Newsletter of the Canadian Association
for the Study of Language and Learning
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This issue was edited by Jane Milton, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design
it is accessible through the Inkshed Web site, at
http://www.stu.ca/inkshed

About Inkshed . . .

This newsletter of the *Canadian Association for the Study of Language and Learning* (CASLL) provides a forum for its subscribers to explore relationships among research, theory, and practice in language acquisition and language use, particularly in the Canadian context. CASLL membership runs from January 1 to December 31 and includes a subscription to Inkshed. To subscribe, send a cheque, made out to "Inkshed at NSCAD," for $20 ($10 for students and the un (der)employed to the following address:

Susan Drain, Department of English, Mount St. Vincent University, Halifax, NS, B3M 2J6, Canada.

Subscribers are invited to submit items of interest related to the theory and practice of reading and writing. CASLL also has a website (www.stu.ca/~hunt/casll.htm) maintained by Russ Hunt.

Please submit newsletter contributions
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Inkshed editors and editorial consultants, past and present, include the following:

From the Editor's Notepad

Welcome, all, to the twentieth volume of *Inkshed*. In the previous issue, I reminded us of the early intention to make this newsletter the venue for conversation and I'm happy to say that this issue contains great conversations. We have a reply from Patrick Dias to the review of his book *Worlds Apart*. The review by Russ Hunt appeared in Volume 19. We also have a consolidation of a particularly enthusiastic conversation held on the listserve.

This issue also brings you the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held at the Inkshed Conference in May, 2002, but I'm sorry to report to those of you who were not able to get to this year's conference that I have no summary of, or response to, that conference. I'm particularly disappointed because I was one of those who could not attend and was intrigued by Russ Hunt's comment on the listserve that he thought the conversations there were the finest. It is no coincidence that the "authentic writing"; thread online occurred immediately after the conference. Our thanks go to Linda Meggs who bravely took on the job of conference co-ordinator after attending her first Inkshed. Thanks also to the program committee: Anne Hunt, Russ Hunt, Roberta Lee, and Shurli Makmillan.

This issue also brings you the call for proposals for the 2003 Inkshed conference to be held in Hockley Hills, Ontario. The theme, "Teaching in Contexts," promises a broad and lively subject for discussion. We look forward to celebrating 20 years of conferences that offer inspiration, challenge, and support in what we do as teachers and students of writing.

– Jane Milton

Patrick Dias

A Response to Russ Hunt's review of *Worlds Apart*

> ["Between Planets: What's Between the Worlds of *Worlds Apart*," *Inkshed* 19.2 (Autumn 2001), 4-7]

While I do not speak for my co-authors, I expect they will concur with much of what I have to say in response to Russ Hunt's attentive and discerning reading of our book and his appreciative comments. I am grateful for such a reading, and for his delineation of why this book ought to be of interest to teachers of writing and Inkshedders in particular. But true to the genre of review writing, Russ also points to some shortcomings or as he more kindly puts it, disappointments, which I feel I ought to respond to.

He believes "there is a kind of narrowness involved in seeing the central issue as 'the performance of universities in preparing their graduates for the changed writing demands of professional workplaces.'" (p. 6) I don't believe any of the authors see the central issue of this book in this way; in fact, the quotation in context reads: "Our question about the relationships between writing at work and at school arose from some dissatisfaction with the performance of universities in preparing their graduates for the changed writing demands of professional workplaces" (p. 3, underlining added). We are in effect saying that the press-fed, popularly perceived failure of schools to prepare their students for writing at work led us to examine the relationships between writing at school and writing at work; but that our inquiring soon made clear the profound disjunction between the two worlds. For

us the central issue became, as we state in the sentence that precedes the bit Russ cites: "Because writing is acting, it is highly contextualized, and it is the character of this contextualization that turns out to be the burden of this book." (*Worlds Apart*, 6).

The theme of the research program which supported our study was "Education and Work." That theme and our questions about writing could best be explored within professional faculties and their cognates in the workplace. When Russ argues that our "focus on the consequences of education for futures in the workplace, for careers, is not of much interest to them [English professors]," and will alienate them, we need to explain that our focus was primarily on writing as an activity and how it functions in various settings and the consequences of that. We were addressing people who teach and study writing; endearing ourselves to English professors will be better accomplished by an article that carries the findings to their practices.

At another point in his review, Russ points out that the "authors' characterization of the classroom situation makes it clear how it differs from situations where writing actually functions," and then he goes on to remind us that "writing which isn't done in the workplace can serve such authentic functions as creating community, influencing others, establishing a record, furthering mutual tasks, and so forth, and can do so even in classrooms" (p. 7). But we had not intended to characterize the classroom situation; rather we had presented case studies of certain classrooms where writing was a major activity both for teaching and assessment purposes. We presume that there are similar dynamics in other such classrooms, but in no way do we wish to imply that there aren't classrooms or situations where writing can serve the authentic functions Russ mentions. We had certainly not intended to characterize so many of the writing classrooms, for instance, where writing is used in these ways. So while it is disappointing, it ought not to surprise readers that "we allowed a phenomenon like inkshedding to fall through the cracks" (p.7).

I can see now why Russ believes we assume "there is nothing out there in the space between the worlds," simply because our study did not touch on such situations. We made no such assumption however; until we had understood and delineated clearly the differences between those two worlds of writing, and accounted for those differences, we were in no position to point to the efforts that attempt to bridge those worlds. We were concerned with the bulk of those university classrooms and workplace settings where writing goes on as we have described, and therefore accounts for a widespread conviction that one does not learn to write for the workplace in the university. We leave off saying:If there is one major, obvious-seeming way in which educational courses might prepare people better for the demands of writing at work, it is through constituting the class as a working group with some degree of complexity, continuity, and interdependency of joint activity. Such arrangements will go some way toward realizing the far richer communicative relations that contextualize writing in the workplace (*Worlds Apart*, 235).Yes, Russ is right in wanting "an exploration of how that richness actually works to facilitate learning ... and might be brought into higher education contexts." I am aware of how much of such effort is already being made by him and other Inkshedders. Our own effort in that direction and that of Inkshedders Christine Adam, Natasha Artemeva, Ann Beer, Jane Ledwell-Brown, and Graham Smart appears in *Transitions: Writing in Academic and Workplace Settings*, Hampton Press, 2000. Honestly, not a plug for the book; just my way of saying how much we believe that the work Russ points to needs to be realized. (By the way, we ought to acknowledge Peter Medway as one of the co-authors of *Worlds Apart*; his name does not appear at the head of the review.)

Technostyle

Technostyle is the journal of the Canadian Association of Teachers of Technical Writing. *Technostyle* presents articles and reviews of interest to teachers, practitioners, or researchers involved in technical, academic, professional, scientific, and governmental communication. We are pleased to announce an upcoming special issue of *Technostyle* on the expertise of professional writing and its development.

We invite manuscripts written from a variety of approaches to the study of nonliterary communication – rhetorical, linguistic, sociological, cultural, ethnographic – but all submissions should be securely situated in relevant research. While manuscripts addressing pedagogical issues are welcome, authors should avoid describing lessons without explaining their significance to broader theoretical concerns. In addition to the criterion of relevance to the teaching, practice, and research of technical writing, suitable submissions for publication are as follows: articles based on sound empirical research, the significance of which is explicated in terms of relevant and current theory, or articles that make a contribution to a current, developing rhetorical framework. *Technostyle* also welcomes articles that place these concerns in a context specific to relevant scholarship in Canada and to international contexts.

Manuscripts should be addressed to

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Manuscripts should be no longer than 6,500 words (25 double spaced, typed pages) and should be submitted in two copies free of internal or external indications of identity of authorship. All manuscripts will be externally reviewed and authors may be asked to undertake revisions in response to reviewers' evaluations. The editors also invite submissions of 500 words that respond to articles published in *Technostyle*. Publication is subject to editorial decision. Authors of accepted submissions are asked to follow APA style in citations and headings. Annual membership dues for CATTW are CAN $25 for students, $40 for individuals, and $50 for institutions and include a subscription to Technostyle. Dues may be sent to

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The CATTW website can be located at this address: http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/~agoldric/CATTW/

Minutes from Annual General Meeting

May 12, 2002

The Canadian Association for the Study of Language and Literacy

(Inkshed 19, Stanhope, Prince Edward Island)

Present: Laura Atkinson, Susan Drain, Jan Duerden, Jennifer Gilbert, Roger Graves, Anne Hungerford, Russ Hunt, Nan Johnson, Roberta Lee, Brock MacDonald, Shurli Makmillen, Kenna Manos, Linda Meggs, Rachel Nash, Deborah Payne, Margaret Procter, J. Barbara Rose, Ginny Ryan, Leslie Sanders, Wendy Strachan, Tosh Tachino, Kathy Voltan, Sharron Wall

Regrets: Patricia Golubev, Victoria Littman

Russ Hunt served as chair.

