makes a large jump and the reader's mind must catch up. This creates a little sensation of space in the reader's mind, which is nothing less than a moment's experience of God, and when you feel it, there is usually an "Ahh" wanting to issue from your lips. (1996, 125)

MOI: During the years I've been teaching writing and literature at art school I've come to appreciate the strategies of artists, architects, and designers as potential models for alternative ways to construct writing; for example, the cubist collage styles of Picasso and Duchamp, made from found materials, reused and repurposed; Tom Phillips' *Humument* series of renovated books (2005); David Hockney's *Cameraworks* Polaroid grids (1984).

> ALFONSO MONTUORI: In postmodern culture the author ceases to act as the sole originator for the creative product, instead, art becomes *bricolage,* playing around with fragments of meaning one has not created. (2005, 375)

TOM BARONE AND ELLIOT EISNER: For word-based, or alphanumeric, texts, the last several decades have witnessed the so-called linguistic, narrative, and literary "turns" in the humanities and social sciences, resulting in a burgeoning of literary forms. A short list includes the following: allegory, autobiography, autoethnography, biography, fictional storytelling, layered accounts, life story, life history, literary essay, literary ethnography, memoir, mixed genres, mystory, narrative composition, nonfictional novel, novel, novella, performance science, poetry, polyvocal texts, readers theater, saga, short story, writing-story, mixed genres. (2012, 27)

> MOI: Most genres in this list are familiar, though "life story" and "mystory" are curious terms that may refer to a filtering point of view, or to the "mystery" that remains in anyone's "mystory." A "nonfictional

novel" might be fiction based on a true story? Perhaps my REMIX method for presenting the research could be considered "polyvocal texts?"

MEL GLEESON: "Poly" refers to "much"/"many" and "vocal" is obviously associated with the human voice. *Polyvocal* then refers, in my understanding, to the notion of multiple voices in a text. Rather than having one, overarching perspective—as is generally common in academic essay writing, where we're encouraged to keep a consistent tone, tense, and language register —a plurality of views and opinions manifest and co-exist . . . offering rich possibilities for multi-linear narratives. (2011)

> ROBERT ATWAN: It may help to imagine an essay as a sort of Cubist rendition of an idea: the essayist would rather you consider all sides and aspects of a thought or concept, much in the same multi-perspectival fashion that Picasso or Braque portrayed an ordinary table on canvas. Some essayists—Montaigne again was the first—seem literally to be turning ideas over in their minds. The intellectual essay is nothing if not ruminative: the autobiographical essay may continually lose its sense of direction. Both kinds of essays . . . will often reach a "conclusion in which nothing is concluded." (2008, 12)

MOI: Think of my chapters, then, as essays in REMIX form, a creative synthesis of collected ideas from poets, artists, musicians, theorists, critics, and literary voices from more or less the last hundred years, *in which nothing is concluded.*

> TOM BARONE AND ELLIOT EISNER: Arts-based researchers can redirect conversation about social phenomena by enabling others *to vicariously re-experience the world*. . . . But it is only to the degree that its artistic elements of design are employed effectively can the work achieve . . . a special sort of aesthetic utility. (2012, 20)

MOI: Nothing is concluded yet the REMIX is intended to offer a form of "aesthetic utility."

> TOM BARONE AND ELLIOT EISNER: [Aesthetic utility requires] a reconfiguration and re-presentation of selected facets of what the research "uncovers," with those facets now transformed into aesthetic substance upon their embodiment within an aesthetic form. (2012, 20)

MOI: The *bricolage* process enacts this idea of "reconfiguration and re-presentation . . . within an aesthetic form." I appreciate Barone and Eisner (thank you) for establishing permission for research findings to be "selected."

> KENNETH GOLDSMITH: If it's a matter of simply cutting and pasting the entire Internet into a Microsoft Word document, then what becomes important is what you—the author—decide to choose. Success lies in knowing what to include and—more important—what to leave out. (2011, 10)

MOI: Luxurious abundant creativity flows from every billboard, MP3 player, street corner jazzman, and graffiti artist, and this may be the very thing that can overwhelm our most tender urges to creativity of our own. There is so little space

for the new to arise, distracted as we are by the enormous wealth of existing, ongoing creative output. Perhaps the many ways to collaborate with the abundance—in the form of collages, found text, and Creative Commons remixing—are the contemporary upgrades to the old-fashioned cult of individual genius. The Creative Commons offers alternatives to standard copyright licenses, which allows makers to share their work freely. Google it or read Lawrence Lessig and Lewis Hyde for more about the concept of gift cultures, which Andrew Keen also has written about, and fears.

> ANDREW KEEN: In addition to stealing music or movies, they are stealing articles, photographs, letters, research, videos, jingles, characters, and just about anything else that can be digitized and copied electronically. . . . The digital revolution is creating a generation of cut-and-paste burglars who view all content on the Internet as common property. (2007, 145)

LEWIS HYDE: Understanding and engaging in the long-standing debate over "intellectual property" rights is one of the prerequisites of cultural citizenship in the twenty-first century. (qtd. in Allen 2011, 677)

> LAWRENCE LESSIG: I offer the example of Japanese *doujinshi:* . . . [Like *manga*] *doujinshi* are also comics, but they are a kind of copycat comic. A rich ethic governs the creation of *doujinshi.* It is *not doujinshi* if it is *just* a copy; the artist must make a contribution to the art he copies, by transforming it either subtly or significantly. With *doujinshi,* as with hip-hop loops, paint/photo collages, and other examples, the new work of art

> is considered an original, despite the fact that it's a "remix" of existing material. (2004, 26)

ANDREW KEEN: The widespread acceptance of such behavior [appropriation, remix, etc] threatens to undermine a society that has been built upon hard work, innovation, and the intellectual achievement of our writers, scientists, artists, composers, musicians, journalists, pundits, and moviemakers. (2007, 145)

> CATHERINE LACEY: The entire point of remixing is to blend the disparate elements together so that they both recall and distort their previous meaning. This effect is not realized simply by placing different things next to each other. (2010)

MOI: In writing, all kinds of hybrid forms are cutting-edge: graphic novels, book-as-object sculptures, text-image appropriations, the fragment, the ephemeral. . . . California College of the Arts students are also street artists and graffiti masters in love with skateboard culture and industrial wastelands; they draw cities imploding, heads and minds exploding intricately detailed detritus; their sculptures are made of bones, branches, hairballs, dust, and bits of string and wire, with blood for glue.

> LEWIS HYDE: Picasso's Tete de Taureau is a revelation, not a creation. . . . Picasso's "deep personality" is in love with bulls and bullfighting. . . . The bull's head is part of his mental landscape, so it's no surprise when his eye catches a familiar pattern in the handlebars and bicycle seat. (1996, 19)

JOHN CAGE: The highest discipline is the discipline of chance operations. . . . The person is being disciplined, not the work. (qtd. in Hyde 1999, 143)

> LEWIS HYDE: The person is being disciplined away from the ego's habitual attitudes and toward a fundamental change of consciousness. This is Cage's version of Duchamp's "forgetting the hand." (1999, 143)

ARTHUR RIMBAUD: I am present at the explosion of my thought. I watch and I listen to it. I wave the baton; the symphony murmurs from its depths or comes leaping onto the stage. (qtd. in White 2008, 50)

> LOUISE NEVELSON: I saw that by moving the boxes—setting them at different angles—I could create different shadows. I saw, too, how even cracks in the wood sucked in shadows. Suddenly I knew that the shadow . . . is as important as the object. (qtd. in Bober 1984, 100)

DAVID SHIELDS: All this material started becoming a book when I realized I could slide some of the material into thematized rubrics, otherwise known as chapters; each chapter could have a movement, an argument; and the book as a whole could go from A to Z, could unfold an ethos, an *ars poetica.* (qtd. in Lacey 2010)

> MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY: [Art] carries out the work of "thinking" in a manner that conceptual thought cannot accomplish. (qtd. in Cascardi et al. 2010, 33)

KEMBREW MCLEOD: I seek to blur the distinction between scholarship, everyday life, and the arts. (2010, 421)

> TOM BARONE AND ELLIOT EISNER: [Aesthetic utility also lends itself to] the production of disequilibrium within the percipient of the work as s/he vicariously re-experiences what has been designed. (2012, 20)

JOHN CAPUTO: Keep a watchful eye for the ruptures and the breaks and irregularities in existence. (1988, 6)

> BOB DYLAN: What happens is, I'll take a song I know and simply start playing it in my head. That's the way I meditate. . . . That's the folk music tradition. You use what's been handed down. "The Times They Are A-Changing" is probably from an old Scottish folk song. (qtd. in Hyde 2010, 199)

KENNETH GOLDSMITH: Ideas in literature have been shared, riffed, culled, reused, recycled, swiped, stolen, quoted, lifted, duplicated, gifted, appropriated, mimicked, and pirated for as long as literature has existed. . . . Gift economies, open source cultures, and public commons have been vital for the creation of new works, with themes from older works forming the bases for new ones . . . from Martin Luther King Jr's sermons to Muddy Waters' blues tunes. (2011, 2)

> SHUNRYU SUZUKI: The best way to control people is to encourage them to be mischievous. Then they will be in control in its wider sense. To give your sheep or cow a large, spacious meadow is the way to control him. (1970, 32)

LEWIS HYDE: Trickster . . . keeps a sharp eye out for naturally occurring opportunities and creates them ad hoc when they do not occur by themselves. (1999, 47)

> NATALIE GOLDBERG: You need a large field for writing too. Don't pull in the reins too quickly. Give yourself tremendous space to wander in, to be utterly lost with no name, and then come back and speak. (1996, 130)

ANDREW KEEN: Blogs, MySpace, YouTube, and the rest of today's user-generated media are destroying our economy, our culture, and our values. (2007, cover)

> PICASSO: All art is theft. (qtd. in Shields 2010, xv)

WALTER BENJAMIN: All great works of literature either invent a genre or dissolve one. (qtd. in Shields 2010, xv)

> GRAHAM GREENE: When you are unsure, you are alive. (qtd. in Shields 2010, xv)

MOI: Those three statements are epigraphs in David Shields' appropriated manifesto *Reality Hunger* (2010), written entirely in the words of other people.

> CATHERINE LACEY: About 87 pages into *[Reality Hunger's]* collection of quotes I realized that the act of lifting many writers' thoughts and putting them in this book had fundamentally changed their meanings. (2010)

T. S. ELIOT [1920]: Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal. (2012, 114)

> KENNETH GOLDSMITH: Faced with an unprecedented amount of available text, our problem is not needing to write more of it; instead, we must learn to negotiate the vast quantity that exists. How I make my way through this

> thicket of information—how I manage it, how I parse it, how I organize and distribute it—is what distinguishes my writing from yours. (2011, 1)

CONFUCIUS: As the sun makes it new / Day by day make it new / Yet again make it new. (1969, 36)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Transdisciplinary Lens

I have been teaching in the Writing & Literature Department, Humanities & Sciences Division, at California College of the Arts (CCA) since 1994. We train artists, architects, designers, craftspeople, curators, and writers, using a studio pedagogy that combines theory and practice. Formerly known as California College of Arts and Crafts, the Oakland campus was founded as a guild in 1907 on the key principle of the Arts and Crafts Movement, which calls for the integration of beauty and function. At the time, the guild primarily built furniture, still one of our majors, and the relationship of beauty and function remains a key consideration in all the arts, including writing. Building transdisciplinary connections among the arts with this principle in mind is what interests me here.

Now with a second campus in San Francisco, CCA's current motto is "The Future of Culture." State-of-the-art technology, software, tools, and materials are provided in a setting that also honors the artist's hand and the history and traditions of the disciplines. Faculty at CCA are hired as working practitioners in the fields we teach, so the knowledge we bring to the table is practical as well as academic. Our students come to the Bay Area from all over the world and we enjoy a rich intermingling of global aesthetics, diverse philosophies, and cultural worldviews along with a stunning array of pure talent.

Working in these privileged surroundings has inspired and broadened my own writing practice, as the way that artists see the world and materialize their

ideas rubs off and has opened me up to new ways of seeing and writing. Drawing from this enriching exchange, throughout *Remix Perspectives* I am connecting seminal ideas from arts such as painting, photography, dance, and music to the art of the writer, demonstrating where the arts share common ground and how knowledge of one can inform the other. I am also aware that literary writing possesses certain qualities peculiar to itself and, within that, the genres of literary fiction and creative nonfiction each have particular tasks. Authors of literary prose are therefore my primary sources. Poets are included to support my premise that the poetic components of imagery and rhythm are integral to the practice of prose.

Reading insights across the disciplines leads to a broadened perspective on literary writing, its methods, and its role in the past, present, and future of culture. "The term "transdisciplinary" usually labels a paradigm or vision that transcends narrow disciplinary worldviews through overarching synthesis" (Klein 11). The transdisciplinary lens is large and at times unwieldy, like the old-fashioned zoom lens that requires both arms to hold it in place while you try to find your focus. Transdisciplinary practitioners most easily find a focus through what is known as the DDD: Dominant Disciplinary Discourse. In *Remix Perspectives* the DDD is World Literature: literary fiction and creative nonfiction as studied in academic departments commonly called English, Comparative Literature, Creative Writing, or Literary Studies.

The primary sources throughout are novelists, short story writers, and memoirists speaking first-hand about the practice and creative process of making

literature. These are authors such as Dorothy Allison, Margaret Atwood, Jorge Luis Borges, Elizabeth Bowen, Clark Blaise, Raymond Carver, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Carlos Fuentes, Patricia Hampl, Lyn Hejinian, Ernest Hemingway, Henry James, Ha Jin, Franz Kafka, Milan Kundera, Toni Morrison, Bharati Mukherjee, Gertrude Stein, and others, chosen as representative multicultural authors from the canon of required reading. Each one tells stories in a way that only he or she can do. Best-selling contemporary writers like Isabel Allende and Stephen King manage to write stories in unique voices that also appeal to millions of readers around the world. How do they do that? The *zeitgeist* of the twentieth century questioned the borders between elite and popular culture—the canonizers versus the masses—and the Internet has launched a democratized platform where anyone can publish anything at any time for all to see. Borders still exist in the new millennium, of course, but more loosely guarded, with doors that can swing both ways depending on changing trends and the wide-ranging tastes of global reading audiences. The chosen range of primary sources in *Remix Perspectives* epitomizes the expanding definitions of who can be an author.

At the level of infrastructure, poets like Elizabeth Bishop, Michelle Cliff, T. S. Eliot, Li-Young Lee, Ezra Pound, W. S. Merwin, Adrienne Rich, Wallace Stevens, Walt Whitman, and William Carlos Williams offer inspiration and models for imagery, rhythm, and complex ideas portrayed in few words. Offering an overview, critics from literary theory and literary criticism analyze the forms and methods of production: theory giants like Gaston Bachelard, Mikhail Bakhtin,

Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, William Gass, and Susan Sontag; respected essayists such as Julia Alvarez, Joan Didion, Anne Fadiman, John Gardner, Marjorie Garber, Vivian Gornick, Donald Hall, bell hooks, Denise Levertov, Alicia Ostriker, Marilynne Robinson, and Zadie Smith; and popular how-to guides like Ray Bradbury, Natalie Goldberg, Anne Lamott, Deena Metzger, Lorrie Moore, and Carolyn See. These are meta-thinkers who help to define good writing and how it operates.

The transdisciplinary lens in *Remix Perspectives* situates creative writing as one art among many and compares practices across the disciplines. How does the subject represent the content for photographers like Diane Arbus, David Hockney, Dorothea Lange, or Edward Weston, for example? How do painters like Da Vinci, Van Gogh, Picasso, or Warhol distinguish background from foreground (or not)? How do dancers like Isadora Duncan or Anna Halprin embody foreshadowing, or release? Where do the notes come from for musicians like John Cage, Leonard Cohen, and Bob Dylan?

Zooming out, I read art critics and aesthetics philosophers who see artists (encompassing the notion of writers *as* artists) as key players in historical and social movements, shaping and being shaped. Thinkers such as Theodor Adorno, John Caputo, Arthur Danto, Jacques Ranciére, Ben Shahn, Wendy Steiner, and Jeannette Winterson discuss relations between art and culture, art and society, art and politics, art and itself. Though the focus is on the last hundred years or so, ancient philosophers like Plato and Aristotle provide foundational contributions

on the earliest social role of the arts in our republics. Contemporary philosophers such as Italo Calvino, John Cage, Lewis Hyde, and Elaine Scarry suggest that evocations of lightness, chance, gift cultures, and beauty as found in the arts can, in direct and indirect ways, serve the cause of justice. Sociologists Svetlana Boym, Mihaly Czikszentmihalyi, Kenneth Gergen, and E. Doyle McCarthy offer insights on the social contexts of and for our stories.

Questions about truth and lies, and the controversial ethics of literary truth-telling (as distinct from the ethics of journalism or the law) are taken up by reviewers in the popular press such as Steve Almond, James Atlas, Charles Baxter, Jonathan Lethem, and David Shields, as well as scholars on the pedagogy of creative writing whose names are less well-known. Regarding truth, poet Emily Dickinson recommends that we "tell it slant" (107). Cultural anthropologist Felipe Fernández-Armesto reports that in pre-literate societies truth was "registered emotionally or by non-sensory and non-rational kinds of perception" (6). REMIX 5B provides fragments of this ongoing debate, wherein the only conclusion may be that we each must determine our own stance on the ethical boundaries of literary truth.

When devising fictional characters or versions of ourselves, creative writers also might wish to consider what psychologists have to say about the deeper motives for human behavior, the unconscious forces at work upon us, or the role of dreams and archetypes in shaping our identities. Seminal psychologists James Hillman, Carl Jung, George Lakoff, Abraham Maslow, and Marion

Woodman offer clues for re-interpretation of the narratives we tell ourselves and others. Insights from psychotherapists Carol Pearson, Sydney Jourard, Lawrence Kubie, Lilian Rubin, and Ellen Siegelman might prod the memoir writer to revise a troubled life story so it becomes a redemptive act, for example, or help teach a novelist how to unfold the psychological layers of made-up characters.

A subset of thinkers from what is known as narrative medicine, or medical humanities, proposes that physicians and other healthcare practitioners have much to learn from literature about suffering, tragedy, recovery, and medical ethics. Rita Charon is a key thinker in this relatively new discipline, also represented here by Nancy Andreasen, Arthur Frank, Peter Graham, Faith McLellan, Richard Seltzer, and Joanne Trautmann. I have studied imagination and medicine through public programs at Pacifica Graduate Institute, where I was introduced to dream-tenders and depth psychologists Stephen Aizenstadt, Robert Bosnak, and Ginette Paris, who teach the potentially therapeutic value of writing, dreaming, and reading literature.

The disciplinary lens of creativity studies focuses here on the mind-state of the writer at work: Frank Barron on imagination, Rollo May on courage, Alfonso Montuori on creative inquiry, Maurice Sendak on confronting demons.

At its widest opening the transdisciplinary lens encompasses the art of the writer (and everything else!) within complexity theory, systems thinking, and chaos theory. Concepts from these fields of study push writers to further contextualize our work through the wide-angle lenses of mutual causality and

intercommunication. Joanna Macy, Jennifer Wells, Edgar Morin, Daniel Deslauriers, Fariba Bogzaran, and David Peat describe these big ideas.

Still, these realms are merely physical, limited by the laws of physics and neuroscience. Not to be hampered thus, the metaphysicians are here too: Confucius, Chuang Tzu, Lao Tzu, Thich Nhat Hanh, Tarthan Tulku, Basho and his fellow haiku masters. Their cryptic contributions appear sporadically, when we need a reminder to look up from our books.

How to Read REMIX

In search of a form to convey my experience of conducting research in these times, of teaching hyper-distracted undergraduate and graduate students, and of imagining a useful stance for my own creative writing, I wanted to invoke the stunning abundance of information and sensory input we are processing at all times, awake in our busy days and asleep in our dreams. My methods professor Daniel Deslauriers read *Remix Perspectives* on a plane and says he experienced a "dizzying" sensation. Suspended at thirty thousand feet, flying at the speed of flight, the in-flight movie came before him without sound, so there emerged a contradictory interaction between my juxtaposed texts and the flashing images onscreen. This seems to me a perfect image of our multimedia, multisensory, multitasking life in the twenty-first century.

Each time I read these chapters I notice a different aspect of what is presented. Perhaps what attracts my attention depends on my mood, where I am at with my writing, or what I need (consciously or unconsciously) to take away from the reading session. The REMIX form always jolts my synapses to make new kinds of connections from those I might make reading more linear texts or guidebooks; it feels electric, as my mind wanders and then someone says something surprising, or that I had not thought of before, or that I have heard many times but only now understand in a way that is meaningful for my writing or adds to my evolving knowledge of nature, humanity, the arts, technology, and their interconnections.

If you are in search of solid ground, complete coherence, or linear thinking, please keep in mind that it is not my intention to provide this, though I hope the theoretical frameworks for my choices of form and content seem logical and properly bound to scholarly traditions. Reading each REMIX will require the kind of open-minded attention that everyday life demands, and I imagine that you, too, might be reading this while in a state of distraction, checking your cell or social networks periodically while listening to music, or on an airplane while a movie plays, a baby cries, and others around you tap their touchscreens, minds anywhere but here.

Naturally, you may connect more readily to certain voices on your first encounter with *Remix Perspectives* and warm up to others next time you pick it up; instinctively, you might give more attention to someone you know and find the stranger irrelevant, may wonder where is so-and-so, and why was she not invited? Your thoughts may drift then be re-engaged, enough to cease wondering over the absent old friend (who is not here because I had to make choices and there are limits, no disrespect intended). One minute ideas are flowing back and forth in a logical manner; at others, it sounds less like conversation, more like eavesdropping while in motion, where you catch only part of what someone says before another crosses your path to interject a new point of view. Such is the nature of reading and paying attention in our times, and the REMIX form of ordered fragments transparently embodies this condition.

As you read each REMIX it is fine to let your mind wander (as it will, no doubt) but then notice what causes you to come back to attention and consider whether the idea you alight on might be pertinent to you at this moment, and why. I expect this is the kind of work that you can come back to again and again, and take away a different idea with each new encounter with the text. I am also aware that some quotes and ideas could just as easily appear in other chapters, as the boundaries between topics are somewhat flexible.

Many if not most names in each REMIX will be recognizable to students and practitioners in the fields of world literature, literary theory, and creative writing, while names from the other arts, psychology, philosophy, and spiritual wisdom may or may not be familiar. Readers who wish to know more about each thinker than what they contribute to the topic can easily find biographies online, and the Works Cited list provides full follow-up details on all quote sources. MOI appears from time to time, myself as a character in my own book, distinct from myself as the omniscient author of the book as a whole. MOI speaks when she has something to add, or a point needs to be clarified or questioned; otherwise, she listens, a skill that is equally as important for writers as speaking, reading, and writing.

Within each REMIX I invite the reader to focus primarily on the concept or point of view that each quote presents. When a train of thought appears and connects from one to the next, get on it; if it seems to go off track just keep moving until you find your way.

1.

THE PRACTICE:

HABITS OF MIND, BODY, SPIRIT

1A. Tapping the Surface:

"Self-Forgetful" First-Person Point of View

The Freudian image of levels of consciousness as an iceberg portrays the ego as the mere tip, with the unconscious a wide, nearly impenetrable ice layer but for the slippery revelations of dreams and altered mind states. Proust's famous evocation of a formerly lost memory by dipping a madeleine cookie into a cup of tea is just one of many modes of entry to these otherwise hard-to-reach places: introspection, meditation, medication, vacation to new terrains that lift us away from our habitual slumber and the oppressive noise.

In a letter to her biographer, poet Elizabeth Bishop said, "What one seems to want in art, in experiencing it, is the same thing that is necessary for its creation: a self-forgetful, perfectly useless concentration" (qtd. in Pickard 269). Bishop's words refer to an ability to put the loud, aspiring ego aside for the moment, to look and listen: to the world as we find it, to the artists and authors whose ideas we are assimilating, to our own deeper voices.

Between the extremes of loud ego and repressed psyche is the more accessible subconscious (AKA preconscious), a freer-roaming space just below the surface of ego consciousness and above the underwater unconscious. The writer can enter this space by accident (e.g., the Freudian slip) or by invitation (e.g., altered mind states, or simply by asking, through prompts).

Among the teaching challenges of our times is our students'—and our own—tendency to be distracted, minds always elsewhere: online, on cell, or, at

minimum, drifting. Our twenty-first-century sense of self is fragmented and susceptible, uncertain in an uncertain world. Part of our work as writers or as teachers of student writers is to train our attention, harness it, or perhaps easier, *use* or *cultivate* our distractible nature in service to our art, by *inviting* alternate mind states, consciously visiting and mining treasures from other layers of our psyches. Here are representative voices from journalism, psychology, sociology, poetry, memoir, literary theory, and songwriting, presenting thoughts on means of access to the subconscious, and the role of this most creative realm.

REMIX 1A: THINKING

JOAN DIDION: A writer [is] a person whose most absorbed and passionate hours are spent arranging words on pieces of paper. (1968, 225)

> LAWRENCE KUBIE, MD: The goal to seek is to free preconscious processes from the distortions and obstructions interposed by unconscious processes and from the pedestrian limitations of conscious processes. The unconscious can spur it on. The conscious can criticize and correct and evaluate. But creativity is a product of preconscious activity. (1958, 143)

SIDNEY JOURARD: The act of writing bears something in common with the act of love. The writer, at his most productive moments, just flows. He gives of that which is uniquely himself. (1971, 62)

JULIA ALVAREZ: Writing begins before you ever put pen to paper or your fingers down on the keyboard. It is a way of being alive in the world (1998, 264).

MIHALYI CSIKSZENTMIHALYI: "Flow" . . . is like being carried away by a current, everything moving smoothly without effort. Contrary to expectation, "flow" usually happens not during relaxing moments of leisure and entertainment, but rather when we are actively involved in a difficult enterprise, in a task that stretches our physical or mental abilities. (1993, xiii)

FRANZ KAFKA: Writing means revealing oneself to excess; that utmost of self-revelation and surrender, in which a human being, when involved with others, would feel he was losing himself, and from which, therefore, he will always shrink as long as he is in his right mind. . . . That is why one can never be alone enough when one writes, why there can never be enough silence around one when one writes, why even night is not night enough. (qtd. in Cain 2012, 86)

SUSAN CAIN: What's so magical about solitude? In many fields [research psychologist Anders Ericsson says], it's only when you're alone that you can engage in Deliberate Practice, which he has identified as the key to exceptional achievement. When you practice deliberately, you identify the tasks of knowledge that are just out of your reach, strive to upgrade your performance, monitor your progress, and revise accordingly. Practice sessions that fall short of this standard

are not only less useful—they're counterproductive. They reinforce existing cognitive mechanisms instead of improving them. (2012, 81)

> CAROLYN SEE: While you're being quiet, keeping your literary aspirations to yourself, pay attention to the world around you. Listen. What's your "voice," what's your material, what's your genre, what are you trying to say? (2002, 9)

ISABEL ALLENDE: Each one of my books corresponds to a very strong emotion. [I] associate *The House of the Spirits* with longing, a desire to recapture a lost world; *Of Love and Shadows* with anger in the face of the abuses of dictatorships; and *Eva Luna* with accepting myself, finally, as a person and a writer. (qtd. in Rodden 1999, 21–22)

> JULIA ALVAREZ: As much as I can break down the process of writing stories, I would say that this is how it begins. I find a detail or image or character or incident or cluster of events. A certain luminosity surrounds them. I find myself attracted. I come forward. I pick it up, turn it around, begin to ask questions, and spend hours and weeks and months and years trying to answer them (1998, 263).

JOAN DIDION: Had my credentials been in order I would never have become a writer. Had I been blessed with even limited access to my own mind there would have been no reason to write. (1968, 225)

> EDMUND WHITE: Just as Baudelaire had spoken of the virtues of intoxication, which permit the individual to merge with the world around

him and with universal humanity, in the same way Rimbaud ascribed the poet's supernatural lucidity to everything that broke down the dulling habits of perception. (2008, 52)

MOI: I love solitude but am glad for the forced interactions of teaching, which keeps me in relationship, continually meeting new groups of young students.

GASTON BACHELARD [1960]: The image-producing forces of our mind develop along two very different lines. The first take wing when confronted by the new; they take pleasure in the picturesque, in variety, in the unexpected event. The imagination to which they give life always finds a springtime to describe. . . . The other forces which produce images plumb the depths of being; there they seek at once the primitive and eternal. They rise above seasons and history. (2005, 10)

MIHALYI CSIKSZENTMIHALYI: It turns out that when challenges are high and personal skills are used to the utmost, we experience this rare state of consciousness. The first symptom of flow is a narrowing of attention on a clearly defined goal. We feel involved, concentrated, absorbed. We know what must be done, and we get immediate feedback as to how well we are doing. (1993, xiii)

JOAN DIDION: I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means. What I want and what I fear. . . . *What is going on in these pictures in my mind?* (1968, 225)

CHARLES BAXTER: What you remember is the key to who you are. This commonplace formulation excludes dismissive irony and the mere piling-up of

information as techniques for memoir writing. Personal information must be converted into experience if it is to communicate anything, methodically disproving the bleakest of [Walter] Benjamin's prophecies. If any writer can tell the story of his or her life, s/he has a chance of escaping from the suffering of a dysfunctional personal narrative. S/he is seeking to understand that suffering and to turn it into something readable and coherent and functional in a time of data-glut. As a result, *a memoir cannot be summarized.* It only works if it includes the details. There's no intimacy otherwise, and any memoir requires intimacy to convey its experiences. (1999, 152)

> MOI: I try to be aware of the difference between private and public, the kind of intimate writing I should keep to myself versus what could be published or of interest to others.

LEONARD COHEN: I heard my soul singing behind a leaf, plucked the leaf, but then I heard it singing behind a veil. I tore the veil, but then I heard it singing behind a wall. I broke the wall, and I heard my soul singing against me. I built up the wall, mended the curtain, but I could not put back the leaf. I held it in my hand and I heard myself singing mightily against me. (1984, 7)

> GASTON BACHELARD [1960]: In nature, within ourselves and without, [the image-producing forces in our mind] produce seeds, seeds in which form is buried in a substance, in which form is internal. (2005, 10)

JOAN DIDION: When I talk about pictures in my mind I am talking, quite specifically, about images that shimmer around the edges. (1968, 225)

> LAWRENCE KUBIE, MD: Cogitation and intelligence: *"Cogito"* to shake things up, to roll the bones of one's ideas, memories, and feelings, to make a great melting pot of experience ["to shake together"]: plus the superimposed process of *"intelligo":* i.e., consciously, self-critically but retrospectively, an after-the-act process of choosing from among unanticipated combinations those patterns which have new significance. . . . New combinations are rarely if ever found by straining for them consciously, but rather by a process of free association. (1958, 51–52)

MOI: This is why writing teachers so often recommend that we draft uncritically, free-associate, follow our meandering trains of thought, and then put on the critical hat of the conscious mind when we craft and critique the "cogitated" "rolled bones" of raw draft material.

> LAWRENCE KUBIE, MD: Free associations have a general significance beyond their exploratory importance in psychoanalytic technique. It is through free association that the mind shakes itself out of its ruts. . . . shakes itself apart and together again, finding its way off the beaten path, stumbling into new connections. It is through free association that the mind moves without conscious, deliberate bias or preconception from thought to thought, from idea to idea, from feeling to feeling. Where it is not subject to distorting pressures from unconscious processes, it is the most spontaneous, primitive, natural, and creative process of thought. (1958, 53)

GASTON BACHELARD [1960]: Intellectual criticism of poetry will never lead to the center where poetic images are formed. . . . The image can only be studied through the image, by dreaming images as they gather in the state of reverie. (2005, 6)

> SUSAN CAIN: Deliberate Practice is best conducted alone for several reasons. It takes intense concentration, and other people can be distracting. It requires deep motivation, often self-generated. But most important, it involves working on the task that's most challenging to *you* personally. (2012, 81)

GASTON BACHELARD [1960]: It is reverie that delineates the furthest confines of our mind. (2005, 215)

> SYDNEY JOURARD: [The writer] makes himself naked, recording his nakedness in the written word. Herein, lies some of the terror which frequently freezes a writer, preventing him from producing. Herein, too, lies some of the courage that must be entailed in letting others learn how one has experienced or is experiencing the world. (1971, 62)

MOI: Sometimes I hate myself and fear what I might say.

> JULIA ALVAREZ: The function of ritual is not to control this baffling universe but to render homage to it, to bow to the mystery. Similarly, my daily writing rituals are small ways in which I contain my dread and affirm my joy and celebrate the mystery and excitement of the calling to be a writer (1998, 280).

LEONARD COHEN: Sit in a chair and keep still. Let the dancer's shoulders emerge from your shoulders, the dancer's chest from your chest, the dancer's loins from your loins, the dancer's hips and thighs from yours; and from your silence the throat that makes a sound, and from your bafflement a clear song to which the dancer moves. (1984, 53)

1B. Constructing the Surface:

"Organic Form"

The driving principle I like to teach and use in my own practice of "making writing" is Denise Levertov's *organic form*:

> On the one hand is the idea that content, reality, experience, are essentially fluid and must be given form; on the other, this sense of seeking out inherent, though not immediately apparent, form. ("Some Notes on Organic Form: 1965")

The key idea put forth in REMIX 1A was that we must listen deeply to ourselves and recognize the facts of the world *as they are* before we attempt to portray or transform them. Levertov suggests that the writer can discern the form that our raw material should take by "contemplating" the existing shapes and sounds of lived experience as opposed to imposing form upon it. She describes this kind of creative process as

> A method of apperception, i.e., of recognizing what we perceive . . . based on an intuition of order, a form beyond forms, in which forms partake, and of which man's creative works are analogies, resemblances, natural allegories. Such poetry is exploratory. ("Some Notes on Organic Form: 1965")

Creative writing is not passive action; it is "exploratory" and the writer must be in a position to perceive, receive, and make conscious the form that the content

dictates. Levertov believes, "Form is never more than a *revelation* of content" ("Some Notes on Organic Form: 1965").

REMIX 1B presents painters, poets, short story writers, creativity theorists, and novelists who seem to agree that the work of artists and writers is substantial labor that demands a certain kind of physical fitness and mental dexterity.

REMIX 1B: MAKING

LEONARDO DA VINCI: The youth ought first to learn perspective, then the proportions of everything, then he should learn from the hand of a good master in order to accustom himself to good limbs; then from nature in order to confirm for himself the reasons for what he has learned then for a time he should study the works of different masters then make it a habit to work at his art. (qtd. in Goldwater and Treves 1945, 49)

> LORRIE MOORE: Perhaps you go to graduate school. Perhaps you work odd jobs and take writing courses at night. Perhaps you are working on a novel and writing down all the clever remarks and intimate personal confessions you hear during the day. Perhaps you are losing your pals, your acquaintances, your balance. (1985)

ANNE LAMOTT: Often when you sit down to write, what you have in mind is an autobiographical novel about your childhood, or a play about the immigrant experience, or a history of—oh, say—women. But this is like trying to scale a glacier. It's hard to get your footing, and your fingertips get all red and frozen and

torn up. Then your mental illnesses arrive at the desk like your sickest, most secretive relatives. . . .

What I do at this point, as the panic mounts and the jungle drums begin beating and I realize that the well has run dry and that my future is behind me and I'm going to have to get a job only I'm completely unemployable, is to stop. First I try to breathe, because I'm either sitting there panting like a lapdog or I'm unintentionally making slow asthmatic death rattles. So I just sit there for a minute, breathing slowly, quietly. I let my mind wander. (1994, 17)

> LORRIE MOORE: Insist that you are not very interested in any one subject at all, that you are interested in the music of language, that you are interested in—in—syllables, because they are the atoms of poetry, the cells of the mind, the breath of the soul. Begin to feel woozy. Stare into your plastic wine cup. (1985)

MOI: Don't be too drunk or too sober.

> HENRI MATISSE: Expression, to my way of thinking, does not consist of the passion mirrored upon a human face or betrayed by a violent gesture. The whole arrangement of my picture is expressive. The place occupied by figures or objects, the empty spaces around them, the proportions—everything plays a part. Composition is the art of arranging in a decorative manner the various elements at the painter's disposal for the expression of his feelings. In a picture every part will be visible and will play the role

> conferred upon it, be it principal or secondary. All that is not useful in the picture is detrimental. (qtd. in Goldwater and Treves 1945, 410)

SANFORD SCHWARTZ: [de Kooning's] images were arrived at intuitively. He often seems to have started with some idea of a standing or seated figure, or with shapes derived from the body, and then to have been guided by his feeling for craft—for where his brush wanted to go—and by what his instincts were telling him. (2011, 9)

> ZADIE SMITH: I want to offer you a pair of ugly terms for two breeds of novelist: the *Macro Planner* and the *Micro Manager*. . . . A Macro Planner makes notes, organizes material, configures a plot and creates a structure—all before he writes the title page. This structural security gives him a great deal of freedom of movement. It's not uncommon for Macro Planners to start writing their novels in the middle. . . . I am a Micro Manager. I start at the first sentence of a novel and I finish at the last. . . . Because Micro Managers have no grand plan, their novels exist only in their present moment, in a sensibility, in the novel's tonal frequency line by line. (2009, 99-100)

MOI: I can recall a handful of memorable times when everything I wanted to say came pouring out in a rush of energy and I barely had to change a word; I only had to keep my hand moving as fast as my thoughts were flying and heart was beating.

ANNE LAMOTT: Thirty years ago my older brother, who was ten years old at the time, was trying to get a report on birds written that he'd had three months to write, which was due the next day. We were out at our family cabin in Bolinas, and he was at the kitchen table close to tears, surrounded by binder paper and pencils and unopened books on birds, immobilized by the hugeness of the task ahead. Then my father sat down beside him, put his arm around my brother's shoulder, and said, "Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird." (1994, 19)

G. K. CHESTERTON: Hope is the power of being cheerful in circumstances that we know to be desperate. (qtd. in Lamott 1994, 19)

ANNE LAMOTT: Writing can be a pretty desperate endeavor, because it is about some of our deepest needs: our need to be visible, to be heard, our need to make sense of our lives, to wake up and grow and belong. (1994, 19)

LORRIE MOORE: Why write? Where does writing come from? These are questions to ask yourself. They are like: Where does dust come from? Or: why is there war? Or: If there's a God, why is my brother now a cripple? (1985)

MOI: Writing has saved my life many times, even just as a friend.

DONALD HALL: Absorbedness is the paradise of work, but what is its provenance or etiology? Surely it is an ecstasy of transport, of loss of ego; but it is also something less transcendent: To work is to please the powerful masters who are parents—who are family, who are church, who are custom or culture. (1993, 25)

MOI: I appreciate the unconditional, nonjudgmental attitude of the blank page.

VINCENT VAN GOGH: If we study Japanese art, you see a man who is undoubtedly wise, philosophic, and intelligent, who spends his time how? In studying the distance between the earth and the moon? No. In studying the policy of Bismarck? No. He studies a single blade of grass. . . . But this blade of grass leads him to draw every plant and then the seasons, the wide aspects of the countryside, then animals, then the human figure. So he passes his life. (qtd. in Goldwater and Treves 1945, 384)

FRANK BARRON: Let's remember that not only is intelligence multifaceted, so too is creativity. Research has identified clusters of the many aspects of creativity: originality, fluency and volume of ideas, adaptive flexibility, spontaneous flexibility, expressional fluency, sensitivity to problems. All these can be expressed in a variety of sensory modalities, and in units large or small. (1997, 12)

ANNE LAMOTT: Practically even better news than that of short assignments is the idea of shitty first drafts. All good writers write them. This is how they end up with good second drafts and terrific third drafts. People tend to look at successful writers, writers who are getting their books published and maybe even doing well financially, and think that they sit down at their desks every morning feeling like a million dollars, feeling great about who they are, how much talent they have, and what a great story they have to tell; that they take in a few deep breaths, push

back their sleeves, roll their necks a few times to get all the cricks out, and dive in, typing fully formed passages as fast as a court reporter. But this is just the fantasy of the uninitiated. I know some very great writers, writers you love who write beautifully and have made a great deal of money, and not *one* of them sits down routinely feeling wildly enthusiastic and confident. (1994, 21)

> ZADIE SMITH: There is one great advantage to being a Micro Manager rather than a Macro Planner: the last day of your novel truly is the last day. If you edit as you go along, there are no first, second, third drafts. There is only one draft, and when it's done, it's done. (2009, 107)

DONALD HALL: As I walk the dog, or watch spring training games from Florida while struggling to finish my income tax, I think about work and take notes. Driving, I keep a little tape machine beside me. I am absorbed in this book and in "Another Elegy." Every day I have ideas for a poem and essay, and every day make another draft of the poem and add pages of this prose to the *Life Work* pile. Do I fiddle too much with the poem as I approach six hundred bloody drafts? Do I repeat the same tone and feeling in all my work-anecdotes? I am swept away: I am happy; I am manic. (1993, 24)

> ANNE LAMOTT: All I have to do is write down as much as I can see through a one-inch picture frame. . . . All I am going to do right now, for example, is write that one paragraph that sets the story in my hometown, in the late fifties, when the trains were still running. I am going to paint a picture of it, in words. (1994, 18)

E. L. DOCTOROW: Writing a novel is like driving a car at night. You can see only as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way. (qtd. in Lamott 1994, 18)

> ANNE LAMOTT: You don't have to see where you're going, you don't have to see your destination or everything you will pass along the way. You just have to see two or three feet ahead of you. (1994, 18)

ZADIE SMITH: In the middle of a novel, a kind of magical thinking takes over. . . . The middle of a novel is a state of mind. . . . If you go outside, everything—I mean, *everything*—flows freely into your novel. Someone on the bus says something—it's straight out of your novel. You open the paper—*every single story in the paper is directly relevant to your novel. (*2009, 104)

> PABLO PICASSO: When I have found something to express, I have done it without thinking of the past or of the future. I do not believe I have used radically different elements in the different manners I have used in painting. If the subjects I have wanted to express have suggested different ways of expression I have never hesitated to adopt them. I have never made trials nor experiments. Whenever I had something to say I have said it in the manner of which I have felt it ought to be said. Different motives inevitably require different modes of expression. (qtd. in Goldwater and Treves 1945, 418)

ZADIE SMITH: When building a novel you will use a lot of scaffolding. Some of this is necessary to hold the thing up, but most isn't. The majority of it is only

there to make you feel secure, and in fact the building will stand without it. . . . Scaffolding holds up confidence when you have none, reduces the despair, creates a goal—however artificial—an end point. (2009, 105)

> DONALD HALL: Sometimes I make lists of things to do in years ahead: a prose book I mean to write; a new book of poems, with a guess at the year when it ought to finish itself; new short stories; revisions of a textbook. These lists get lost. Opening an old notebook, I find a list from the late 1970s. It surprises me to find that I had already planned something accomplished a decade later; it surprises me that I wrote so many things I planned to write. But also, I notice a forgotten project that interests me again: In the old notebook I make new notes. (1993, 10)

MOI: Sometimes I draw pictures of what my book covers will look like when the mess is tidy and finally published.

> FRANK BARRON: Creative geniuses . . . may be able to push sanity almost to the breaking point, but they can usually swing back again, correct and integrate their perceptions, and make out of their transitory distress a social communication that they can give to the world and that the world can receive. (1997, 16)

MOI: I try to be sane but not boring.

> ZADIE SMITH: When you finish your novel, if money is not a desperate priority, if you do not need to sell it at once or be published that very second—*put it in a drawer*. For as long as you can manage. A year or

> more is ideal—but even three months will do. *Step away from the vehicle.* The secret to editing your work is simple: you need to become its reader instead of its writer. (2009, 107)

ANN O'HANLON: *Seeing* is the gathering of physical statistics outside of us through the instrument of the eye, an involuntary mechanical act. *Perception* is the gathering of consciousness from those outer things. (2-3) . . . *Work* is the activity that releases the individual creative energy. (2001, 21)

1C. Between the Lines:

"Something Else at Work"

Before she became an international star after publication of her best-selling memoir *Under the Tuscan Sun* (followed by the Hollywood film), Frances Mayes was chair of creative writing at San Francisco State University. Before that, she was my professor while I was studying for my master of arts in English: Creative Writing (1983). Though my home base was prose, the poetry workshop I took with Frances Mayes taught the infrastructures of imagery and rhythm upon which any writer in any genre needs to construct the story. Beyond and within those more tangible components—the concrete image, the music of words—lie what Mayes calls "gaps and holes" (409). This section comes late in her great textbook *The Discovery of Poetry*, after she has demonstrated how to read or compose literal and figurative images and all forms of meter and free verse, and she introduces the concept like this: "Craft. Analysis of the text. Our own interpretations. And still there is something else at work in a poem" (409). Mayes compares this "something else" to Dylan Thomas's "force that through the green fuse drives the flower" (416).

The French might call it that *je ne sais quoi*, a space just out of reach of the black-and-white text composed of mere words. It is what resides between the lines, AKA subtext, and is perhaps the more intriguing and difficult, yet most compelling, component of what we enjoy as readers and writers of fiction and creative nonfiction. There is setting and character and plot, there is the sound and

rhythm of words on the page, and there is something else: the meaning? the emotions? the driving force? I know there have been times when I have revised a story to death, in misguided attempts to perfect individual sentences to such a degree that all life is sucked out of the prose. This driving force can feel dangerous to us when we are writing because it is out of our control, shows up out of nowhere, uninvited; it is mischievous, a devil, a trickster that wants to light fires and leave no evidence. I try to revise it out of existence but it is an offering and should be welcomed. How can we learn to let down the guard of the logic police and "let the wild rumpus start?" (Sendak 23). How does the writer put *in* the lines what is also there *between* the lines? A surgeon, a surrealist, a psychologist, a novelist, a trickster/scholar, and a children's book author weigh in.

REMIX 1C: GAPS

RICHARD SELTZER: Two layers compose the skin—the superficial epidermis and, deeper, the dermis. Between is a plane of pure energy. (2001, 169)

> JORGE LUIS BORGES [1941]: The universe (which others call the Library) is composed of an indefinite and perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries, with vast airshafts between, surrounded by very low railings. (1962, 51)

CARL JUNG: Reason sets the boundaries far too narrowly for us, and would have us accept only the known—and that too with limitations—and live in a known framework, just as if we were sure how far life actually extends. As a matter of

fact, day after day we live far beyond the bounds of our consciousness; without our knowledge, the life of the unconscious is also going on within us. The more the critical reason dominates, the more impoverished life becomes; but the more of the unconscious, and the more of myth we are capable of making conscious, the more of life we integrate. (1965, 302)

> MILAN KUNDERA: Poetry and lyricism are not two sister notions that must actually be kept well apart. For Garcia Marquez's poetry has no relation to lyricism; the author is not confessing, not exposing his soul, he is not drunk on anything but the objective world he lifts into a sphere where everything is simultaneously real, implausible, and magical. (2006, 82)

GERTRUDE STEIN [1931]: Have to be almost lost and known as well as when there is very much no doubt about whether it can be claimed to be and not be known better than by the time that there is very much to be given for it as they please themselves and have to have a name for it. It is wonderfully reasonable of it to be known as an alternative for it by the time that they have been wishing for more of it all the time. (1995, 301)

> LEWIS HYDE: It is possible that there is no real self behind the shifting masks, or that the real self lies exactly there, in the moving surfaces and not beneath. It's possible there are beings with no way of their own, only the many ways of their shifting skins and changing contexts. (1999, 54)

BREYTEN BREYTENBACH: Ancient Chinese lore has it that writing evolved from magical signs, from runes and the "symbols" or "depictions" of the bones cast by

diviners. It is said that on the day man started to codify the signs and their meanings by repeating them at will, and thus losing him/herself by beginning to trace the openings to the unknown, gods and demons wept because now there was no longer only Heaven and Earth. Man had manifested herself, interjected herself between reality and dreams, and bared the cunt of creation. Now there was a go-between straddling the known and the unknowable and something autonomous (writing, conscious becoming) came into being with its own realness, if not "reality." A twin emerged. An intimate stranger. (2009, 77)

> MAURICE SENDAK: Max said, "BE STILL" and tamed them with the magic trick of staring into all their yellow eyes without blinking once and they were frightened and called him the most wild thing of all and made him king of all wild things. (1963, 22)

JORGE LUIS BORGES [1941]: I say that it is not illogical to think that the world is infinite. Those who judge it to be limited postulate that in remote places the corridors and stairways and hexagons can conceivably come to an end—which is absurd. Those who imagine it to be without limit forget that the possible number of books does have such a limit. I venture to suggest this solution to the ancient problem: The Library is unlimited and cyclical. If an eternal traveler were to cross it in any direction, after centuries he would see that the same volumes were repeated in the same disorder (which, thus repeated, would be an order: the Order). My solitude is gladdened by this elegant hope. (1962, 58)

> GERTRUDE STEIN [1931]: Be very careful of what you do think carefully do not be very anxious to have it begun but be very good about it and have it already to wait so that if you hear about it you will be there already and that makes no difference by the right of way waiting is partly a favor to them that it is a prevailing joining of indication of which it is combined with arbiter of their destiny to a satisfactory degree need not be mine. (1995, 386)

LEWIS HYDE: Whoever the gods of fortune are, they will drop things in your path, but if you search for those things you will not find them. Wandering is the trick, and giving up on "loss" or "gain" and then agility of mind. (1996, 387)

> ROLLO MAY: We shall often be faced with despair, as indeed every sensitive person has been during the last several decades in this country. Hence Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and Camus and Sartre have proclaimed that courage is not the absence of despair; it is, rather, the capacity to move ahead *in spite of despair*. (1978, 3)

LEWIS HYDE: Ginsberg's art oscillates between idealizing the actual and actualizing the ideal. . . . The work he creates is not an escape from his struggle with shame but the resolution or fruit of it. [Maxine Hong] Kingston would not allow herself to publish until she had made a thing of beauty to replace the cultural shapeliness that her speaking out threatened to destroy. . . . Those who work the edge between what can and can't be said do not escape from shame but

turn toward and engage with it. They wrestle with it; they try to change its face; they kill it in one form so as to resurrect it in another. (1999, 164)

> ROLLO MAY: The word *courage* comes from the same stem as the French word *coeur*, meaning "heart." Thus, just as one's heart, by pumping blood to one's arms, legs, and brain enables all the other physical organs to function, so courage makes possible all the psychological virtues. Without courage other values wither away into mere facsimiles of virtue. (1978, 4)

BREYTEN BREYTENBACH: Writing is not an art form; it is a life discipline. Write from the totality of your being, not only from the confessional or the ache of unrequited love. It must as much come from the loins as it emerges from memory. . . . Writing is the unbiased heart living in its own beating. (2009, 140)

> MAURICE SENDAK: The wild things roared their terrible roars and gnashed their terrible teeth and rolled their terrible eyes and showed their terrible claws but Max stepped into his private boat and waved goodbye and sailed back over a year and in and out of weeks and through a day and into the night of his very own room. (1963, 33–34)

GERTRUDE STEIN [1931]: Sound sight and sense around sound by sight around by with sound sight and sense will they apologize truthfully. Come to allowing. (1995, 301)

> LEWIS HYDE: An intelligence makes itself at home in the happening world, one not so attached to design or purpose. (1996, 384)

2.

THE PARTS:

COMPONENTS OF STORIES

2A. Snapshots and Portraits:

"The Glimpse"

The task of making flat characters comprised of mere words come to life as round, breathing, individual beings requires a combination of qualities. The *work* of writing lies in our own eccentric habits of mind, body, and spirit as discussed in The Practice chapters, while the *significance* of the work emerges from the writer's desire to understand people: in relationships, in situations, in solitary introspection of their own failings and blessings. When we sit down to describe a character, just as when we try to know anyone in our lives, including ourselves, we have only a glimpse of their complexity, so we start there.

Painter/photographer/set designer David Hockney exemplifies "the glimpse" in his 1984 *Camerawork* series of Polaroid snapshots, offering close-up details in each shot of a friend's face, a body in motion, groups gathered around tables or in living rooms. Arranged in rows and grids, each focused snapshot contributes to a sense of the whole, while the white Polaroid frames stand as boundaries to cohesion that indicate how much about these characters remains unknown. In presenting the snapshots this way, Hockney says he wanted to come "closer to how we actually see, not all at once, but in discrete, separate glimpses, built up" (11). He believes that vision is "a continuous accumulation of details perceived across time and synthesized into a larger, continuously metamorphosing whole . . . built up from hundreds of micro-perspectives" (16).

The typical family snapshot might show just one angle of vision, a single moment in time, with the characters posed to mark an occasion: a birthday, holiday, vacation, and so on. The studio portrait photographer may attempt to capture some singular essence of the person's character and indicate it by using costumes or backdrops or gestures that symbolize intelligence, say (the author headshot, leaning thoughtfully on a hand, for example) or beauty (hairdo, makeup, studio smile). The art photographer might aim toward broader commentary, this person as a representative figure, or, more artsy, want to capture the play of light and shadow on a face, to recall the feeling of that time of day in that season in that place at that age. Poet Naomi Shihab Nye has asked, "Where are all those days no one took a picture of?" (xii). The writer will also go there.

Like the photographer, creative writers portray appearances and the array of human behaviors, and we also attempt to imagine and present the psychological, sociological, moral, or archetypal reasons why our characters look and act in a certain way. We can only do so one word, one sentence, one glimpse, at a time. Writers of novels, memoirs, plays, and poetry are here with photographers and psychotherapists to describe how they rely on the surface (what presents itself to the senses) to probe the depths (what else is going on).

HENRY JAMES: The germ of a story . . . was never an affair of plot—that was the last thing [Turgenev] thought of: it was the representation of certain persons. The first form in which a tale appeared to him was as the figure of an individual, or a combination of individuals, whom he wished to see in action, being sure that such people must do something very special and interesting. They stand before him definite, vivid, and he wished to know, and to show, as much as possible of their nature. (1972, 200–201)

> ANNA DEVEARE SMITH: When I did my research [for *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992]*, I was listening with an ear that was trained to hear stories for the specific purpose of repeating them with the elements of character intact. (1994, xxiv)

LAO TZU: When people become very angry, that destroys tranquility; when people become very joyful, that dashes positive action. Energy diminished, they become speechless; startled and frightened, they go crazy. Anxiety and lament burn the heart, so sickness builds up. If people can get rid of all these, then they can merge with spiritual light. (qtd. in Cleary 1991, 12)

> LILLIAN RUBIN: As with all personal narratives, each story is a construction that reflects the individual's *experience* of his or her life. This doesn't mean it's a fiction. Rather, as Erik Erikson wrote in *Insight and Responsibility,* in every life story there are both the "actuality" and the "reality"—the former concerned with objective facts, the latter with how

> the individual *feels* about those facts. Certainly, facts count. But it's how those facts are experienced and remembered, how they're interpreted, what meaning is assigned to them, that's central not just in constructing the narrative of a life but in how that life actually is lived. (1997, 13)

DOROTHY ALLISON: We all imagine our lives are normal, and I did not know my life was not everyone's. It was in Central Florida that I began to realize just how different we were. . . . The first time I looked around my junior high classroom and realized I did not know who those people were—not only as individuals but as categories, who their people were and how they saw themselves—I also realized that they did not know me. (1994, 20)

> DIANE ARBUS (speaking in 1961 of the "freaks" in her photographs): [These are] people who appear like metaphors somewhere further out than we do, beckoned, not driven, invented by belief, each the author and hero of a real dream by which our own courage and cunning are tested and tried; so that we may wonder all over again what is veritable and inevitable and possible and what it is to become whoever we may be. (qtd. in Dyer 2005, 47)

CAROL PEARSON: Any culture's or individual's myths of the hero tell us about what attributes are seen as the good, the beautiful, and the true, and thereby teach us culturally valued aspirations. Many of these stories are archetypal. Archetypes, as Carl Jung postulated, are deep and abiding patterns in the human psyche that remain powerful and present over time. These may exist, to use Jung's

terminology, in the "collective unconscious," the "objective psyche," or may even be coded into the make-up of the human brain. We can see these archetypes clearly in dreams, art, literature, and myths that seem to us profound, moving, universal, and sometimes even terrifying. We also can recognize them when we look at our own lives and those of our friends. By observing what we do and how we interpret what we do, we can identify the archetypes that inform our lives. (1989, xxv)

> DOROTHY ALLISON: We were the *they* everyone talks about—the ungrateful poor. I grew up trying to run away from the fate that destroyed so many of the people I loved, and having learned the habit of hiding, I found I had also learned to hide from myself. (1994, 13–14)

JUVENAL ACOSTA: Earlier Mexican poets have felt it their task to interpret the enigma of *mexicanidad.* If defining Mexican literature was a challenge for Carlos Fuentes and Octavio Paz, the poets of our time, beneficiaries of those efforts, situate themselves more naturally in the world they have inherited. Without this problem of identity, they have been able to set about their work in a more relaxed way. . . . Because the younger poets have not felt the same responsibility to represent to the outside world who they are, they have had the freedom to write with greater spontaneity and less self-consciousness. (1993, ii)

> DOROTHY ALLISON: One of the strengths I derive from my class background is that I am accustomed to contempt. I know that I have no chance of becoming what my detractors expect of me, and I believe that

> even the attempt to please them will only further engage their contempt, and my own self-contempt as well. Nonetheless, the relationship between the life I have lived and the way that life is seen by strangers has constantly invited a kind of self-mythologizing fantasy. It has always been tempting for me to play off of the stereotypes and misconceptions of mainstream culture, rather than describe a difficult and sometimes painful reality. (1994, 24)

LAO TZU: It is in the nature of human feelings that everyone likes to be in high positions and dislikes to be in low positions; everyone likes gain and dislikes loss; everyone likes advantage and dislikes affliction; everyone likes honor and dislikes lowliness. (qtd. in Cleary 1991, 41)

> GEOFF DYER: The power of Arbus's work often depends on the tension between the mask—the way people want to be seen —and the way that the camera tugs away at it. Sometimes Arbus pulls the mask completely away and we see people naked (several of her best-known pictures were done in a nudist colony), as if they are blind or mentally ill. But some of her most revealing photographs show the struggle to remove the mask and her subjects' efforts to keep it in place. (2005, 44)

DIANE ARBUS: [The mask, in these circumstances, is still there but] has been pulled out of shape. It's ripped, no longer fits properly and, as a consequence, appears both as a ghastly contrivance and as an authentic expression of near-universal aspirations. (qtd. in Dyer 2005, 44)

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD [1931]: Of course all life is a process of breaking down, but the blows that do the dramatic side of the work—the big sudden blows that come, or seem to come, from outside—the ones you remember and blame things on and, in moments of weakness, tell your friends about, don't show their effects all at once. There is another sort of blow that comes from within—that you don't feel until it's too late to do anything about it, until you realize with finality that in some regard you will never be as good a man again. The first sort of breakage seems to happen quick—the second kind happens almost without your knowing it but is realized suddenly indeed. (1996, 55)

LILLIAN RUBIN: Too much intervenes between infancy and adulthood for the experience in the family alone to govern how a life will be lived. Particular psychological proclivities, class background, sub-cultural differences, personal experiences, and the way they are all internalized all play a part in the making of an adult. (1997, 3)

DOROTHY ALLISON: It is hard to explain how deliberately and thoroughly I ran away from my own life. I did not forget where I came from, but I gritted my teeth and hid it. (1994, 22)

MOI: Moving away is the first challenge, then being able to visit and still maintain your new self-description without disavowing who you also are.

CAROL PEARSON: At first, the young child feels little or no separation from the environment, and especially none from the mother. It is only as the

> adult completes the task of strong ego development that his or her boundaries can expand and make way for the self. This includes (in each of us) not only the full conscious self, but the personal unconscious and access to archetypal images emerging from the collective unconscious. The result is not only a renewed sense of wonder and oneness with the cosmos, but a reclaiming and redefinition of magical thinking. (1989, xxvi)

ABRAHAM MASLOW: From the bottom of the pyramid to the top, with basic needs at bottom: Physiological needs (hunger, thirst, and so on); Safety and security needs (long-term survival and stability); Belongingness and love needs (affiliation and acceptance); Esteem needs (achievement and recognition); Cognitive needs (knowledge and understanding); Aesthetic needs (order and beauty); Self-actualization (realization of potential). (1943, 371)

> MOI: I think I may have constructed myself from the top-down of this pyramid, which explains the instability that underlies my "realization of potential." I have only a glancing sense of "long-term survival and stability" or "affiliation and acceptance."

CAROL PEARSON: Underneath the frantic absorption in the pursuit of money, status, power, and pleasure and the addictive and obsessive behaviors current today is, we all know, a sense of emptiness and a common human hunger to go deeper. In writing *The Hero Within* it seemed to me that each one of us wants and needs to find, if not the "meaning of life," then the meaning of our own,

individual lives, so that we can find ways of living and being that are rich, empowered, and authentic. (1989, xv)

ANNA DEVEARE SMITH: Identity is in some ways a process toward character. It is not character itself. It is not fixed. Our race dialogue desperately needs this more complex language. The words of Twilight, the ex-gang member after whom I named the play, addresses this need:

> Nighttime to me is like a lack of sun,
> but I don't affiliate darkness with anything negative.
> I affiliate darkness with what came first,
> because it was first,
> and relative to my complexion,
> I am a dark individual
> and with me being stuck in limbo
> I see the darkness as myself.
> And I see the light as the knowledge and the wisdom of the world, and the understanding of others. (1994, xxvi)

LILLIAN RUBIN: Certainly, the tangled strands of DNA that determine our genetic predispositions make a difference in how we respond to the world around us. In my own family, my brother's pessimism and my optimism stood in opposition to one another from our earliest childhood. He characteristically saw a half empty glass; to my eyes, it was always half full. Such differences are not trivial. They govern how we experience the world, how we internalize and interact with those

experiences, what choices seem possible. . . . But the secrets and possibilities embedded in the double helix notwithstanding, it alone cannot explain why some people fall down seven times and get up eight—and why others cannot recover from the first fall. For, although the process by which we respond to events around us may be influenced by our genes, it is mediated by the social and psychological circumstances within which our lives are embedded. (1997, 2)

> DOROTHY ALLISON: I grew up poor, hated, the victim of physical, emotional, and sexual violence, and I know that suffering does not ennoble. It destroys. To resist destruction, self-hatred, or lifelong hopelessness, we have to throw off the conditioning of being despised, the fear of becoming the they that is talked about so dismissively, to refuse lying myths and easy moralities, to see ourselves as human, flawed, and extraordinary. All of us—extraordinary. (1995, 36)

LAO TZU: Spiritual light is attainment of the inward. When people attain the inward, their internal organs are calm, their thoughts are even, their eyes and ears are clear, and their sinews and bones are strong. They are masterful but not contentious, firm and strong yet never exhausted. They are not too excessive in anything, nor are they inadequate in anything. (qtd. in Cleary 1991, 12).

2B. Landscapes and Still Life:

"No Ideas But in Things"

William Carlos Williams' epic poem *Paterson* was assembled over the course of decades and published as a whole in 1963. Focused on the urban complexity of Paterson, New Jersey, the city next door to his suburban hometown of Rutherford, where Williams lived and worked as a family doctor all his life, the poem includes the line "no ideas but in things" (6) to express a desire "to make a start, / out of particulars / and make them general" (3). He wanted to "find an image large enough to embody the whole knowable world around me" (vii). This word *embody* is important, as it speaks to the poet's goal of conveying abstract thought in concrete terms: *ideas* in *things*.

"Direct treatment of the 'thing'" is a key tenet of the Imagist movement in poetry (1912-1917), in which Williams played a role (Pratt 18). This concept has been handed down to writers-at-work as "show, don't tell" and was in part inspired by Japanese haiku traditions of representing the abstract philosophy of impermanence, for example, in an image of cherry blossoms, which bloom for three days then are gone. The ways of the poet are not the same as those of the philosopher, the scientist, or the historian, though their aims may overlap. In his Introduction to Williams' historical essay collection *In the American Grain*, Horace Gregory notes that, even when writing about history, Williams' mode is "almost aggressively non-historical" (xii).

> He is not here to record American history nor to give us a new sequence of events. He is here to present its signs and signatures, its backward glances and, by implication, its warnings for the future. (xii)

Williams elaborates:

> In my own work it has always sufficed that the object of my attention be presented without further comment. This in general might be termed the objective method. . . . It doesn't declaim or explain; it presents. (*In the American Grain,* xviii)

Strict adherence to Imagist tenets is perhaps best left to haiku masters, as a component of "tell" is almost always helpful to readers as a way to ground what we want to "show" in a firm narrative perspective. However, the practice of image-making, of "no ideas but in things" is an important skill in the writer's arsenal. Here, poets, philosophers, literary critics, and prose storytellers debate and embody this practice of grounding metaphysical ideas in sensory imagery.

REMIX 2B: SETTING / OBJECTS

MARK DOTY: What is it about the representation of the sensory world that compels so, what is the character of this desire? It *is* a desire, an immediate impulse in the face of wonder or pleasure or feeling confounded or flummoxed. A need that flares up, as if it were my work in the world to do exactly this. (2010, 7-8)

> ED WICKLIFFE: William Carlos Williams (1883-1963) is famously known for coining the term: "No ideas but in things." This one line from the 1927

> version of the poem *Paterson,* became a mantra for poetry in the early 20th century. Its expression is still strongly influential today. It changed the look and feel of poetry, possibly more than any other single idea in the past hundred years. It was not original, however. . . . His statement was a summary of the poetry trends at that time. (2009)

EZRA POUND: An image is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. . . . It is the presentation of such a "complex" instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation . . . which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art. It is better to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works. (qtd. in Doty 2010, 51)

> BONNIE COSTELLO: The bulk of critical writing on [poet Elizabeth] Bishop deals with her sense of the visual particular in one way or another—her sense of place, her preoccupation with mapping and geography, her descriptive discipline. No one claims, any more, that she is "merely" descriptive, but all agree that Bishop gathers and communicates knowledge through the eye. (1982, 351)

CLARK BLAISE: I think often of the compass points. Like the arrow-clusters at cramped country crossroads, the cardinal directions all move me; I dream restless dreams of that *setting out* feeling, of entering a highway for what you know to be a long drive, and reading that first, firm, challenge to the continent. East. And I would see fishing boats and a pounding rocky surf and the great cities and I would think (in my southern, and mid-western days) *yes,* that's the best direction. East

for me. Culture, history, people, excitement, sophistication. But then, on my only trip to California, undertaken with a group of high school seniors from Pittsburgh, I thrilled to those days of unbroken signposts: *West, West, West,* and even when the land was flat or Appalachian-rolling, I'd be thinking of buttes and mesas and sawtooth mountains and I'd think of getting properly lost in all that space, and feeling free. Well, this was *North:* this was just about as far north as anyone could imagine; watery and glistening and cold, as though the sign itself should be read under a stream of icy water; I think of North and I think of Hamm's Beer and Land o' Lakes butters and of the lakes and pure forests of the Canadian shield, that area that stops just a few hours east of Winnipeg, where town names again turn French and people along the highway are unmistakably Indian. (1996, 168)

> LYN HEJINIAN: We delight in our sensuous involvement with the materials of language, we long to join words to the world—to close the gap between ourselves and things—and we suffer from doubt and anxiety because of our inability to do so. (qtd. in Doty 2010, 3)

LI-YOUNG LEE: I am letting this room / and everything in it / stand for my ideas about love / and its difficulties // I'll let your love-cries, / those spacious notes / of a moment ago, / stand for distance. // Your scent, / that scent / of spice and a wound, / I'll let stand for mystery. (1990, 49)

> MOI: I often teach this poem by Li-Young Lee, as it presents such a clear set of equations between things and ideas.

MARK DOTY: Perception is simultaneous and layered, and to single out any aspect of it for naming is to turn your attention away from myriad other things, those braiding elements of the *sensorium*—that continuous, complex response to things perpetually delivered by the senses, the encompassing sphere that is such a large part of our subjectivity. (2010, 3)

> ELAINE SCARRY: How is the "solidity" of the imagined object achieved? To bring this about is key since solidity is ordinarily a main feature distinguishing perceptual objects from their gauzy counterparts in our imagination, where they are, to return to Sartre, lacking in density, thin, two-dimensional. The imagined object is not incidentally two-dimensional. Its two-dimensionality is what it is. Aristotle says in *De Anima* that "images are like sensuous content except in that they contain no matter." (1994, 10)

LYN HEJINIAN: A moment yellow, just as, four years later, when my father returned home from the war, the moment of greeting him, as he stood at the bottom of the stairs, younger, thinner than when he had left, was purple—though moments are no longer so colored. Somewhere, in the background, rooms share a pattern of small roses. Pretty is as pretty does. The windows were narrowed by white gauze curtains, which were never loosened. Hence, repetitions, free from all ambition. (1980, 5)

> MOI: When I first read Hejinian I thought, ooh, this is how memories of home feel, that disjointed and vague.

BONNIE COSTELLO: The eye seeks amplitude and composure, but finding it, seeks again deprivation, flux, and freedom. It is this rhythm of vision—receding and yielding—that interests me in Bishop's work. (1982, 352)

> JANA RICHMAN: The fear begins to subside as soon as I'm out of town. The speed of the open road should cause greater fear, but the whir of the engine lulls me into a false sense of safety. A slight vibration from the foot pegs seeps into my toes, travels through my legs and around the curve of my butt, settling in my lower back. I squeeze the grips to send another tremble through my hands and into my elbows to dwell in my chest and shoulders. The unseasonable cool Arizona summer morning air slips up my sleeves and twirls inside my zipped jacket. I pop up my face shield, take the blast full on my face; sunglasses flutter with the force. The wind enters at my temples, roars past my ears, and exits at my neck. The pavement slides under me, and I'm stunned, always, to see it so close. My brain tells me it is rough and hard, but in my eyes, it shimmers and glides. The weeds on the side of the road beckon me to reach out and brush my hand over their fluffy tops. I resist. (2005, 395)

ELAINE SCARRY: Each of the arts incites us to the practice of all three acts: immediate perception, delayed perception, and mimetic perception. But painting, sculpture, music, film, and theater are weighted toward the first, or (perhaps more accurately) they bring about the second and the third by means of their elaborate

commitment to the first; whereas the verbal arts take place almost exclusively in the third. (1994, 7)

> PETER COYOTE: This book *[Sleeping Where I Fall]* attempts to describe what the pursuit of absolute freedom felt like, what it taught me, and what it cost. It is neither an apologia for nor a romance of the sixties. (1998, xiii)

MOI: Setting is *place,* where the story is located on a map of the world, and it is also *the times, the season, time of day, the weather.* Writers portray their settings as they perceive them, remember them, and imagine them.