1. The group approved the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of May 2001.

2. Kenna Manos presented the Treasurer's Report:

BALANCE at 2001 AGM	$ 3290.35
INCOME: dues paid at Inkshed 18	868.35
dues paid since then but before May 9, 2002	190.00
EXPENSES:	3.75
ACCUMULATED BALANCE:	$ 4344.95

4. The group affirmed that this balance should be used to support the attendance at conferences of graduate students and the underemployed. Margaret Procter moved (seconded by Susan Drain) that those requiring this subsidy be invited to submit receipts to the Treasurer by June 15 for consideration of reimbursement; the motion carried. Linda Meggs volunteered to send out notice to the list of registered Inkshed 19 participants with this invitation. Kenna Manos (seconded by Brock MacDonald) moved that next year's organizers be directed to include a note about these subsidies in their call for proposals.

5. Four new board members were elected to take the place of those whose terms expire this year: Tosh Tachino, Nan Johnson, Shurli Makmillen, Jen Gilbert.

> [NOTE: The other board members are Geoff Cragg, Victoria Littman, Brock MacDonald, Linda Meggs, and Wendy Strachan (elected in 2001 for three years), Jane Ledwell-Brown (re-elected in 2000 for three years), and Kenna Manos as Treasurer.]

6. Laura Atkinson reported for Inkshed Publications, noting once again that the current bank balance ($4,780.33 as of May 2, 2002) was enough to publish a small book. No calls for proposals have been issued since the discussion of that possibility at the 2001 AGM. Members noted the suitability of Roger Graves' planned book on Canadian writing programs for a publishing project. Members also suggested that the current CASLL budget could be also be drawn upon to subsidize a publication if necessary.

7. Other business: Roger Graves reported from the Canadian caucus of the 2002 Conference on College Composition and Communication that the Working Class Caucus had asked for Canadian endorsement of three statements: that all positions in writing programs be declared ful-time, that instructors be enabled to choose part-time work only if it included benefits, and that no writing program have more than 10% of its instructors in part-time positions. After discussion, the sense of the meeting was that these resolutions did not relate to Canadian conditions and that our vote would not be appropriate.

8. It was generally agreed that Inkshed 20 would be held near Toronto. CASLL members from the Toronto area agreed to organize it. Leslie Sanders noted that our celebration of the twentieth anniversary should look forward and welcoming new participants as well as celebrating our past. There was a consensus that setting a maximum of 50 to 60 people would allow us to continue meeting in all-group sessions, with the possibility of small-group breakouts as well. The Toronto group asked for suggestions as to specific locations. After discussion, there was general agreement on a tentative title: "Teaching in Context: Reading, Writing, Speaking, Learning." This title and theme will be clarified by online discussion before the call for papers is issued. Other suggestions were made to continue encouraging poster displays and a reading table, in a separate room if possible.

9. Before adjourning, the meeting thanked the organizers of Inkshed 19 for an excellent conference.

-- Margaret Procter, Secretary *pro tem*

What's "Real" in Writing and Reading Situations?

A Collaborative Exploration

by
Natasha Artemeva, Marcy Bauman, Patrick Dias, Brenton D. Faber, Will Garrett-Petts, Roger Graves, Russ Hunt, Charlotte Hussey, Rob Irish, Roberta Lee, Jamie MacKinnon, Anthony Paré, Linda Schofield, Graham Smart, Tania S. Smith, Philippa Spoel, and Tosh Tachino

Introduction

At the Inkshed Working Conference 19 on Prince Edward Island in May (more information about it, its sessions, the inksheds from the conference, and pictures, is available on the Inkshed Web site), one of the discussions on Sunday morning was focused on Roger Grave's document on the conference "reading table" and on Russ Hunt's review of *Worlds Apart* in the fall *Inkshed Newsletter*. After the conference Roger emailed the conference participants, saying, in part,

> I'd like to talk more about an issue that came up on Sunday am in the response/ discussion about what makes a writing task "real," what counts as a real or "authentic" rhetorical situation. The service learning classes [described in Roger's Inkshed paper] do that, but Russ made the point that any class, at least theoretically, is capable of this. What conditions mark these occasions? Consequences of the writing act? Perception on the part of the writer?

Russ then opened the discussion to the CASLL email list, saying, again in part,

> This is an issue that I'd like to have the help of Inkshedders in thinking about. I'd like to begin by putting a slightly different spin on what Roger cites me as saying: my main contention is not that we *can* make situations "real" in class, but rather that classes, as conventionally constructed, make it extremely difficult and unlikely to happen, even though it is possible.
>
> Here's a simple minded example: what I'm writing, right now, as I compose this, is *real*, in that my central motive is to use this writing to convey an idea to readers whom I want to understand it and whom I want to respond to it (Bakhtin says they're the same thing, eh?). If I constructed a scenario in class in

which I asked a student to imagine this situation and write the email, turning it in as an assignment, it would *not* be real. (And we need to remember that that kind of simulation rarely happens in class.)

So there's my dichotomy. What makes one real and one not, and what are the important differences in terms of language learning? What conditions, to use Roger's terminology, mark an occasion when writing is "real" or "authentic"?

Is that the issue you were raising, Roger?

On the basis of that invitation, over the next couple of weeks, a discussion ensued which seemed to many of the participants to have wider implications, and to call forth ideas worth preserving beyond the evanescence of an electronic conversation. In order to render the process a bit clearer and the ideas more accessible, Russ Hunt (with the advice and consent of the participants) pruned, copyedited, and arranged the conversation into the following form. It begins with Roger's response to the invitation, and goes on to consider a wide range of issues arising from the fundamental question.

Date: Thu, 16 May 2002 21:21:03 -0500
From: Roger Graves <rgraves@condor.depaul.edu>
Subject: Re: What's "real" in writing situations?

That's it. I'm wondering about whether or not or to what extent this depends on the student's perception of the task -- phenomenalism ("a thing as it appears to and is constructed by the mind" -- *Random House Dictionary*). This is what Russ is saying -- maybe -- that the situation must be perceived by the writer as demanding or desiring a response. Burke must have said something about this -- where's Rick Coe?
Roger Graves

Date: Fri, 17 May 2002 13:58:45 -0400
From: Philippa Spoel <pspoel@nickel.laurentian.ca>
Subject: "Real" writing

This discussion of "real" or "authentic" writing situations is definitely something that interests me. Personally, I prefer not to think of some situations as more "real" than others. The classroom context and the roles of students and teachers in this context are as "real" any other situation. I think it's important to remember that, by the very nature of the classroom / educational context, students are always students and teachers are always teachers. So if we design assignments that more or less resemble or enact practices that are close to or somehow connected with workplace contexts which these students may one day enter as workers / employees (not as students), nonetheless in the context of our courses, the work that the students perform is "really" an assignment that, ultimately, will be assessed by us as teachers / gatekeepers of the educational system. Much as there are times when I would like to, I can't abdicate this professional identity / responsibility.

I guess my point is that this distinction between "real" and somehow "nonreal" writing doesn't make sense to me; all writing is "real", isn't it? -- even the situation that you describe, Russ, of asking students to "imagine the situation." In this case, you would be asking them (as a "real" teacher) to perform a "real" assignment in their "real" identities as students. Admittedly, the assignment would probably be very difficult for them to undertake (because how could they "imagine" the situation effectively?), but to me that's not the same as saying that the writing they produce is not "real." The problem for me is not that this assignment wouldn't produce "real" writing, but rather that it might be asking them to do something that would be very difficult for them based on their background knowledge (and hence the writing produced might not effectively meet your assessment criteria). I'm more comfortable with the concept of practice (rather than pretense) as a central teaching / learning

method -- what is it that we want students to "practice" (as preparation for their lives when they are no longer students, when they find themselves in other rhetorical situations) and how can we best design assignments to foster meaningful and challenging but not impossible practice? There are of course very important connections to explore and foster between classroom contexts and other contexts, but for me the most important reality to keep in mind is that any writing that students perform in the context of a course is, of course, primarily motivated by and addressed to this context. Although assignments may resemble (even to the point of providing a "real" service to some external organization) the kinds of professional writing / communication that students may perform later or in other parts of their lives as employees, still, when they are assigned as part of a course, they are "really" assignments.