> JOAN DIDION: It is hard for people who have not lived in Los Angeles to realize how radically the Santa Ana figures in the local imagination. The city burning is Los Angeles's deepest image of itself; Nathanael West perceived that, in *The Day of the Locust;* and at the time of the 1965 Watts riots what struck the imagination most indelibly were the fires. For days one could drive the Harbor Freeway and see the city on fire, just as we had always known it would be in the end. Los Angeles weather is the weather of catastrophe, of apocalypse, and, just as the reliably long and bitter winters of New England determine the way life is lived there, so the violence and the unpredictability of the Santa Anas affect the entire quality of life in Los Angeles, accentuate its impermanence, its unreliability. The wind shows us how close to the edge we are. (1968, 220)

DAVID LODGE: The Romantic movement . . . pondered the effect of milieu on man [and] opened people's eyes to the sublime beauty of landscape and, in due course, to the grim symbolism of cityscapes in the Industrial Age. (1992, 58)

> MARK DOTY: What we want when we describe is surely complex: To solve the problem of speechlessness, which is a state without agency, so that we feel impressed upon by things but unable to push back at them? To refuse silence, so that experience will not go unspoken? To be accurate (but to what? the look of things, the feel of being here? to the strange fact of being in the face of death?)? To arrive at exactitude in order to experience the satisfaction of matching words to the world, in order to give those words to someone else, or even just to savor them for ourselves? (2010, 9)

BONNIE COSTELLO: But what is the point of describing landscapes, if not to render a vision of God's Work, or find a transcendental meaning? Descriptive poetry provides the mind (of reader and writer) with a scene of action. Its meanings are in one sense highly specified and focused (sights, sounds, smells) but partly because these meanings are specified in a context relatively empty of human content, they offer a broad range of suggestion and more room for association. With less formal and less thematic closure than other genres, the description of the landscape becomes a means for the release of emotions and tensions that might otherwise be precluded or overlooked. (1982, 352)

ELIZABETH BISHOP: A blue-white sky, a simple web, / backing for feathery detail: / brief arcs, a pale-green broken wheel, / a few palms, swarthy, squat, but delicate; / and perching there in profile, beaks agape, / the big symbolic birds keep quiet, / each showing only half his puffed and padded, / pure-colored or spotted breast. / Still in the foreground there is Sin. (1983, 92)

BONNIE COSTELLO: Bishop's descriptions define this pattern of dismantled vision, dispersal, darkness, and compensatory glimpse. . . . The view of experience, as opposed to the view of expectation, dream, or art, is minimal and messy. Expecting the balanced, frontal, filled-in tapestry, the eye finds an ungenerous and slovenly world. (1982, 358)

MOI: I love this idea of "compensatory glimpse," as if what we *are* able to behold can potentially compensate for the impenetrable mystery of which the glimpse is but a peek, and "ungenerous and slovenly" besides.

ELIZABETH BISHOP: Oh, tourist, / is this how this country is going to answer you // and your immodest demands for a different world, / and a better life, and complete comprehension / of both at last, and immediately. (1983, 89)

BONNIE COSTELLO: Bishop knows with the landscape artist that nothing excites so much as that which is hidden. (1982, 360)

ELAINE SCARRY: One property of mental images is that they tend to float around, whether what is pictured is as light as the gray spray of dandelion seeds or as

weighty as a bottle of blue-black ink. So given to floating are mental images that it requires some effort to hold them steady on the mental retina. (1994, 92)

> DAVID REMNICK: In the weeks after 9/11, we could hardly erase the vision of the wreckage of the two towers, the twisted steel and sheets of glass, the images of men and women leaping from ninety-odd stories up, the knowledge that thousands lay beneath the ruined buildings. To live in, or near, a war zone was frighteningly new to all but the immigrants who had come here to escape such places. The sense of grief and shock, a terrible roaring in the mind of every American, made it impossible to assess the larger damage that Osama bin Laden and his fanatics had inflicted, the extent to which they had succeeded in shattering our self-possession. (2011, 22)

COLUM MCCANN: The sky would always be this shade of blue. The towers had come down the day before. Third Avenue on the Upper East Side was a flutter of missing faces, the posters taped to the mailboxes, plastered on windows, flapping against the light poles. . . . The streets were quieter than usual. The ash fell, as ash will. (2011, 24)

> EDWIDGE DANTICAT: My family in Haiti has been removing rubble from a school that was shattered during the earthquake of January 12, 2010. In the process, they have found bones, human bones. Because they are no scientists or DNA experts, it is impossible for them to trace the bones back to the bodies to which they once belonged: active, lively people who

> spoke and laughed and danced and loved. . . . It is the burden of the survivors and the curious to decipher final moments whether they occurred a year, ten years, or a thousand years ago. Do they speak to the reality of a particular time, to the nature of death itself, to an individual's final instincts during his or her last moments on earth? (2011, 32)

MIHALYI CZIKSZENTMIHALYI: In contemporary homes, most people construct a symbolic environment filled with images that help them to remember who they were, to confirm who they are, and to foreshadow the kind of persons they would like to be in the future. . . . Another set of images is invoked when individuals meet in a public arena to invent or to reaffirm their collective identity. From the first lumbering dances our hominid ancestors performed around the campfire, to the extravagant opening and closing ceremonies of the latest Olympics broadcast around the world on television, we try to find symbolic expressions for our relationships with people who are not bound to us by kinship ties, and with the mysterious forces immanent in the cosmos. (1993, 224–225)

> LI-YOUNG LEE: The sun on the face / of the wall / is God, the face / I can't see, my soul, // and so on, each thing / standing for a separate idea, / and those ideas forming the constellation of my greater idea / And one day, when I need / to tell myself something intelligent / about love, // I'll close my eyes / and recall this room and everything in it. (1990, 50)

MIHALYI CZIKSZENTMIHALYI: While personal objects worn on the body appear to have primarily defensive purposes, creating as it were a symbolic armor against

the dangers of the outside world, the objects one collects in the home seem to serve a different function. As they are more private, their function seems to be to create inner order and clarity in the owner's conception of self, rather than making an external impression. (1993, 223)

> MILAN KUNDERA: The nineteenth century began amid decades of explosive events that, time and again and from top to bottom, transfigured the whole of Europe. Something essential in man's existence changes then, and forever: History became everyone's experience; man began to understand that he was not going to die in the same world he had been born into; the clock of History began to toll the hour in loud tones, everywhere, even within novels whose time was immediately counted and dated. The shape of every little object—every chair, every skirt—was stamped with its imminent disappearance (transformation). The era of descriptions began. (Description: compassion for the ephemeral; salvaging the perishable.). (2006, 14)

JUNICHIRO TANIZAKI: Every time I am shown to an old, dimly lit, and, I would add, impeccably clean toilet in a Nara or Kyoto temple, I am impressed with the singular virtues of Japanese architecture. The parlor may have its charms, but the Japanese toilet truly is a place of spiritual repose. It always stands apart from the main building, at the end of a corridor, in a grove fragrant with leaves and moss. No words can describe that sensation as one sits in the dim light, basking in the

faint glow reflected from the shoji, lost in meditation or gazing out at the garden. (1977, 3)

> MILAN KUNDERA: By definition, what a narrator recounts is a thing that has happened. But each little event, as it becomes the past, loses its concrete nature and turns into an outline. Narration is recollection, therefore a summary, a simplification, an abstraction. The true face of life, of the prose of life, is found only in the present moment. But how to recount past events and give them back the presentness they've lost? The art of the novel found a solution: presenting the past in scenes. A scene, even one recounted in the grammatical past tense, is ontologically the present: we see and hear it; it unfolds before us here and now. (2006, 12-13)

CLARK BLAISE: Up on the second floor, in the bedroom we had converted to an apartment, with a hotplate for my father's coffee and a small skillet for my mother's eggs—the smoke-filled haven of my father—a small drama was being enacted that would alter all of our lives. (1996, 179)

> MILAN KUNDERA: Against our real world, which, by its very nature, is fleeing and worthy of forgetting, works of art stand as a different world, a world that is ideal, solid, where every detail has its importance, its meaning, where everything in it—every word, every phrase—deserves to be unforgettable and was conceived to be such. (2006, 149)

JUNICHIRO TANIZAKI: The novelist Natsume Soseki counted his morning trips to the toilet a great pleasure, "a physiological delight" he called it. And surely there

could be no better place to savor this pleasure than a Japanese toilet where, surrounded by tranquil walls and finely grained wood, one looks out upon blue skies and green leaves. (1977, 3)

> ED WICKLIFFE: The historical context will show that Williams meant for poetry to focus on objects rather than mere concepts, on actual things rather than abstract characteristics of things. The mention of any object creates a visualized idea in our minds—we form an image of the thing. This does not happen at the mention of abstractions, like "truth" or "memory." Abstract words do not create images in the mind. Only "things" create visual images. Things can be tangible, such as a wheelbarrow. Or things can be a behavior, such as a sidelong glance. The image of a thing creates an idea of what the thing means in the context it is used. Hence there are "no ideas but in things" according to Williams. (2009)

BONNIE COSTELLO: What we experience, then, is not so much the particular streak of the tulip, or the particular mountain or cave or field, but a series of tensions and movements, a range from close focus to wide prospect, and so on, which invites us to enter the poem each with his own range of more individual feelings and thoughts. . . . For one who has little trust in a closed system of meaning or symbolism, the landscape offers an important locus of self-discovery. (1982, 352)

MOI: In that first cross-country trip in Steve Gorski's Volvo I saw how vast and empty landscape could be. We left the car far behind and hiked snowy mountain peaks where all we heard was silence.

W. S. MERWIN:

So gradual in those summers was the going
of the age it seemed that the long days setting out
when the stars faded over the mountains were not
leaving us even as the birds woke in full song and the dew
glittered in the webs it appeared then that the clear morning
opening into the sky was something of ours
to have and to keep and that the brightness we could not touch
and the air we could not hold had come to be there all the time
for us and would never be gone. (1997, 42)

2C. Zoom Lens and Big Picture:

"Punctum"

Character, setting, objects, and meaning are the *nouns* of story, whereas action (also known as plot) is the *verb,* examined here as it relates to the concrete infrastructure of nouns where the story takes place. Creative writers strive to represent the truth of memory, of lived experience, of witness, of imagination, by employing techniques of *narrative,* "the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful" (Polkinghorne 1). We may choose fiction or nonfiction as modes of meaning-making exploration; literary *fiction* offers imagined lies in transformative relationship with literal truth, whereas literary *nonfiction* is loyal to lived reality. (See REMIX 5B for more definitions and discussion of the ethics of truth-telling in literature.)

The art of creative nonfiction includes personal essay, memoir, and travel stories: "good, old-fashioned reporting—facts, plus story and reflection or contemplation" (Gutkind, xxix). As an art form, literary nonfiction may be usefully compared to the art of photography, which similarly must work with the truth of what can be seen through a camera lens, while also offering what Roland Barthes calls *punctum:* "what I add to the photograph and *what is nonetheless already there" (Camera Lucida* 55). Barthes says:

> More than the other arts, Photography offers an immediate presence to the world—a co-presence; but this presence is not only of a political order ("to

> participate by the image in current events"), it is also of a metaphysical order. *(Camera Lucida* 84)

This notion of metaphysical order is in sync with Gutkind's requirement of reflection or contemplation, whereby the literary nonfiction author is presenting the truth of what happened while simultaneously in search of the meaning of those events.

> Vivian Gornick frames this search as "the situation and the story:"
>
> Every work of literature has both a situation and a story. The situation is the context or circumstance, sometimes the plot; the story is the emotional experience that preoccupies the writer: the insight, the wisdom, the thing one has come to say. (13)

What happened is the Situation; the Story is what we make of it. The concept applies to nonfiction and to fiction as well, where we are making up the situation and imagining worthwhile reasons for readers to enter it. In either realm, Gornick recommends that the writer assume a stance of "detachment" (12) in her relationship to the material, and that she think of herself as "a narrator [who] becomes a persona" (6) or "instrument of illumination" (7). It is not only that this story happened, or could happen, but that we ask *why* it happened, and what could it possibly *mean?*

ELIZABETH BOWEN [1950]: Story involves action. Action towards an end not to be foreseen (by the reader) but also towards an end which, having been reached, must be seen to have been from the start inevitable. (2006)

> STEPHEN KING: In my view, stories and novels consist of three parts: narration, which moves the story from point A to point B and finally to point Z; description, which creates a sensory reality for the reader; and dialogue, which brings characters to life through their speech. . . . You may wonder where plot is in all this. The answer—my answer anyway—is nowhere. . . . I distrust plot for two reasons: first, because our *lives* are largely plotless, even when you add in all our reasonable precautions and careful planning; and second, because I believe plotting and the spontaneity of real creation aren't compatible. (2000, 163)

NICHOLAS DELBANCO: Sideways motion equally may represent advance. Not all progress is predictable or regular; change comes in fits and starts. . . . So perhaps our proper figure is not a triangle or pyramid but the circle and the sphere. (qtd. in Shreve and Shreve 1998, 35)

> STEPHEN KING: (An amusing sidelight: the century's greatest supporter of Developing the Plot may have been Edgar Wallace, a best-selling potboiler novelist of the 1920s. Wallace invented—and patented—a device called the Edgar Wallace Plot Wheel. When you got stuck for the next Plot Development or needed an Amazing Turn of Events in a hurry,

> you simply spun the Plot Wheel and read what came up in the window: a fortuitous arrival, perhaps, or Heroine declares her love. These gadgets apparently sold like hotcakes). (2000, 167)

MOI: I went online to try to buy this Plot Wheel for Mary Beth Pringle and discovered that Stephen King may have made this up. If the Plot Wheel doesn't exist, someone should invent it.

> MARILYNNE ROBINSON: I assumed, I was educated to believe, that I would live my life in a civilization of expanding comprehension. The old lost myth of civilization is that it unfolds, that it opens up the realizations of which it is capable, that it instructs itself. Obviously this is in some degree an idealization. But there seemed good reason to hope that I would learn from the collective life new things about aesthetics, and justice, and language, and social order—about the human project, the human collaboration, about the expression of human exceptionalism in the arts and sciences that declare the strange exhilaration of our strange life on earth. Granting evil, which it seems a dangerous error to consider solvable, human civilizations have created abundant good, refining experience and circumstance into astonishingly powerful vision and dreams, into poems and music which have fallen like a mantle of light over our mere human weakness. (1998, 2)

SVETLANA BOYM: The twentieth century began with a futuristic utopia and ended with nostalgia. Optimistic belief in the future was discarded like an outmoded

spaceship sometime in the 1960s. Nostalgia itself has a utopian dimension; only it is no longer directed toward the future. Sometimes nostalgia is not directed toward the past either, but rather sideways. The nostalgic feels stifled within the conventional confines of time and space. (2001, xiv)

> PHILLIP LOPATE: Over the years I have developed a distaste for the spectacle of *joie de vivre,* the knack of knowing how to live. Not that I disapprove of all hearty enjoyment of life. A flushed sense of happiness can overtake a person anywhere, and one is no more to blame for it than the Asiatic flu or a sudden benevolent change in the weather (which is often joy's immediate cause). No, what rankles me is the stylization of this private condition into a bullying social ritual. (1995, 716)

MOI: I am a fan of *joie de vivre,* as it has taken me a while to perfect the art of it. On the other hand, I get Lopate's point. Sometimes I feel nostalgic for deep grief, when everything felt so *exquisitely painful* and *real.*

> SVETLANA BOYM: Somehow progress didn't cure nostalgia but exacerbated it. Similarly, globalization encouraged stronger local attachments. In counterpoint to our fascination with cyberspace and the virtual global village, there is a no less global epidemic of nostalgia, an affective yearning for a community with a collective memory, a longing for continuity in a fragmented world. Nostalgia inevitably reappears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals. (2001, xiv)

STEPHEN KING: The situation comes first. The characters—always flat and unfeatured, to begin with—come next. Once these things are fixed in my mind, I begin to narrate. I often have an idea of what the outcome may be, but I have never demanded of a set of characters that they do things my way. On the contrary, I want them to do things *their* way. In some instances, the outcome is what I visualized. In most, however, it's something I never expected. For a suspense novelist, this is a great thing. I am, after all, not just the novel's creator but its first reader. And if *I'm* not able to guess with any accuracy how the damned thing is going to turn out, even with my inside knowledge of coming events, I can be pretty sure of keeping the reader in a state of page-turning anxiety. And why worry about the ending anyway? *Why be such a control freak?* Sooner or later every story comes out *somewhere*. (2000, 165)

ELIZABETH BOWEN [1950]: Plot must further the novel towards its object.

What object? The non-poetic statement of a poetic truth. (2006)

SVETLANA BOYM: At first glance, nostalgia is a longing for a place, but actually it is a yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams. In a broader sense, nostalgia is rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress. The nostalgic desires to obliterate history and turn it into private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition. (2001, xv)

> ALAN CHEUSE: So there are a number of different ways to understand the meaning of progress in a world in which a count forward also leads toward the end. . . . But metaphor sometimes can act as a valuable shield against the ironic forward tending of progress toward the grave. Flimsy poetry, mortal fiction, evanescent dance, delicate paintings—these are some of the only answers we have in the face of relentless forward motion in a world without a belief in immortality. (qtd. in Shreve and Shreve 1998, 32)

PHILLIP LOPATE: To know rapture is to have one's whole life poisoned. If you will forgive a ridiculous analogy, a tincture of rapture is like a red bandana in the laundry that runs and turns all the white wash pink. We should just as soon stay away from any future ecstatic experiences that spoil everyday living by comparison. Not that I have any intention of stopping. Still, if I will have nothing to do with religious mysticism, it is probably because I sense a susceptibility in that direction. Poetry is also dangerous; all quickening awakenings to Being extract a price later. (1995, 731)

> MARILYNNE ROBINSON: I want to overhear passionate arguments about what we are and what we are doing and what we ought to do. I want to feel that art is an utterance made in good faith by one human being to another. I want to believe there are geniuses scheming to astonish the rest of us, just for the pleasure of it. (1998, 4)

JAMES RESTON: [How should progress be defined?] Human happiness. Greater comfort. Faster speed in transportation and communication. Reduction in human

suffering. Dazzling technology. Longer life span. . . . How do we balance any one of these positive abstractions against regression? Against poverty, AIDS, the scourge of drugs, environmental disaster, the impoverishment of family life? (qtd. in Shreve and Shreve, 1998, 3-4)

> SVETLANA BOYM: The ambivalent sentiment permeates twentieth-century popular culture, where technological advances and special effects are frequently used to recreate visions of the past, from the sinking Titanic to dying gladiators and extinct dinosaurs. (2001, xiv)

STEPHEN KING: Plot is, I think, the good writer's last resort and the dullard's first choice. The story that results from it is apt to feel artificial and labored. I lean more heavily on intuition, and have been able to do that because my books tend to be based on situation rather than story. . . . I want to put a group of characters (perhaps a pair; perhaps even just one) in some sort of predicament and then watch them try to work themselves free. My job isn't to *help* them work their way free, or manipulate them to safety—those are jobs which require the noisy jackhammer of plot—but to watch what happens and then write it down. (2000, 164)

> ALAN CHEUSE: Poetry, as Robert Frost once wrote, is a momentary stay against confusion. I think he used that word confusion in a deep, deep way, meaning chaos and whorl. Under the sway of impersonal technological progress, and moving toward a millennium in which we can only see more of the same, our feeble gestures at making art appear, in

their very fragility, an immense and daring act. (qtd. in Shreve and Shreve, 1998, 33)

PHILLIP LOPATE: *Joie de vivre* [is] too compensatory. I don't really know what I'm waiting for. I know only that until I have gained what I want from this life, my expressions of gratitude and joy will be restricted to variations of a hunter's alertness. I give thanks to a nip in the air that clarifies the scent. But I think it is hypocritical to pretend satisfaction while I am still hungry. (1995, 731)

MOI: I am hungry right now.

3.

THE PURPOSES:

WHY WRITE?

3A. Therapeutic Value:

"Exploring The Wreck"

Adrienne Rich's seminal 1972 poem "Diving into the Wreck" propels us to navigate the conscious/unconscious forces that drive surface behavior, and suggests we consider the deeper reasons why we, or our characters, do what we do. In the poem, the narrator dons her gear and descends with her camera, knife-blade, and body-armor. She says, "I came to explore the wreck. / The words are purposes. / The words are maps. / I came to see the damage that was the done / and the treasures that prevail." She is clear that she seeks the whole truth: "The thing I came for: / the wreck and not the story of the wreck / the thing itself and not the myth." Yes, damage has been done but treasures might prevail if we go deep enough to learn that "the sea is not a question of power. / I have to learn alone / to turn my body without force / in the deep element."

The first story I ever wrote was about my brother Tommy, who drowned when he was nine and I was ten. My sister Patti was seven, and Michael, Mary Lou, and Mark were "the three little kids." *Where did Tommy go?* we kept asking. He "died" in the river that ran through the woods behind our New Jersey home, but images lingered: his unyielding cheek as I bent to kiss him in the coffin, the stifling scent of carnations and great-aunts' powdery perfume, the odd sight of our mother, a young and formerly happy "big kid," wearing a too-tight black dress. I spent my teen years writing this one story, over and over. I did not even think of it as "a story" until I gave it a title: "Blanket of Roses," inspired by the drape of

fresh red petals that covered the lower half of my little brother's half-open casket. I had never heard the word *metaphor*, never analyzed how poetic images can serve as connecting links from what happened to what it meant but it seemed to me to symbolize the "cover-up" feeling I had, that my brother was no longer there in that body and that the beauty of the roses felt like betrayal.

Years later, in graduate school I won the Wilner Award for a longer story "Cradle Songs" (1983), which opens with "A few things were forbidden." There was the rushing sound of the streaming river and the image of children sneaking away to swim in it because after our brother drowned of course our mother forbid us from going there and of course it was the most compelling thing. Again, childish questions about the nature of death and life formed a structure, and again finding the metaphor titled and completed the story: this time inspired by Walt Whitman's phrase "out of the cradle / endlessly rocking," to describe how childhood had felt forever after: chaos, endless rocking instability.

Nothing lasts, not joy, not grief; we are "endlessly rocking." After my firstborn died in 1988, I spent seven years writing a memoir/tribute to her and to motherhood while raising my new newborn, a lively, healthy baby boy. *Silvie's Life* was published by Zenobia Press in 1995. I had been teaching creative writing at San Francisco State University, and during those years I also developed a "Griefwriting" course that I taught at Book Passage, College of Marin, and neonatal healthcare conferences, as (thanks to the work of Dr Anita Catlin) I became known as an expert on end-of-life ethics as well as grief. The worst

possible thing had happened and I "lived to tell the story." Everyone has stories, and they show up in our writing, photo albums, quilts, collages, chants, drumming, requiems, symphonies: containers for grief and joy, markers of our time here, *mementos mori.*

The Griefwriting course moves from describing *what happened* to describing your "symptoms" and what, if anything, is comforting: walking, crying, shouting, tea. Almost everyone finds it a healing step simply to tell the story. Carl Jung has suggested that the healing begins once the story is told. Write what happened, then read it aloud and let it go, to merge with the collective history and suffering of the world. A turning point occurs in the course when you "research quotes that define your philosophy" and (re)discover, or reject, or (re)create, your religion or philosophy of life or school of thought. Metaphors may be found: Heaven, Hell, God, and you may be soothed by these concepts, which invite us to find meaning even in a world of dangers and sorrows. Naturally, you would have to believe in such a thing as meaning, and the death of a child can seem pretty meaningless, but without this search we are left only with the unyielding flesh of the dead, not the blanket of roses or cradle song, the transformative, connective image that invites us to find Beauty here, or simply to surrender to the hard facts of life. This is the definition of the Sublime: terror and awe, brutality and beauty, as equal parts of the whole. According to Chuang-Tzu:

> The ten thousand things are really one. We look on some as beautiful because the foul and rotten may turn into the rare and unearthly, and the

> rare and unearthly may turn into the foul and rotten. So it is said, "You have only to comprehend the one breath that is the world. The sage never ceases to value oneness." (qtd. in Gross and Shapiro 128)

REMIX 3A: CATHARSIS

DENISE LEVERTOV: I want to distinguish between self-expression and art…. [Art] has a transformative and absorptive function. It's not a matter of getting rid of feelings but of recognizing them, absorbing them, and transforming them. (qtd. in Trautmann 1981, 6)

> BELL HOOKS: A distinction must be made between that writing which enables us to hold onto life even as we are clinging to old hurts and wounds and that writing which offers to us a space where we are able to confront reality in such a way that we live more fully. Such writing is not an anchor that we mistakenly cling to so as not to drown. It is writing that truly rescues, that enables us to reach the shore, to recover. (1989, 77)

ANNE HUDSON JONES: It has become traditional to open essays about literature and medicine with an invocation to Apollo, the Greek god of medicine, of music, of poetry, of archery, and of prophecy. Apollo symbolizes the ancient union of medicine and poetry—or literature, if we are willing to conceive poetry more broadly. He represents the orderly, light side of classical Greek civilization, in contrast with his half brother Dionysus, who represents wine, revelry, and chaos, the dark side of human nature. Despite his identification with light and the sun,

Apollo was a complex god, a god of healing, yet a god of sudden death through disease, which could be delivered very effectively by his arrows. Apollo was the father of Asclepius, who eventually took over from him most of his functions of healing. (1990, 11)

> MARION WOODMAN: I think the image is the connector between psyche and soma. The feeling-tone in the body, where the belly resonates with the resonating heart and liver, all of this is producing chemistry that is picked up by the brain. Science is now working on this grand computer, the brain, transforming feeling into image. The image gives us an understanding of what's happening in the body and some insight into the anguish in the brain and the psyche. I see psyche and soma as one. The metaphorical symbol is the connector. It requires resonating space in which to unfold. (2009, xii)

DANIEL DESLAURIERS AND FARIBA BOGZARAN: Applied to human life and evolution, the core idea of systems theory is that humans are open systems. We participate in and are influenced by many other systems simultaneously. Human life is co-extensive with nature (our biology), nurture (our unique developmental journey) and culture (our cultural matrix). For example, our brain reflects our biological and hereditary origins and autonomous programs (one of which is the sleep-wake cycle), but it is also connected to our cognitive-emotional functions that accumulate experience and developmentally makes sense of it. In addition, through language and other creative forms (in particular the arts and technology),

an extended social consciousness connects our personal awareness to larger social and cultural processes. (2012, 7)

> DENISE LEVERTOV: Writing or painting is not going to solve the problems that put people in mental hospitals or in jails, nor keep the terminal cancer patient from death, but it can help people grow, and to feel better about themselves because they are *articulating* in some way; and to live more fully, as long as they *are* alive, than they would have done if they had not written or painted. (1981, 151)

JOHN BRIGGS AND F. DAVID PEAT: Many of us don't feel creative and persistently block the action of creativity in much of our lives. We lose it in our obsessions with control and power; in our fear of mistakes, in the constricted grip of our egos, in our fetish with remaining within comfort zones, in our continuous pursuit of repetitive or merely stimulating pleasures, in our restricting our lives to the containers of what other people think, in our adherence to the apparent safety of closed order, and in our deep-seated belief that the individual exists in an irreducible opposition to others and the world "outside" of the self. (2000, 29)

> FRANK BARRON: Most of us erect walls against extreme feelings, unusual thoughts, moments of desolation or horror; sometimes the mentally ill person is one who either cannot or will not erect those walls and as a result has difficulty functioning in the way we call normal. Another result, however, may be that an unusual truth or an extreme beauty is experienced vividly and then communicated through some form that touches others. If

> we could have some of the advantages of mental agitation without the disabling disadvantages that usually accompany it, we might be persons of greater fulfillment. (1997, 16)

MOI: That would be so nice.

> JOANNE TRAUTMANN: Certain artists take upon themselves some of these intolerable pains. They make it their business to pursue the pain on behalf of all of us till the end. And of course sometimes they don't come back. There have been studies describing doctors in the same light, essentially as scapegoats. . . . both writers and doctors as similar bearers of our pain. (1981, 107)

ELIZABETH SEWELL: The image of Jesus on the cross must have been marvelously helpful here because obviously he took it *all* on. We, neither the writer nor the physician, can take it all on—that would be hubris. And it's interesting that the Catholic tradition used the mother figure also, the Mater Dolorosa. . . . Catholics seem to have needed a feminine figure as well as the one on the cross. (qtd. in Trautmann 1981, 107)

> BELL HOOKS: That woundedness which I was once so ashamed to recognize became for me a place of recovery, the dark deeps into which I could enter to find both the source of that pain and the means to heal. Only in fully knowing the wound could I discover ways to attend to it. Writing was a way of knowing. (1989, 77)

MOI: Writing was a way of ranting.

> ANNE HUDSON JONES: According to Aristotle, one of the purposes of Greek tragedy was to bring about catharsis, a purging of the emotions of pity and fear, to purify and exhilarate the spectators. This idea of catharsis continues to be important for those who consider literature itself a mode of healing. . . . Terms such as "poetry therapy," "drama therapy," and "bibliotherapy" are used today. Whatever one calls it, literature offers healing in both active and passive ways. The active way is by writing: catharsis is provided by the act of expressing oneself. . . . The passive way in which literature offers healing is through reading rather than writing. (1990, 16-17)

JOHN WOODCOCK: Rita Charon . . . asks students in her third-year course in medical interviewing to write imaginary narratives of the lives of their patients using each patient's point of view, in the first person. She does this to develop her students' powers of empathy, so that by understanding their patients more fully they can treat them more effectively. The students quickly come to see that an empathic understanding of a patient can reveal medically significant details about patients' subjective lives that are typically left out of more "realistic" traditional interviewing and reporting processes. (1990, 45)

> RITA CHARON AND NANCY DREW TAYLOR: The writer might get sick or get well differently from the non-writer by virtue of his or her ability to articulate, and therefore master, those inchoate events taking place in the body. (1997, ix)

PETER GRAHAM: [In] pathography, an innately subgenre of autobiography . . . sick people meditate upon and write about their own illnesses or people witness and describe the illness and recovery or death of their close associates—children, parents, friends, lovers. For most pathographers, falling ill precedes the impulse to write. Illness is not just the subject but also the cause of authorship. Some pathographers may set out to cultivate sympathy, others to offer a model of conduct, others to impart useful information; but they share a larger generic purpose. Pathography offers a subjective complement to the objectifying rhetoric of the medical history. (1997, 70-71)

> ARTHUR W. FRANK: The figure of the wounded storyteller is ancient: Tiresius, the seer who reveals to Oedipus the true story of whose son he is, has been blinded by the gods. His wound gives him his narrative power. The wound that the biblical patriarch Jacob suffers to his hip while wrestling with the angel is part of the story he tells of that event, and it is the price of his story. (1995, xi)

ANN O'HANLON: I should be listening, and asking, and exposing, and perhaps nudging (occasionally), and above all perceiving objectively (forgetting my own subjective preferences) the works of people and the world of nature. . . . To discover a way, a process, of unlocking this vast wealth of energy—the energy of the esthetic soul, the human soul—became my prime motivation for living. (2001, v-vi)

> MARION ROSEN: The client's unconscious processes shape the body. In the socialization process most people adopt roles, play games, wear masks, put up façades, and put barriers in the form of muscular tension between themselves and others. They feel or believe that their genuine or authentic self is unacceptable. The roles, games, masks, barriers, and façades develop subtly in response to unspoken demands and pressures from the child's caretakers, become structured in the body, and require muscular tension to maintain. (qtd. in Johnson 1995, 63)

NANCY ANDREASEN: Writing differs from other art forms in ways that make it perhaps the most challenging and frightening of all. Although writing is the most human, personal, and interpersonal of all art forms, it is also incredibly lonely. . . . The writer must deal with himself and his experiences as both analyst and analysand. He must live them intensely, and yet also stand back, observe them critically, analyze rationally, and often judge harshly. (1981, 35)

> JAMES C. COWAN: The Apollonian view assumes a linear development that is rational and logical, built upon *analysis* and depending on the conscious mind, with an objective, knowable truth as a reachable end point; . . . The Dionysian view assumes a cyclic development that is intuitive and imaginative, built upon creative *synthesis* and depending on unconscious modes of experience, with a subjective, even a revealed, truth that can never be expressed in abstract or conceptual language but only embodied

> in the concrete images that Susanne K. Langer calls "presentational symbols." (1981, 94)

CARL JUNG [1921]: To be a symbol, rather than a sign, the analogy must point to some hitherto unknown bit of psychic reality. (1976, 16)

> E. M. FORSTER [1910]: Only connect! . . . Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted. . . . Live in fragments no longer. Only connect, and the beast and monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die. (2002, 187)

GEORGE LAKOFF: We are not simply given our world but we "construct" it through our perception and categories of thought. Metaphor is basic to such construction. (1989, 3)

> ELLEN SIEGELMAN: Metaphor is essentially a bridging operation, and bridges do not reduce, they connect. Jung called symbols "the larger class to which metaphor belongs, bridges thrust out towards an unseen shore." The unseen shore can be thought of as the unconscious as well as the unseen. Metaphors offer a passageway to the unconscious, not perhaps the royal road of dreams, but an important thoroughfare, nevertheless. They also serve as bridges between affect and insight, since the hallmark of a living metaphor is the intense feeling that surrounds it. Metaphor is a way to mobilize and release affect. Because it uses the concrete and visual, which is the first language any of us know, it has powerful connections with the unconscious. And because all metaphors are connecting

> operations (connecting one term with another), the work of the conscious ego is involved as well. Metaphor is thus an ideal vehicle for embodying both conscious and unconscious, both affect and cognition. (1990, xi)

JAMES HILLMAN: To plot is to move from asking the question *and then what happened?* to the question *why did it happen?* . . . In our kind of fictions [the psychotherapist's] the plots are our theories. They are the ways in which we put the intentions of human nature together so that we can understand the *why* between the sequence of events in a story. (1998, 9)

> ELLEN SIEGELMAN: An interest in bridges (bridges between Jungians and Freudians, bridges between conscious and unconscious) leads not only to the land masses that are connected but to what is in between. This in-between, third thing is what Jung (1916) talked about in the acts of imagination that mediate between conscious and unconscious and what Winnicott (1971) later designated as the transitional space, which is midway between fantasy and reality and is the domain from which art and culture spring. (1990, xi)

FRANK BARRON: I have myself posited what I call "the cosmological motive" in creative people. This means that they seek to construct a cosmos in their own experience, even if it is only to study the insects in their backyard, or the people in their town, or, for that matter, their own personalities. Each of us is a potential cosmos. The drive to find order, to make sense of everything, is the mark of the cosmological motive at work. (1997, 13)

> ANNA HALPRIN: Dancing outside the confines of the proscenium theater and in the environment—the street or the natural world—had unexpected results. As it came closer to the environments where people lived, dance became more connected to people's lives and more responsive to people's needs. The image-making and sleight-of-hand common to the theater dropped away and we were left with the raw material of our lives to make our art. The boundaries between art and life, and between performer and audience, shifted and expanded, and the uses and applications of dance followed suit. Some larger force, which I believe has to do with the ancient roots of dance and its primary importance to human beings was set into motion. (1995, xi)

E. L. DOCTOROW: [What starts a story for me] can be a phrase, an image, a sense of rhythm, the most intangible thing. Something just moves you, evokes feelings you don't even understand. (qtd. in Briggs and Peat 2000, 25)

> JOHN BRIGGS AND F. DAVID PEAT: Creators know that a drip of paint on the canvas, a slip with chisel on marble, even a mistake in an otherwise well-planned experiment can create a bifurcation point, a moment of truth that amplifies and begins to self-organize the work. . . . Novelist Henry James coined the idea of "the germ" for the point when amplification takes place. A germ is the seed from which the creative thing flowers. (2000, 24-25)

JAMES HILLMAN: Soul and history are names we give to this more fundamental operation going on between what Hindu thought refers to as *suksma* (subtle) and

sthula (gross), between the fictional metaphorical viewpoint and the literalistic historical viewpoint, between inwardness and outwardness. It is not that there are two kinds of events, or two places of events, but two perspectives toward events, an inner psychological one and an outer historical one. (1998, 26)

> PETER GRAHAM: How might a professional writer's desire to produce the best possible literary text, joined with the technical understanding of how to achieve such ends ["candor and craft"], change pathography to something more artful? . . . *Meta*pathographies [are] not simple personal stories of illness but artful transformations of the genre. . . . The metapathographer takes a narrative position above his or her struggle with disease and thereby redefines the relations of patient, illness, cure, and narrative to one another. (1997, 72-73)

FAITH MCLELLAN: Anne Hunsake Hawkins has identified three basic types of illness narrative, or pathography: testimonial pathographies, inspired primarily by didactic or altruistic motives; angry pathographies that describe patients' unhappiness with the way they or their illnesses have been treated; and narratives that deal with "finding alternative treatment modalities—modalities that sometimes supplement traditional therapies and sometimes replace them altogether. . . . [Arthur W.] Frank groups the narratives into "three culturally available narrative voices": restitution, chaos, and quest. The first voice speaks mainly of a desire for the restoration of health, the second is created through the untellable nature of illness and suffering, and the third is an example of the

mythic construct of journey and return. The last voice springs from the long heroic tradition in literature, whose associated metaphors "are ubiquitous in pathography." (1997, 97)

> ARTHUR W. FRANK: The ill person who turns illness into story transforms fate into experience; the disease that sets the body apart from others becomes, in the story, the common bond of suffering that joins bodies in their shared vulnerability. (1995, xi)

PETER GRAHAM: The healthy heart of all pathography is agency, not endurance. . . . While one continues actively living—and for authors this involves writing and being read—one is not simply dying. (1997, 73)

> JOAN BARANOW: Communication between the two worlds we are all born into, is described by Susan Sontag as "the kingdom of the well and . . . the kingdom of the sick." A belief shared among all the participants is that *being cured* of the disease is not the same as *being healed,* and that expressive writing brings us to a place of healing. Our subject is the body, our medical experiences widely diverse, our goal to express through literature what happens when a physical or mental anguish disrupts our lives. (2012, 1)

JAMES HILLMAN: A clinician is supposed to note the way stories are told. Old textbooks of psychiatry, such as Eugene Bleuler's, referred to style for aid in diagnosis. The psychiatrist was encouraged to note florid expansiveness, rambling, alliterations, punnings, and bizarre word associations, hyperbole,

archaisms, mannerisms—terms we may find in literary textbooks on style. A diagnosis is partly made on the basis of a person's style of telling his tale. (1998, 15)

> ANNE HUDSON JONES: Illness, suffering, and death are the human condition. As long as people have lived, they have fallen ill, suffered, and died, and they have tried to understand these events and give them meaning. Their attempts have often taken the form of literary works. From the *Book of Job* and *Oedipus Rex* to *As Is* and *The Normal Heart,* two recent plays about AIDS, literature reflects societies' needs to understand the mysteries of disease. In their attempts to bring light, order, and healing into the chaos of illness, literature and medicine do indeed serve the same god. (1990, 13)

PETER GRAHAM: Not surprisingly, some of the best known and most widely read pathographies are by authors already recognized as eminent. Audre Lorde's *Cancer Journals,* Oliver Sacks' *A Leg to Stand On,* and Simone de Beauvoir's *A Very Easy Death* are but a few such examples, though admittedly these three works, like [Reynolds] Price's *A Whole New Life,* remain rich, potentially ambiguous hybrids of eloquent sincerity blended seamlessly with imaginative insight. (1997, 84)

> JAMES HILLMAN: Above all we cannot claim inner certainties of the soul against the flux of outer facts. What we tell ourselves about our "true" entities and landmarks of the soul are as subject to dissolution,

misapprehension, and shifting boundaries as are any "outer" events. We can be as deluded about ourselves as about the world's facts. The distinction between a case history of outer events and a soul history of inner experiences cannot be made in terms of indelible permanence and literal truth. Neither is more "real" because it is more solid. We have to affirm psychic reality in another way—not by copying the literalistic metaphors, the fantasies of fixity and hardness, that we use for outer reality. (1998, 26)

JOHN BRIGGS AND F. DAVID PEAT: Whereas tragedy is concerned with struggles of power, comedy is about tricksters, ambiguity, and the transformation of roles. Whereas tragedy invariably ends in death, comedy ends in marriage, a continuation of society and fertility brought about through tricking the fates, playing on ambivalence, and the criss-crossing of boundaries and limits. (2000, 46)

ANNA HALPRIN: Now I was ready to . . . dance the healing image of myself. . . . Something happened in this dance that I can't explain. I felt I had been on a mysterious journey to an ancient world. Time and place were suspended and I was in a timeless blue void. The experience left me trembling and purified. Later, as I gained distance from the experience of my dance, I began to notice a pattern within it that seemed relevant to other healing processes. I have mapped out the touchstones of this journey. . . . The first was simply to look and see and *identify* the issue, the

> polarity between the dark side and the light side. The second point in my journey was the actual *confrontation,* which was followed by a *release.* After the *release,* the third task was finding some way to *integrate* the new changes in my body. . . . The last step was an *assimilation,* a coming back to my community and my family and my life. (1995, 67)

MARION ROSEN: Discovering oneself is not enough. Patients must take action: to make a contribution as the people they have discovered within. It is not enough to find out we can love; we also need to love somebody. It is not enough to find out we are an artist; we must do something to express being an artist. If we discover maternal or paternal feelings, we must act upon these in relation with others. When this happens, it seems that patients' lives are complete. This point is where the real transformation shows very obviously. (2003, 14)

> DENISE LEVERTOV: Transformation! Yes, that is probably the key word. *To spew forth* is not to transform; neither is it *to state.* Both can be included in the process of making a work of art. But works of art transcend these and other factors, *transforming* them, along with the raw material of experience (factual or emotional) into autonomous creations that give off mysterious energy. (1981, 152–153)

BELL HOOKS: To become a writer I needed to confront that shadow-self, to learn ways to accept and care for that aspect of me as part of a process of healing and recovery. I longed to create a groundwork of being that could affirm my struggle to be a whole self and my effort to write. To fulfill this longing I had to search for

that shadow-self and reclaim it. That search was part of a long inward journeying. Much of it took place in writing. (1989, 77)

> DENISE LEVERTOV: Not everyone has the form-sense and the impulse to *make things out of a particular medium* that distinguish the artist; therefore not everyone can effect transformation of raw material. . . . Nevertheless, everyone has the potential (however undeveloped) to experience works of art created by others, and partake of that transforming communion. (1981, 153)

ARISTOTLE: The plot must be so structured . . . that the one who is hearing the events unroll shudders with fear and feels pity at what happens. (1985, 40)

> ANNA HALPRIN: The driving, pulsing life force that motivates us all became the inspiration of my later works. The shock of having cancer and the changes it wrought on my life and my work led me to explore the relationship between dance and healing. I began to work with dance as a healing art, and with people who are challenging life-threatening illness. Compassion, health, love, catharsis, life, death—the full spectrum of humanity's striving—needed to be contained in my evolving forms. And over and over again, returning to the mountain, or to the sea, I was fed with images and resources and power, which I recycled back into the work of making vital community. (1995, xii)

STEPHEN AIZENSTAT: We need to think together about what it takes to create healing environments that encourage the self-healing the body excels at, all the

while fighting disease. We need to rekindle classical medicine, when imagination and medicine walked hand in hand. (2009, x)

> GINETTE PARIS: The function of literature, art, and also, to speak for my profession, depth psychology, is to search for the images that open the heart and make us see what is right there in our psychological reality. (2007, 163)

HIPPOCRATES: Life is short and art is long. (qtd. in Bosnak 2009, xv)

3B: Documentary Stance:

"Situated Knowledges"

Another purpose for literature may be activism. Stories can be motivating, present injustices, and even point to possible solutions in the course of documenting fictional or actual events. Stories show us particular characters in specific settings in self-created and socially constructed situations. Characters have individual identities, informed by their settings, which include place (where in the world) and time (the historical moment). The writer sets the scene then places individual characters in dialogue, in relationship, in conflict there. "*Situated knowledges* are, by their nature, unfinished. But that is the character of all things human and alive" (McCarthy 111). The story is *alive,* and this is why as readers we react adversely to a story that ties itself up too neatly, because it is not true to life. Our postmodern, deconstructed, socially constructed, coming-apart-at-the-seams selves recognize that the best literature offers glimpses of *mutual causality*, where we are both influenced *by* and influences *on* the world, in a reciprocal loop.

Social theorist/philosopher Michel Foucault tells us:

> "Truth" is centered on the form of scientific discourses and the institutions which produce it; it is subject to constant economic and political incitement. . . . It is the object, under diverse forms, of immense diffusion and consumption. . . . It is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic

> apparatuses (university, army, writing, media). . . . It is the issue of a whole political debate and social confrontation. . . . The essential political problem for the intellectual is not to criticize the ideological contents supposedly linked to science . . . but of ascertaining the possibility of constituting a new politics of truth. (qtd. in McCarthy 105)

Social constructionist Kenneth Gergen urges writers to imagine more than reproductive models of reality. "We could use our language to construct alternative worlds in which there is no gravity or cancer, or in which persons and birds are equivalents, and the sun revolves around the world" (5). Creating alternate realities is a critical function of fiction writers—science fiction, fantasy, romance, mystery, thrillers. As readers of fiction, that is the contract we agree to: Suspend disbelief, which means, believe the lie, aware it is a lie. Gergen asserts that it is not only fiction writers who bend reality at will, however, and the notion that just about anyone can use language to construct alternative worlds can be seen as threatening to stability: "Not only does it suggest that there is no truth—words that truly map the world—but it also suggests there is nothing we can hold on to, nothing solid on which we can rest our beliefs, nothing secure" (5).

Perched on a lonely planet spinning in space, bound by the certainties and accidents of physics, cosmology, and the weather, we live amidst dynamic and unpredictable forces, while trapped within the predictable progress of time moving us ever forward toward our deaths. What do we make of this vast complexity? Gergen calls for new-millennium "generative theorizing [as] a form

of *poetic activism.* . . . . That is, it asks us to take a risk with words, shake up the conventions, create new ways of understanding, and new images of possibility" (82). He throws this challenge out to scholars and activists in all fields, asking, "What kind of alternative could we construct?" (82). Writers and artists are the pot-stirrers, door openers, tour guides, and bird's-eyes. "The scholar's task is not to 'get it right' about the nature of the world but to generate understandings that may open new paths to action" (81).

In presenting critics from the related cultural realms of art, photography, journalism, the novel, the memoir, and moral philosophy, the intent here is to invite creative writers to consider your own ethical and aesthetic stance in relation to the ideas and questions raised by these thinkers.

REMIX 3B: WITNESS

SUSAN SONTAG: [In] Da Vinci's instructions for battle paintings, he insists that artists have the courage and the imagination to show war in all its ghastliness. (2003, 75)

> LEONARDO DA VINCI: Make the conquered and beaten pale, with brows raised and knit, and the skin above their brows furrowed with pain. . . . Make the dead partly or entirely covered with dust. . . . And let the blood be seen by its color flowing a sinuous stream from the corpse to the dust. (qtd. in Sontag 2003, 75)

SUSAN SONTAG: For the photography of atrocity, people want the weight of witnessing without the taint of artistry, which is equated with insincerity or mere contrivance. Pictures of hellish events seem more authentic when they don't have the look that comes from being "properly" lighted and composed. . . . By flying low, artistically speaking, such pictures are thought to be less manipulative. (2003, 27)

> TODD DAVIS AND KENNETH WOMACK: [We attribute] the demise of modern humanism to its failure in the face of two world wars, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the horror of genocide and holocaust, and the oppression of peoples whose narratives somehow fell outside the bounds of an Anglo- or Eurocentric point of view. (2001, 33)

SUSAN SONTAG: Pity can entail a moral judgment if, as Aristotle maintains, pity is considered to be the emotion that we owe only to those enduring undeserved misfortune. . . . Leonardo is suggesting that the artist's gaze be, literally, pitiless. The image should appall, and in that *terribilitas* lies a challenging kind of beauty. . . . That a gory battlescape could be beautiful—in the sublime or awesome or tragic register of the beautiful—is a commonplace about images of war made by artists. (2003, 75)

> ARTHUR DANTO: Elegies are part music and part poetry, whose language and cadence are constrained by the subject of death and loss and which express grief, whether the artist shares it or not. [Robert Motherwell's] *Spanish Elegies*, as they are called, express, in the most haunting forms

> and colors, rhythms and proportions, the death of a political ideal, whatever the awful realities that may historically have been part of it. . . . Elegy fits one of the great human moods; it is a way of responding artistically to what cannot be endured or what can only be endured. (2003, 110)

SUSAN SONTAG: Photographs tend to transform, whatever their subject; and as an image something may be beautiful—or terrifying, or unbearable, or quite bearable—as it is not in real life. . . . Transforming is what art does, but photography that bears witness to the calamitous and the reprehensible is much criticized if it seems "aesthetic"; that is, too much like art. The dual powers of photography—to generate documents and to create works of visual art—have produced some remarkable exaggerations about what photographers ought or ought not to do. . . . In this view, a beautiful photograph drains attention from the sobering subject and turns it toward the medium itself, thereby compromising the picture's status as a document. (2003, 76-77)

> THEODOR ADORNO [1949]: To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. (1981, 34)

SUSAN SONTAG: Goya's [paintings] *Disasters of War* . . . depict the atrocities perpetrated by Napoleon's soldiers who invaded Spain in 1808 to quell the insurrection against French rule. Goya's images move the viewer closer to the horror. All the trappings of the spectacular have been eliminated: the landscape is an atmosphere, a darkness, barely sketched in. War is not a spectacle. (2003, 44)

> LIONEL TRILLING: For our time the most effective agent of the moral imagination has been the novel of the last two hundred years. It was never, either aesthetically or morally, a perfect form and its faults and failures can be quickly enumerated. But its greatness and its practical usefulness lay in its unremitting work of involving the reader himself in the moral life, inviting him to put his own motives under examination, suggesting that reality is not as his conventional education has led him to see it. It taught us, as no other genre ever did, the extent of human variety and the value of this variety. It was the literary form to which the emotions of understanding and forgiveness were indigenous, as if by definition of the form itself. (1979, 215)

SUSAN SONTAG: The ghoulish cruelties in *Disasters of War* are meant to awaken, shock, wound the viewer. Goya's art, like Dostoevsky's, seems a turning point in the history of moral feelings and of sorrow—as deep, as original, as demanding. With Goya, a new standard for responsiveness to suffering enters art. . . . The expressive phrases in script below each image comment on the provocation. . . . A voice, presumably the artist's, badgers the viewer: can you bear to look at this? One caption declares: One can't look. *(No se puede mirar.)* Another says: This is bad. *(Esto es malo.)* Another retorts: This is worse. *(Esto es lo peor!)* Another declaims: Barbarisms! *(Barbaros!)* What madness? *(Que locura?),* cries another. And another: This is too much! *(Fuerte cosa es!)* And another: Why? *(Por que?).* (2003, 45)

> HENRY JAMES [1915]: One finds it in the midst of all this as hard to apply one's words as to endure one's thoughts. The war has used up words; they have weakened; they have deteriorated. (qtd. in Sontag 2003, 25)

WALTER LIPPMANN [1922]: Photographs have the kind of authority over imagination today, which the printed word had yesterday, and the spoken word before that. They seem utterly real. (qtd. in Sontag 2003, 25)

> SUSAN SONTAG: It seems that the appetite for pictures showing bodies in pain is as keen, almost, as the desire for ones that show bodies naked. For many centuries, in Christian art, depictions of hell offered both of these elemental satisfactions. (2003, 41)

MAX ERNST: Dada was above all a moral reaction. Our rage aimed at total subversion. A horrible futile war had robbed us of five years of our existence. We had experienced the collapse into ridicule and shame of everything represented to us as just, true, and beautiful. My works of that period were not meant to attract, but to make people scream. (qtd. in Danto 2003, 48)

> ARTHUR DANTO: How innocent Dada itself was, in its artistic refusal to gratify the aesthetic sensibilities of those responsible for the First World War—to give them babbling in place of beauty, silliness instead of sublimity, injuring beauty through a kind of punitive clownishness. (2003, 57)

RUTH FRANKLIN: Scholar/holocaust survivor H. D. Adler . . . produced a quantity and a diversity of writing about the Holocaust that seem to have been equaled by

no other survivor: . . . poetry, works of history, collections of documents and testimonies, essays on a vast variety of topics, and a sociological tome. (2011, 74)

> MOI: These are distinct genres of writing—the poem, the essay, the testimony, the sociological study—and they represent a range of possible perspectives or worldviews.

ARTHUR DANTO: [Max] Ernst knew the war—he had been an artilleryman [in the First World War]—and his art was aggressive, as his perception of the war-makers as hateful required it to be. . . . The original spirit of Dada was a kind of exaggerated play in the shadow of the war, a way of demonstrating by infantile actions its contempt for the clashing patriotisms: the term itself was baby-talk for "rocking horse." (2003, 48)

> RUTH FRANKLIN: [Adler's book *Theresienstadt 1941-1945*, completed in 1947, published in Germany in 1955, never translated into English] is a comprehensive study of the camp from every perspective: sociological, historical, economic, anthropological, psychological. (2011, 74)

H. D. ADLER: [I recall thinking, upon my arrival at Theresienstadt,] "If I survive, then I will describe it . . . by setting down the facts of my individual experience, as well as to somehow describe it artistically." (qtd. in Franklin 2011, 74)

> SUSAN SONTAG: If there was one year when the power of photographs to define, not merely, record, the most abominable realities trumped all the complex narratives, surely it was 1945, with the pictures taken in April and early May at Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, and Dachau in the first

> days after the camps were liberated, and those taken by Japanese witnesses such as Yosuke Yamahata in the days following the incineration of the populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in early August. (2003, 25)

RUTH FRANKLIN: Adler achieves the work of art [in his novel *Panorama,* written 1948, published 1968] through various literary disciplines or devices:

> [Fiction]: He emphasizes universality. . . . almost never uses identifiable names for places or people. . . .
>
> [Metaphor]: Peepholes, lenses, or scopes of different types appear in nearly every chapter. . . .
>
> [Rhythm]: Gently pulsing lyrical rhythm. . . .
>
> [Vocabulary]: He uses religious vocabulary to describe the profanest of events ("temples of murder . . . THIS WAY TO THE SHOWERS: . . . Here, you will sanctify yourself in order to meet your salvation. . . . Look, how this is a shrine into which you are being led"). . . .
>
> [Imagination]: The gas chamber is a place where the imagination has feared to tread. But Adler demonstrates that even this barrier can be broken with compassion and taste. . . .
>
> [Repeating motifs]: *Panorama* takes a synoptic view in which the camps are but a single moment: its peepholes are windows not only into [the character's] life but also into the twentieth century. . . . The camp scene is linked thematically to earlier scenes . . . sinister foreshadowings of what is to come. (2011, 75-76)

GREGORY MARSHALL: Narratives exert influence on human ethos by holding up models for conduct and attitude, by guiding our responses to various human predicaments, by scripting the various moral and ethical judgments that we might make about other people's behavior. (2004, 38)

> RUTH FRANKLIN: In contrast [to Beckett's nihilism] . . . Adler's approach—to investigate, to contextualize, even to transform—is profoundly positive. He strove to write novels that were documentary and academic works that were emotionally gripping, creating a body of work in which both the parts and the whole functioned with a common purpose: to illuminate, in as many ways as possible, the terrors of the Nazi years. (2011, 79)

CORA DIAMOND: The significance of works of literature for moral philosophy is that we may learn from our reading of such works, and from reflection on them, terms of criticism of thought applicable to discussions of practical issues and to moral philosophy itself. (1983, 164-165)

> MARTINA KOPF: African authors who deliberately sought to create narratives on the genocide and the post-genocidal society in Rwanda for public memory . . . took an innovative approach to the literary representation of genocide. . . . It not only shaped the duty to remember as a collective undertaking, but also merged patterns of civil society's engagement with the field of literature. Furthermore, it was framed by the intention of bearing witness as a writer and to use fiction as a means to create and transmit knowledge on the genocide. It thus defined a particular

> point of departure at the interface of social-political, ethical and aesthetical commitment. (2012, 65)

SUSAN SONTAG: Making suffering loom larger, by globalizing it, may spur people to feel they ought to "care" more. It also invites them to feel that the sufferings and misfortunes are too vast, too irrevocable, too epic to be much changed by any local political intervention. With a subject conceived on this scale, compassion can only flounder—and make abstract. But all politics, like all of history, is concrete. (2003, 79)

> CONGRESSMAN GEORGE A. DONDERO OF MICHIGAN [1965]: Modern art is communistic because it is distorted and ugly, because it does not glorify our beautiful country, our cheerful and smiling people, and our material progress. Art which does not beautify our country in plain simple terms that everyone can understand breeds dissatisfaction. It is therefore opposed to our government and those who create and promote it are our enemies. (qtd. in Danto 2003, 26)

ARTHUR DANTO: This is but one instance . . . of the politicization of beauty. (2003, 26)

> DAVID SEED: In common with the early fiction of Alice Walker, [Toni] Morrison wanted to establish the African American woman as a subject in her own right by writing against subject taboos and by demythologizing the black woman. . . . The triple concerns of language, race, and gender all intersect in Morrison's career. Her attempts to create a nonracist,

> racialized narrative language represent her efforts to voice different, often suppressed aspects of African American culture. (2011, 187)

MARTA CAMINERO-SANTANGELO: Louise Erdrich's novel *Tracks* and Indian writer M. K. Indira's novel *Phaniyamma* bear witness to narratives missing in dominant colonial histories and to the silences or purposeful "forgettings" that characterize such histories. . . . [One major thesis is that] remembering can be embodied as well as verbal or textual; we remember through our bodies, and the body is therefore the site of counter-stories that can correct or fill in the gaps of colonial histories. (2010, 195)

> MARTINA KOPF: What does the exposure to trauma do to the witness and what does it mean in the process of writing and remembering genocide? These are questions that remain to be explored in the analysis of literatures of trauma. (2012, 66)

MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY: Phenomenology is a philosophy that takes the facts of the subject's embodiment and of the materiality of the world as co-equal. Its philosophical task is to account for the engagement of the two in the production of meaning. [It is] a philosophy for which the world is always "already there" before reflection begins . . . and all its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical status. (qtd. in Danto 2003, 32)

> THEODOR ADORNO: [Modern art] has taken all the darkness and guilt of the world onto its shoulders. Its entire happiness consists in recognizing

> unhappiness; all its beauty consists in denying itself the semblance of beauty. (qtd. in Cascardi et al. 2010, 15)

MARTA CAMINERO-SANTANGELO: The tradition of associating speech with agency is a long one in Western culture. For Lacan, to enter the symbolic order—the world of social meanings and relations—is to enter the realm of language; one cannot negotiate society, then, without wielding language effectively. . . . The assertion, then, that silence may wield its own forms of agency, may constitute in itself a form of expression or communication, may help to reshape the social or political landscape, or may be worth listening to is an intriguing and provocative one. . . . [Writers on silence, Proma Tagore and Helene Carol Weldt-Basson] both wish their readers to come away with a complex understanding of textual silence as more than just absence, passivity, or a void. (2012, 194)

> SUSAN SONTAG: In fact, there are many uses of the innumerable opportunities a modern life supplies for regarding—at a distance, through the medium of photography—other people's pain. Photographs of an atrocity may give rise to opposing responses. A call for peace. A cry for revenge. Or simply the bemused awareness, continually restocked by photographic information, that terrible things happen. (2003, 13)

ARTHUR DANTO: In the 1980s, when so many young men were beginning to die of AIDS, the gay funeral became a kind of art form. . . . Again, in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, impromptu shrines appeared all over New York City. . . . The mood was elegiac rather than angry,

and the shrines were the outward expression of hearts broken by what was perceived as the end of a form of life. . . . The conjunction of beauty with the occasion of moral pain somehow transforms the pain from grief into sorrow, and with that into a form of release. And since the occasion of the elegy is public, the sorrow is shared. It is no longer one's own. We are taken up into a community of mourners. The effect of the elegy is philosophical and artistic at once; it gives a kind of meaning to the loss by putting it at a distance, and by closing the distance between those who feel it—who are in it, as we say, together. (2003, 111–112)

> SUSAN SONTAG: The attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, was described as "unreal," "surreal," "like a movie" in many of the first accounts by those who escaped from the towers or watched from nearby. After four decades of big-budget Hollywood disaster films, "It felt like a movie" seems to have displaced the way survivors of catastrophe used to express the short-term unassimilability of what they had gone through: "It felt like a dream." (2003, 21-22)

THEODOR ADORNO: Art has always had the power to reveal things that theory seems to lack. (qtd. in Cascardi et al. 2010, 27)

> ARTHUR DANTO: When Roger Fry organized his great exhibitions of Post-Impressionist art at the Grafton Gallery in London, in 1910 and 1912, the public was outraged not only by the disregard of life-likeness, which characterized so much of the modernist movement, but by the palpable absence of beauty. In his defense, Fry argued that the new art would be

> seen as ugly *until* it was seen as beautiful. To see it as beautiful, he implied, requires aesthetic education, and that the beauty would be seen in the course of time. Undoubtedly we do come to see beauty that evaded us at first—but suppose we don't? Is it because we are blind to the beauty—or is it because we have wrongly taken it as a given that art *must* be beautiful? (2003, xv)

MOI: I taught a summer course at CCA one year called Brutal Aesthetics, which asked, Is "beauty truth, truth beauty" as young dying Romantic poet Keats proclaimed in 1819? How can truth be beauty in times of war or disaster? What is the artist/writer's role: to mirror the world, or create heroic ideals? We began by defining the concept of Beauty, according to Keats, Kant, Wikipedia, et al. We researched where beauty has been found and how defined in the past. Then the assignments were to photograph, find, and create beauty in the present; generate language to analyze beauty's structures and possibilities; consider ugliness and how to coexist.

> SUSAN SONTAG: There is beauty in ruins. To acknowledge the beauty of photographs of the World Trade Center ruins in the months following the attack seemed frivolous, sacrilegious. The most people dared say was that the photographs were "surreal," a hectic euphemism behind which the disgraced notion of beauty cowered. But they were beautiful, many of them. . . . The site itself, the mass graveyard that had received the name "Ground Zero" was of course anything but beautiful. (2003, 76)

MOI: Be the camera lens, the map, a frame, an impulse, tuning fork, compass, water.

> ARTHUR DANTO: If the aim of a painting is to arouse desire, it is appropriate that it be beautiful. If it is to arouse loathing, it is perhaps more appropriate that it be disgusting. (2003, 120)

WALT WHITMAN [1855]: Look down, fair moon, and bathe this scene; / Pour softly down night's nimbus floods, on faces ghastly, swollen, purple; / On the dead, on their backs, with their arms toss'd wide, / Pour down your unstinted nimbus, sacred moon. (1955, 260)

3C. Lyric Beauty:

"Art's Most Useful Purpose Is To Be"

Along with the potentially therapeutic purpose of releasing emotions via catharsis, and activist purposes of documentation and witness, it is possible to argue that art's most useful purpose is To Be. Ancient philosopher Plato would have banished poets and artists from his Republic because our creations exist at what he called the "third remove from reality" (qtd. in Oates 28). Ontologically, "for Plato, the idea is the real, and all else is less real" (28). Epistemologically, Plato believed "The only thing we can 'know' in any full sense of the word is that which is ultimately real, namely, an Idea, something which does not change" (28.) Axiologically, "inasmuch as there are aesthetic and ethical Ideas, objects in this world 'participate' in these Ideas, these norms of value, and can be appraised accordingly" (28). Works of art or literature that serve this purpose of diverting our attention from the impermanent and changing world *cohere* to Plato's "profound conviction that somewhere in the picture there is that which is abiding and does not change, and that underlying the impermanence there is that which is permanent" (28).

Aesthetics philosopher Jacques Rancière claims:

> Art is not, in the first instance, political because of the messages and sentiments it conveys concerning the state of the world. Neither is it political because of the manner in which it might choose to represent society's structures, or social groups, their conflicts, or identities. It is

> political because of the very distance it takes with respect to these functions, because of the type of space and time that it institutes, and the manner in which it frames this time and peoples this space. (23)

To create this kind of "space and time," raw experience must be transformed aesthetically. Rancière invites the viewer to pause before the work of art and contemplate the possibility of other realms beyond what is found in space and time and bring that knowledge back with us into politics and relationships.

Tibetan teacher Tarthan Tulku advises:

> Apart from exploration through observation, analysis, and inquiry, we can cultivate a deeper knowledge through respect for the possibilities of our own intelligence, and through a willingness to explore in all directions. This may require developing new symbols and a new language—metaphors and concepts that can do justice to all the circumstances and possibilities that inquiry discloses. (90)

The notion that art should strive to be useless does not invite escapism or lack of compassion for our personal and worldly challenges; rather, it suggests that art will be most successful and meaningful when it masters itself. Novelist Ha Jin believes that the "writer as migrant" has a particular kind of work to do:

> The writer should be not just a chronicler but also a shaper, an alchemist, of historical experiences. . . . [however] the writer should enter history mainly through the avenue of his art. If he serves a cause or group or even a country, such a service must be a self-choice and not imposed by

> society. . . . Whatever role he plays, he must keep in mind that his success or failure as a writer will be determined only on the page. That is the space where he should strive to exist. (30)

Literary critics, art critics, dance critics, philosophers of aesthetics, poets, and painters contribute their thoughts on the useless role of lyric beauty.

REMIX 3C: USELESSNESS

MARJORIE GARBER: The "uses" of reading and of literature [are] not as an instrument of moral or cultural control, nor yet as an infusion of "pleasure," but rather as a *way of thinking*. . . . The very uselessness of literature is its most profound and valuable attribute. (2012, 7)

> ELAINE SCARRY: The political critique of beauty . . . urges that beauty, by preoccupying our attention, distracts attention from wrong social arrangements. (2001, 58)

EDWIN DENBY: The first taste of art is spontaneously sensual, it is the discovery of an absorbing entertainment, an absorbing pleasure. If you ask anyone who enjoys ballet or any other art how he started, he will tell you that he enjoyed it long before he knew what it meant or how it worked. (qtd. in Gottlieb 2008, 380)

> DENNIS DUTTON: The arts are about particularity. They bring together traditions, genres, an artist's private experience, fantasy, and emotion, fused and transformed in aesthetic imagination. (2009, 2)

JAMES A. MCNEILL WHISTLER: Why should I not call my works "symphonies," "arrangements," "harmonies," and "nocturnes"? . . . Art should be independent of all clap-trap—should stand alone, and appeal to the artistic sense of eye or ear, without confounding this with emotions entirely foreign to it, as devotion, pity, love, patriotism, and the like. All these have no kind of concern with it; and that is why I insist on calling my works "arrangements" and "harmonies." (qtd. in Goldwater and Treves 1945, 347)

> EDWIN DENBY: But if ballet is a way of entertaining the audience by showing them animal grace, why is its way of moving so very unanimal-like and artificial? For the same reason that music has evolved so very artificial a way of organizing its pleasing noises. Art takes what in life is an accidental pleasure and tries to repeat and prolong it. It organizes, diversifies, characterizes, through an artifice that men evolve by trial and error. (qtd. in Gottlieb 2008, 381)

ZADIE SMITH: Most lyrical realism blithely continues on its merry road, with not a metaphysical care in the world. . . . But if it's to survive, lyrical realists will have to push a little harder on their subject . . . the tenuous nature of a self . . . the possibility that language may not precisely describe the world . . . to assure us of our beautiful plenitude. (2009, 81-82)

> MARJORIE GARBER: Let us say there are two poles in the debate over the "use" or "value" of literature. One pole is utilitarian or instrumental: the idea that literature is good for you because it produces beneficial societal

> effects: better citizens, for example, or more ethically attuned reasoners. The other pole might be characterized as ecstatic, affective, or mystical: the idea that literature is a pleasurable jolt to the system, a source of powerful feelings. (2012, 9)

ZADIE SMITH: [The novel] wants to offer us the authentic story of a self. But is this really what having a self feels like? Do selves always seek their good, in the end? Are they never perverse? Do they always want meaning? Do they not sometimes want its opposite? And is this how memory works? Do our childhoods often return to us in the form of coherent, lyrical reveries? Is this how time feels? Do the things of the world really come to us like this, embroidered in the verbal fancy of times past? Is this really realism? (2009, 82)

> PAUL VERLAINE: The goal of poetry is the Beautiful and the Beautiful alone without any reference to the Useful, the True, or the Just. (qtd. in White 2008, 61)

MOI: Music seems the most able to move us, as it is so intangible: no body, no materials, at least for the listener. Or is the most direct route to Beauty *through* the body and the instrument, and this is why musicians love their work so much?

> SIMONE WEIL: [Beauty requires us] to give up our imaginary position as the center. . . . A transformation then takes place at the very roots of our sensibility, in our immediate reception of sense impressions and psychological impressions. (qtd. in Scarry 2001, 159)

ZADIE SMITH: One does not seek the secret, authentic heart of things. One believes—as Naipaul had it—that the world is what it is and, moreover, that all our relations with it are necessarily inauthentic. As a consequence, such an attitude is often mistaken for linguistic or philosophical nihilism, but its true strength comes from a rigorous attention to the damaged and the partial, the absent and the unspeakable. (2009, 92)

> ELAINE SCARRY: Beauty, far from contributing to social injustice . . . actually assists us in the work of addressing injustice . . . by requiring of us constant perceptual acuity—high dives of seeing, hearing, touching. (2001, 62)

KENNETH BAKER: Elaine Scarry is the latest of several writers to try and rehabilitate [beauty]. With the paralysis of progressive politics in the 1970s, social critique went underground and re-emerged in—of all places—the practice, criticism, and history of the arts. Issues of social justice that appeared incorrigible in the real world were resolved in the frictionless thrashings of art and literary criticism. In the new intellectual climate of political correctness, interest in mere aesthetic niceties was viewed as reactionary. (1999, 4)

> MARJORIE GARBER: [Plato's] famous exiling of poets from a well-ordered republic, on the grounds that they offered *doxa,* or opinion, rather than *logos,* or reason/discourse, instantiated an unhappy split between what we now call art and what we now call science. (2012, 15)

ELAINE SCARRY: [Plato required] that we move from "eros," in which we are seized by the beauty of one person, to "caritas," in which our care is extended to all people. (2001, 81)

> JOHN UPDIKE: There is in Degas a democracy of vision that gives the awkward and the ugly equal representation with the graceful and beautiful; he anticipated a camera's capabilities in his cropped and eclipsed assemblages and also its dispassion, its acceptance of what it sees. (1989, 106)

JEAN RENOIR: For me a picture . . . should be something likable, joyous and pretty—yes, pretty. There are enough ugly things in life for us not to add to them. (qtd. in Updike 1989, 86)

> MOI: Some think it is irresponsible for artists *not* to portray human suffering.