Date: Fri, 17 May 2002 14:11:43 -0400
From: Rob Irish <irish@ecf.utoronto.ca>
Subject: Re: "Real" writing

I wonder if we could add another word into this discussion: "owned writing." This would seem to me to get at the distinction Russ was making in his post between his conveying information and a construct asking his students to convey information. The real difference is that Russ "owned" the communication and had real goals for it. Similarly, students in a classroom can own a paper, get excited about making an argument that is really theirs, and so the paper becomes "real." Other students will not own the assignment -- even in the very same course -- so their work lacks the "authenticity." Sadly, that real text will not always be "better" than the inauthentic one in the usual scheme of assessment. So to pick up Philippa 's question, no I don't think they're all real because sometimes we ask our students to "imagine" something, and they don't. Hence, the writing act that accompanies their unimagined position will not be authentic.

If my idea has merit, then my next question is what can we do in the classroom to increase the likelihood that students will "own" the writing situation, whether imagined or "real"?

Date: Fri, 17 May 2002 15:40:06 -0300
From: Russ Hunt <hunt@stu.ca>
Subject: Re: "Real" writing

Philippa 's right, of course, there's nothing unreal about a classroom. Maybe the term I'm looking for is "rhetorical authenticity"? Whatever: it seems to me there's a profound difference between (a) the situation I'm in right now, in which I'm trying to make, in writing, a distinction in my own head as clear to other people as I can (with the realization that I may wind up having to rethink it), and (b) *any* situation in which I was producing a piece of writing whose only *real* (and I think I mean "real" there) function was going to be to be read by a teacher or other authority, who would judge it as effective or not. It's also important that in the present case I'm not only *expecting* response, I'm *responding*. And the response -- here's the hard part -- is to *what* I'm saying. Inkshedders (especially Philippa, here) will either get what I'm saying, or not.

> So if we design assignments that more or less resemble or enact practices that are close to or somehow connected with workplace contexts which these students may one day enter as workers / employees (not as students), nonetheless in the context of our courses, the work that the students perform is "really" an assignment that, ultimately, will be assessed by us as teachers / gatekeepers of the educational system.

Yes. That seems to me exactly the problem: it's as "real," but it's not "real" in anything like the same way. And I don't think it affords learning in any of the same ways. Nor does it exercise the writer's pragmatic skills in anything like the same ways. What I mean by that is this; I've already edited that first paragraph three times (and, now, this one as often), putting in the parenthetical (a) and (b), putting in and taking out underlining, reshaping sentences, trying to anticipate questions and objections and confusion. I do that because I'm vividly aware that

this will be read, not by someone who will admire a cool rhetorical move or judge the organization as effective, but by someone who's (someones who're) either going to be engaged by the argument or not. Completely other considerations would occupy me if I were constructing an example of email to show someone how email allows accommodation for audiences.

Here's the problem:

> Admittedly, the assignment would probably be very difficult for them to undertake (because how could they "imagine" the situation effectively?)

"Effectively imagining" is a concept and phrasing I like a lot. If we think about almost every writing assignment out there, we're asking students to imagine situations they have no experience of, and to do so "effectively" (which, for me, means tricking their pragmatic sense into acting as though the situation were "real").

I'm not comfortable with "pretense," and I hope I didn't suggest that, but I'm also not very comfortable with "practice" (someone at an Inkshed conference long ago made a distinction between "practice" and "praxis" that I liked a lot).

> I'm more comfortable with the concept of practice (rather than pretense) as a central teaching / learning method -- what is it that we want students to "practice" (as preparation for their lives when they are no longer students, when they find themselves in other rhetorical situations) and how can we best design assignments to foster meaningful and challenging but not impossible practice?

I do agree that this is an important question, but I increasingly think that the idea that students should be practicing in situations "like" the ones they might be in otherwise isn't, um, practical. What I want to try to do is give them "authentic" (well, okay, "real") rhetorical motives for writing, rather than asking them to imagine situations entirely outside their experience.

I think that's the only way that they can, in Rob 's term, "own" the writing situation.

> Date: Fri, 17 May 2002 16:23:47 -0400
> From: Philippa Spoel <pspoel@nickel.laurentian.ca>
> Subject: more on "real" writing

Ok, I think I understand and agree with the distinctions you and Rob are making between writing that seems to be more meaningful or more "owned" and the kinds of empty (?) writing that students often produce, through no fault of their own, because they don't really care about what they are writing so much as they care about the way that it will be assessed. But still I would say that the function of writing in order to be assessed by an authority is a very REAL rhetorical function and an extraordinarily important / meaningful (and of course problematic!) one in our culture. I think we can try to create writing tasks that try to engage students, try to provide them with more of a sense of ownership for what they are doing, more personal relevance / meaning, etc. but in the end, I am going to be assessing their work and I know it and they know it. Students do write in expectation of a response -- the response of a teacher's assessment, the grade. And they in turn respond, for better or worse, with further assignments.

And I'm not so sure that this list provides a completely different writing experience. True, I do care about whether or not Russ, Rob, Roger (any other Rs out there?) understand what I'm saying and in that sense maybe my writing is more "real" than the typical classroom assignment. Also, my position in this rhetorical hierarchy is very different from that of students in the generic classroom hierarchy. However, despite this important structural difference, even in this CASLL context, I too am very concerned about how my writing will be assessed by my colleagues -- not as concerned as I was when I was a grad student (I don't think I ever posted anything then!) but

nonetheless aware of my audience as a group that will be "assessing" my words. I'm not writing for grades but I am conscious of having my words "evaluated" -- are they "effective" from my audience's perspective? Do you see my writing as thoughtful and relevant, or as simplistic and irrelevant? (please don't answer that last question!)

So (a) I think the function of evaluation (broadly-speaking) for writing is present in many contexts and (b) this is a real function and (c) it can be a meaningful form of response that in turns elicits new writing. Maybe it's this last point that concerns me most -- how can I establish in my courses modes and criteria of evaluation that will guide students to produce what I (and, I hope, they too) consider to be meaningful writing -- is this writing that seems to demonstrate some sense of "ownership", some kind of "authenticity," some "real" responsiveness to other people's ideas, some personal engagement? Am I the one who judges whether or not my students' writing demonstrates these qualities? Are they the ones who judge?

Date: Fri, 17 May 2002 16:43:41 -0400
From: Rob Irish <irish@ecf.utoronto.ca>
Subject: Re: more on "real" writing

In some of the writing on assessing writing that I've been bogged under for the last year or so, people suggest "metacognitive exercises" whereby students write about what effect they were trying to have on the reader in sections of drafts of their work. Then, the advocates suggest, the writing instructor can help the writer understand how successful he / she has been (at least with that one reader). This kind of an idea seems to me an attempt to get students to own / make real what they are trying to accomplish. It also gives the instructor some kind of a rubric by which to play evaluator. The folks who suggest this are writing from the US composition context in which the instructors comment on drafts, but I find that we play a similar role in writing conferences in our writing centre. We ask what the students are trying to do, and then look to help them do that by clarifying ideas, teasing out further thoughts, clarifying organization etc. We are always having to be careful about who "owns" those papers and those conference meetings, particularly because the students would often like to foist off responsibility onto us.

Date: Fri, 17 May 2002 16:48:23 -0400
From: Marcy Bauman <marcyb@umich.edu>
Subject: Re: more on "real" writing

Forgive me, folks, before I even get started . . . but I've spent the last year with my head in programming languages of various sorts, and I think I see another way to describe the notion of "real" or "authentic" here . . . and this is a terrible oversimplification, I know.

Think first that you have a piece of writing. That piece of writing has various attributes or properties (which are outside the writing itself) associated with it:

- audience
- response expected (desired) by the author
- things to be learned from writing

There are dependencies associated with those properties: Certain kinds of audiences invoke certain kinds of expectations of response, which in turn afford certain kinds of learning. What I hear Russ saying is that the typical "teacher as audience" invokes a certain expectation of response (a grade), and that this situation makes it impossible for him to enable students to learn the sorts of things he wants them to learn.

I don't think that any of that has to do with the notion of "authentic" or "owned" writing, though -- "authenticity," I would argue, isn't a property of the writing or the situation, but a property of the *writer*. So, indeed, as Philippa

and Rob both note, it's possible for people to be authentically engaged in and to own the writing that they do for assessment in classrooms -- I'd submit that Russ' objections to that kind of ownership and engagement have to do with the kinds of learning that can take place, rather than with the emotional or intellectual state of the writer. In fact, the kind of learning that takes place when writing is assessed for a grade might work against and make more difficult the learning that takes place when writing is self-directed.

Date: Fri, 17 May 2002 17:54:17 -0400
From: "Tania S. Smith" <smith.3460@osu.edu>
Subject: Re: more on "real" writing

I think "owning" a piece of writing is all about learning to respond to a rhetorical situation you've thought carefully about. I keep trying new ways of encouraging students to do this.

In the current class I'm teaching (intermediate writing), the short assignments early in the quarter require that students actually address the classroom audience, especially in the introduction. Students learn to exercise some rhetorical muscles by directing their writing in this way. For example, here's an introduction to a research assignment that went along with a presentation on a chapter of John Trimbur's text *The Call To Write*:

> The chapter that we chose to present to you today is about public documents. Since this is such a huge genre, we decided to narrow it down to a specific community, and then focus on some genres within that community. The chapter does a good job of explaining many different types of genres within different communities, so we encourage you to read through it. Some of these documents you may see on a daily basis. Some you may have never seen before. After reading through this chapter, you may also be surprised to find out how public documents are incorporated in your everyday life.

I'm trusting that I'm not the only one who asks students to write this way in formal assignments even though it's so unlike the usual academic essay. I am not focusing on only preparing them for other university classes.

The ethos that comes through these words is a student (actually a group of three) who took time to think about the impact of the essay on a real audience.

And yes, their fellow students were assigned to read a draft of this paper before the presentation. It really did reach the "real" audience. At the end of class the classroom audience filled out an online form addressed only to me (with room for comments) that assessed the integration of the paper and the chapter they covered in their presentation. That classroom assessment counts for half their presentation grade, and perhaps even more, since I also consider the students' discursive comments as I make my own assessment. Then the presenters get the comments of their peers with the students' names removed. We also have an online discussion area where some students have posted their feedback on the paper and presentation.

Date: Fri, 17 May 2002 15:42:35 -0700
From: Will Garrett-Petts <petts@cariboo.bc.ca>
Subject: Authentic writing

As some of you may know, Don Lawrence & I worried "authenticity" as a critical term in our recent book, seeing it as the hallmark of the kind of writing/composing that interested us. In a recent interview (in *West Coast Line*) Don links authenticity to the vernacular in art: he says that the "vernacular . . . involves a sense that one's personally-experienced past (often hidden or buried) can be recovered, even redeemed, in the present moment -- specifically, at the point of contact where artist and audience meet. When vernacular art moves us, it does so not because of its originality or its illustrative function, but because it strikes us as authentic, authentic, that is, to the moments of production and contact."

Some of this, it seems to me, might be true for classroom-based writing as well. As teachers, we are asking our students to recover (or redeem) that which is not necessarily "at home" in a classroom setting; we are asking our students to share our sense of academic reality, encouraging them to find ways to make their ideas, experiences, intuitions, and research count in a new linguistic context? We are asking our students to believe, with Russ, that the classroom provides more than mere conjectural reality -- that it is a good space for authentic expression. As Marcy writes, authenticity is a property of the writer, but it is also something felt by the reader as true to the moments of production and contact?

Date: Fri, 17 May 2002 18:46:27 -0500
From: Graham Smart <gsmart@purdue.edu>
Subject: rhetorically authentic writing

I think I'd like to come at the issue of "rhetorical authenticity" from another angle (and here I'm taking up a theme from *Worlds* Apart and Russ's review of it). If we're talking about rhetorical authenticity from a teaching / learning-in-school perspective, then I think what really matters is how a writing project is framed for students and what explicit or implicit claims are being made for it by the teacher. Or put another way, it's a question of authentic situations, authentic rhetors, authentic audiences, and authentic purposes.

So for example, let's say a piece of writing has been elicited by a teacher in a case-study type of situation, with students assigned a pretend persona (say, an employee in an organization), with a pretend audience (say, the employee's manager), for a pretend purpose (say, to present an analysis of a problem and recommend a solution), for the *real* purpose of being read and graded by the teacher. Then the texts produced by the students will be authentic pieces-of-writing-produced-by-students-in-a-classroom-for-a-teacher/grader-for-the-purposes-of-practicing-writing-and-receiving-grades. The texts will be that and nothing else -- they will have no other rhetorical authenticity but that. I don't mean to say that the assignment and the writing experience wouldn't be worthwhile -- they may be very worthwhile -- but the texts have no other rhetorical authenticity. The texts will not be anything like a text actually produced in the workplace by an employee, addressed to the employee's manager, and intended to convey a problem analysis and recommended solution. In fact, the two types of texts will be Worlds Apart.

Date: Fri, 17 May 2002 21:48:30 -0400
From: Patrick Dias <dias@education.mcgill.ca>
Subject: Re: more on "real" writing

The question about real writing situations reminds me of Anne Freadman's analogy in her provocative paper, "Anyone for Tennis? " -- I have watched an exchange of shots, some of them have been returned, others have whizzed by, and I no longer want to remain a spectator, but take up my racket and make a few telling returns (really write, for all real writing is consequential -- something gets done, something happens).

For one, most school writing is not real writing (it is of course, real school writing), though we would very much like to make it so, because, I suspect we believe there is no learning without engagement. As Russ has suggested, real writing occurs in anticipation of a response, is dialogic (in the Bakhtinian sense). In Anne Freadman's tennis analogy, the shot must be returned or conceded. A grade is not a shot in response (the evaluator is on the sidelines, like a coach perhaps, shouting "good shot!" but there is no one on the other side of the net to return that shot -- that well-crafted wrist shot, the elegant rhetorical turn, goes into empty space); a grade is not even feedback -- in the sense of an ongoing dialogue, a speaker, or an actor, or a performer picking up from an audience; the institutional setting defines the act of writing: what is good writing (earns a good grade)? and how do I make this good?

But enough of analogizing. As the other Freedman (Aviva) has said, school writing goes nowhere; once it's graded, it's filed away, discarded, forgotten. At the end of term, so many of those well-bound reports are left

behind, and end up in the recycling bin. In our research on academic and workplace writing, most workplace writers asserted that they had learned to write at work. We might claim that we prepared them to write at work, but they certainly did not see the link. Rightly so. Workplaces are complex settings, hierarchical, with long institutional histories, organizational cultures, and a lot more (not unlike our own institutions and departments, one has to live a long time in them to learn their ways); so such settings and the exigencies that arise within them cannot be simulated in classrooms. As Aviva Freedman puts it so succinctly, you write where you are.

I have argued elsewhere that so much of school time is spent preparing for the life after, whether that be Grade 3, Junior or Senior High, Community College, or the University; and at each level, there is the perennial complaint: Didn't they teach you anything in . . . ? Students need to be writing for the here and now, from their own needs, as defined by them. It is only then they will be able to judge for themselves if they are accomplishing what they set out to do, and what remains to be done. It is the need to say that ineffable "such and such a thing" that James Britton said is worked out in the saying, is discovered or realized in the writing. Real writing serves intention, is goal-directed, is motivated by will and desire. Good writing, real writing, I believe, is an outcome of our using language as a tool, as an extension of ourselves, and not as something "out there" that we somehow appropriate and model. Classroom communities are just as real as any workplace setting for writing. I know from much of this discussion and from past issues of *Inkshed* that places for such writing are always in the making.

Date: Sat, 18 May 2002 00:39:24 -0400
From: Marcy Bauman <marcyb@umich.edu>
Subject: Re: more on "real" writing

I'm sorry, but the longer this discussion goes on, the less helpful I'm finding the distinction between "real" writing and "inauthentic" writing. Patrick, I know perfectly well what you mean by a Bakhtinian notion of dialogue, and I understand the references to "Anyone for Tennis" -- but I just don't think it's a helpful distinction to say that writing inside of classrooms is not real, and writing outside of classrooms is real.

I think it's far more useful to say that writing in those contexts serves different purposes. The point of school writing is to provide "examples of something"; it's performative, and the grade *is* the response: the situation constrains the written transaction to the point where the grade often seems like the only *possible* response (cf. Giltrow and Valiquette's findings that student writers tend to read instructor comments as justification for the grade). But I simply will not buy the notion that because this writing is performative, students and teachers are not sometimes authentically engaged in its production (and consumption, as in reading, as Will points out). Perhaps this kind of writing has little to do with writing outside of school; perhaps a grade is a limited kind of feedback that doesn't really serve the writer or help her to learn -- I'll buy all of that. All I'm saying is that students can be authentically engaged in trying to get the grade, and that their engagement can lead them to the same sophisticated kinds of audience awareness (what will this teacher like? What topic should I pick? How should I approach it?) that we see more easily in out-of-school writing. You can say that this happens only in rare cases. Fair enough. But that it happens at all is an indication to me that "real", "authentic" and "engagement" are the wrong terms to apply to describe what I think Patrick and Russ are trying to describe.
We go round and round with this "real/authentic" thing and never get anywhere.