ELAINE SCARRY: Matisse never hoped to save lives. But he repeatedly said that he wanted to make paintings so serenely beautiful that when one came upon them, suddenly all problems would subside. (2001, 33)

> MATTHEW ARNOLD: More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. (1910, 65)

THEODOR ADORNO AND MAX HORKHEIMER: The work of art, by completely assimilating itself to need, deceitfully deprives men of precisely that liberation

from the principle of utility which it should inaugurate. What might be called use value in the reception of cultural commodities is replaced by exchange value. (2001, 1239)

> MARJORIE GARBER: Uselessness itself becomes a commodity, and a sign of leisure, culture, and social standing. (2012, 26)

JOANNA OVERING: Thanks to the influence of Kant, we have disengaged "the arts" from the social, the practical, the moral, the cosmological, and have made artistic activity especially distinct from the technological, the everyday, the productive. (qtd. in Dutton 2009, 65–66)

> W. H. AUDEN: For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives. . . . / A way of happening, a mouth. (qtd. in Garber 2012, 30)

DENNIS DUTTON: Long before Kant, the question of artistic autonomy was being debated by the Greeks, some of whose music, painting, and drama was as detached from social or ideological content as most modern painting, drama, and music. . . . Most of us conceive of art and aesthetic experience as a broad category that encompasses the mass arts (popular forms such as Attic tragedy, Victorian novels, or tonight's television offerings), historical expressions of religious or political belief, the history of music and dance, and the immense variety of design traditions for furniture, practical implements, and architecture. Far from being a small, rarefied class of objects, in the European imagination back to the Greeks, art includes a staggeringly vast range of activities and creative products. (2009, 66)

> ARISTOTLE: For it is an instinct of human beings from childhood to engage in mimesis (indeed, this distinguishes them from other animals: man is the most mimetic of all, and it is through mimesis that he develops his earliest understanding); and equally natural that everyone enjoys mimetic objects. A common occurrence indicates this: we enjoy contemplating the most precise images of things whose actual sight is painful to us, such as forms of the vilest animals and of corpses. (qtd. in Dutton 2009, 33)

BONNIE COSTELLO: The problem of the beholder, the unsteady status of perspective, leads us back to a question. . . . What is the purpose of describing a landscape? Contemplation, of course. But of what? to what end? The word implies expectation and intention. If landscape does not provide [Elizabeth] Bishop with an idyllic retreat or a vision of God's Work, what can it provide? For Darwin, the scientific observer, the question of purpose was taken care of. But for the artist? Is expressiveness, the release of feeling and desire into the mutable world, enough? (1982, 365)

> ARTHUR DANTO: Artifacts are not problematic . . . they are simply nicely made useful objects. Art works are altogether something else, a compound of thought and matter. . . . A utilitarian artifact is shaped by its function, but the shape of an artwork is given by its content. (qtd. in Dutton 2009, 82)

JACQUES RANCIÈRE: Art consists in constructing space and relations to reconfigure materially and symbolically the territory of the common . . . a way of occupying a

place where relations between bodies, images, spaces, and times are redistributed. (2009, 22)

> HEGEL: The beauty of art is beauty born of the spirit and born again. (qtd. in Danto 2003, 93)

ARTHUR DANTO: What Hegel wanted to stress is that art is an intellectual product, and that its beauty too must express the thought the art embodies. (2003, 93)

> MARCEL PROUST: [upon seeing a peasant girl approaching the station in the early morning, offering coffee and milk]: I felt on seeing her that desire to live which is reborn in us whenever we become conscious anew of beauty and of happiness. (qtd. in Danto 2003, 29)

ARTHUR DANTO: I believe Proust's psychology profound in connecting the consciousness of beauty with the feeling of happiness. . . . It was the moral weight that was assigned to beauty that helps us understand why the first generation of the avant-garde found it so urgent to dislodge beauty from its mistaken place in the philosophy of art. It occupied that place by virtue of a conceptual error. Once we are in position to perceive that mistake, we should be able to redeem beauty for artistic use once again. (qtd. in Danto 2003, 29)

> ABRAHAM MASLOW: Enlarge the object. Or, squint at it so you see only general outlines. Or, gaze at it from unexpected angles, such as upside-down. Look at the object reflected in a mirror. Put it in unexpected backgrounds, in out-of-the-ordinary juxtapositions, or through unusual

> color filters. Gaze at it for a very long time. Gaze while free-associating or daydreaming. (qtd. in Gross and Shapiro 2001, 122)

T. S. ELIOT: Words move, music moves / Only in time; but that which is only living / Can only die. Words, after speech, reach / Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern, / Can words or music reach / The stillness, as a Chinese jar still / Moves perpetually in its stillness. (qtd. in Garber 2012, 56)

> ELAINE SCARRY: One can see why beauty—by Homer, by Plato, by Aquinas, by Dante (and the list would go on and on) . . . has been perceived to be bound up with the immortal, for it prompts a search for a precedent, which in turn prompts a search for a still earlier precedent, and the mind keeps tripping backward until it at last reaches something that has no precedent, which may very well be the immortal. . . . And one can see why beauty—by those same artists, philosophers, theologians of the Old World and the New—has been perceived to be bound up with truth. What is beautiful is in league with what is true because truth abides in the immortal sphere. (2001, 30-31)

KENNETH BAKER: *On Beauty and Being Jus*t is Scarry's argument that surrender to beauty and concern for social justice, far from being incompatible, are deeply linked. Her book is full of striking observations about beauty in and beyond the arts. They spring from remarks on the impulse beauty stirs in us to perpetuate or duplicate it. (1999, 4)

> ELAINE SCARRY: Beautiful things have a forward momentum, . . . they incite the desire to bring new things into the world: infants, epics, sonnets, drawings, dances, laws, philosophic dialogues, theological tracts. (2001, 46)

WALLACE STEVENS [1952]: There it was, word for word, / The poem that took the place of a mountain. (1990, 374)

4.

THE PROCESS:

EMBODYING EXPERIENCE

4A. The Framing Eye:

"Oneness of Waves and Water"

In college I explored the art of photography as well as writing. Among my intellectual mothers at the time was Susan Sontag, who suggests that "To photograph . . . means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and therefore, like power" *(On Photography,* 4). During those coming-of-age years the camera provided a space to separate myself from my circumstances, "to turn my body without force in the elements" as Adrienne Rich describes in "Diving Into the Wreck." Through the camera lens, I could recognize patterns, omit the extraneous, find my focus. I could stand apart and observe any situation with the kind of mind that meditation practices recommend. Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh teaches, "Through meditation, we see that waves are made only of water, that the historical and ultimate dimensions are one. Even while living in the world of waves, we touch the water, knowing that a wave is nothing but water" (124).

The best photographers are able to frame the waves in such a way that the oneness of waves and water is *present,* even if not strictly visible in the photograph. This is the quality that an art photograph needs in order to mean more than a snapshot (Barthes' *punctum).* Like photography, literary writing also requires a framing eye, a point of view that includes "historical and ultimate dimensions." This perspective may *be* there in us as a stable, intuitive force, yet not be immediately apparent in our early drafts. The writing process compares to

the work of photographers, who must snap dozens of shots to produce one image with the right balance of shadows and light. Writing is a *process,* not a singular action.

In her 1972 essay "When We Dead Awaken," Adrienne Rich advocates for "re-vision" as the way to re-visit and re-see lived experience. We write, and then consciously re-view our content and intentions following the subconscious bursts of first drafts. As we move through the stages of draft, craft, and critique, we come to see the story through multiple lenses, from various heights, windows, and distances. The framing eye takes in the unstable forces of what is found and what is new and integrates the stuff of dreams and psyche into words through the hand and mind at work in time and space.

REMIX 4A: DRAFTS

DEENA METZGER: The beginning. Something wants to be said. We don't know what it is or what shape it desires. An inchoate feeling. A pressure around the heart, perhaps, asking it to open. We pick up a pen or sit down at the computer. (1992, 9)

> ISABEL ALLENDE: Books don't happen in my mind, they happen somewhere in my belly. It's like a long elephant pregnancy that can last two years. And then, when I'm ready to give birth, I sit down. I wait for January 8th, which is my special date, and then, that day, I begin the book that has been growing inside me. (qtd. in Epel 1994, 8)

NATALIE GOLDBERG: There is no perfect atmosphere, notebook, pen, or desk, so train yourself to be flexible. Try writing under different circumstances and in different places. Try trains, buses, at kitchen tables, alone in the woods leaning against a tree, by a stream with your feet in the water, in the desert sitting on a rock, on the curb in front of your house, on a porch stoop, in the back seat of a car, in the library, at a lunch counter, in an alley, at the unemployment office, in the dentist's waiting room, at a bar in a wooden booth, at the airport, in Texas, Kansas, or Guatemala, while sipping a Coke, smoking a cigarette, eating a bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich. (1996, 102)

> ELENA PONIATOWSKA: I have always walked. I think as I stroll along. How much of me there is in these faces that don't know me and that I don't know, how much me in the subway, in the steps that pile up, one on top of the other, until they finally come out into the great, white spout of light, how much of me in the last, weary steps coming out, how much of me in the rain that forms puddles on the pavement, how much of me in the smell of wet wood. (1992, 91)

LUISA VALENZUELA: Sometimes while writing, I have to get up to dance, to celebrate the flow of energy transforming itself into words. Sometimes the energy becomes words that are not printed, not even with the delicate line of a fountain pen, which is the most voluptuous in the act of writing. You must always celebrate when—whether in a café or a subway—a happy combination of words, a fortuitous allusion, elicits its associations that unwind the mental thread of

writing without a mark. The mark comes next. And I will do my best to retain the freshness of that first moment of awe and transformation. (1992, 200)

> ELIZABETH JOLLEY: I do not know if this is an interesting fact but I am the sort of person who needs to create a superficial order in my surroundings before I can confront the confusion which exists in my mind and in the scattered notes I gather over days, weeks, months, and years for the making of a story or a novel. I have to know in advance what I am going to prepare for the family dinner. I like to have the essentials of housework done and correspondence answered before working at the novel—if I am going to work during the day. I find it very hard to emerge from the fiction to an uncared-for house. The move from the desk to the domestic, toward the end of an afternoon, is one of the most painful experiences. I do not think this is hard for women only, but perhaps women more often find themselves in this position even in these times when women are "liberated"—and in spite of the washing machine and the dishwasher. (1992, 134)

DIANE JOHNSON: How I think about my work is indistinguishable from the way I think about my needlepoint or cooking: here is the project I'm involved in. It is play. In this sense, all my life is spent in play—sewing or needlepoint, or picking flowers, or writing, or buying groceries. Being a housewife and mother, I have duties, too, but I am apt to shirk duty or wander off in the middle of it, so I can't

really claim to have sacrificed my writing to my housework, the way it seems to some women. (1992, 141)

> MARGARET ATWOOD: There are a lot of things that can be said about what goes on around the edges of writing. Certain ideas you may have, certain motivations, grand designs that don't get carried out. I can talk about bad reviews, about sexist reactions to my writing, about making an idiot of myself on television shows. I can talk about books that failed, that never got finished, and about why they failed. The one that had too many characters, the one that had too many layers of time, red herrings that diverted me when what I really wanted to get at was something else, a certain corner of the visual world, a certain voice, an inarticulate landscape. (1992, 151)

LINDA HOGAN: I feel it is not enough for me just to write, but I need to live it, to be informed by it. I have found over the years that my work has more courage than I do. It has more wisdom. It teaches me, leads me places I never knew I was heading. And it is about a new way of living, of being in the world. (1992, 79)

> ISABEL ALLENDE: Often when I sit down that day and turn on my computer or my typewriter and write the first sentence, I don't know what I'm going to write about because it has not yet made the trip from the belly to the mind. It is somewhere hidden in a very somber and secret place where I don't have any access yet. It is something that I have been feeling but which has no shape, no name, no tone, no voice. So I write the first

> sentence—which usually is the first sentence of the book. That is the only thing that really stays. Then the story starts unfolding itself, slowly, in a long process. By the time I've finished the first draft I know what the book is about. But not before. (qtd. in Epel 1994, 8)

JOHN MCPHEE: You begin with a subject, gather material, and work your way to structure from there. You pile up volumes of notes and then figure out what you are going to do with them, not the other way around. (2011, 36)

> DEENA METZGER: The first and foremost question a writer, public or intimate, must ask is, What must I say? To begin to know the answer to this question is to begin to know the essential self. . . . What must I say? What *must* I say? What must *I* say? What must I *say?* And finally, what must I say *to you?* (1992, 9)

KAYE GIBBONS: My memory houses a collection of images, not ordered in the patterns I see and respect in literary history, not ordered in any form vaguely resembling a chronology. I have to work at telling when something happened and then what happened next. There seems to be so many gaps, and I know the gaps are there thanks to this incredible mind machine we possess that filters pain, protects us, that knows, as T. S. Eliot knew: *Humankind cannot bear very much reality*. (1992, 58)

> ANITA DESAI: The writing of the book became a curious mingling of the real and the remembered and the imagined—as every novel is. It is, after all, as E. M. Forster said, "won by the mind from matter" and contains

> elements of both. The two can be seen locked in combat or in harmony, but the right proportions have to be found in order to balance the whole. If the book is to be strong, effective, and meaningful, then the gaps between these elements, between the real and the imagined worlds, the objective and the subjective attitudes, the extrovert and the introvert elements, have to be closed up; the two must mesh together leaving no gaps through which credulity could drain. Having built oneself such a container, it might surprise one to see, when lowering it into those depths of memory, or swinging through the free space of imagination, what it might catch and net. (1992, 102)

JOHN UPDIKE: [I wrote this particular novel] because the rhythm of my life and my "oeuvre" demanded it, not to placate hallucinatory critical voices. (qtd. in Desai, 103)

> MOI: I don't write as a daily habit, just to get words on the page. I only write when I have something to say.

NATALIA GINZBURG: When I sit down to write I feel extraordinarily at ease, and I move in an element which, it seems to me, I know extraordinarily well; I use tools that are familiar to me and they fit snugly in my hands. If I do something else, if I study a foreign language or try to learn history or geography or shorthand or if I try and speak in public or take up knitting or go on a journey, I suffer and constantly ask myself how others do those same things: it always seems to me that there must be some correct way of doing these things which others know and I

don't. And it seems to me that I am deaf and blind and I feel a sort of sickness in the pit of my stomach. But when I write I never imagine that there is perhaps a better way of writing, which other writers follow. I am not interested in what other writers do. (1992, 104)

> RITA DOVE: For years I thought the only "proper" way to write was to start a poem and plug away at it until it was done—sort of like finishing all the food on your plate at dinner. I worried my poems like a dog does a bone. Then, one afternoon about seven years ago, I was wandering through a stationery store in West Berlin. (Like many writers on the eternal search for the Perfect Writing Implement, I haunt stationery stores.) I discovered an array of plastic folders, closed on two sides, that came in clear red and purple and yellow and blue. I bought the entire rainbow. And suddenly everything changed. If a poem I was working on eluded completion, I'd slip the pages into one of the colored folders. Instead of producing whole poems I began to collect fragments and let them grow in the dark. This way I could work on several poems at once; some, of course, were doomed to remain fragments, and some would complete themselves within a month or ten weeks or two years. Now when I sit down to write, I first spread out the folders, choose the color that suits my "mood," and leaf through it until something strikes me. I'll work on that fragment until I get stuck, and then I'll go on to another poem in that folder, or switch colors.

> After weeks of fiddling I often complete two or three poems on the same day. (1992, 162)

MOI: I used to try to be organized about it, and I have file cabinets and bookshelves and notebooks that *are* vaguely organized. But they don't stay that way. Everything changes. I guess that's good too.

> RAY BRADBURY: I began to make lists of titles, to put down long lines of *nouns.* These lists were the provocations, finally, that caused my better stuff to surface. I was feeling my way toward something honest, hidden under the trapdoor on the top of my skull. The list ran something like this:
>
> THE LAKE. THE NIGHT. THE CRICKETS. THE RAVINE. THE ATTIC. THE BASEMENT. THE TRAPDOOR. THE BABY. THE CROWD. THE NIGHT TRAIN. THE FOG HORN. THE SCYTHE. THE CARNIVAL. THE CAROUSEL. THE DWARF. THE MIRROR MAZE. THE SKELETON.
>
> I was beginning to see a pattern in the list, in these words that I had simply flung forth on paper, trusting my subconscious to give bread, as it were, to the birds. . . . Glancing over the list, I discovered my old love and fright having to do with circuses and carnivals. I remembered, and then forgot, and then remembered again, how terrified I had been when my mother took me for my first ride on a merry-go-round. With the calliope screaming and the world spinning and the terrible horses leaping, I added my shrieks to the din. (1992, 17)

MOI: Bradbury's approach is a favorite. I call it "Nouns of Childhood" and it works especially well with first-year college students who are happy to recall childhood, so recently left behind.

> NAOMI EPEL: One morning in the spring of 1974, William Styron woke to the lingering image of a woman he had known in his early twenties. He could see her standing in a hallway, her arms full of books, the blue number of a tattoo visible beneath her sleeve. Suddenly he knew it was time to abandon the book over which he'd been laboring to tell this woman's story. He went directly to his studio and wrote the opening paragraphs of what was to become *Sophie's Choice.* (1994, 1)

RAY BRADBURY: I went on making the lists.

THE MEADOW. THE TOY CHEST. THE MONSTER. TYRANNOSAURUS REX. THE TOWN CLOCK. THE OLD MAN. THE OLD WOMAN. THE TELEPHONE. THE SIDEWALKS. THE COFFIN. THE ELECTRIC CHAIR. THE MAGICIAN. . . .

I began to run through those lists, pick a noun, and then sit down to write a long prose-poem-essay on it. (1992, 18–19)

> NATALIE GOLDBERG: It takes a while for our experience to sift through our consciousness. . . . It is hard to write about a city we just moved to; it's not yet in our body. . . . We have not lived through three winters there or seen the ducks leave in fall and return to the lakes in spring. Hemingway wrote about Michigan while sitting in a café in Paris. (1996, 14)

ERNEST HEMINGWAY: Maybe away from Paris I could write about Paris as in Paris I could write about Michigan. I did not know it was too early for that because I did not know Paris well enough. (qtd. in Goldberg 1996, 14)

> DEENA METZGER: Write anything for five minutes, it doesn't matter what. Write as if you are walking into an unknown wood, attentive to anything you might see, or poking at an indistinct mass wondering what it is, whether it is alive or dead, whether it will snarl suddenly, turn and bite. Keep writing. . . . Let the writing feel welcome. Keep writing. Don't look back. Don't edit. Don't think of what it might be, could be. Don't think. Only welcome it. Make a place for it to be. (1992, 9)

VIRGINIA WOOLF: The mind receives a myriad of impressions. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday. . . . Let us [the modern novelist] record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness. (1925, 150)

> MOI: I have used the first pages of Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* to teach, believe it or not, grammar. The entire book takes place in a single day. Clarissa Dalloway begins the day in present tense, sunshine and flowers, then imagines (in future tense) the party she will throw later that night, while recalling memories of the last time she saw some of the guests she has invited (via past tense, or flashbacks).

GRETEL EHRLICH: Writing, like being a good hand with a horse, requires wakefulness and a willingness to surrender. I try to burn away preconception and let what is actually here come in. Any act of writing is a meditation on existence. It implies stopping, breathing in and out. (1992, 178)

> CAROLYN FORCHÉ: It is possible to practice meeting the world, rather than regarding it as an object of knowledge, to leave behind the desire to appropriate experience, and begin to think in terms of relation. Levinas says that ethics is a response to the face of a stranger that *"summons me,* questions me, stirs me, provokes my response or my responsibility." This stranger is anyone *other* than ourselves. We don't write "about" the Other or another, purporting to capture, describe, render, or represent Otherness. We write out of our encounter and out of our being marked by it. (1992, 189)

DIANE JOHNSON: My impression is that, though different writers find the genesis of a novel in different ways, all are alike in their sense of having the work inside them in some potential form. The analogy to gestation is very exact. The work must be born to be known. One's sense of it beforehand is strong, yet so subvocal, so unconscious, and often so different from what the reader will find it to be about, that the possibilities of misunderstanding, between the writer and the work, and between the writer and the reader, are very great indeed. (1992, 148)

> MARGARET ATWOOD: A ratio of failures is built into the process of writing. The wastebasket has evolved for a reason. Think of it as the altar of the

> Muse Oblivion, to whom you sacrifice your botched first drafts, the tokens of your human imperfections. She is the tenth Muse, the one without whom none of the others can function. The gift she offers you is the freedom of the second chance. Or as many chances as you'll take. (1992, 152)

ELIZABETH JOLLEY: I never write a synopsis or an outline. If I did I might lose the idea before it was born. The language of the synopsis might kill the energy and rhythm of the special writing needed for the story. I often wish that in writing I could start with the first words and move smoothly on and on to the last words. Writing for me is a ragged and restless activity with scattered fragments to be pieced together rather like a patchwork quilt. I rewrite a great deal and usually write the first pages last and often put off writing the end for a long time. I cannot explain any of this. (1992, 135)

> JOY WILLIAMS: The surface of the good story is severely simple. Clean and treacherous as new ice. Below the surface is accident, chaos, uncertainty—beautiful, shifting things. I believe in the mystery of things, their spiritual rhythm. I am not interested in man-woman things much. In-out. Or love. I am interested in loneliness, obsession, desperation. Well, perhaps I am interested in love. I am not interested in woman-woman matters much. Feminist matters. Support and consolation matters. Transformation is what I'm interested in the most. What it is that is beyond and beneath things. Moments, the levels in moments. (1992, 124)

VIRGINIA WOOLF: Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and circumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? (1932, 287)

> JOHN MCPHEE: In 1846 . . . Edgar Allan Poe published an essay called "The Philosophy of Composition," in which he described the stages of thought through which he had conceived of and eventually written his poem "The Raven." The idea began in the abstract. He wanted to write something tonally somber, sad, mournful, and saturated with melancholia. He thought it should be repetitive and have a one-word refrain. He asked himself which vowel would best serve the purpose. He chose the long "o." And what combining consonant, producibly doleful and lugubrious? He settled on "r." Vowel, consonant, "o," "r." Lore. Core. Door. Lenore. Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore." Actually, he said "nevermore" was the first such word that crossed his mind. (2011, 36)

LINDA HOGAN: Poetry is a string of words that parades without a permit. It is a lockbox of words to put an ear to as we try to crack the safe of language, listening for the right combination, the treasure inside. It is life resonating. It is sometimes called Prayer, Soothsaying, Complaint, Invocation, Proclamation, Testimony, Witness. Writing is and does all these things. And like that parade, it is illegitimately insistent on going its own way, on being part of the miracle of life,

telling stories about what happened when we were cosmic dust, what it means to be stars listening to our human atoms. (1992, 79)

> BHARATI MUKHERJEE: My image of artistic structure and artistic excellence is the Moghul miniature painting with its crazy foreshortening of vanishing point, its insistence that everything happens simultaneously, bound only by shape and color. In the miniature paintings of India, there are a dozen separate foci, the most complicated stories can be rendered on a grain of rice, the corners as elaborated by the centers. There is a sense of the interpenetration of all things. (1992, 38)

CAROLYN FORCHÉ: The past leaves its residue of debris: the past itself, the world in pieces, which we fondly and in our bewilderment retrieve so as to make our meaning. We live in ruins then, which are by turns abandoned, inhabited, excavated, and destroyed. The shards of the past may be pieced together so as to comfort us with an illusion of commensurate memory. It was like this, we say, except that there were no pieces missing, and the cracks weren't visible. (1992, 181)

> MOI: I remember meeting Carolyn Forché at a writers' retreat in Taxco, Mexico, where the other teachers included Clark Blaise and Jayne Anne Phillips. On the first day I couldn't help but notice Jayne Anne's impeccable French manicure. Next day I saw that Forché had done her nails, too, and they looked splendid. That was a great trip. I learned that details matter.

HENRY JAMES: The law of the artist is the terrible law of fructification, the law of acceptance of all experience, of all suffering, of all life, of all suggestion and sensation and illumination. (qtd. in Ehrlich 1992, 179)

> GRETEL EHRLICH: A writer's imagination must be . . . filled not just with literal truths, but with the unseen, the unknown whose shy presence is felt. What's underneath the lake water, the sod-bound fields, the lid of my skull, I wonder? (1992, 175)

MAURICE SENDAK: There's a sequential order in one's unconscious life as an artist and you just follow the order. You don't question it. You could question it. You could resist it. But I don't. It's the only thing I trust. (qtd. in Epel 1994, 231)

> NATALIE GOLDBERG: It's good to go off and write a novel, but don't stop doing writing practice. It is what keeps you in tune, like a dancer who does warm-ups before dancing or a runner who does stretches before running. Runners don't say, "Oh, I ran yesterday. I'm limber." Each day they warm up and stretch. (1996, 13)

MOI: The writer has to be reasonably fit just to sit still for so many hours and not be in pain.

> JOY WILLIAMS: The writer has to maintain a curious disassociation with the world. The act of writing in itself is a highly self-conscious retreat from the world. I live in beautiful places but I have to stay cooped up in a small, almost dark room if I'm ever going to get anything done. And I have to stay there for hours and hours, day after day, making this thing, setting this

> created, unreal thing in motion, a story. The literal isn't interesting, but the literal must be perfectly, surprisingly rendered because the search is always to see things in a new way. That is essential. (1992, 122)

DIANE JOHNSON: I tend to get interested in technical or formal problems in novel-writing, and I think each of my books reflects a slightly different preoccupation, which makes each differ from the last. I think that to set oneself new problems is the only way to grow as a writer; but I know that readers, on the other hand, tend to wish you would do the same things over (until you get them right anyhow). (1992, 141)

> MARGARET ATWOOD: You learn to write by reading and writing, writing and reading. As a craft it's acquired through the apprentice system, but you choose your own teachers. Sometimes they're alive, sometimes dead. . . . As a vocation, it involves the laying on of hands. You receive your vocation and in your turn you must pass it on. Perhaps you will do this only through your work, perhaps in other ways. Either way, you're part of a community, the community of writers, the community of storytellers that stretches back through time to the beginning of human society.
>
> As for the particular human society to which you yourself belong—sometimes you'll feel you're speaking for it, sometimes—when it's taken an unjust form—against it, or for that other community, the community of the oppressed, the exploited, the voiceless. Either way, the pressures on you will be intense; in other countries, perhaps fatal. But

> even here—speak "for women," or for any other group which is feeling the boot, and there will be many at hand, both for and against, to tell you to shut up, or to say what they want you to say, or to say it a different way. Or to save them. . . . Tell what is yours to tell. Let others tell what is theirs. (1992, 154)

DIANE JOHNSON: Once you think of all the things a novel is to be about, you still have to embody it in a story. Between these two steps, a great painful chasm, a gap, a silence can prevail, at least for me. As in darkness, I grope toward the story, something to hang the aboutness on. I think the process is opposite for some writers—they think of a gripping story first, and then the complexities and moral ramifications develop as they write. (1992, 148)

> MARGARET ATWOOD: Why do you write? There's the blank page, and the thing that obsesses you. There's the story that wants to take you over and there's your resistance to it. There's your longing to get out of this, this servitude, to play hooky, to do anything else: wash the laundry, see a movie. There are words and their inertias, their biases, their insufficiencies, their glories. There are the risks you take and your loss of nerve, and the help that comes when you're least expecting it. There's the laborious revision, the scrawled-over, crumpled-up pages that drift across the floor like spilled litter. There's the one sentence you know you will save. . . . Next day there's the blank page. You give yourself up to it like a sleepwalker. Something goes on that you can't remember afterwards. You

look at what you've done. It's hopeless. . . . You begin again. It never gets any easier. (1992, 156)

NATALIE GOLDBERG: You can't depend on its going smoothly day after day. It won't be that way. You might have one day that is superb, productive, and the next time you write, you are ready to sign up on a ship headed for Saudi Arabia. There are no guarantees. You might think you have finally created a rhythm with three days running, and the next day the needle scratches the record and you squeak through it, teeth on edge. (1996, 135)

JACK KEROUAC: Be submissive to everything. Open. Listening. (qtd. in Goldberg 1996, 53)

NATALIE GOLDBERG: Listening is receptivity. The deeper you can listen, the better you can write. You take in the way things are without judgment, and the next day you can write the truth about the way things are. (1996, 53)

JACK KEROUAC: No time for poetry, but exactly what is. (qtd. in Goldberg 1996, 53)

MAURICE SENDAK: *Kenny's Window,* about a little boy's dreams, was the first book I ever actually wrote. That book was a child of therapy. I had only been in therapy for a short time so I was very concerned with the business of using dreams. I was only twenty-seven. Kenny is definitely a product of that time, and of the excitement and scariness of being analyzed. . . . This is why I approve of analysis so much: it begins to give you a certain creative power over your inner workings. Lots of artists are frightened of therapy. The creative process is such a

secret thing that they see discussing it in analysis as a form of castration. But my feeling always has been that if that's your anxiety maybe you shouldn't be an artist. Being an artist is your life, it isn't some secret thing. It's what you are. And you can't be that easily destroyed. You can't be that vulnerable. I never ever worried about that. . . . The greatest thing therapy can do is put you in contact with some element of the creative process which then you begin to develop. Therapy may not solve your life's problems, but then nothing does. (qtd. in Epel 1994, 233–234)

> DEENA METZGER: When we inhabit this inner realm, when we are with ourselves, we are participating in a vast underground world of common understanding and communality some of which may have been with us from the very beginning of time. What Carl Jung calls the collective unconscious—what I like to think of as the creative unconscious (in its communal aspect) or the imagination (in its personal aspect)—is the sea of internal and eternal values, images, cultural memories, and experiences that inform dreams and creative work while, just as often, challenging the prevailing modes of the state, the society, or community in which one lives. (1992, 6)

NATALIE GOLDBERG: Go further. Push yourself beyond when you think you are done with what you have to say. Go a little further. Sometimes when you think you are done, it is just the edge of beginning. Probably that's why we decide we're done. It's getting too scary. We are touching down onto something real. It

is beyond the point when you think you are done that often something strong comes out. (1996, 103)

> DEENA METZGER: How did the journal entries I was writing transform themselves into story? Story takes moments, links them together, finds the order inherent in their relationship, fills them out. A story has a beginning and an end, has consequences. If the journal is the jumble of raw material—blood, bones, sinews—and a poem is the cell, the impulse, the story is the entire animal. (1992, 12)

NATALIE GOLDBERG: Suddenly, after much composting, you are in alignment with the stars or the moment or the dining-room chandelier above your head, and your body opens and speaks. (1996, 15)

4B. Cartography and Exactitude:

"Reality Can Be Modeled"

The creative writer acts as a *cartographer*, attempting to map the big picture yet conscious that it may be impossible. To demonstrate the absurdity of the job, Jorge Luis Borges wrote the short fiction "On Exactitude in Science." The narrator's goal in the story is to produce "a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it" (325). Naturally, as the mapmaker worked he soon saw that "the vast Map was useless" (325). Neither the writer nor the cartographer can duplicate reality exactly, "point for point." This is not the wiki job description anyway: "Combining science, aesthetics, and technique, cartography builds on the premise that reality can be modeled in ways that communicate spatial information effectively."

The productions of writers provide the map, not the landscape. The task is not to travel the same roads as in life, or to repeat everything that has happened, but to climb to a viewpoint, to be Gornick's "instrument of illumination" (7). A well-lit landscape and a well-drawn map can "communicate spatial information effectively" to help guide us to where we want to go or need to be.