So that's why I'm proposing that we look at what writing situations allow people to learn about writing. What do we want them to learn, and how can we set up the situation so that they can learn those things? If we want them to learn to write for various audiences, we have to provide more than one; if we want them to learn to persuade, amuse, call into action, entertain their readers, then we have to create situations where those things are possible outcomes of the writing. Not all situations allow all outcomes.

Date: Sat, 18 May 2002 12:35:23 -0400
From: Natasha Artemeva <nartemev@ccs.carleton.ca>
Subject: Re: more on "real" writing

I am still having difficulty seeing university writing as "leading nowhere" and not being "authentic" and workplace writing as having "real" goals and consequences. My graduate students, who have been reading Worlds Apart with me, also have trouble with this vision. I think that writing practice is so situated -- regardless whether it happens at school or in the workplace -- that such generalizations are hard to make.

I am not going to refer to classroom practices in this message -- my view is that "authenticity" of classroom writing depends on the course and how it is taught. I am more concerned with the argument about "authenticity" and "real implications" of workplace writing. In my former life as an engineer and in my recent life as a writing consultant to high-tech companies and government, I often observed (and sometimes was personally involved in) writing situations that led nowhere and had no purpose above and beyond showing the boss that the writer was doing "something" rather than wasting time and money. How about workplace reports that are used for evaluation only -- how are they different from papers students write for evaluation purposes? How about project reports that report on work that has never been done -- reports that actually lie with the only purpose to justify the writer's salary and continuous employment? Should we pretend that it never happens in the workplace? Of course, these are extreme situations that do not happen all the time, but we need to keep in mind that there ARE many situations in which workplace writing is not as "real" as it seems or is no more "real" than school writing. I often view my students' writing as a much more "authentic" and "real" than the documents I used to come across (or asked to produce/edit) in various workplaces.

I am not trying to diminish the important differences between school and workplace writing -- I agree with many conclusions drawn in *Worlds Apart* and really like the book. I'm just trying to show that the sharp distinction between school and workplace is in fact much more "blurred."

Date: Tue, 21 May 2002 10:52:28 -0400
From: Rob Irish <irish@ecf.utoronto.ca>
Subject: Re: Authentic writing

As I hear the word moving to authenticity, I wonder if we should raise Bakhtin's terms : Authoritative vs. internally persuasive discourses. Isn't the latter what really makes something "real" to a student?

Date: Tue, 21 May 2002 13:17:20 -0400
From: ToshTachino <ftachino@chat.carleton.ca>
Subject: Re: Authentic Writing

The fundamental assumption that underlies *Worlds Apart* seems to be that the role of university writing classes is purely to prepare students for their future career. This makes sense in specialized majors such as journalism, engineering, law, etc., but I wonder if we should impose the same paradigm for other disciplines such as English, psychology, linguistics, anthropologies, etc. Authentic writing is possible and desirable in journalism, engineering, etc. because the students in these disciplines are expected to become journalists, engineers, etc., but do we always know what English majors end up being? If we can't predict the (majority of) students' future career, what is authentic writing? What are we trying to teach? Are we really responsible for providing job training? Do students come to university to prepare for their future career? (That's what the middle-class adage says, but do students really believe in that?)

Date: Tue, 21 May 2002 12:54:29 -0500
From: Graham Smart <gsmart@purdue.edu>
Subject: Re: Authentic Writing

I wouldn't agree that the "fundamental assumption" in *Worlds Apart* is that the role of university writing classes is to prepare students for their future careers, and for several reasons. First, the authors are very clear that school

writing has its own particular, and entirely legitimate and worthwhile, purposes for writing -- as do different instances of workplace writing. The authors are *not* at all suggesting that school writing is a pale imitation of workplace writing or that the primary function of school writing is to somehow prepare students for the writing they'll be doing later on in their lives after graduation. And second, the research underlying *Worlds Apart* focused on particular disciplines that do represent themselves as providing professional preparation -- such as Architecture, Social Work, Engineering, and Public Administration. And the authors don't make any claims beyond the bounds of this research.

And to respond as well to the implication that students don't really expect to receive preparation for their future careers . . . I disagree: I think that this definitely is *one* of the expectations, among others, that many students have. As one of our graduate students said here at Purdue, "If you try telling a kid who's going to graduate with a $30,000 student loan to repay that they shouldn't really expect their academic programs to position them for jobs, they'll think you're a little crazy."

Date: Tue, 21 May 2002 17:16:37 -0400
From: Anthony Paré <anthony.pare@mcgill.ca>
Subject: Re: Authentic Writing

You can always count on Graham to do a careful reading, and he's also done an accurate synopsis of one of our major arguments in *Worlds Apart*. In fact, the book is in part a critique of the belief that universities should be preparing people for specific workplace activities, such as writing on the job. As the book's title suggests, we don't think that's even possible, since the two are such radically different environments, with different goals, different social arrangements, different values and beliefs, and on and on. (Except, of course, for those of us who teach, since then universities ARE workplaces; but that's another story.) We discovered (as others have) that there is a widespread belief among practitioners in many fields that universities are failing to prepare students for writing on the job, and we've argued that the workplace must take on much of that responsibility, because writing is so embedded in local activity that students cannot be "taught" rhetorical particularities at a distance, out of context.

Another and closely related argument we tried to make -- one that might be relevant here -- is that the function or purpose of (students') writing in school is worlds apart from the function of (workers') writing at work. We oversimplified that difference, perhaps, by saying that the former is epistemic (primarily to do with knowledge-making), and largely concerned with individual growth (writing to learn, writing to know), whereas the latter is instrumental (oriented to action), and almost always concerned with collective or corporate ends. (Here the idea of ownership becomes quite literal, since many organizations own the written products of their employees.)

I agree that the broad distinction between "authentic" / "real" and "inauthentic" isn't useful, and we might instead ask ourselves what writing *does*, what ends does it have? Are the ends appropriate / authentic to the context -- that is, do they serve something beyond the performance of the task, something with implications for the world that the writing grows out of and enters into (a world that includes the writer)? Will the writing have consequences, change anything, cause action of some sort? A university writing task that purports to simulate or replicate the rhetorical context of "the" workplace cannot be authentic, and therefore probably cannot "teach" a person to write for that workplace at some indeterminate future date, after graduation, because it is not embedded in an authentic activity or context to which the text responds; it does not DO what such a document would do in the workplace. (And every workplace is different and constantly changing.)

Date: Tue, 21 May 2002 21:05:42 -0500
From: Roger Graves <rgraves@condor.depaul.edu>
Subject: authenticity, performativity

I asked a colleague, David Jolliffe, about where the use of "authentic" in phrases such as "authentic intellectual achievement" come from and he pointed me to Fred M. Newman and Associates, *Authentic Achievement: Restructuring Schools for Intellectual Quality*. Authentic as used in this context "stands for intellectual accomplishments that are worthwhile, significant, and meaningful, such as those undertaken by successful adults: scientists, musicians, business entrepreneurs, politicians . . . For students, we define authentic achievement through three criteria critical to significant accomplishment: construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and the value of achievement beyond school." (23-24) The issue is salient here because in Russ' review of *Worlds Apart* he argues that "writing which isn't done in the workplace *can* serve such *authentic* [my emphasis] functions as creating community, influencing others, establishing a record, furthering mutual tasks, and so forth, and can do so even in classrooms." (3rd last paragraph, web text) The point is that there is a group of people who are working to restructure American K-12 schools using "authentic achievement" as a key phrase. This work asserts, similarly to Russ, that "authentic" learning and writing can occur in schools. Russ was responding to the assertion on page 226 of *Worlds Apart* that "[students'] texts do not have performativity, in the sense of realizing speech acts such as orders or requests." The point under debate here is "can student texts be authentic in the sense that their texts either have or can potentially have consequences?" Russ says yes, and in my presentation at Inkshed I also argued that student texts can have consequences, such as obtaining funding for workshops for prostituted girls and women. The challenge, it seems to me, is to define what it means for a text to have consequences and then to design curricula that provoke these texts and engage students in meaningful action.

Date: Wed, 22 May 2002 09:35:59 -0400
From: Jamie MacKinnon<jmackinnon@bank-banque-canada.ca>
Subject: Re: Authentic Writing

A note from a "non-academic" workplace:

While I agree with the thrust of your comments, Anthony, I'd quibble with the notion that, in general terms, student writing "is epistemic (primarily to do with knowledge-making), and largely concerned with individual growth (writing to learn, writing to know), whereas [workplace writing] is instrumental (oriented to action) . . ."

I reckon that in most research, high-tech, and / or knowledge-intensive businesses, a lot of writing is epistemic (*as well as* "instrumental") in nature. I would also note a significant instrumental / transactional aspect to most student writing -- for many students much of the time, the sole purpose in writing is the obtaining of a satisfactory mark (and from the prof's point of view, the transaction is: "You give me writing; I give you grade").

To Roger, I say that the "construction of knowledge" mentioned in the Newman book needs to be carefully considered. Professors' expectations (often tacit, sometimes explicit) at the undergrad level are usually for the re-creation or reiteration of existing knowledge.

Deeply epistemic writing -- writing that advances knowledge by posing new problems, by posing old problems in newly fruitful ways, and by proposing innovative responses to problems, takes place (in felicitous moments) in grad schools as well as the workplace.

All this to say, I'm leery of a presumed epistemic / instrumental dichotomy, and of conflating workplace / school with "authentic" / inauthentic.

Date: Wed, 22 May 2002 09:52:23
From: Marcy Bauman <marcyb@umich.edu>
Subject: Re: Authentic Writing

Jamie, can you say more about epistemic writing in the workplace? I'm having a hard time imagining what that might be like, even in research, high-tech, or knowledge-intensive workplaces.

The closest I can come is the design specs that are currently circulating around the group of people working on the next-generation courseware here at UM . . . the specs do shape what the designers and developers do, but they are also an attempt to map out how this system (which is not yet built) will work *in the future* . . . so they're subject to constant "vision and revision" as people run into technical snags that alter what can be done, or how it can be done. In that sense, the specs are both predictive and descriptive, both a blueprint and a guess.

But that's clearly not the same kind of writing-to-know that occurs in schools . . .

Date: Wed, 22 May 2002 12:16:05 -0300
From: Russ Hunt <hunt@stu.ca>
Subject: Re: "Authentic" Writing

I want to back away from two dichotomous pairs of terms I've introduced here: "real / unreal" and "authentic / inauthentic." And let me back away, too, from the distinction between "academic" and "workplace." Not that I don't think all those distinctions aren't real, or don't matter; they're just clearly not the ones I'm trying to focus attention on, and they certainly don't map onto each other.

I'm interested in Anthony 's suggestion that we think about what writing *does*. But when I read the rest of that paragraph, it doesn't seem to me to capture what I want, either.

> What ends does it have? Are the ends appropriate/authentic to the context -- that is, do they serve something beyond the performance of the task, something with implications for the world that the writing grows out of and enters into (a world that includes the writer)? Will the writing have consequences, change anything, cause action of some sort?

It's pretty hard to imagine a disciplined way to distinguish between the writing that's produced as an *example* (thank you again, Anne Freadman) -- a way of demonstrating that the writer can write, and can write in some form or demonstrating some knowledge -- and writing that's produced to persuade or inform. Both serve something beyond the performance of the task, both have implications for the world, both are, well, "real." What I want somehow to find a way to talk about is writing that -- for the writer as she's writing it -- has what I think Bakhtin might call "addressivity." In other words, maybe (and I'm resisting the word here because in a way it's my hobbyhorse) it's "dialogic." (Patrick 's anticipated this point, as he so often does . . .) That is, it's an utterance that's linked substantively to a previous utterance (or utterances), and expects a substantive response. I think that defines out much school writing, and includes much workplace writing (though clearly not all, in either case).

I'm now worried about the word "substantive" there. What I mean is that the utterances are connected by *what they say*. Thus it would clearly be a *response* to what I just said to say, "Russ, you're obsessing about ideas that really aren't very important," or "Russ, you use dashes and parentheses *way* too much," it wouldn't, in my sense, be a substantive response of the kind I'm looking for.

There are a whole bunch of other issues in this discussion I want to come back to, but let me start by posing that as a question: does it make sense to say, as I think I'd like to, that people learning to use written language need (and rarely get) occasions in which their language is uttered in that sort of context -- where it's part of a dialogue, where substantive, dialogic responses are the mechanism by which it links to the world? Where there is an expectation that an actual reader interested in what's being said will be actually persuaded, informed, amused, touched, etc. (or not?) To quote Patrick:

> Students [I'd say learners] need to be writing for the here and now, from their own needs, as defined by them. It is only then they will be able to judge for themselves if they are accomplishing what they set out to do, and what remains to be done.

That "judge for themselves" is important here, too.

Date: Wed, 22 May 2002 11:48:52 -0400
From: Marcy Bauman <marcyb@umich.edu>
Subject: Re: "Authentic" Writing

Russ, I'd say you're getting close . . . in this paragraph you're defining the kinds of response you want the writing to create in terms of effects that seem to me to be observable, and not particularly value-laden. You can tell that a piece of writing is part of a dialogue, for instance, by all the same mechanisms you use to tell whether any utterance is part of a dialogue (chiefly, its relevance to the utterances which preceded it . . . now what is Polanyi's term for that?? It escapes me at the moment . . .)

> There are a whole bunch of other issues in this discussion I want to come back to, but let me start by posing that as a question: does it make sense to say, as I think I'd like to, that people learning to use written language need (and rarely get) occasions in which their language is uttered in that sort of context -- where it's part of a dialogue, where substantive, dialogic responses are the mechanism by which it links to the world?

One caveat: I don't like the word "substantive," either, and I'd suggest about saying that the statement, "Russ, you're obsessing about ideas that really aren't very important," isn't substantive because it may possibly be is to say, it could mean, for example, that I'm trying to tell you that I'm not persuaded. I'm not sure why this is important, but I think it is, somehow . . . maybe it has to do with how people who are unskilled at responding to content initially frame their responses.)

But I have to say that I think you lose it here:

> Where there is an expectation that an actual reader interested in what's being said will be actually persuaded, informed, amused, touched, etc.

. . . because teachers who give very traditional assignments and who grade very traditionally can also be "actual readers" who are interested, and who will possibly actually be persuaded, etc. Well, maybe not persuaded, but certainly informed, amused, or touched . . . I think if writing teachers were NOT informed, amused or touched from time to time, they'd quit in droves . . .

I think maybe all you need is to say that the response will be another link in the dialogic chain: that is to say, it, too, will be relevant and content-oriented . . .

Date: Wed, 22 May 2002 11:40:09 -0400
From: Jamie MacKinnon <jmackinnon@bank-banque-canada.ca>
Subject: Re: Authentic Writing

By epistemic writing, I mean writing that produces knowledge, initially for the writer, and then, sometimes (often I'd argue, for writing done in the workplace), for the reader. Epistemic writing deals more with Moffett's "generalizing" and "theorizing" than "recording" or "reporting" (though the latter may have epistemic dimensions). Epistemic business writing genres include recommendation reports, proposals, contracts, pharmaceutical trial documentation, briefing notes, policies, "outlook" reports, and RFPs – any document, I would argue, in which the final content can't be predicted at the outset by the writer.

Businesses (most businesses) are "rational enterprises," to use Toulmin's expression. To be successful, a business must create, organize and apply various types of knowledge. A good deal of this (not all) is done in writing. Writing is a major vehicle in many businesses for regulating dissent, for establishing consensus, for assessing

possibilities, and for promoting action -- i.e., writing is a machine for creating and validating knowledge and for constraining / encouraging rational action (i.e., applying knowledge) to further the business.

But now that I write this, I find myself puzzled at your puzzlement ("hard time imagining"). If business needs knowledge (axiomatic, I think), and knowledge needs language (cf Aristotle, John Gage), why wouldn't a good deal of writing in businesses be epistemic? Surely you don't think that knowledge creation occurs exclusively in schools?

Date: Wed, 22 May 2002 11:59:45 -0400
From: Marcy Bauman <marcyb@umich.edu>
Subject: Re: Authentic Writing

Thanks, Jamie, that helps. I'm having to revise my previous stance, but I'd like to hold it for a moment longer in order to respond to this:

> But now that I write this, I find myself puzzled at your puzzlement ("hard time imagining"). If business needs knowledge (axiomatic, I think), and knowledge needs language (cf Aristotle, John Gage), why wouldn't a good deal of writing in businesses be epistemic? Surely you don't think that knowledge creation occurs exclusively in schools?

Nope, it's not that I think knowledge creation occurs exclusively in schools. It's that I (almost) think that epistemic writing in school serves the function of connecting the writer with the knowledge, of helping the writer assimilate knowledge (writing-to-know). This process (and its artifacts) seems much more tentative than what I imagine you'd find in "recommendation reports, proposals, contracts, pharmaceutical trial documentation," all of which seem to me to be examples of writing whose possible outcomes are much more severely constrained or curtailed. In school writing, it's much easier to be off-the-wall, as it were, because nothing is likely to happen as a result of the writing. In a workplace, the audiences and purposes for producing the documents are more pragmatic and many more conclusions are therefore rendered unreachable, many more opinions unsayable . . .