REMIX 4B: FORM AND STYLE

WILLIAM GASS: Early words were carved on a board of beech, put on thin leaves of a fiber that might be obtained from bamboo and then bound by cords, or possibly etched in ivory, or scratched on tablets made of moist clay. Signs were chiseled in

stone, inked on unsplit animal skin stretched very thin and rolled, or painted on the pith of the papyrus plant. A lot later, words were typed on paper, microfilmed, floppy-disked, Xeroxed, faxed. As we say about dying, the methods vary. Carving required considerable skill, copying a lengthy education, printing a mastery of casting—in every case, great cost—and hence words were not to be taken lightly (they might have been indeed, on lead). They were originally so rare in their appearance that texts were sought out, signs were visited like points of interest, the words themselves were worshipped; therefore the effort and expense of writing was mostly devoted to celebrating the laws of the land, recording community histories, and keeping business accounts. (2009, 327)

> BEN SHAHN: [Form] is the visible shape of all man's growth; it is the living picture of his tribe at its most primitive, and of his civilization at its most sophisticated state. Form is the many faces of the legend—bardic, epic, sculptural, musical, pictorial, architectural; it is the infinite images of religion; it is the expression and the remnant of self. Form is the very shape of content. (1957, 53)

WILLIAM GASS: These marks, each and every one, required a material which would receive them, and a space where they might spread out, since they were becoming visible for the first time, made formerly from air and as momentary as music. They were displacing themselves from their familiar source: the lips, teeth, tongue, the mouth, from which they normally emerged on their journey to an ear; for words were once formed nearly as easily as breathing, heard without effort,

taken in automatically, along with their normal surroundings, which were also essential to their understanding—the tone and timbre of the speaker's voice, a scowl or smile crossing the face like a fox across a clearing, inflections accompanied by gestures as well as confirmed or contradicted by the posture of the body—and shaped into sentences made, as Socrates suggested, by the soul who felt them first, thought them, brought them forth like symptoms of an inner state, and was responsible for them, too, accountable because the psyche itself was their author and knew well the consequences of the word when accurately aimed, when deployed like a phalanx, armored and speared. (2009, 328)

> BEN SHAHN: Form is not just the intention of content; it is the embodiment of content. Form is based, first, upon a supposition, a theme. Form is, second, a marshaling of materials, the inert matter in which the theme is to be cast. Form is, third, a setting of boundaries, of limits, the whole extent of idea, *but no more*, an outer shape of idea. Form is, next, the relating of inner shapes to the outer limits, the initial establishing of harmonies. Form is, further, the abolishing of excessive content, of content that falls outside the true limits of the theme. It is the abolishing of excessive materials, whatever material is extraneous to inner harmony, to the order of shapes now established. Form is thus a discipline, an ordering, according to the needs of content. (1957, 70)

WILLIAM GASS: I believe that the artist's fundamental loyalty must be to form, and his energy employed in the activity of making. (2009, 35)

ROLAND BARTHES: By reason of its biological origin, style resides outside art, that is, outside the pact that binds the writer to society. Authors may therefore be imagined who prefer the security of art to the loneliness of style. . . . It is the authority of style, that is, the entirely free relationship between language its fleshly double, which places the writer above History as the freshness of Innocence. (1953, 12-13)

SUSAN SONTAG: Language is the collective inventory, what is given to the writer; style is what is chosen, the "how" one renders "what one wants to write about." . . . Instead of the common-sense dualism of language (social property) and style (individual decision), Barthes proposes the triad of language, style, and "writing." (These he calls the three dimensions of "form."). (1953, xii)

BEN SHAHN: From the moment at which a painter begins to strike figures of color upon a surface he must become acutely sensitive to the feel, the textures, the light, the relationships that arise before him. At one point he will mold the material according to an intention. At another he may yield intention—perhaps his whole concept—to emerging forms, to new implications within the painted surface. Idea itself—ideas, many ideas move back and forth across his mind as a constant traffic, dominated perhaps by larger currents and directions, by what he wants to think. Thus idea rises to the surface, grows, changes as a painting grows and develops. So one must say that painting is both creative and responsive. It is an intimately communicative affair between the painter and his painting, a

> conversation back and forth, the painting telling the painter even as it receives its shape and form. (1957, 49)

WILLIAM GASS: A fully felt fictional world must be at least three-dimensional, and bounded by the Real, the Ideal, and the Romantic. But there is, as we know, a fourth dimension, and I tend to emphasize it, not only because of its neglect, but also because it is the country to which I have fled, and that safe haven is the medium itself. (2009, 50)

> BEN SHAHN: Form is formulation—the turning of content into a material entity, rendering a content accessible to others, giving it permanence, willing it to the race. Form is as varied as are the accidental meetings of nature. Form in art is as varied as idea itself. (1957, 53)

ROLAND BARTHES: Around 1850, Literature begins to face a problem of self-justification. . . . There begins to grow up an image of the writer as a craftsman who shuts himself away in some legendary place, like a workman operating at home, and who roughs out, cuts, polishes and sets his form exactly as a jeweler extracts art from his material, devoting to his work regular hours of solitary effort. (1953, 62-63)

> SUSAN SONTAG: To translate *écriture* as "writing" is literally correct, but Barthes' meaning [refers to] . . . the ensemble of features of a literary work, such as tone, ethos, rhythm of delivery, naturalness of expression, atmosphere of happiness or malaise. (1953, xiii)

GASTON BACHELARD [1958]: As soon as an art has become autonomous, it makes a fresh start. It is therefore salient to consider this start as a sort of phenomenology. On principle, phenomenology liquidates the past and confronts what is new. (1994, xxxii)

> JEAN LESCURE: Knowing must . . . be accompanied by an equal capacity to forget knowing. Non-knowing is not a form of ignorance but a difficult transcendence of knowledge. This is the price that must be paid for an oeuvre to be, at all times, a sort of pure beginning, which makes its creation an exercise in freedom. (qtd. in Bachelard 1994, xxxiii)

GASTON BACHELARD [1958]: In poetry, non-knowing is a primal condition; if there exists a skill in the writing of poetry, it is in the minor task of associating images. But the entire life of the image is in its dazzling splendor, in the fact that an image is a transcending of all the premises of sensibility. (1994, xxxiii)

> WILLIAM GASS: Point of view has to do with the deployment of pronouns, character with the establishment of linguistic centers to which and from which meanings flow; themes are built with universals, and their enrichment depends upon the significance of a text beyond its surface sense; perceptions will appear to be fresh and precise if denotation is managed well; energy is expressed by verbal beat, through sentence length and Anglo-Saxon or Latin vocabulary choice; feeling arises particularly from such things as rhythm and alliteration, although every element of language plays a role; thought is constructed out of concepts and their

> interconnections; imagination involves the management of metaphor at every level; narrative reliability rises or falls with the influence of modal operators; form can be found in the logic of the language—its grammar, scansion, symmetries, rhetorical schema, and methods of variation; and each of the qualities I have just listed, along with many others, can be used to give to a text its desirable complement of four dimensions. (2009, 51)

MIKHAIL BAKHTIN: Literary texts simply intensify certain capabilities of language that are potential in spoken speech as well: "Poetry is violence practiced on ordinary speech," to paraphrase the young Jacobson. Style in this view means the sum of the operations performed by the poet in order to accomplish the violence necessary to mark the text off as literature. (1987, xxx)

> ROLAND BARTHES: Writing is an ambiguous reality: on the one hand, it unquestionably arises from a confrontation of the writer with the society of his time; on the other hand, from this social finality, it refers the writer back, by a sort of tragic reversal, to the sources, that is to say, the instruments of creation. Failing the power to supply him with a freely consumed language, History suggests to him the demand for one freely produced. . . . It is under the pressure of History and Tradition that the possible modes of writing for a given writer are established; there is a History of Writing. But this History is dual: at the very moment when general History proposes—or imposes—new problematics of the literary language, writing still remains full of the recollection of previous usage,

> for language is never innocent: words have a second-order memory which mysteriously persists in the midst of new meanings. (1953, 16-17)

SUSAN SONTAG: Barthes isn't claiming that literature does or should exist in a social, historical, or ethical vacuum. . . . Every given mode of *écriture* owes its existence to "the writer's consideration of the social use which he has chosen for his form and his commitment to this choice." But literature, conceived as an instrumentality, cannot be confined to its social or ethical context. . . . Though the choice of a given manner of *écriture* amounts to "the choice of that social area within which the writer elects to situate the nature of his language," the writer can't place literature at the service of a social group or ethical end (as Sartre implies). (1953, xiv)

> GASTON BACHELARD [1958]: Art, then, is an increase of life, a sort of competition of surprises that stimulates our consciousness and keeps it from becoming somnolent. (1994, xxxiii)

BEN SHAHN: An artist at work upon a painting must be two people, not one. He must function and act as two people all the time and in several ways. On the one hand, the artist is the imaginer and the producer. But he is also the critic. (1957, 34)

> ROLAND BARTHES: Imagery, delivery, vocabulary spring from the body and the past of the writer and gradually become the very reflexes of his art. Thus under the name of style a self-sufficient language is evolved which has its roots only in the depths of the author's personal and secret

> mythology, that sub-nature of expression where the first coition of words and things takes place, where once and for all the great verbal themes of his existence come to be installed. Whatever its sophistication, style has always something crude about it: it is a form with no clear destination, the product of a thrust, not an intention, and, as it were, a vertical and lonely dimension of thought. Its frame of reference is biological or biographical, not historical: it is the writer's "thing," his glory and his prison, it is his solitude. Indifferent to society and transparent to it, a closer personal process, it is in no way the product of a choice or of a reflection on Literature. It is the private portion of the ritual; it rises up from the writer's myth-laden depths and unfolds beyond his area of control. It is the decorative voice of hidden, secret flesh; it works as does Necessity, as if, in this kind of floral growth, style were no more than the outcome of a blind and stubborn metamorphosis starting from a sub-language elaborated where flesh and external reality come together. Style is properly speaking a generative phenomenon, the transmutation of a Humour. (1953, 10-11)

BEN SHAHN: It became uncomfortably apparent to me that whatever one thinks as well as whatever one paints must be constantly reexamined, torn apart, if that seems to be indicated, and reassembled in the light of new attitudes or new discovery. (1957, 38)

> MIKHAIL BAKHTIN: The study of verbal art can and must overcome the divorce between an abstract "formal" approach and an equally abstract

> "ideological" approach. Form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon—social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning. (1987, 259)

BEN SHAHN: To me both subjective and objective are of paramount importance, another aspect of the problem of image and idea. The challenge is not to abolish both from art, but rather to unite them into a single impression, an image of which meaning is an inalienable part. (1957, 45)

> JACQUES DERRIDA: The miracle of the trace . . . allows us to read [an author] today and to hear his voice resonate so it can signify to us. (qtd. in Gallop 2011, 20)

JANE GALLOP: In tracing figures and images we are following precisely what we could call thought, or rather thinking—or maybe live theory. Sometimes reading the liveness of theory means attending to its moment, context, date, temporality. That is an important aspect of my practice of close reading, reading the temporal history of the text, the occasion, the revisions. This means treating theory . . . as a persistent ongoing practice *in time.* (2011, 25)

> ROLAND BARTHES: The multiplication of modes of writing is a modern phenomenon which forces a choice upon the writer, making form a kind of behaviour and giving rise to an ethic of writing. . . . Modern writing is a truly independent organism which grows around the literary act, decorates it with a value which is foreign to its intention, ceaselessly commits it to a

> double mode of existence, and superimposes upon the content of the words opaque signs which carry with them a history, a second-order meaning which compromises or redeems it, so that with the situation of thought is mingled a supplementary fate, often diverging from the former and always an encumbrance to it—the fate of the form. (1953, 84)

BEN SHAHN: Form arises in many ways. Form in nature emerges from the impact of order upon order, of element upon element, as of the forms of lightning or of ocean waves. Or form may emerge from the impact of elements upon materials, as of wind-carved rocks, and dunes. Form in living things too is the impinging of order upon order—the slow evolving of shapes according to function, and drift, and need. And other shapes—the ear, the hand—what mind could devise such shapes! The veining of leaves, of nerves, of roots; the unimaginable varieties of shape of aquatic things. (1957, 69)

> WILLIAM GASS: As I am defining it, the imagination is comparative, a model maker, bringing this and that together to see how different they are or how much the same. The imagination prefers interpenetration. That's its sex. It likes to look through one word at another, to see streets as tangled string, strings as sounding wires, wires as historically urgent words, urgent words as passing now along telephone lines, both brisk and intimate, strings which draw, on even an everyday sky, music's welcome staves. (2009, 347)

ROLAND BARTHES: Flaubert it was who most methodically laid the foundations for this conception of writing as craft. . . . On the one hand, he builds his narrative by a succession of essences, and not at all by following a phenomenological order (as Proust later does); he finalizes the uses of verbal tenses according to a convention, so as to make them perform the function of signs of Literature, in the manner of an art drawing attention to its very artificiality; he elaborates a rhythm of the written word which creates a sort of incantation and which, quite unlike the rules of spoken eloquence, appeals to a sixth, purely literary, sense, the private property of producers and consumers of Literature. . . . The writer then gives to society a self-confessed art, whose rules are visible to all, and in exchange society is able to accept the writer. (1953, 64-65)

> BEN SHAHN: Forms in art arise from the impact of idea upon material, or the impinging of mind upon material. They stem out of the human wish to formulate ideas, to recreate them into entities, so that meanings will not depart fitfully as they do from the mind, so that thinking and belief and attitudes may endure as actual things. (1957, 70)

MOI: Listening was the best way to participate here. What pleasure.

4C. Play of Imagination:

"A Tune Beyond Us, Yet Ourselves"

Wallace Stevens' 1937 poem, "The Man with the Blue Guitar," is partly inspired by Picasso's cubist paintings of blue guitars. Why does the artist paint them blue? Most guitars in reality come in shades of the wood from which they are made. The audience in the poem complains to the musician, "you do not play things as they are" (133). As they listen to the "jangling . . . metal of the strings" they concede, "But play, you must, / A tune beyond us, yet ourselves" (133).

These lines speak to the role of imagination, to our desire (at times) for more than a literal representation of what is found. Stevens is known as a metaphysical lyricist, because of the way he rhythmically, tangibly, evokes the mystery of existence *via* "things as they are." Unlike imagists and haiku poets who present the thing itself without interpretation, Stevens often ponders meaning along with the reader. Working in a post-Nietzscheian, God-less world, Stevens posits that we must look to art and poetry to fill the void where God used to be located, while acknowledging the dire challenge for art and poetry of such a role. The poem says, "Poetry / Exceeding music must take the place / Of empty heaven and its hymns, / Ourselves in poetry must take their place, / Even in the chattering of your guitar" (135). If God is not in place, then the meaningfulness formerly offered by God is *here*, among things as they are, chattering and imperfect. The poet offers the transformative image of the color blue with all its connotations, and the guitar as a musical, transporting vehicle.

GASTON BACHELARD [1960]: Imagination is not, as its etymology would suggest, the faculty of forming images of reality; it is rather the faculty of forming images which go beyond reality, which *sing* reality. (2005, 15)

> GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO: The richest events occur in us long before the soul perceives them. And, when we begin to open our eyes to the visible, we have long since committed ourselves to the invisible. (1928, 19)

GASTON BACHELARD [1960]: Here, in this commitment to the invisible, is the original poetry, the poetry that gives us our first taste for our inner destiny. It gives us a feeling of youth or youthfulness by replenishing our faculty of wonderment. True poetry is a function of awakening. (2005, 16)

> LOUISE NEVELSON: Art is everywhere, except it has to pass through a creative mind. (qtd. in Bober 1984, 124)

LEO TOLSTOY [1897]: Artistic (and also scientific) creation is such mental activity as bring dimly perceived feelings (or thoughts) to such a degree of clearness that these feelings (or thoughts) are transmitted to other people. (1960, 169)

> HENRY JAMES: One's subject is in the merest grain, the speck of truth, of beauty, of reality, scarce visible to the common eye—since, I firmly hold, a good eye for a subject is anything but usual. (1972, 72)

STEPHEN KING: Stories are relics, part of an undiscovered pre-existing world. The writer's job is to use the tools in his or her toolbox to get as much of each one out of the ground intact as possible. (2000, 163-164)

> ROBERT BLY: In many ancient works of art we notice a long floating leap at the center of the work. That leap can be described as a leap from the conscious to the unconscious, a leap from the known part of the mind to the unknown part and back to the known. (1975, 1)

JOY WILLIAMS: I was fascinated by the words in the Bible, and the stories. . . . all those words meant something other than what they appeared to mean, they were all representations of other things, things I could and couldn't imagine. Water wasn't water; seeds weren't seeds. This thrilled me. Everything, as image, was totally something else. There were levels of meanings in images, in sentences, in stories. (1992, 119)

> ROBERT BLY: We often feel elation reading Neruda because he follows some arc of association that corresponds to the inner life of the objects; so that anyone sensitive to the inner life of objects can ride with him. The links are not private, but somehow bound into nature. . . . Thought of in terms of language, then, leaping is the ability to associate fast. In a great ancient or modern poem, the considerable distance between the associations, the distance the spark has to leap, gives the lines their bottomless feeling, their space, and the speed of the association increases the excitement of the poetry. (1975, 4)

JAN MORRIS: The essence of my work, whether it deals with the past or the present, whether it is fact or fiction, is detachment—not alienation or estrangement, merely standing separate. (1992, 75)

GASTON BACHELARD [1960]: Imagination is always considered to be the faculty of *forming* images. But it is rather the faculty of *deforming* the images offered by perception, of freeing ourselves from the immediate images; it is especially the faculty of *changing* images. If there is not a changing of images, an unexpected union of images, there is no imagination, no *imaginative action.* If a *present* image does not recall an *absent* one, if an occasional image does not give rise to a swarm of aberrant images, to an explosion of images, there is no imagination. There is perception or memory of a perception, familiar memory, the habit of colors and forms. (2005, 17)

ROBERT BLY: Often in *Harmonium,* [Wallace Stevens'] first book, the *content o*f the poem lies in the *distance* between what Stevens was given as fact, and what he then imagined. The farther a poem gets from its initial worldly circumstance without breaking the thread, the more content it has. (1975, 14)

WILLIAM BLAKE: The imagination is not a State; it is the Human Existence itself. (qtd. in Bachelard 2005, 19)

LEONARD COHEN: Return, spirit, to this lowly place. Come down. There is no path where you project yourself. Come down; from here you can look at the sky. From here you can begin to climb. Draw back your songs from the middle air where you cannot follow it. Close down these shaking towers you have built toward your vertigo. You do not know how to bind your heart to the skylark, or your eyes to the hardened blue hills. Return to the sorrow in which you have hidden your truth.

Kneel here, search here, with both hands, the cat's cradle of your tiny distress. Listen to the one who has not been wounded, the one who says, "It is not good that man should be alone." Recall your longing to the loneliness where it was born, so that when she appears, she will stand before you, not against you. Refine your longing here, in the small silver music of her preparations, under the low-built shelter of repentance. (1984, 33)

> MOI: I am in the pink cathedral in San Miguel de Allende, kneeling and praying with strangers in Spanish. This is one place in the world where I kneel.

ROBERT BLY: *Duende* involves a kind of elation when death is present in the room; it is associated with "dark" sounds, and when a poet has *duende* inside him, he brushes past death with each step, and in that presence associates fast. (Samuel Johnson remarked that there was nothing like a sentence of death in half an hour to wonderfully clear the mind.) The gypsy flamenco dancer is associating fast when she dances, and so is Bach writing his cantatas. (1975, 29)

> MOI: This must be why I love San Miguel de Allende so much. Death walks through the plaza on ten-foot stilts. Children eat skulls made of pink sugar. Tiny, painted skeletons drive buses, get married, play the saxophone. Death has a smile on his face. Death is not a stranger.

FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA: To help us seek the *duende*, there are neither maps nor discipline. All one knows is that it burns the blood like powdered glass; that it

exhausts, that it rejects all the sweet geometry one has learned, that it breaks with all styles. (qtd. in Bly 1975, 29)

> ARTHUR RIMBAUD: The Poet becomes a seer through a long, immense and carefully reasoned disordering of all the senses. The poet must subject himself to a self-instigated torture; he must undergo all the agonies of love, suffering, and madness. He needs all his faith, all his superhuman force, and he will become the great sick man, the great criminal, the great cursed sinner—and the supreme Wise Man, since he'll have reached the Unknown. (qtd. in White 2008, 51)

LEWIS HYDE: It is especially by our "likes and dislikes," [John] Cage says, that we cut ourselves off from the wider mind (and the wider world). Likes and dislikes are the lap dogs and guard dogs of the ego, busy all the time, panting and barking at the gates of attachment and aversion and thereby narrowing perception and experience. Furthermore, the ego itself cannot intentionally escape what the ego does—intention always operates in terms of desire or aversion—and we therefore need a practice or discipline of *non*intention, a way to make an end run around the ego's habitual operations. (1996, 393)

> CARL JUNG: The unconscious helps by communicating things to us, or making figurative allusions. It has other ways, too, of informing us of things that by all logic we could not possibly know. Consider synchronistic phenomena, premonitions, and dreams that come true. (1965, 302)

GERTRUDE STEIN [1931]: If any one dreams of the ocean they will dream of little waves. (1995, 389)

> MILAN KUNDERA: Chance and chance alone has a message for us. Everything that occurs out of necessity, everything expected, repeated day in and day out, is mute. Only chance can speak to us. We read its messages much as gypsies read the images made by coffee grounds at the bottom of a cup. (1984, 48)

HENRY JAMES: Such is the interesting truth about the stray suggestion, the wandering word, the vague echo, at touch of which the novelist's imagination winces as at the prick of some sharp point: its virtue is all in its needle-like quality, the power to penetrate as finely as possible. (qtd. in Dyer 2005, 72)

> GERTRUDE STEIN [1931]: How do you feel. About it. This way that there is no connection. Between it and just why just as in an ending that there is a fix to be sent to leave or be sent. Say well. Well. (1995, 392)

DOROTHEA LANGE: To know ahead of time what you're looking for means you're then only photographing your own preconceptions, which is very limiting… It is fine for a photographer to work completely without plan and just photograph that to which he instinctively responds. (qtd. in Dyer 2005, 6)

> EDWARD WESTON: A photograph is not an interpretation, a biased opinion of what nature should be, but a revelation, — an absolute, impersonal recognition of the significance of facts. (qtd. in Dyer 2005, 65)

ROLAND BARTHES: Sometimes . . . the *punctum* is revealed only after the fact, when the photograph is no longer in front of me and I think back on it. I may know better a photograph I remember than a photograph I am looking at, as if direct vision oriented its language wrongly, engaging it in an effort of description which will always miss its point of effect, the *punctum.* (2010, 53)

> GERTRUDE STEIN [1931]: It is to be a study of how to say they were asking if it is what they said. It makes no difference. Longer louder. All in all. Bother and other. Oh the heavenly scent. (1995, 392)

ROLAND BARTHES: A detail overwhelms the entirety of my reading . . . by the mark of *something*, the photograph is no longer "anything whatever." This *something* has triggered me, has provoked a tiny shock, a *satori*, the passage of a void. (2010, 49)

> LEWIS HYDE: Trickster . . . knows how to slip through pores, and how to block them; he confuses polarity by doubling back and reversing himself; he covers his tracks and twists their meanings; and he is polytropic, changing his skin or shifting his shape as the situation requires. (1999, 62)

HENRY JAMES: Ah, the terrible law of the artist . . . the law, in short, of the acceptance of all experience, of all suffering, of *all* life, of *all* suggestion and sensation and illumination. (qtd. in Dyer 2005, 88)

> GERTRUDE STEIN [1931]: It must be known. (1995, 392)

MARK DOTY: We live in a felt narrative progression, through which experience is transformed into memory. And memory edits its records of the past like a brilliant

auteur—cutting, juxtaposing, creating a pace determined by the direction and emotion of a story. What is memory but a story about how we have lived? (2010, 22)

> CAROL PEARSON: Our experience quite literally is defined by our assumptions about life. We make stories about the world and to a large degree live out their plots. What our lives are like depends to great extent on the script we consciously, or more likely, unconsciously, have adopted. (1989, xxv)

GASTON BACHELARD [1960]: There are, of course, works in which the two image-producing forces cooperate; indeed, it is impossible to separate them completely. The most mobile, the most changing reverie, the one entirely given over to forms, nonetheless keeps a ballast, a density, a slowness, a germination. On the other hand, any poetic work which descends deeply enough into the germ of being to find the solid constancy and fine monotony of matter, any poetic work which derives its force from the vigilant action of a substantial cause, must still flower, must adorn itself. For the initial seduction of the reader, it must embrace the exuberance of formal beauty. As a result of this need to seduce, the imagination most often operates where joy goes—or at least where *a* joy goes!—in the direction of forms and colors, of varieties and metamorphoses, of the probable shapes of future surfaces. (2005, 11)

> ROBERT GOTTLIEB: [Isadora Duncan] was constantly studying the sources of movement and refining her own liberating approach to dance, which

> she claimed to have discovered in the waves breaking on California shores, in the art of ancient Greece, in the ideas of Whitman, Nietzsche, and Wagner. Wherever she went, she proclaimed her aesthetic, both from the stage and in writing. Her costumes were scant, but she was shrouded in her lofty ideas: "Art which is not religious is not art, is mere merchandise," [Duncan claimed]. Within a short time she was being proclaimed as a profound revolutionary spirit. (2008, 546)

ROBERT BLY: [William Blake] maintained that living open to animal instincts was precisely "innocence;" children were innocent exactly because they moved back and forth between the known and unknown minds with a minimum of fear. To write well, you must "become like little children." (1975, 2)

> ELLEN SIEGELMAN: The metaphor-making capacity seems to wane when the child enters school and throughout the elementary-school years. . . . In general, this is a time of industriousness and rule-boundedness. (1990, 9)

MARK DOTY: There is another sort of temporality, too, which is timelessness. In this lyric time we cease to be aware of forward movement; lyric is concerned neither with the impingement of the past nor with anticipation of events to come. It represents instead a slipping out of story and into something still more fluid, less linear: the interior landscape of reverie. This sense of time originates in childhood, before the conception of causality and the solidifying of our temporal sense into an orderly sort of progression. . . . Such a state of mind is "lyric" not because it is musical (though the representation of these states of mind usually is)

but because we are seized by a moment that suddenly seems edgeless, unbounded. The parts of a narrative are contiguous, each connecting to the previous instant and the next, but the lyric moment is isolate. Though it most often seems to begin in concentration, in wholly giving oneself over to experiencing an object, such a state leads toward an unpointed awareness, a free-floating sense of self detached from context, agency, and lines of action. (2010, 23)

> GIORGIO DE CHIRICO [1899]: Everything has two aspects: the current aspect, which we see nearly always and which ordinary men see, and the ghostly and metaphysical aspect, which only rare individuals may see in moments of clairvoyance and metaphysical abstraction. . . . A work of art must narrate something that does not appear within its outline. The objects and figures represented in it must likewise poetically tell you of something that is far away from them and also of what their shapes materially hide from us. (qtd. in Goldwater and Traves 1945, 440)

GASTON BACHELARD [1960]: It has often been said that the child contains all possibilities. As children, we were painters, modelers, botanists, sculptors, architects, hunters, explorers. What has become of all that? At the very heart of maturity, however, there is a means of regaining these lost possibilities. A means? What! I might be a great painter? — Yes, You might be a great painter a few hours a day. — I might create masterworks? — Yes, you might create wonderful masterpieces, works which would give *you* the direct joy of wonderment, which would take you back to the happy time when the world was a source of wonder.

That means is literature. One has but to *write* the painted work. One has but to *write* the statue. Pen in hand—if only we are willing to be sincere—we regain all the powers of youth, we re-experience these powers as they used to be, in their naïve assurance, with their rapid, linear, sure joys. Through the channel of *literary imagination,* all the arts are ours. A beautiful adjective, well placed, in the right light, sounding in the proper harmony of vowels, is all we need for substance. (2005, 101)

5.

THE PEDAGOGY:

CAN CREATIVE WRITING BE TAUGHT?

5A. Opposing Forces:

"Energy, Rebellion, and Desire"

Alicia Ostriker was my first professor at Rutgers University and was wearing suede pants and smoking a cigarette in the classroom (!) on my first day of college in 1973. She had just returned from summer in India so she exuded an air of enlightenment as well as cool, and seemed to me in that first impression, and increasingly so as the semester (and our lives) went on, the embodiment of knowledge of both the sacred and the profane. A poet/scholar who gave her students permission to write about what matters to us, whatever it is, trivial or profound, she also taught us how often both reside in the same place. In addition to her own exemplary poetry, *Dancing at the Devil's Party* is among Alicia Ostriker's scholarly works that unfold this teaching about duality, invoked in its subtitle: *Essays on Poetry, Politics, and the Erotic.* On the first page she quotes William Blake's remark from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell:* "The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it." Ostriker goes on:

> All art depends on opposition between God and the devil, reason and energy. The true poet (the good poet) is necessarily the partisan of energy, rebellion, and desire, and is opposed to passivity, obedience, and the authority of reason, laws, and institutions. (2)

Ostriker also introduced us to poet John Keats and his seminal idea of *negative capability*: the ability to hold in the mind two opposing ideas without reaching after fact or reason. Then she brought us to Whitman, who echoes Keats: "Do I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself." Negative capability allows, even courts, images of paradox: terror/awe, beauty/suffering, God/Devil, yin/yang. Negative capability may also be defined as a mind-state of openness, emptying the mind to make space to be filled. These were key ideas to be introduced to early, as it takes a lifetime to grasp them. "Opposing Forces" later became the title of a freshman English course I taught at California College of the Arts, so I carry forward to student writers these primal notions, that the drama of any story is derived from the tension inherent in the endlessly rocking balance of opposing forces: sacred/profane, empty/full, present/past, nature/the city, solitude/belonging, me/you, life/death.

REMIX 5A: WORKSHOP CULTURE

CHRIS GREEN: The practice of creative writing formed in three central moments: experiential education and John Dewey in the 1920s; coming of age with the New Criticism in the 1930s and 1940s; and gaining professional institutional status in the expressivism of the late 1960s. . . . The proliferation of writing programs began with the return of the GI's after World War II. It was not until 1967, however, that the Associated Writing Programs was formed . . . and today, there are 320 college and university programs. (2001, 157)

ANIS SHIVANI: The MFA programs are killing writing in this country. (2011, 19)

MOI: I have thought this at times, though I teach in these programs.

FRANCINE PROSE: Long before the idea of a writer's conference was a glimmer in anyone's eye, writers learned by reading the work of their predecessors. They studied meter with Ovid, plot construction with Homer, comedy with Aristophanes; they honed their prose style by absorbing the lucid sentences of Montaigne and Samuel Johnson. And who could have asked for better teachers: generous, uncritical, blessed with wisdom and genius, as endlessly forgiving as only the dead can be? (2007, 3)

MADISON SMART BELL: Academic scholarship has abdicated its interest in contemporary literature in favor of myopic concentration on critical theory. This change is quite a major one. When the New Criticism was in its prime, academic critics were pretty obliged to pay at least some direct attention to the contemporary literature surrounding them. (qtd. in Hutner et al. 1999, 226)

ANIS SHIVANI: Contemporary American fiction has become cheap counseling to the bereaved bourgeois. Its scope is restricted too much to the trivial domestic sphere. It promotes grief, paralysis, inaction: a determinism for the post-politics society, where ideology has no place. Mired in appreciation of beautiful (or rather prettified) language for its own sake,

> without connection to ideology . . . serious fiction today has lost any connection with a wide, appreciative readership. (2011, 12)

CHRIS GREEN: Rising out of the era of John Dewey, most creative writing workshops today practice a radical pedagogy utilizing recursive, opportunistic instruction via decentralized authority (i.e., students teach and learn from each other) based on student-directed, hands-on involvement. Class members come to know each other and form a community as they gain trust and intimacy through offering their work to the class for consideration and take on the responsibility of thoughtfully critiquing the work so offered. (2001, 158)

> JUDITH HARRIS: How can a student write as a self without first formulating a social context in which to express the personal? Even the most personal registry of utterance is implicitly a response to the social context determined by subjectivity. Thus the idiosyncratic ways in which a creative writer structures his or her speech is a personal signature that distinguishes one student's work from another's and makes headway into the larger discourse community. (2001, 176)

ANIS SHIVANI: The younger fiction writers today . . . are themselves entirely self-constructed as bourgeois citizens, playing by the rules of the publishing game, pursuing their grants and promotions and accolades from wherever they might come, hungry for any scrap of attention from the limited sources each niche is likely to offer them. Writers today are polite, sociable, inoffensive, wanting to

spark no controversy, staying clear of any dangerous, big, meaningful ideas, even at the expense of their own increased commercial viability. (2011, 14)

> JUDITH HARRIS: Both creative writing and composition pedagogy should be allied in their concern for the positive effects that personal expression (which is also, emphatically, connected to a social context) can have, and in acknowledging psychoanalytic theory's usefulness in understanding student writing. Introspective writing, in fact, helps students to be more self-critical and therefore more tolerant of others within a social context such as the classroom. Tolerance comes from firsthand experience in writing: one must tolerate one's own mistakes while correcting them. (2001, 189)

FRANCINE PROSE: One essential and telling difference between learning from a style manual and learning from literature is that any how-to book will, almost by definition, tell you *how not* to write. In that way, manuals of style are a little like writing workshops, and have the same disadvantage—a pedagogy that involves warnings about what might be broken and directions on how to fix it—as opposed to learning from literature, which teaches by positive model. (2007, 44)

> MOI: Who is it that recommends starting your day of writing by typing someone else's great prose, so that the feeling of good writing is in your fingertips when you move on to write your own words?

STEVE ALMOND: In the beginning was the word, and the word was uttered by a storyteller. His myths and histories offered a unified version of (among other things) our origins, the codes by which we should live, and our mortal fate.

Eventually these stories were preserved, duplicated and made portable as written works. The teller was supplanted by the writer, who, in an effort to bridge the gap between him and his audience, deployed a figure called the narrator. (2013, 45)

> JUDITH HARRIS: The personal is not public until the enclosed circuit of mind pressing on paper, and work pressing on mind, is opened up to include an audience. (2001, 187)

MARJORIE GARBER: Matthew Arnold considered knowledge of literature to be beneficial not only to the critical thinking and moral health of the individual but also to a program of social advancement. . . . Today that sense has [been] replaced by expertise in science and in information technology, on the one hand, and by visual literacy on the other. By *visual*, what is now meant is moving images (films, videos, television, MTV, advertising) as well as paintings and photographs. (2012, 13)

> STEVE ALMOND: I continue to receive stories [from creative writing students] that are long on vivid camera work and short on coherence. These manuscripts all lack the same thing: an effective narrator. . . . Initially, I attributed this pattern to the modern pedagogy of creative writing—specifically the sustained dogma against exposition, which finds its purest expression in the mantra "show, don't tell." My teaching years made it clear that students were also mimicking—consciously and unconsciously—the dazzling visual media of film and television. (2013, 44)

JIM HARRISON: I have grave doubts if so-called “creative writing” has a place in the university where peer pressure has tended to construe a uniform product and the MFA has become a somewhat suspect license. Of course the university is ultimately the place writers might turn to for fair judgment given the utter venality of the marketplace and many of the reviewing mediums. It is also pleasant to see the immodest silliness of deconstructionism disappear. (qtd. in Hutner et al. 1999, 276)

> ANIS SHIVANI: These stories *[Best New American Voices 2007]* are so very good, they’re intolerably bad. Competence without genius has killed the modern American literary short story. These meet every last requirement of the well-made story, but there is no soul, no emotion worth speaking of. In fact, [editor] Sue Miller’s Introduction takes note of Flannery O’Connor’s comment that “the short story as a medium is in danger of dying of competence.” The emerging writers showcased here, in this anthology representing the best of the writing programs, conferences, and colonies, have mastered the formula for successfully published and awarded literary stories in much the same fashion that consumers of writing manuals first found success publishing stories with slick commercial magazines in the twenties and thirties. (2011, 143)

GORDON HUTNER: We need to learn a good deal more about the wealth, scope, and terrain of contemporary writing than we already know, need to learn about the

dozens of new writers who appear annually and who risk being silenced—not for reasons of race, gender, or class, but because they have been mid-listed. As much as we can, we must try to wrest away the authority for such evaluations from the multimedia conglomerates and return it to readers who understand the literary values of the past and the present. (1999, 219)

> MADISON SMART BELL: I see myself as working in near perfect isolation rather than as participating in any group or class project, and I suspect that most American artists and writers (with the exception of popular musicians and some poets) see themselves similarly. (qtd. in Hutner et al. 1999, 221)

GAIL GODWIN: As a fiction writer I would ask [academic critics] to show us to ourselves more. Put more contemporary fiction into your syllabi. Review more contemporary fiction and place it in historic and cultural contexts; show living writers where their novels are coming from out of the tradition and suggest where, on the evidence of the voices in these novels and stories, our culture might be heading. (qtd. in Hutner et al. 1999, 262)

> MARJORIE GARBER: The specific contribution of literary studies to intellectual life inheres in the way it *differs from* other disciplines—in its methodology and in its aim—rather than from the way it *resembles* them. What literary scholars can offer to the readers of all texts (not just those explicitly certified as literature) is a way of *asking literary questions:* questions about the *way* something means, rather than *what* it means, or

> even why. It is not that literary studies is uninterested in the what and the why—in recent years, such questions have preoccupied scholars whose models are drawn from adjacent disciplines like history and social science. But literariness, which lies at the heart of literary studies, is a matter of style, form, genre, and verbal interplay, as well as of social and political context—not only the realm of reference and context but also intrinsic structural elements like grammar, rhetoric, and syntax; tropes and figures; assonance and echo. (2012, 57)

ANIS SHIVANI: There isn't in these workshop productions *[Best New American Voices 2007]* a single searing note of anger at the world's poverty and injustice, the vast bridge between classes and nations' degree of affluence; American consumerism owns the world, and the narrative strategies of these authors smoothly reinforce this unalterable given. (2011, 150)

> MARJORIE GARBER: We do literature a real disservice if we reduce it to knowledge or to use, to a problem to be solved. If literature solves problems, it does so by its own inexhaustibility, and by its ultimate refusal to be applied or used, even for moral good. This refusal, indeed, is literature's most moral act. At a time when meanings are manifold, disparate, and always changing, the rich possibility of interpretation—the happy resistance of the text to ever be fully known and mastered—is one of the most exhilarating products of human culture. (2012, 30)

STEVE ALMOND: These [student] manuscripts reflect a more fundamental cultural shift. In evolving from readers to viewers, we've lost our grip on the essential virtues embodied by a narrator: the capacity to make sense of the world, both around and inside us. (2013, 44)

> CHRIS GREEN: At question in creative writing classrooms are the limits and possibilities of audience, circumstance, and rhetoric. A single poetry does not exist in America: instead there are many poetries for many readerships. (2001, 153)

ANIS SHIVANI: Readership has been declining because the writing product addresses itself not to a global audience of the future but to limited niches, as per the dictums of the marketing mavens of the publishing industry. Niches are self-limiting, doomed to obsolescence as soon as they are categorized as such, always in danger of future subdivision. The true writer exceeds these niches in every venture of his, contemptuous of the notion of history as that which is already known. (2011, 160)

> MARJORIE GARBER: [What] are the primary meanings of words like *assessment* and *outcome* when they are deployed in the context of an institutional review? . . . Poems and novels do not have answers that are immutably true; they do not themselves constitute a realm of knowledge production. Instead, they raise questions, they provoke thought, they produce ideas and generate arguments, they give rise to more poems and more novels. The impact of a poem might be answered with Emily

Dickinson's phrase about feeling that the top of her head has been taken off, but this is not a reliably replicable result. And yet scientists and social scientists will often join poets, writers, critics, and general readers in saying that literature and the arts are what they are saving the world *for*. (2012, 28)

5B. Complex Perspectives:

"Tell It Slant"

Regarding the truth, Emily Dickinson famously recommends:

Tell all the Truth but tell it slant---

. . . . . .