I don't mean to sound paranoid or to denigrate the knowledge-making that you have shown does go on, only to say that it isn't as free-form as the knowledge-making in school and so it seems to me to be something else. The knowledge created in schools strikes me as far more personal than the knowledge created in workplaces.

Date: Tuesday, May 21, 2002 12:26 PM -0400
From: Rob Irish <irish@ecf.utoronto.ca>
Subject: Re: Authentic writing

One distinction Bakhtin makes -- in "discourse in the novel" -- is between the authoritative voice and the internally persuasive one. He puts it this way (p.342 in *The Dialogic Imagination*): "Both the authority of discourse and its internal persuasiveness may be united in a single word -- one that is simultaneously authoritative and internally persuasive -- despite the profound differences between these two categories of alien discourse. But such unity is rarely given -- it happens more frequently that an individual's become, an ideological process, is characterized by a sharp gap between these two categories: in one the authoritative word (religious, political, moral, the word of a father, of adults and of teachers etc.) that does not know internal persuasiveness, in the other the internally persuasive word that is denied all privilege, backed up by no authority at all, and is frequently not even acknowledged in society . . . The struggle and dialogic interrelationships of these categories of ideological discourse are what usually determine the history of an individual ideological consciousness."

Sorry for the long quote, but it's helping me sort this idea related to my own research. Bringing this back to our students and the discussion of various writing, I think that it is only when the two voices come together that students can be confident in their success. Paul Prior has an article in *RTE* looking at this for a grad student in

sociology. More generally, students are trying as they write to enter a discourse world. As they get feedback about their writing, one of the points they are given is an assessment of how successful they have been at that step. Typically, the comments they get may cover a myriad of different writing concerns: expression, focus of ideas, development or support of argument, validity of argument etc. So, the student is trying to enter the discourse community (Geertz's "intellectual village"). They are trying to write their way in. The prof or TA marking the paper is the gatekeeper who decides whether to let them into the outskirts of town or thrust them into the village square (or maybe it's the centre circle of hell).

Anyway, if we see our students as working dialogically to reconcile these two voices, then we can respond differently. We can respond not so much as gatekeepers as perhaps the welcome wagon, or at least the information centre.

Date: Wed, 22 May 2002 14:36:14 -0300
From: Russ Hunt <hunt@stu.ca>
Subject: Re: "Authentic" Writing

Ignoring the last three or four posts, I want to go back a few steps and respond to Marcy' s inference about the fact that what I'm interested in more than the "ownership" or "authenticity" of the writing is the extent to which it offers an occasion for learning. As I thought about that this noon (she's quite right, of course) it occurred to me that a powerful analogy might be with the work on "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" "rewards" (now there's a flourish of shudder quotes, eh?).

When Alfie Kohn and all the others who've worked on this distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, they draw an opposition which seems to me closely parallel to what I'm trying to attend to. The classic case is the one where someone's playing a game for fun, to engage in it, to win, and someone else is being paid to play it. The classic *finding* is that the latter tend to quit as soon as the pay ends.

How I think about that -- I'm not sure Alfie Kohn would agree -- is that the transaction in the second case is most centrally with an authority, the paymaster, not with the game or the partners in play. That authority will make the judgement about whether you get paid, whether you're done, etc., and your own view really won't matter much. The consequences are fundamentally arbitrary (there's room here for some thinking about the relations between "consequences" and "rewards").

So although it looks like the same action being conducted, the social relationships which define the action are radically different (and thus the action itself is radically different).

Developing the analogy, the writing that isn't, in the terms I'm thinking about, dialogic, is no less the basis for a social relationship (or set of them), but the relationship isn't intrinsically connected to what the text says. I almost have the feeling you could do some sort of diagram to show the relationships around the text.

As I start to think in this direction, I start to think I can see why my instinct is that dialogic written language offers a more powerful learning occasion than, well, whatever we're going to call writing that isn't that.

Date: Wed, 22 May 2002 14:11:48
From: Philippa Spoel <pspoel@nickel.laurentian.ca>
Subject: Re: Authentic Writing

I have trouble with the idea that the "writing-to-know" that occurs in (some) school contexts is somehow "freer" than what can or does occur in workplace contexts -- surely the constraints on school writing (even informal writing-to-learn activities) are just as strong and "real" (sorry, couldn't resist!) as on workplace writing activities. Perhaps more so, given that a typical student-identity seems to call for careful observance of the rules or teacher's

expectations, even if we like to think that we are encouraging students to write "freely."

I guess I'm uneasy about another value hierarchy or dichotomy that seems implied in what you say, namely between the (relative) "freedom" of writing-to-learn in university and, by contrast, the lack of freedom in workplace contexts. I would imagine that the possibilities for trying out new ideas, doing real brainstorming, working collaboratively on "meaningful," "substantive," cutting-edge projects, etc. are very likely greater in at least some workplace contexts than within the traditional, heavy structures of university education. I would likewise imagine that many workers (i.e. professionals) feel greater personal connection with and investment in the knowledges they are constructing and communicating than many students do. I suppose this brings us back to the issue of how does one design educational activities that will help to foster this kind of connection and enthusiasm, or "ownership" as Rob puts it, for students?

Date: Wed, 22 May 2002 14:07:39 -0500
From: Graham Smart <gsmart@purdue.edu>
Subject: Re: Authentic Writing

I agree with Jamie entirely that a great deal of epistemic or knowledge-generating writing happens in the workplace. The Bank of Canada, as a research and policy institution is certainly a clear example of this. To direct Canada's monetary policy, the Governor and his senior colleagues need to know what has happened, is happening, and likely will happen in the country's economy. And much of this knowledge is generated inside the Bank by its economists through text-centered activity. Similarly, as in any large organization, the people at the Bank responsible for making decisions about its administrative operations need locally produced knowledge of diverse and complex kinds, and again much of this knowledge is produced through text-centered activity. And while such writing is definitely instrumental, it's also epistemic.

And not only is writing in the workplace frequently epistemic, but it can in certain instances be highly creative, exploratory, heuristic, and collaborative. I'd also argue that every time an economist or business analyst or manager participates in knowledge-producing writing, they're learning (as well as sharing with others) something important to their work, and that this knowledge, or knowing, grows and evolves over time. And given the implications for the organization and for individual careers, the writers are personally connected--indeed, very connected--to the activity as knowers. Further, in keeping with situated learning theory (particularly Lave & Wenger, but also Orlikowsky and Brown & Duguid and others), in organizational communities-of-practice, knowledge-making and learning are happening continuously, both on individual and collective levels.

I think in general that many of the distinctions made between knowledge-making in workplace writing and knowledge-making in school writing tend to break down when you look carefully at what's actually happening in a particular classroom or worksite. More specifically, for this discussion, I'd argue that the instrumental vs epistemic binary isn't a very useful way to look at workplace writing.

Date: Wed, 22 May 2002 15:45:16 -0400
From: Marcy Bauman <marcyb@umich.edu>
Subject: Re: Authentic Writing

Let me try again: When I read Jamie's first post, I was thinking, "Yes, but workplace texts all *do* something besides allow their writers to learn." The examples he gave in his second message -- "recommendation reports, proposals, contracts, pharmaceutical trial documentation, briefing notes, policies, "outlook" reports, and RFPs" – are all texts whose primary purpose is, er, dialogic -- they're going to someone (several someones) who are going to DO something (make further recommendations, devise policies, take certain actions) based on their contents. This is what I meant by constrained; the situations in which those texts are produced constrain the format, and also, to some extent, the findings.

By contrast, writing-to-learn in school doesn't usually DO anything in that sense. When I think of writing-to-learn in school, I think of freewriting, essay tests, term papers. Aside from marking (maybe), there are no resultant actions associated with those texts.

But I'll grant you, Philippa, that the mark can be just as (or more) constraining than the actions that might be taken in a workplace as a result of a text. I think I was trying to draw a distinction between private (protected, in the object-oriented sense?) writing and writing-in-the-world, but the distinction clearly doesn't hold up . . .

Date: Wed, 22 May 2002 18:43:04 -0300
From: Russ Hunt <hunt@stu.ca>
Subject: Re: Authentic Writing

Let's talk about genres for a minute here. Marcy says, responding to Philippa's argument that "the constraints on school writing (even informal writing-to-learn activities) are just as strong and "real" (sorry, couldn't resist!) as on workplace writing activities,"

> Yes, but workplace texts all *do* something besides allow their writers to learn.

She goes on that the examples Jamie gave ----

> "recommendation reports, proposals, contracts, pharmaceutical trial documentation, briefing notes, policies, "outlook" reports, and RFPs" – are all texts whose primary purpose is, er, dialogic -- they're going to someone (several someones) who are going to DO something (make further recommendations, devise policies, take certain actions) based on their contents. This is what I meant by constrained; the situations in which those texts are produced constrain the format, and also, to some extent, the findings.