The Truth must dazzle gradually

Or every man be blind--- (107)

As readers and writers we approach our texts line by line, page by page, bird by bird. The writer may wish to tell all the truth, "to embody the whole knowable world around me" (Williams, *Paterson,* vii), but how? To "tell it slant" might mean looking in on the truth from a number of angles, to set the truth on its side, push it off balance, let it be unstable. Some truths are too much for the reader to take on all at once, so "dazzle gradually," let it unfold in the course of events. Dickinson advocates surprise, which can only emerge after a period of withholding and suspenseful anticipation, of wondering what comes next.

Creative nonfiction respects truth as its imperative, yet, as noted, truth is a complex concept. The so-called fourth genre (creative nonfiction) resides more or less at the center of a truth spectrum ranging from the subjective introspection of journals to the objective reportage of journalism. Anne Fadiman frames a few genres on the truth spectrum in this way:

> Today's readers encounter plenty of critical essays (more brain than heart) and plenty of personal—very personal—essays (more heart than brain), but not many familiar essays (equal measures of both). (xi)

Fadiman claims the familiar essay's heyday was the early nineteenth century, and she describes how it was:

> The familiar essayist didn't speak to the millions; he spoke to *one* reader. . . . His viewpoint was subjective, his frame of reference concrete, his style digressive, his eccentricities conspicuous, and his laughter usually at his own expense. And though he wrote about himself, he also wrote about a *subject*, something with which he was so familiar, and about which he was often so enthusiastic, that his words were suffused with a lover's intimacy. (x)

Here, the subjective "I" voice is not introspective but focused outward, a personal lens (small and socially constructed though it may be) through which to view the world (large and complex as it is). The writer straddles these territories, negotiating and making conscious—in fact, *materializing*—unconscious processes, assumptions, values, and patterns of thinking in the act of creation. This is why the practice of writing can serve the writer's psychic needs, and at the same time potentially move readers to their own self-analysis. Unearthing, revealing, discovering, re-contextualizing, we remake chaos and complexity not into order but into a multidimensional presentation of the world as-it-is, seen from multiple angles.

The memoir writer's innate desire to impose a personal point of view on everything can become a kind of stranglehold limitation, as oppressive in its way as the supposedly objective voice of the scholar or journalist. Can we eliminate point of view entirely, offer up the world-as-it-is, unfiltered by consciousness? Mid-twentieth-century, the French "new novelist" Alain Robbe-Grillet tried this, describing interiors of rooms, bodies moving through space and time, riffling papers on desks, and character tableaux, *without emotion.* As a young creative writing major in graduate school toward the end of the century, I longed to escape my own subjectivity and write like R-G, but my natural urge to locate meaning beyond *narcissism* (my own life, my own deaths) AND beyond *reproduction* of the world's smooth surfaces eventually felt stifled by such rigid objectivity. The idea of a Third Way has intrigued me ever since I read *Siddhartha* in high school and Alan Watts in college, and I have studied Buddhism and other spiritual traditions ever since, which teach us how to read and write (and live) with detachment as well as love.

REMIX 5B: TRUTHS AND ETHICS

PHILIP GERARD: [The essence of creative nonfiction is] stories that carry both literal truthfulness and a larger Truth, told in a clear voice, with grace, and out of a passionate curiosity about the world. (qtd. in Bloom 2003, 278)

FELIPE FERNÁNDEZ-ARMESTO: At the earliest times we can know about, it was usual for truth to be understood as registered emotionally or by non-

> sensory and non-rational kinds of perception. Pre-literate societies—I suggest, on the basis of anthropological evidence—understood truth in this way, as did some early literate ones. (1999, 6)

DAVID SHIELDS: Anything processed by memory is fiction. . . . [Readers need to] make their peace with this and there will be less argument over the questions regarding the memoir's relation to the "facts" and "truth." (2010, 57)

> LINCOLN MICHAEL: I am skeptical readers will ever make their peace with this because what readers want from nonfiction *is* the truth, *is* facts (2010)

FERN KUPFER: The question of lying comes up all the time in the creative nonfiction classes I teach. Iowa State is a tech-ag-engineering kind of place, and most of my students are fairly literal-minded. "But that's how it happened," they sometimes say [when] I suggest changes that would tighten a narrative and pep up the prose. "Your memoir shouldn't read as slowly as real life," I tell them. We need to give memoir writers permission to lie, but only when the reconstructed version of the story does not deceive the reader in its search for the aesthetic truth. (1996, 292)

> JONATHAN LETHEM: We writers aren't sculpting in DNA, or even clay or mud, but words, sentences, paragraphs, syntax, voice; materials issued by tongue or fingertips but which upon release dissolve into the atmosphere, into cloud, confection, specter. Language, as a vehicle, is a lemon, a hot rod painted with thrilling flames but crazily erratic to drive, riddled with bugs like innate self-consciousness, embedded metaphors and symbols,

> helpless intertextuality, and so forth. Despite being regularly driven on prosaic errands (interoffice memos, supermarket receipts, etc), it tends to veer on its misaligned chassis into the ditch of abstraction, of dream. (2007, xxi)

PATRICIA HAMPL: Memoir is a peculiarly open form, inviting broken and incomplete images, half-recollected fragments, all the mass (and mess) of detail. It offers to shape this confusion—and, in shaping, of course, it necessarily creates a work of art, not a legal document. But then, even legal documents are only valiant attempts to consign the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth to paper. Even they remain versions. (1999, 33)

> DAVID SHIELDS: What does it matter if [James] Frey actually spent the few nights in prison he writes about in his book *[A Million Little Pieces]?* . . . Fake jail time was merely a device to get a point across, a plausible situation in which to frame his suffering. (2010, 132)

LINCOLN MICHAEL: Note: Frey actually invented a three-month jail stay. . . . Using fictional elements as devices to create a plausible narrative for the author to frame his feelings . . . isn't that just a description of a novel? (2010)

> TONI MORRISON: The crucial distinction for me is not the distinction between fact and fiction, but the distinction between fact and truth. Because facts can exist without human intelligence, but truth cannot. So if I'm looking to find and expose a truth about the interior life of people who didn't write it . . . if I'm trying to fill in the blanks that the slave narratives

> left—to part the veil that was so frequently drawn, to implement the stories that I heard—then the approach that's most productive and most trustworthy for me is the recollection that moves from the image to the text. Not from the text to the image. . . . The images that float around them—the remains, so to speak, at the archeological site—surface first, and they surface so vividly and so compellingly that I acknowledge them as my route to a reconstruction of a world, to an exploration of an interior life that was not written and to the revelation of a kind of truth. (qtd. in Zinsser 1998, 192; 194; 195)

LYNN BLOOM: Writers of creative nonfiction live—and die—by a single ethical standard, to render faithfully, as Joan Didion says in "On Keeping a Notebook," "how it felt to me" (134), their understanding of both the literal and the larger Truth. That standard, and that alone, is the writer's ethic of creative nonfiction. In contrast to the official story, creative nonfiction presents the unauthorized version, tales of personal and public life that are very likely subversive of the records and thus of the authority of the sanctioned tellers. (2003, 278)

> PATRICIA HAMPL: *Write about what you know.* This instruction from grade school was the first bit of writing advice I was ever given. Terrific—that was just what I wanted to do. But privately, in a recess of my personality I could not gain access to by wish or by will, I was afraid this advice was a lie, concocted and disseminated nationwide by English teachers. The real, the secret, commandment was, *Write about what matters*. (1999, 198)

BEN YAGODA: More than at any time since the heyday of the slave narrative, an autobiography was expected to be a testament, containing an account that shined a light on suffering, exposed wrongdoing, or, more broadly, advanced a cause. A tale of one's own experience—whether surviving a historical conflagration, enduring racial discrimination, or confronting personal or family demons—was the coin of the realm. (2010, 244)

> LINCOLN MICHAEL: The question is what does the label "nonfiction" add to a piece? What would be gained by relabeling Frederick Exley's magnificent *A Fan's Notes* a memoir? What purpose would it serve to publish Lydia Davis's brilliant contemplations as essays instead of stories? It is a question, I think, of "authority." If you are publishing something as nonfiction, you are borrowing part of your authority from reality, from its relation to truth. This is not a slight against nonfiction, for it is asking to be judged on those grounds as well. If you publish a work of prose as fiction you are asking for it to be judged as one would judge a painting, a song, or a poem. (2010)

KENNETH GOLDSMITH: In Barthes' seminal essay "The Death of the Author" . . . he made a distinction between literature and autobiography, saying that, for instance, "If we were to discover, after admiring a series of books extolling courage and moral fidelity, that the man who wrote them was a coward and a lecher, this would not have the slightest effect on their literary quality. We might regret this

insincerity, but we should not be able to withhold our admiration for his skill as writer." (2011, 142)

> SALMAN RUSHDIE: Art's power comes from its contradictoriness. It both is and is not a part of reality; it both is and is not a representation of reality; it both acts on and is irrelevant to politics and history. . . . By equating literature with politics, Iran and the whole Middle East have turned reality into a Wonderland world where novels cause riots and writers must hide in fear of their lives. (qtd. in Steiner 1995, 117)

WENDY STEINER: Rushdie insists on a whole series of subtle and not-so-subtle distinctions between art and the world. If one imagines and represents the words of those who insulted the Prophet, one is not thereby insulting the Prophet oneself. Exposing the rigidity and sexism of Islam in a fiction is not the same as trying to destroy the faith. . . . Fiction uses facts as a starting-place and then spirals away to explore its real concerns, which are only tangentially historical. Not to see this, to treat fiction as if it were fact, is to make a serious mistake of categories. The case of *The Satanic Verses* [by Salman Rushdie] may be one of the biggest category mistakes in literary history. (1995, 120)

> SALMAN RUSHDIE: The idea that this is somehow an attack on . . . religion shows an absolute failure to understand what fiction is. After all, the names are changed, and most or all of the action takes place as dream or delusion. *The Satanic Verses* is art, not theology. (qtd. in Steiner 1995, 118)

T. S. ELIOT [1921]: When you read literature, it is as literature you must read it and not as another thing. (1975, 156)

> SALMAN RUSHDIE: Let me be clear. I am not trying to say that *The Satanic Verses* is "only a novel" and thus need not be taken seriously. . . . I do not believe that novels are trivial matters. The ones I care most about are those which attempt radical reformulations of language, form, and ideas . . . to see the world anew. (qtd. in Steiner 1995, 120)

WENDY STEINER: Fiction is not history, religion, political plot, violence, or immorality. At its best, it changes both language and our ideas of the world. But if we are attentive to what Rushdie has said elsewhere about the constructedness of reality, then in changing our ideas about the world it changes the world. And since the world is history, religion, political plotting, violence, and immorality, if affects all these. (1995, 120-121)

> LYNN BLOOM: Where living people are concerned there can be virtue in protecting the innocent, the vulnerable, the voiceless, private people who would be destroyed if their inmost secrets were betrayed. This is an ethical issue I suspect all scrupulous writers of creative nonfiction and biographers of living people contend with routinely—and resolve differently, on a case-by-case basis. (2003, 279)

PATRICIA HAMPL: The truth memoir has to offer is not neatly opposite from fiction's truth. Its methods and habits are different, and it is perhaps a more perverse genre than the novel. It seems to be about an individual self, but it is

revealed as a minion of memory, which belongs not only to the personal world but to the public realm. As such, the greatest memoirs tend to be allergic to mere confession and mistrustful of revenge, though these are two of the genre's natural impulses. (1999, 205)

> LYNN BLOOM: To be credible the writer of creative nonfiction has to play fair. This is a statement of both ethics and aesthetics. The presentation of the truth the writer tells, however partisan, cannot seem vindictive or polemical. (2003, 284)

MOI: My 85-year-old student and friend, Minnette, is adamant that being vindictive is what writing is for. She believes that getting back at those who have harmed us is a perfectly fine use for the medium.

> JAMES ATLAS: The unstable authorial "I" that came under assault in English departments across the land during the '70s and '80s now occupies center stage. . . . Why this pull toward the anatomy of self? In part, it reflects a phenomenon pervasive in our culture—people confessing in public to an audience of voyeurs. In an era when "Oprah" reigns supreme and 12-step programs have been adopted as the new mantra, it's perhaps only natural for literary confession to join the parade. We live in a time when the very notion of privacy, of a zone beyond the reach of public probing, has become an alien concept. (1996)

MOI: Our relationship to privacy has changed drastically since the turn of the 21st century. Even if we want to, our ability to keep the facts of our lives private has

been usurped absolutely by the Google algorithm, public video surveillance, and cell phone cameras. Before I know what hits me, I have been posted to Facebook without my knowledge, and not looking my best.

> PATRICIA HAMPL: How did I come to believe that *what I know* was also *what matters?* (1999, 200)

BOB DYLAN: I wrote these songs in, not a meditative state at all, but more like in a trancelike, hypnotic state. *This* is how I feel? Why do I *feel* like that? And who's the *me* that feels this way? (qtd. in Lethem 2007, 318)

> LYNN BLOOM: There is no question about whose truth gets told in creative nonfiction—it has to be the author's, with all other truths filtered through the authorial rendering. . . . What truth to tell, however, is more problematic. For the writer's vision varies over time and intervening circumstances, shaped by the protean personalities of his or her subjects. What is true for writers is true for readers as well; as we experience more of life and learn more ourselves, and as the world itself changes, we come to understand events and people differently. Thus although the facts of the story, any story, remain the same, its truth—like the impressions in time-lapse photography—can change. And does. (2003, 286)

FELIPE FERNÁNDEZ-ARMESTO: We need to be able to tell whether truth is changeful or eternal, embedded in time or outside it, universal or varying from place to place. We need to know how we have got to where we are in the history

of truth—how our society has come to lose faith in the reality of it and lose interest in the search for it. (1999, 2)

> JAMES ATLAS: This urgency to get at the facts—or what are presumed to be the facts—has a long tradition; it reflects our historic American longing to discover who we are. The literature of the self has a long tradition in America; the Emersonian "I," declaring the primacy of subjective consciousness, was a vigorous 19th-century theme, nowhere more pronounced than in Whitman's "Song of Myself." But until not long ago, it was more traditional forms of narrative, in particular the novel, that provided instruction in manners and morals, that sought to explain—in Trollope's words—the Way We Live Now. Our hunger for authenticity found expression in stories that were realistic but fictional. Hemingway and Sherwood Anderson, Fitzgerald and Dos Passos worked close to the vein of autobiography, drawing on the material of their own lives. The history of American literature is a history of private experience enacted on a public stage. (1996)

WENDY STEINER: Art is neither identical to reality nor isolated from it, but a virtual realm tied to the world by acts of interpretation. Experiencing the variety of meanings available in a work of art helps make us tolerant and mentally lithe. Art is a realm of thought experiments that quicken, sharpen, and sweeten our being in the world. (1995, 8)

> VLADIMIR NABOKOV: For me a work of fiction exists only insofar as it affords me what I shall bluntly call aesthetic bliss, that is a sense of being somehow, somewhere, connected with other states of being where art (curiosity, tenderness, kindness, ecstasy) is the norm. (qtd. in Steiner 1995, 209)

LYNN BLOOM: Do the same conventions of civility, courtesy, familial obligation—including tolerance and forbearance—apply in the writing of creative nonfiction as they do in real life? Or is there a double standard—one for art, one for life? (2003, 278)

> KENNETH GOLDSMITH: In the mid-1950s, a group of artists and philosophers who called themselves the Situationists International proposed three concepts designed to infuse magic and excitement into the dull routine of everyday life: the *dérive, détournement*, and *psycho-geography.* Their idea, not unlike that of uncreative writing, was not to reinvent life but to reframe it, reclaiming dead zones as alive. A slight shift of perspective could lead to fresh takes on tired subject matter, renaming a symphony without altering the music, drifting through a city with no goal in mind, or putting new subtitles on an old movie. By creating new *situations,* such interventions were intended to be a catalyst for social change filtered through a reorientation of normal life. (2011, 16)

FELIPE FERNÁNDEZ-ARMESTO: Perhaps the rise of chaos theory should not have harmed the concept of truth, for it did not really fillet order out of the world; it

only made it breathtakingly, even beautifully complex. In combination, however, with all the other subversions of certainty that were being mined at the time in science, philosophy, and art, it seemed to confirm that nature was in collusion: a chaotic universe mirrored meaningless art and truthless thought. (1999, 187)

> KENNETH GOLDSMITH: Andy Warhol was an unoriginal genius, one who was able to create a profoundly original body of work by isolating, reframing, recycling, regurgitating, and endlessly reproducing ideas and images that weren't his, yet, by the time he was finished with them, they were completely Warholian. By mastering the manipulation of information (the media, his own image, or his superstar coterie, to name a few), Warhol understood that he could master culture. (2011, 139)

FELIPE FERNÁNDEZ-ARMESTO: We are left with dumbstruck tongues and hands too numb to write, despairing of ever saying anything true because language is trapped in self-reference, unable to reach reality, never expressing truth and, at best, only able to "represent" it. (1999, 195)

> KENNETH GOLDSMITH: In a 1963 interview, Warhol asks, "But why should I be original? Why can't I be non-original?" He sees no need to create anything new: "I just like to see things used and reused." Echoing then-current notions of eradicating the division between art and life, he says, "I just happen to like ordinary things. When I paint them, I don't try to make them extraordinary. . . . That's why I've had to resort to silk screens,

stencils and other kinds of automatic reproduction. And still the human element creeps in!" (2011, 140)

PATRICIA HAMPL: Memoir rightly does belong to the imaginative world. Once writers and readers make their peace with this fact there will be less argument over the ethical question about the memoir's relation to "facts" and "truth." But as long as we try and nudge memoir into the same confines of nonfiction that we expect, for example, from journalism, we'll have these battles with people taking rigid positions. (1998)

5C. Value Judgments:

"Things That Only Literature Can Give Us"

I remember a funny *New Yorker* cartoon showing a frazzle-haired mom in her kitchen, the refrigerator door completely out of space to display the prolific drawings spilling from the pen of her frazzle-haired offspring, no caption required. It made me wonder, how much "creativity" does the world really need? Walk the streets of any quaint California town—Mendocino, Carmel, Sonoma—and you will find boutique storefronts selling arts and crafts: pottery, jewelry, figurines, and kits to create them yourself. Browse any issue of *Poets & Writers* magazine and you will find ads for countless MFA programs in creative writing, writer conferences, writer retreats, magazines seeking submissions, and literary contests. The number of people who think they want to be "A Writer" may be way more than the numbers who have time or interest to read their precious, laborious prose.

The drive to create is apparently innate, common, and a key part of what makes us feel personally whole and connected to others. Whenever I feel alienated, isolated, utterly alone in the world, if I can make my way to a library, bookstore, art museum, or club with live music, I feel less lonely. Even at home, when I can explore creative self-expression in whatever form or category, I feel okay, connected. During the 1980s and into the '90s, I lived in the northern California coastal town of Bolinas and was the youngest writer by decades in two different critique groups with brilliant elders: Paul Schmidt, Dorothy Schmidt,

Marjorie Jacobs, Kirby Ferlinghetti, Paul Harris, Joanne Kyger, and Arthur Okamura, most memorably. Most were not writing just to "be a writer" or be published and acknowledged by critics, though some are notably successful poets and artists. They taught me to appreciate better reasons for doing the work: it is good exercise for the heart and brain, a pleasurable pastime to write and read together with others, and psychically necessary.

In *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* (1988), Italo Calvino tells us, "My confidence in the future of literature consists in the knowledge that there are things that only literature can give us, by means specific to it" (1). This may explain why so many seek to be writers. Whether we are readers or practitioners, literature provides vital services found in no other parts of our lives.

Calvino's six memos for the future of literature recommend:

1. *lightness,* "as a reaction to the weight of living" (26);
2. *quickness,* "agility, mobility, and ease, all qualities that go with writing where it is natural to digress, to jump from one subject to another, to lose the thread a hundred times and find it again after a hundred more twists and turns" (46);
3. *exactitude,* "symbolized by a feather that served as a weight on scales used for the weighing of souls" (55);
4. *visibility,* "two types of imaginative process: the one that starts with the word and arrives at the visual image, and the one that starts with the visual image and arrives at its verbal expression" (83); and

5. *multiplicity*, "the type of work that in literature corresponds to what in philosophy is nonsystematic thought, which proceeds by … sudden, discontinuous flashes of light." (118)

6. *Consistency,* like the other five values, was intended by Calvino to be included among the "certain values, qualities, or peculiarities of literature that are very close to my heart, trying to situate them within the perspective of the new millennium" (1).

However, Calvino died before completing this last memo, and perhaps this very fact is consistent with his values of lightness and exactitude, as he passed through and left behind for us some precisely rendered parts of his soul.

Apart from shooting-star geniuses who show up in the world every hundred years or so and manage to make "original contributions" regardless of circumstances or critical acclaim, there are many others born with natural gifts and the talent to be brilliant, or at least decent, musicians, artists, dancers, or authors whose names we will never know. Social conditions and the judgments of critics can enhance or hinder the drive-to-succeed, for geniuses and ordinary creatives both. Educators, gatekeepers, and judges may serve to squelch or help to fulfill their potential. Workshop culture is a delicate balance and everyone who participates must recognize the array of personal or professional reasons why we are there. It is important to know the difference between writing that should stay in your journal, for your eyes only, versus what is publishable. As a story moves from private to public, a transformation must occur. Good stories change from

Anne Lamott's "shitty first drafts" (21) through the process of revision, the lessons of form and craft, critical feedback, and persistent attention at the macro and micro levels until the writing "*sings* reality" (Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination,* 15).

REMIX 5C: CRITIQUE CRITERIA

JANE HIRSHFIELD: Each new work arises within a tradition and can be received only within that tradition's modes. If a writer is to speak meaningfully, she may stretch communal understandings, but at least some listeners must be able to follow her words. . . . [The writer] must learn the tradition and rise above it, absorb and then abandon what has come before. (1997, 40)

> T. S. ELIOT [1921]: No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation, is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism. The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art that preceded it. (1975, 38)

JOHN GARDNER: Nearly every beginning writer sooner or later asks . . . his creative writing teacher or someone else he thinks might know, whether or not he really has what it takes to be a writer. . . . One might begin [the answer] anywhere; for

convenience, let me begin with verbal sensitivity. . . . Another indicator of the young writer's talent is the relative accuracy and originality of his "eye." The good writer sees things sharply, vividly, accurately, and selectively (that is, he chooses what's important) not necessarily because his power of observation is by nature more acute than that of other people . . . but because he cares about seeing things clearly and getting them down effectively. (1985, 1-2; 19-20)

> RAYMOND CARVER: It was a basic tenet of [John Gardner's] that a writer found what he wanted to say in the ongoing process of seeing what he'd said. And this seeing, or seeing more clearly, came about through revision. He *believed* in revision, endless revision. (qtd. in Gardner 1985, xiv)

MOI: I enjoy revision much more than writing. The first draft is an ugly "lump of clay" which I mine with great effort from dark places. The pleasure comes as I sculpt it into shape, adding and subtracting until I feel satisfied when I step back and take a look at what I made.

> FRANCINE PROSE: It's a good idea to have a designated section of your bookshelf (perhaps the one nearest your desk) for books by writers who have obviously worked on their sentences, revising and polishing them into gems that continue to dazzle us. There are works you can turn to whenever you feel that your own style is getting a little slack or lazy or vague. (2007, 47)

FRANCES MAYES: Don't be too cryptic. . . . You might have so much respect for the distilled language of poetry that you forget to give the reader enough clues.

You might boil down your poem too much so that each word is incredibly important to you but not to the reader, who has no idea what you're talking about! Cut, cut, cut, you hear an inner voice saying. You sometimes need to do the opposite and add. (2001, 460)

MOI: Cryptic is my middle name.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY: Sometimes when I was starting a new story and I could not get it going. . . . I would stand and look out over the roofs of Paris and think, "Do not worry. You have always written before and you will write now. All you have to do is write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence that you know." So finally I would write one true sentence, and then go on from there. It was easy then because there was always one true sentence that I knew or had seen or had heard someone say. If I started to write elaborately, or like someone introducing or presenting something, I found I could cut that scrollwork or ornament out and throw it away and start with the first true simple declarative sentence I had written. (qtd. in Prose 2007, 61)

FRANCES MAYES: Write poems that matter very much to you, whether they are memories of childhood, meditations, or sound experiments. The quality of deep feeling, thought, or intense energy will guarantee that your poem, at least, has life. (2001, 459)

JOHN GARDNER: Another indicator of the novelist's talent is intelligence—a certain kind of intelligence, not the mathematician's or the philosopher's but the storyteller's. . . . It is composed of several qualities: . . . wit . . . childishness . . .

visual memory . . . a strange admixture of shameless playfulness and embarrassing earnestness . . . patience like a cat's; a criminal streak of cunning; psychological instability; recklessness, impulsiveness, and improvidence; and finally, an inexplicable and incurable addiction to stories. (1985, 34)

> FRANCINE PROSE: Everything in the paragraph contributes to the speaker's credibility, as a fictional character and as an honest human being: the diction, the rhythms, the slight repetitions for emphasis, the way that the tenses keep shifting from present to past and back. The choice of words and phrases . . . the language, the story itself, the specificity of the details. (2007, 91)

ALAN LIGHTMAN: Reading, listening, even thinking, I was mesmerized by the sounds and the movements of words. Words could be sudden, like *jolt,* or slow, like *meandering.* Words could be sharp or smooth, cool, silvery, prickly to touch, blaring like a trumpet call, fluid, pitter-pattered in rhythm. And, by magic, words could create scenes and emotions (2005, 3)

> FRANCES MAYES: Be as generous to the white page as you can; give it everything you've got at the moment. Underline all the important sounds, ideas, phrases—and ruthlessly throw away any clichés. A good rule to remember: If you've heard it before, don't use it. (2001, 460)

RAYMOND CARVER: [A short story] was something that had a recognizable beginning, middle, and end to it. . . . rising or falling emotion . . . peaks, valleys, plateaus, resolution, *denouement.* (qtd. in Gardner 1985, xv)

> JACQUES RANCIÈRE: For art to exist, what is required is a specific gaze and form of thought to identify it. . . . Insofar as it is seen as the mere accomplishment of a religious or therapeutic ritual, dance is not an art. But nor is it if it consists merely in the exercise of a corporeal virtuosity. Something else is required if it is to be counted as an art. This "something else" was, until Stendhal's time, called a *story [histoire]*. (2009, 7)

DORIS LESSING: I re-read the novel *[The Golden Notebook, 1962]* the other day and remembered the fury that went into it. Probably that is why the book goes on and on as it does—because of its "charge." It does have a remarkable vitality. Some of it is the energy of conflict. I was writing my way out of one set of ideas, even out of a way of life, but that is not what I thought while I was doing it. Inside that tight framework is an effervescence. (1994, ix)

> MOI: *The Golden Notebook* was a key book for me when I first read it. I liked the idea of keeping separate notebooks as a way to compartmentalize life and take control, while also gathering them together in the golden notebook, the book I was holding, with its overarching perspective, the whole that embraced the parts.

JANE HIRSHFIELD: When we call a work "original," we point to the way it is irreducibly and creatively itself—individual, recognizable, and distinct. Sometimes, though, we use the word to refer to innovation, to some quality within it previously unseen, while at other times we mean more the idea of authentic presence—the idea that a work, like a person, is original not because it is new in

subject matter or technique but because it has the uniqueness that moistens and flares in all embodied being. (1997, 33-34)

> ALAN LIGHTMAN: Every writer has a source for his writing, a deep, hidden well that he draws from to create. For me, I believe that source is science. . . . Some friends have told me that my novels have an architectural quality, a prominence of design. Perhaps that is a sign of the source. (2005, 43-44)

FRANCINE PROSE: Read your work aloud, if you can, if you aren't embarrassed by the sound of your own voice ringing out when you are alone in a room. Chances are that the sentence you can hardly pronounce without stumbling is a sentence that needs to be reworked to make it smoother and more fluent. (2007, 56)

> FRANCES MAYES: Start crafting and revising as soon as you have written down all the raw material you think you need. Some poets go through thirty revisions. Chances are, any poem will need work beyond the first draft, unless you've had a true gift descend upon you. (2001, 460)

JANE HIRSHFIELD: New writers soon learn Ezra Pound's [1935] injunction "Make it new," which is itself a variation of Tolstoy's [1897] "Make it strange." (1997, 47)

> T. S. ELIOT [1921]: The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the

> *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. (1975, 38)

MOI: I love seeing my book *Silvie's Life* on bookstore shelves, how all the books to its left have to shift to the left, while all the books to the right shift right, to make room for its presence.

> JOHN GARDNER: I write for those who desire, not publication at any cost, but publication one can be proud of—serious, honest fiction, the kind of novel that readers will find they enjoy reading more than once, the kind of fiction likely to survive. Fine workmanship—art that avoids cheap and easy effects, takes no shortcuts, struggles never to lie even about the most trifling matters . . . workmanship, in short, that impresses us partly by its painstaking care, gives pleasure and a sense of life's worth and dignity not only to the reader but to the writer as well. (1985, xxiii)

FRANCES MAYES: Try to push aside the censor, that demon who whispers "Not good" and "Don't dare say that" and "Who cares about your life?" Poets write about the same basic human subjects over and over. Your inner voice is one that never has been heard in the world before. Though there are thousands of love poems and death poems, your version will be new if you can catch your own sound. (2001, 460)

> FRANCINE PROSE: Among the questions that writers need to ask themselves in the process of revision—Is this the best word I can find? Is my meaning

> clear? Can a word or phrase be cut from this without sacrificing anything essential? Perhaps the most important question is: Is this grammatical? What's strange is how many beginning writers seem to think that grammar is irrelevant, or that they are somehow above or beyond this subject more fit for a schoolchild than the future author of great literature. . . . But the truth is that grammar is always interesting, always useful. (2007, 43)

JANE HIRSHFIELD: In classical Japanese literature, the highest value was not the creation of the new, but the ability to compress within brief written expression the greatest possible resonance of emotion and perception. (1997, 47)

> FRANCES MAYES: What is the quality of the words in the poem? Are any overused? Are they fresh? Concrete? Vague? Abstract? If you ran your hand over the surface of the sounds, would they be smooth, rough, jagged, soft? Is this texture fitting to the subject? (2001, 461)

JOHN GARDNER: Good fiction is intellectually and emotionally significant. All this means is that a story with a stupid central idea, no matter how brilliantly the story is told, will be a stupid story. (1985, 51)

> FRANCES MAYES: Is the poem anchored in a particular speaker's voice? Whose? What is the tone of voice? Does the tone change? Who is the listener? (2001, 462)

FRANCINE PROSE: [My] generous teacher showed me, among other things, how to line edit my work. For any writer, the ability to look at a sentence and see what's superfluous, what can be altered, revised, expanded, and, especially, cut, is

essential. It's satisfying to see that sentence shrink, snap into place, and ultimately emerge in a more polished form: clear, economical, sharp. (2007, 2)

> RAYMOND CARVER: Before our conference [Gardner] would have marked up my story, crossing out unacceptable sentences, phrases, or individual words, and these were items that were not negotiable. In other cases he would bracket sentences, phrases, or individual words, and these were items we'd talk about, these cases were negotiable. And he wouldn't hesitate to add something to what I'd written—a word here and there, or else a few words, maybe a sentence that would make clear what I was trying to say. We'd discuss commas in my story as if nothing else in the world mattered more at that moment—and indeed, it did not. (qtd. in Gardner 1985, xvi)

FRANCINE PROSE: Part of what is so extraordinary about [Philip Roth's] sentences is how energetic and varied they are, how they differ in length, in tone, in pitch, how rapidly and seamlessly they shift from the explanatory to the incantatory, from the inquisitive to the rhetorical to the reportorial. (2007, 40)

> FRANCES MAYES: How many senses are evoked in the poem? What are they? Is the imagery effective? Is the poem immediate or distant? In what end of the telescope does the poem take place—that is, does it seem to take place right here and now, or far away? Does the same image reappear? What is the effect of this? (2001, 462)

RAYMOND CARVER: After this kind of detailed talk about the text, we'd talk about the larger concerns of the story, the "problem" it was trying to grapple with, and how the story might or might not fit into the grand scheme of story writing. . . . A writer's values and craft. (qtd. in Gardner 1985, xvii)

> FRANCES MAYES: What is the activity of the poem like? Look at the verbs: are they generally active or passive? Are the tenses consistent? Does the poem keep on moving? Does each stanza do different work from the previous stanza? Does the poem stay on the track? Or does the train take a side trip into other subjects? (2001, 462)

JOHN GARDNER: Finally, the true novelist is the one who doesn't quit. Novel writing is not so much a profession as a *yoga,* or "way," an alternative to ordinary life-in-the-world. Its benefits are quasi-religious—a changed quality of mind and heart, satisfactions no non-novelist can understand—and its rigors generally bring no profit except to the spirit. For those who are authentically called to the profession, spiritual profits are enough. (1985, 145)

> JULIA ALVAREZ: What do I mean by the writing life? For me, the writing life doesn't just happen when I sit at the writing desk. I mean a life lived with a centering principle, and mine is this, that I will pay close attention to this world I find myself in (1998, 282).

MOI: If I persist, will I be published? Rich? Famous? Beloved?

PAT WALSH: *[. . . 14 Reasons Why [Your Book] Just Might Be Published]:*

1. You wrote a good book.
2. You are honest with yourself.
3. You do your homework.
4. You make yourself stand out.
5. You have high hopes and reasonable expectations.
6. You have a healthy perspective.
7. You take advantage of time.
8. You are patient but persistent.
9. You are flexible.
10. You learn from rejection.
11. You take calculated risks.
12. You take yourself seriously.
13. You make your own luck.
14. You have fun. (2005, xviii)

JANE HIRSHFIELD: Originality lives at the crossroads, at the point where world and self open to each other in transparence in the night rain. There, the plenitude of being comes and goes. (1997, 51)

6.

THE PANORAMA:

CARTOGRAPHY OF THE *ZEITGEISTS*

6A: Which Reality?

"Pre > Modern > Post"

REMIX 6A ponders which realities have been represented by Western artists and writers through the centuries, and asks, Is it our job to portray the world as it is, or to present idealized visions of what could be? Truth or fiction, imagined or real, the productions of writers are by definition *constructs:* made of the thin air of our imaginations and observations; made by hand, made of language, products of our individual psyches and of the writer-as-conduit for collective experience, in a complex weaving. The fragmented forms and structures given us by twentieth-century poets, artists, musicians, and writers have been attempts to render the disorder, uncertainty, and ambiguity found by twentieth-century physicists at the heart of matter and felt by twentieth-century citizens at the core of civilization's slippery social systems. Early twentieth-century artists and writers formally represented the disjunctive reality of the times via cubist fragmentation, musical dissonance, and the psychological wanderings of interior monologues. (Think Picasso, Stravinsky, and Joyce, for examples.)

Contemporary iterations of complexity theory oppose the notion of complete dissolution, however, by reminding us that there are larger operations at work:

> We might briefly describe complexity as *the dynamic interactions of multiple elements engaged in self-organizing processes.* The implications are epistemological, ontological, and ethical, deep and far-reaching. . . .

> Complexity theories are developing rapidly throughout every realm of knowledge—a kaleidoscopic new view of life's intricacies and dynamics—revitalizing our sense of awe, wonder, and enlivenment. (Wells 20; 22)

Complexity theory acknowledges plenty of uncertainty but notes predictable forces at work as well: moons, tides, sunrise, springtime, birth, death. To strike a balance, complexity theory encourages full-body contact with the totality. "The genius of sapiens lies in the intercommunication between the imaginary and the real, the logical and the affective, the speculative and the existential, the unconscious and the conscious, subject and object" (Morin & Kern, 1999).

The writers here touch on critical turning points in the arts, world literature, theology, philosophy, psychology, geography, and aesthetics, from pre-modern to modern and postmodern eras. Are we post-postmodern yet?

REMIX 6A: WESTERN HISTORY OF REPRESENTATION

RICHARD KEARNEY: The human ability to "image" or "imagine" something has been understood in two main ways through the history of Western thought—1) as a *representational* faculty which reproduces images of some pre-existing reality, or 2) as a *creative* faculty which produces images which often lay claim to an original status in their own right. (1994, 15)

> ARTHUR DANTO: The technique of resemblance . . . was a progress defined in the direction of life-likeness. (2003, xiii)

RICHARD KEARNEY: Premodern cultures of Jerusalem and Athens tended to construe the artist primarily as a *craftsman* who, at best, models his activity on the "original" activity of the Divine Creator. . . . This theocentric view of the craftsman also prevailed in the medieval period when the work of the icon-maker, painter, scribe, or cathedral designer was generally evaluated in terms of its capacity to obediently serve and imitate the transcendent plan for Creation. (1994, 12)

> ROLAND BARTHES: Aesthetically, the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries show a fairly lavish profusion of literary languages because men [sic] are still engaged in the task of getting to know Nature, and not yet in that of giving expression to man's essence. (1953, 55)

RICHARD KEARNEY: The modern movements of Renaissance, Romantic, and Existentialist humanism replaced the theocentric paradigm of the mimetic craftsman with the anthropocentric paradigm of the *original inventor* . . . the idea of the artist as one who not only emulates but actually replaces God. (1994, 12)

> WALLACE STEVENS [1937]: Day is desire and night is sleep. / There are no shadows anywhere. / The earth, for us, is flat and bare. / There are no shadows. (1990, 135)

ROLAND BARTHES: It is a well-known fact that toward the end of the eighteenth century . . . literary form develops a second-order power. . . . It fascinates the reader, it strikes him as exotic, it enthralls him, it acquires a weight. (1953, 3)

> RICHARD KEARNEY: What is most striking about the modern genre of portraiture . . . is a common resolve to dispense with traditional modes of painting *resemblance* (i.e., as mimesis of nature or God); and to treat it instead as an autonomous *expression* of man. (1994, 9-10)

JOHN BERGER: The visible, in continual flux, became fugitive. For the Cubists, the visible was no longer what confronted the single eye, but the totality of possible views taken from points all round the object (or person) being depicted (1972, 18)

> GARY ISEMINGER: ["Art for Art's Sake"] was used to promote claims that a work of art should be valued for those of its properties, often chiefly formal ones, . . . revealed in an intense experience of the work itself, as distinct from any useful function it might perform or any moral, political, or religious values it might express or embody. (2004, 4)

JEANNETTE WINTERSON: The riskiness of art, the reason why it affects us, is not the riskiness of its subject matter; it is the risk of creating a new way of seeing, a new way of thinking. (1996, 52)

> JONAH LEHRER: An instinctive modernist, [Stravinsky] realized that our sense of prettiness is malleable, and that the harmonies we worship and the tonic chords we trust are not sacred. Nothing is sacred. Nature is noise. (2008, 123)

JEANNETTE WINTERSON: [Virginia Woolf] knew how to draw the world out, breaking the air with colour and the beat of life, and before we can truly admire it,

the line is out on the water again, catch after catch, drawn from the under-depths, the shimmering world that slips through our hands. (1996, 64)

> JONAH LEHRER: Painters were busy discovering abstraction, but music was already abstract. Poets were celebrating symbolism, but music had always been symbolic. . . . The modernist coup d'etat occurred in 1908, when Arnold Schoenberg decided to abandon the structure of classical music. As an act of aesthetic revolt, this was equivalent to a novelist abandoning plot. (2008, 126)

MOI: As a medium for representing the complexity of human experience, in the twentieth century words proved to be flimsy, ubiquitous, disposable, and truth elusive, relative.

> ROLAND BARTHES: Writing is an ambiguous reality. . . . A stubborn after-image, which comes from all the previous modes of writing and even from the past of my own, drowns the sound of my present words. (1953, 16-17)

RICHARD KEARNEY: Now the model of the productive inventor is replaced by that of the *bricoleur*. . . . He experiences himself afloat in an anonymous interplay of images, which he can, at best, parody, simulate, or reproduce. (1994, 13)

> ARTHUR DANTO: By 1969, the Conceptualists were ready to consider everything as art, and were prepared to consider everyone an artist. . . . Examples could be found in dance . . . where it was possible for a dance to consist in someone sitting in a chair; and in avant-garde music, which challenged the distinction between musical and non-musical sounds. The

> 1960s avant-garde was interested in overcoming the distinction between life and art. It was interested in erasing the distinction between fine and vernacular art. But by the time the decade was over, there was very little left of what anyone would earlier have thought part of the concept of art. It was a period of spectacular philosophical erasure. (2003, xvii)

MOI: I have identified three purposes for literary writing in the *zeitgeist* of the last hundred years: *catharsis,* or therapeutic self-expression; *witness,* or social commentary; and *uselessness,* escape from self and society into lyric realms of art and beauty.

> ITALO CALVINO: We might say that throughout the centuries two opposite tendencies have competed in literature: one tries to make language into a weightless element that hovers above things like a cloud or better, perhaps, the finest dust or, better still, a field of magnetic impulses. The other tries to give language the weight, density, and concreteness of things, bodies, and sensations. (1988, 15)

SUSAN SONTAG: In *Writing Degree Zero,* Barthes presupposes both the effort of writers like Valery, Joyce, Stein, Beckett, and Burroughs to abolish literature and the effort of other writers to confine literature to ethical communication (the notion of "engaged" writing). (1953, xviii)

> ARTHUR DANTO: Art had gone through a period of intense politicization, the high point of which was the 1993 Whitney Biennial, in which nearly every work was a shrill effort to change American society. (2003, 8)

RICHARD KEARNEY: No more is it a question of images representing some transcendent reality, as tradition had it. . . . The mirror of the postmodern paradigm reflects neither the outer world of nature nor the inner world of subjectivity; it reflects itself—a mirror within a mirror within a mirror. . . . The postmodern image is mimesis without origin or end. (1994, 6)

> ITALO CALVINO: I would answer: Who are we, who is each one of us, if not a combinatorial of experiences, information, books we have read, things imagined? Each life is an encyclopedia, an inventory of objects, a series of styles, and everything can be constantly shuffled and reordered in every way conceivable. (1988, 124)

SUSAN SONTAG: Words, unlike images, signify; they convey meaning. Therefore, prose literature is bound, as is no other art, including poetry, to the task of communicating. The writer is (potentially) a giver of consciousness, a liberator. (1953, xi)

6B. Who Is Visible?

"Collective Unconscious ~ Writer As Migrant"

Who has and has not been included in the Western history of representation? Who is visible and who is left out? Where do we each belong on the migratory map? Contradictory cues show up from our ancestors, family, peers, strangers, spirit guides, and cultural icons; they might support, provoke, critique, ignore, or welcome us. Multiple identities reside inside me as day breaks and I wake up wherever I am in the world this morning. My eyes reveal the scenery, the weather, the territory ahead. Input assails me and I process it, wondering what I am forgetting, what is hidden from me, what I do not know. My worldview has been trained by teachers, manipulated by ad men and spin doctors, inspired by landscapes, and formed by experience: by Thich Nhat Hanh, by California, by the *zeitgeist* of my generation. I am alone in the world but it is not a vacuum or void; it is a complex of interwoven networks, extremes, and stable cores. *Breathe.*

REMIX 6B: MULTICULTURAL WRITERS ON THE MIGRATORY MAP

CARLOS FUENTES: For my generation in Mexico [born 1928], the problem did not consist in discovering our modernity but in discovering our tradition. (1990, 23)

> GLORIA ANZALDUA: Modern Western painters have "borrowed," copied, or otherwise extrapolated the art of tribal cultures and called it cubism, surrealism, symbolism. . . . They take our spiritual art objects in an unconscious attempt to get them back. (1988, 33)

GUILLERMO GOMEZ-PEÑA: Our generation [born 1955] belongs to the world's biggest floating population: the weary travelers, the dislocated, those of us who left because we didn't fit anymore, those of us who still haven't arrived because we don't know where to arrive at, or because we can't go back anymore. (1988, 129)

> ISHMAEL REED: The world has been arriving at these [U.S.] shores for at least ten thousand years from Europe, Africa, and Asia. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, large numbers of Europeans arrived, adding their cultures to those of the European, African, and Asian settlers who were already here, and recently millions have been entering the country from South America and the Caribbean. (1988, 159)

GUILLERMO GOMEZ-PEÑA: My work, like that of many border artists, comes from two distinct traditions, and because of this has dual, or on occasion multiple, referential codes. (1988, 128)

> MICHELLE CLIFF: To write as a complete Caribbean woman, or man for that matter, demands of us retracing the African part of ourselves, reclaiming as our own, and as our subject, a history sunk under the sea, or scattered as potash in the canefields, or gone to bush, or trapped in a class system notable for its rigidity and absolute dependence on color stratification. On a past bleached from our minds. It means finding the art forms of these of our ancestors and speaking in the *patois* forbidden us. It means realizing our knowledge will always be wanting. It means also, I

> think, mixing in the forms taught us by the oppressor, undermining his language and co-opting his style, and turning it to our purpose. (1988, 59)

EDUARDO GALEANO: One writes in order to deflect death and strangle the specters that haunt us; but what one writes can be historically useful only when in some way it coincides with the need of the collective to achieve its identity. . . . In saying: "This is who I am," in revealing oneself, the writer can help others to become aware of who they are. As a means of revealing collective identity, art should be considered an article of prime necessity, not a luxury. (1988, 116)

> WALT WHITMAN [1855]: I and mine do not convince by arguments, similes, rhymes, / We convince by our presence. (1955, 568)

MOI: America's grandfather Whitman is here — "singer, thinker, visionary, and citizen . . . greatest democrat who ever lived" — the poet who may have started this conversation on the voice of our common humanity the century before.

> EDUARDO GALEANO: One writes out of a need to communicate and to commune with others, to denounce that which gives pain and to share that which gives happiness. One writes against one's solitude and against the solitude of others. (1988, 114)

WALT WHITMAN [1855]: The city sleeps and the country sleeps, / The living sleep for their time, the dead sleep for their time, / The old husband sleeps by his wife and the young husband sleeps by his wife; / And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them, / And such as it is to be of these more or less I am, / And of these one and all I weave the song of myself. (1955, 61)

> MOI: The solitary work of artists and writers may serve society, among other ways, by being a tuning fork for collective emotions and experiences. Where no center or transcendent truth is discernible, new forms are devised to represent that fact.

MICHELLE CLIFF: When I began, finally, partly through participation in the feminist movement, to approach myself as a subject, my writing was jagged, nonlinear, almost shorthand. . . . I felt my thoughts, things I had held within for a lifetime, traversed so wide a terrain, had so many stops and starts, apparent non sequiturs, that an essay—with its cold-blooded dependence on logical construction… could not work. My subject could not respond to that form, which would have contradicted the idea of speechlessness. (1988, 57–58)

> TONI MORRISON: My early assumptions as a reader were that black people signified little or nothing in the imagination of white American writers. Other than as the objects of an occasional bout of jungle fever, other than to provide local color or to lend some touch of verisimilitude or to supply a needed moral gesture, humor, a bit of pathos, blacks made no appearance at all. (1992, 15)

PAULA GUNN ALLEN: Traditionals say we must remember our origins, our mothers and grandmothers, for without that memory, which implies continuance rather than nostalgia, we are doomed to engulfment by a paradigm that is fundamentally inimical to the vitality, autonomy, and self-empowerment essential for satisfying, high-quality life. (1992, 214)

6C: Interconnections:

"Mutual Causality & Dialogic Imagination"

The literary writer works at the intersections of truth and politics, society and personality, unraveling and reconstructing our complexity. Literature and the arts both respond to the world-as-it-is and shape its self-definitions. Creative writers eavesdrop and report, imagine and invent, soul-search and present the world as we experience it, occasionally offering interpretations. We encounter the absurd, follow threads through labyrinths, locate patterns within chaos, unearth meanings, speculate and provide evidence, much like scientists and priests. Nowadays we are all in conversation; the worldwide web abounds with dialogue, rants, likes, debates, and rebuttals from every corner and fringe on the planet, a democracy of opinions and discourse that includes us all to one degree or another. This process of dialogue is social and intimate and we alternately play the role of social critic, romantic poet, contemplative observer, analytical scholar, objective journalist, and private journaler, alone with our selves and the page.

The creative writer lives both within and apart from culture, a migrant, influenced by it and shaping it at once. In Breyten Breytenbach's inspirational text for writers, *Intimate Stranger* (2009), the author calls that within-and-apart place "Writers Land."

> Despite his extreme situation of writing against South African apartheid from a place of exile in France, which led to nine years of solitary confinement when he tried to go home, Breytenbach's focus is not the

> ambience of politics. *What we make of it is*. [He] stands by the necessity of all forms of artistic expression—visual language, music, and poetry—as primary or *original* languages" (Rogoff, "Rev. of *Intimate Stranger"* 516).

Breytenbach believes that creative works "differ from our everyday working verbal tools—philosophy, science, theology, sociology, and politics" (39).

> The languages of creativeness certainly also *mean* . . . but the *meaning* is carried by the totality of means at their disposal: color, texture, echo, absence, shape. . . . You may say that [poetry] is thought on its way to the unthinkable." (39)

This is where creativity resides, in this liminal space. "The creations of writers and artists become this third realm, another place entirely, where we compose thoughts and visions into material being" (Rogoff, "Rev. of *Intimate Stranger,"* 516).

The intent of the *cartography* essays throughout *Remix Perspectives* is to materialize theory, experience, and praxis into being, to position the contributions of writers on a map of the *zeitgeists*—the cultural, intellectual, ethical, spiritual, political climate where the writer is working—influenced by it and contributing to it in a reciprocal loop. The intent of each REMIX is to *be* the loop.

REMIX 6C: WRITER AS RECIPROCAL ACTOR

JOANNA MACY: Words like *synergy, feedback, causal loops, symbiosis,* have become current and useful. They suggest that events affect each other in a back-

and forth manner, creating circuits and networks of contingency where causes and effects interact reciprocally. They express a paradigm that challenges the assumptions about causation that have dominated Western culture for over two millennia. (1991, 8)

BASHO:

UP FROM APRIL SNOW

RISING UDO SPROUTS . . .

TENDER

PURPLE SUCCULENT (1960, 8)

EDGAR MORIN: The notion of subject holds no meaning except in an eco-system (natural, social, familial, etc) and must be integrated in a meta-system. Each of the two notions, therefore, object and subject, to the extent that they are presented as absolutes, show an enormous, ridiculous, insurmountable gap. But if they recognize this gap, then the gap becomes an opening of one toward the other, opening toward the world, opening toward a possible surmounting of the either/or alternative, toward a possible progress of knowledge. (2008, 29)

RYOTO:

SOMEONE IS WALKING

OVER THE WOODEN

BRIDGE. . . . HEAR

THE DEEP FROG-SILENCE (1960, 21)

MIKHAIL BAKHTIN: This highly distinctive concept of language has . . . a sense of opposition and struggle at the heart of existence, a ceaseless battle between centrifugal forces that seek to keep things apart, and centripetal forces that strive to make things cohere. This Zoroastrian clash is present in culture as well as nature, and in the specificity of individual consciousness. . . . The most complete and complex reflection of these forces is found in human language, and the best transcription of language so understood is the novel. (1987, xviii)

BASHO:

HAVING TUMBLED OFF

HIS GRASS-BLADE . . .

THE FIREFLY

BUZZES UP AGAIN (1960, 26)

EDGAR MORIN: When Stendhal showed the importance of apparently insignificant details, which nevertheless play such an important role in life, he was working with complexity. When Tolstoy showed individual destinies overlapping with the sweep of world history . . . he succeeded in linking the individual soul with the historical destiny of the world. And Dostoevsky, in revealing the irregularities, the sudden movements from one part of ourselves to another, shows how impossible it is to rationalize a human being down to a formula. The great novelists have shown the way of complexity, and even if they haven't done so conceptually or in a philosophical or scientific manner, they have contributed something essential to philosophical and scientific thinking. (2008, 93)

BASHO:

I WILL NOT FORGET

THIS LONELY SAVOR

OF MY LIFE'S

ONE LITTLE DEWDROP (1960, 30)

MIKHAIL BAKHTIN: [The] characteristics of the novel are all organically interrelated and have all been powerfully affected by a very specific rupture in the history of European civilization: its emergence from a socially isolated and culturally deaf semi-patriarchal society, and its entrance into international and inter-lingual contacts and relationships. A multitude of different languages, cultures, and times became available to Europe, and this became a decisive factor in its life and thought. (1987, 11)

WAFU:

WE HARK TO CRICKET

AND TO HUMAN

CHIRPINGS . . . WITH

EARS SO DIFFERENT (1960, 33)

JOANNA MACY: The [general systems theory] view of reality as process, its perception of self-organizing patterns of physical and mental events, and the principles it discerned in the dynamics of these natural systems struck me as remarkably consonant with the Buddha's teachings. . . . Systems theory [also] sees causality as reciprocal, arising from interweaving circuits of contingency. . . .

Furthermore, because general systems theory draws its data from contemporary physical and life sciences, it reveals this kind of causality at play throughout the observable universe. . . . Systems theory casts light on the Buddha's distinctive teachings about the relation of mind to body, the relation of past actions to present choices, and the relation of the self to society and nature. (1991, xii)

BUSON:

TWILIGHT FLOWER-FIELD . . .

MOONRISE IN

THE EASTERN SKY

SUNSET IN THE WEST (1960, 31)

IN CONCLUSION

Aspirations

How to Think Like Leonardo Da Vinci: Seven Steps to Genius Every Day

CURIOSITA

Approach life with insatiable curiosity and an unrelenting quest for continuous learning.

DIMOSTRAZIONE

Commit to test knowledge through experience, persistence, and a willingness to learn from mistakes.

SENSAZIONE

Continually refine the senses, especially sight, as the means to enliven experience.

SFUMATO

Embrace ambiguity, paradox, and uncertainty,

ARTE/SCIENZA

Balance science and art, logic and imagination—"whole-brain thinking."

CORPORALITA

Cultivate grace, ambidexterity, fitness, and poise.

CONNESSIONE

Recognize and appreciate the interconnectedness of all things—"systems thinking." (Gelb, Part Two)

SCOPE

What Is This Book?

WHAT IS FOUND

Remix Perspectives is a collection of found fragments, reconfigured to engender surprise, mental leaps, cerebral ahas, questions, reconsiderations, and pleasure as you assimilate unlikely combinations of words, voices, and ideas. It offers a transdisciplinary synthesis of what I know and what I have learned about writing and teaching. My career as a professor of writing and literature at California College of the Arts has been especially instructive, as I have come to appreciate the unique ways that student artists see the world and materialize their visions. Their methods tend to be organic/intuitive channeling of unconscious or yet-to-be-fully-known ideas, combined with educated skill sets and hours of practice, mistakes, revisions, devastation, and persistence. Consider *Remix Perspectives* an invitational work that calls on creative writers to begin a story without knowing the end, to experiment with form and content though it might fail, to proceed without worrying about what happens next, to be present with what is found.

HOW IT'S FOUND

These found fragments emerged intrinsically from a lifetime of reading, writing, and teaching. I have slept with these books, taught them, highlighted them, deconstructed them, and *used* them in any number of ways: as prompts for writing, inspiration for living, models for style, triggers for my emotions. Though

I have met only some of these authors in person I feel about them all as I do about old friends: that they matter to me, have been my life's companions, and *been there* for me. A good many here are new to me, and I am pleased to make their acquaintance.

The appropriation method used in *Remix Perspectives* derives from my participatory reading style. On any given day, an unorganized maze of books may be found bookmarked on my nightstand or left open on desks and tables. They come recommended by friends, book reviews, *New Yorker* ads, or stumbled upon by browsing library and bookstore shelves, a habit. Throughout the research process, stacks of sticky notes could be found nearby and, as I read, I placed them in the margins next to statements that resonate with my inquiry question: *How do creative writers transform the complexity of life into literature?* When I found a moment, I typed the noted quotes into the computer, leaving behind what suddenly felt verbose or inaccessible. Aware of the canon, sometimes I went in search of authors whom I knew to be seminal, while others were lucky finds, discovered by following links or bibliographies, open to serendipity and synchronicities.

These files of collected quotes were labeled with the author's last name then organized into folders: The Practice, The Parts, The Purposes, The Process, The Pedagogy, The Panorama. Once found, I wanted to engage the appropriated materials at a creative level, as they relate to the inquiry, without knowing the end shape until it *emerged in the process of creation.* The benefits of the method are

that I was never bored, and always curious about how the parts might fit together. The work felt lively, invigorating, radical, and new. I hope that the reader experiences this material in the same way (and please see "Possible Uses for This Book" below). My process of composing this book mirrors what I encourage student artists to rely on in producing their own emergent work: an attitude of openness to what presents itself to the mind and hand as you work.

Transformation of the lifted material into something that "adds value to the original" occurred during the process of *bricolage.* French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss defines the *bricoleur* as "someone who works with his hands and uses devious means compared to those of a craftsman" (16). "The word 'devious' here would seem to mean remote, circuitous, or indirect" (Hatton 75), as opposed to deceitful. As I worked, the quotes in each folder felt like tiles in slider puzzles, where you keep moving the pieces up and down and around each other until an image of the whole slides into place. My circuitous intent has been to set up lively interplay among key thinkers on each topic and allow them to speak for themselves, rather than paraphrase them. As the *bricoleur* author of each REMIX I behaved like a host at a party: I invited interesting people—those I have known for a long time along with those recently met—then nudged them to circulate and compare what they know and who they are. Just like at parties, antagonists like to rile while the pacifists search for common ground; some go on at length or keep interrupting, while others show up with a gem then move on. Some must be escorted out.

LIMITATIONS

The REMIX form may not be to every reader's taste, just as not everyone appreciates cubism, collages, hip-hop loops, or jazz improvisations. As a style, these juxtaposed fragments may read as incoherent, or taken out of their original context so therefore illogical: to consider the ideas of Aristotle, for example, after reading poet Denise Levertov, and followed by the words of dancer Anna Halprin (as in REMIX 3A). You may wonder if the original meaning of the quote in its former context has been lost, and what is to be gained by constructing new edifices and using these writers' quotes in new ways.

The reader may find it challenging to read and absorb such a nonlinear text. The *bricolage* structure may not be familiar. Some may feel it lacks cohesion, a running thread, a consistent single voice, an author to lean into. Whoever heard of a "polyvocal text"?

> Somewhere in here, Robert Bly advocates for "leaping poetry," saying:
>
> In many ancient works of art we notice a long floating leap at the center of the work. That leap can be described as a leap from the conscious to the unconscious, a leap from the known part of the mind to the unknown part and back to the known. (1)

This has been a goal: to invite you to make these kinds of leaps so the new can emerge.

In assessing whether *Remix Perspectives* is a worthy contribution to scholarship on the art of writing, consider the following criteria from Barone and Eisner's text, *Arts-Based Research,* published in 2012:

> *INCISIVENESS*
>
> The work of research is penetrating; it is sharp in the manner in which it cuts to the core of an issue. (148)
>
> *CONCISION*
>
> [This] pertains to the degree in which it occupies the minimal amount of space or includes the least amount of verbiage necessary for it to serve its primary, heuristic purpose of enabling members of an audience to see social phenomena from a fresh perspective. . . . What allows for concision is the presence of a controlling insight—some would call it a theme—that serves as a guide for the artist or researcher in making judgments about which material to include and which to exclude. (149-150)
>
> *COHERENCE*
>
> Notice the manner in which it continuously circles back on itself as the author returns to a theme that is manifested both in the storytelling [the REMIX chapters] and in the more "scholarly" commentary [the *cartography* essays] that adds an additional dimension to the relevant themes and subthemes implicit and explicit within the piece. (151)

GENERATIVITY

[This refers to] the way in which the work enables one to see or act upon phenomena. . . . The arts typically project an image that reshapes our conception of some aspect of the world or that sheds light on aspects of the world we had not seen before. . . . Aristotle once commented that poetry is "truer" than history because poetry deals with the world in its most general sense while history focuses on particulars. (152)

SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

[This] pertains to the character, meaning, and import of the central ideas of the work. What makes a work significant is its thematic importance, its focus on the issues that make a sizable difference in the lives of people within a society. What one is looking for is something that matters, ideas that count, important questions to be raised. (153)

EVOCATION AND ILLUMINATION

It is through evocation and illumination that one begins to *feel* the meanings that the work is to help its readers grasp. . . . Evocation pertains to feeling. It may signify an aesthetic experience. Its contrast is the anesthetic, a process that dulls pain or suppresses feeling. The arts traffic in feeling. . . . Evocation of feeling may result not merely in a cognitive understanding of the material being viewed or read. . . . The criterion of "illumination" as it applies to arts-based research pertains to the ways in which the work illuminates a terrain, a process, an individual. It sheds

> light often by defamiliarizing an object or process so that it can be seen in a way that is entirely different than a way in which customary modes of perception operate. It calls attention to itself and when generative, to processes or events that the creator of the work is attempting to reveal. (154)

FUTURE RESEARCH

One hope is that scholars may read this work and begin to imagine new and experimental forms for scholarly writing, appropriate to their own theses and dissertations. Many people you talk to, both inside and outside of academia, believe that writing or reading a dissertation has to be an arduous, soul-destroying process of rigid objectivity and no joy. Creative methods for conducting and presenting research in any field can make the work more accessible to more readers, from the arts to the sciences, within and outside of school.

One future variation might be, for example, an inquiry focused more narrowly on a few seminal contributors to a field of study, consisting of a series of imagined conversations, inspired by their published quotes and texts. This would not be REMIX as found here, but more similar to the creative dialogues of playwrights, with the researcher providing the context, or setting, for the ideas.

Integrating material from dreams, divinations, intuitions, and visions adds layers of information from unconscious, spiritual, and imaginative realms. Someone researching the psychology of joy, for example, might choose to weave

findings from his review of the literature together with multicultural stories he hears during interviews with therapists and clients along with his own dream narratives throughout the process, to indicate how culture, individuality, and the collective unconscious inform psychological experience.

Narrative inquiry is a rich category of arts-based research for social scientists, anthropologists, ethnographers, psychologists, and others. The researcher might start with interviews, then move toward a creative representation or interpretation of what was learned, as in Anna Deveare Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992*, her response to the Rodney King riots. Deveare Smith interviewed many surrounding figures involved in the crisis, from police to store owners to bystanders, and then enacted the texts of what she heard in live, staged performances. The dissertation might consist of selected original transcripts, the performance script, an analysis of the process, a history of the city, a discussion of race relations, and a proposal for solutions derived from audience focus groups.

Creative approaches to conducting and presenting research should serve to enliven the work for all involved, including the writer, research participants, committee judging the results, and future readers of the study's conclusions.

POSSIBLE USES FOR THIS BOOK

Writers and workshop leaders who read *Remix Perspectives* likely already have your own bags of tricks and prompts for generating new writing, your own sets of essential concepts, and tried-and-true methods for conducting workshops. Ways

to deploy the material presented here are diverse and flexible, adaptable to undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate skill levels and varying demographics, and speak to a range of possible motives for the writing that these perspectives might inspire, from personal self-expression to social documentary to literary publication.

The REMIX chapters that comprise the body of this work—The Practice, The Parts, The Purposes, The Process, The Pedagogy, The Panorama—might easily fit into the timing of a college semester, or be otherwise used in sequence, or culled for guiding concepts useful to specific kinds of writers. The chapters build from considerations of our habits and mind-states in praxis, to identifying component parts of stories and employing techniques of craft, to why we write, criteria for judging the ethics and use value of what has been produced, and a big-picture overview of the writer's larger contexts.

Here are a dozen possible uses for this material in writing classrooms, or for writers alone at their desks:

1. *RE-REMIX:* Copy relevant pages from this book and use scissors to select and rearrange quotes that relate to your current project.
2. *SEMI-DIVINATION:* Use the book like a Tarot deck, the I Ching, or Ouija board. Turn to a page at random and see where your eye lands.
3. *STAGED READING:* Choose a REMIX that applies to your work and assign each group member to read a part out loud, as Gertrude Stein, Jorge Luis

Borges, or Milan Kundera, et al. Discuss what emerges for the audience as well as the players.

4. *PROMPTS:* Single out particular quotes and respond with stream-of-consciousness or automatic writing. Use relevant prompts from REMIX 5C to revise with a critical eye.
5. *SYSTEMATIC PROCESS:* Move a piece of writing from draft to analysis of form and style to transformation, as described in the three chapters of The Process section.
6. *SYLLABUS TEMPLATE:* Organize a course beginning with discussion and assignments derived from The Practice, then The Parts, then The Purposes sections. Use ideas from The Panorama section to provide the larger contexts and issues surrounding what is produced.
7. *LITERATURE SURVEY:* A course could adopt *Remix Perspectives* as a textbook on the last hundred years in literature and the arts, with students doing follow-up research and reading of self-chosen authors here who, for example, represent a decade in time, a theoretical movement, a social issue, or a style of writing.
8. *NARRATIVE MEDICINE:* Consider where and how writing and imagination may be used to facilitate physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual healing. See REMIX 3A.
9. *NEW JOURNALISM:* Teach objective and subjective voice by inviting student writers to bear witness to the historical moment and construct their stance

using found text from local newspapers, discarded scraps, advertising, and eavesdropping, together with their personal observations and responses. See REMIX 2A.

10. *BORDER CROSSING:* Notice how the arts can inform one another, how the art that is the student's strength may be used to enhance skills in more challenging areas. Take a field trip to an art museum and write the "story in a painting," either as a creative short story or history/sociology research report. Read a literary story or novel, then illustrate its themes by drawing, taking pictures, or collaging found imagery before writing the critical essay. Photograph a situation then envision what happens next, perhaps in a series of captioned photos or in graphic novel format. See REMIX 2A.
11. *SUBTEXTS:* Write a dialog that includes what is not being said. See REMIX 1C on "gaps and holes."
12. *CULTURAL STUDIES:* Initiate conversation about race, justice, and current events. Use REMIX 3B or 6B for jumping-off points.

WHAT WRITERS DO

The collected thoughts and suggestions gathered here do not represent the sum total of all possible modes and approaches to creative writing—how could they? My selection process is naturally the work of an author with a point of view; even as I strive to present multiple points of view I am inevitably leaving out others. But this is what writers *do.*

Remix Perspectives offers *selected* concepts, and should be read as sparks: ideas or authors you once knew and maybe have forgotten, ways of writing and thinking that you are aware of but have yet to try, concepts that renew, reinvigorate, or re-contextualize your present manner of working and playing in the field.

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APPENDIX A

Style Guide to REMIX, MLA, And UMI

Some contradictions exist between *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing, 3rd edition* and *Requirements for CIIS Dissertations in MLA Format.* Typically, CIIS guidelines overrule but notable exceptions and choices regarding which rules to follow are listed here, as requested by committee members and signed off by the committee chair. In general, this dissertation is in compliance with MLA rules but takes exception to parts of MLA format for specific reasons and in specific instances, so the committee felt strongly that it should be in compliance with MLA in all other regards.

SPACING

- Block quotes are double-spaced throughout, for consistency between the essay and REMIX sections. This decision was made together with the committee and follows MLA rules for block quotes.

INDENTATION

- In each REMIX, block quotes are indented in an alternating style, to clearly indicate the shift to a new voice.

QUOTE MARKS

- In each REMIX, quote marks are left off at beginnings and ends of block quotes for ease of reading, regardless of length of the quote.
- In each REMIX, double quote marks are therefore used within block quotes to indicate quotes-within-a-quote.

- The same rules are followed in the essay sections for consistency.

WEB SOURCES

- Whenever in-text citations appear with no page number the source is the Web and may be tracked down via the author's name in Works Cited.

WORKS CITED

- All quote sources appear in one list with complete publication details, called "Works Cited" per MLA and at request of committee. (This is a break from CIIS Guidelines, which call this "References," and was approved by CIIS Center for Writing and Scholarship.)

ATTRIBUTIONS

- In each REMIX, the full name of the author of each quote appears in SMALL CAPS for ease of reading at the start of each quote.
- The year of publication is included at the end of each quote, to help the reader situate the statement in time, along with page numbers to locate the quote within the source. This is a break from MLA rules for in-text citations but the committee agrees that it helps to contextualize what is being said. When the year the quote first appeared differs significantly from the published version listed in Works Cited, that date is included in brackets after the author's name.

COPYRIGHT

- A significant aspect of the inquiry is to interrogate intellectual property laws and engage creative uses of appropriation and *bricolage* as scholarly methods.

Nonetheless, this work is in compliance with UMI and ProQuest copyright rules.

FAIR USE

- REMIX as a form is a new entity; as *bricoleur,* I am the new author of the appropriated and reconfigured quotes and thereby become the owner of a "transformative" work.

> According to *Copyright Law & Graduate Research:*
>
> Courts also look favorably on "transformative" or "productive" uses to strengthen the claim of fair use and to outweigh commercial purposes. For example, if your use is straight copying of text or digitizing of images to serve the basic function of the original, the use may not be "transformative." Selective quotations in a scholarly study, short clips in an innovative multimedia work, or deconstruction of text in a critical analysis might be deemed "transformative." ("Purpose of the Use")

POETRY

- No more than one-third of any previously published poem appears.

> According to *Requirements for CIIS Dissertations in MLA Format:*
>
> A quote becomes a reprint (and requires proof of permission to republish) when it includes more than one-third of any one published poem or song (written by someone else). (3k, 7).

LENGTH OF QUOTATIONS

- No quotes extend beyond allowable limit.
- According to *Copyright Law & Graduate Research:* "UMI raises questions about quotations from pre-existing materials that extend for more than one and one-half single-spaced pages." ("Practical Guidance from UMI")
- The word "extend" is interpreted to mean a continuous, long quotation versus the type of short excerpts that appear here.

APPENDIX B

Assessment of Original Contribution

Under the heading "What Does It Mean to Be 'Original'?" researcher E. M. Phillips compiles a list of definitions, suggesting that an original contribution provides one or more of the following services. (The **bold entries** indicate the potential contributions of *Remix Perspectives.)*

1. Saying something nobody has said before.

2. Carrying out empirical work that has not been done before.

3. Making a synthesis of things that have not been put together before.

4. Making a new interpretation of someone else's material or ideas.

5. Trying out something in this country that has previously been done only elsewhere.

6. Taking a new technique and applying it to a new area.

7. Being cross-disciplinary and using different methodologies.

8. Looking at topics that people in my discipline have not looked at before.

9. Adding to knowledge in a way that has not been done before.

10. Testing existing knowledge in an original way.

11. Writing down a new piece of information for the first time.

12. Giving a good exposition of another's idea.

13. Continuing a previously original piece of work.

14. Carrying out original work designed by the supervisor.

15. Providing a single original technique, observation, or result in an otherwise unoriginal but competent piece of research.

16. Having followed instructions and understood the original concepts.

17. Having many original ideas, methods, and interpretations all performed by others under the direction of a postgraduate.

18. Bringing new evidence to bear on an old issue (2004, 190).

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San Francisco State University (MA English: Creative Writing, 1983)

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Rutgers University (BA English, 1977)

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“Piglet noticed that even though he had a Very Small Heart, it could hold a rather large amount of gratitude.”

— A. A. Milne, *Winnie the Pooh*

Thank you for reading!