In this sense, no text is ever unconstrained: it's just that the kinds of texts we think of as characterizing school learning don't "usually DO anything in that sense."

What I'm intrigued by are the examples in Marcy's (and Jamie's) postings -- those above, and, as examples of school texts, "freewriting, essay tests, term papers." The question that the iteration of examples raises for me is, are there *generic* patterns here? What kinds of recurrent rhetorical exigencies characterize classrooms, Jamie's bank, Anthony's social work agency, Pete Medway's architecture firm . . . ? We keep (I keep) talking about texts as though they *existed* in some kind of New Critical bell jar, but really they're always embedded in, shaped and constrained and sustained by, rhetorical / social situations. The situations constrain the production (natch). But the situations also afford learning in various ways, and of various kinds. Is there a language for characterizing *those* differences here?

Date: Wed, 22 May 2002 17:43:34 -0300
From: "Roberta W. Lee" <rwlee@nbnet.nb.ca>
Subject: Authentic writing

This very discussion should tell us what "real" or "authentic" writing is. Why did I think about it this morning all the way down the road to an appointment? And why am I taking the time to write now, when it is a beautiful day and I want to go outside and work in my garden? Why have so many of us busy people been unable to keep out of it? And why did inkshedding after presentations at Inkshed 19 involve the same feeling of urgency?

Clearly, because "authentic" writing or "real" writing is dialogic.

Classroom writing that involves one audience, the professor or teacher, and one purpose, a grade and evaluation from the teacher, does not contain the urgency or involvement of, say, this present discussion. By the same token,

writing in the workplace aimed at one single audience for the purpose of justifying one's existence or getting praise -- "bad" workplace writing so aptly described by Natasha -- is not "authentic" either.

I do not agree with the notion that our purpose as teachers of writing is to prepare students for writing in future situations, workplace or otherwise. I agree with Patrick that dialogue should be taking place at all levels.

Could it be that when we give writing assignments with ourselves as audience, to be evaluated and graded by us, we are actually teaching students that writing is an individual act for the purpose of self-aggrandizement? We may teach them all kinds of great stuff about technical writing, business writing, academic writing, etc. but nothing about community, dialogue, collaboration, and the excitement of stretching our minds and hearts by responding to the thoughts of others. Are we then preparing them to respond effectively in writing to the complex situations they are encountering in the present and will encounter in the future, whether in the workplace or elsewhere?

Date: Wed, 22 May 2002 21:48:50 -0400
From: Patrick Dias <dias@education.mcgill.ca>
Subject: Re: Authentic writing

I do not want to make an issue of the authentic / non-authentic division and I don't wish to equate one with workplaces and the other with school. I do, however, want to stress the notion of engagement or commitment, what some of you have called ownership. Ownership rightly begs the question: ownership as opposed to what? Plainly stated: ownership by the teacher (or the textbook, or the institution, or all three). The effect is more or less the same: writers must continually monitor what someone else wants, expects, and how with minimal effort (there are other courses, after all) they might meet such expectations. I am sure all of us are aware of such stances and the constraints they impose; and we try to work against them. But I sense the institutional setting works against our best intentions. I recall one of my colleagues who insisted that late papers would be penalized. The "real world" has its norms. But surely, no one in that world is expected to produce four or five major papers in more or less the same period.

My own take on requests for extensions was, "Sure, why not," simply because I saw no point in reading and grading something that had been rushed, was unfinished in the writer's eyes, and that therefore did not provide fair evidence of the writer's capabilities (of course, there were other pieces as well). But it also struck me as well, that I was being unfair in laying such expectations on the writer. There were other courses with similar demands; and the writer had a life.

Here again because of the dialogic imperative, I hear Inkshedders saying, "but, but, but . . . ."

I believe Roberta is saying, we need to get out of the way, not front and centre, not the primary audience, and then at least, writers will attend to finding, discovering, what it is they want to say, what matters and what is realizable given constraints of time and other commitments. It is in such contexts that we learn whatever we learn as writers (as I learn now, thanks to your attentiveness and concern). And, why are workplaces more likely to produce such learning (for those who write in them)? It's because, writers in those settings live within such demands and challenges seven to eight hours five times a week; whereas the writing contexts we create in our classrooms can hardly measure up to such concentratedness.

Date: Thu, 23 May 2002 09:28:05 -0400
From: Rob Irish <irish@ecf.utoronto.ca>
Subject: Re: Authentic writing

Patrick wrote. . .

> writers must continually monitor what someone else wants, expects, and how with minimal effort (there are other courses, after all) they might meet such expectations. I am sure all of us are aware of such stances and the constraints they impose; and we try to work against them. But I sense the institutional setting works against our best intentions. I recall one of my colleagues who insisted that late papers would be penalized. The "real world" has its norms. But surely, no one in that world is expected to produce four or five major papers in more or less the same period.

Of course students must monitor what someone else wants -- that is considering audience after all. And of course, expedience is a factor -- that is human after all. I don't believe we can pull ourselves out of the "centre" of the writing exercise so long as 1. we are assigning it, and 2. we are evaluating. I think what the student is engaged in is a complex negotiation between themselves and us. When they fail at it, it is either because they have stayed entirely in their own circle -- ignored us -- or capitulated entirely to our authority -- ignored themselves. If they do the former, they will be frustrated because we don't "get it" (because they haven't given it TO us); if they do the latter they will be frustrated because they've "done what you asked." Yet they won't have done. What I think most of us ask for is that kind of engagement or urgency that Roberta noted. We want the negotiation, and in the process we expect our own ground to be shifted. You can look at this socio-cognitively, heck you can even go back to TS. Eliot and extrapolate from "Tradition and the Individual Talent", but that negotiation is part of the student's maturing. That maturing involves not only adopting the dominant discourse, but also resisting it and reshaping it to the student's own ends. Thereby, of course, the student will reshape that discourse to include him / herself. The more senior the student, that is the more deeply "in" the student is to the discourse the more likely they are to both accept the dominant discourse AND to reshape it. In this sense, I think the writing is real, very real. Whatever they write afterward, wherever they write it, will be influenced by their learning that they can shape a discourse community with their writing and thinking.

> Date: Thu, 23 May 2002 10:09:00 -0400
> From: Philippa Spoel <pspoel@nickel.laurentian.ca>
> Subject: Genres and situational differences

I'm not sure where I'm going with this, but to pick up on Russ ' suggestion that we think more about genres in this discussion, I'm struck by the list that you cite from Marcy of typical school genres: "freewriting, essay test, term papers." What strikes me is that these, in my experience, are very different genres with very different purposes / functions (epistemic and / or instrumental). Isn't "freewriting" a genre that many of us try to use at least partly in opposition or resistance to the more traditional, formalized genres of tests and term papers? So, I guess my point is the rather obvious one that we need to keep in mind the complexity and differences *within* the educational system of the functions of academic writing - and similarly, within workplace contexts (for example, between routine and non-routine tasks, or between primarily instrumental and more epistemic writing processes).

I'm also, in response to Patrick 's comments, thinking about an issue that I discuss with my students every year and which may have implications concerning the possibilities for engaging students in truly dialogic writing: philosophically as well as practically, I am committed to collaborative knowledge-making and communication in my classes -- perhaps this could be linked to the ideal of dialogic communication. However, at the same time, I recognize and discuss with my students the (unfortunate) reality that university education in Canada does not, ultimately, recognize or reward collaborative or group achievements -- regardless of what I set up in my own classroom, students receive individual grades, they are ranked individually against each other, etc. Most workplace contexts, by contrast, function in terms of a group or corporate objective. True, individual employees may compete against each other for promotion and so on, but most workplace tasks, as I understand, are undertaken for the purpose of the company's or organization's success. In this general context, there is a much clearer, more logical imperative for collaboration (of a dialogic nature?) among members of the community. Employees (ideally) have a joint commitment to the success of their organization. In my own class, I may value and attempt to reward (authentic? substantive?) collaboration, but I know perfectly well that it's unrealistic for students to have a profound commitment to this way of doing things, to this kind of community exchange and

process, given the institutional structures which surround us. I don't mean to imply that collaborative work and dialogic exchanges are identical, but perhaps there's a connection here worth exploring in order to try to understand the constraints within educational contexts on engaging students and ourselves in "truly" (there's another term to add to our list!) dialogic activity.

Another thought: several of you have been commenting on the wonderfully dialogic nature of this discussion -- do you think that might be due in part to the nature of this email list as a kind of workplace context, where we as professional academics / teachers are exchanging and exploring ideas relevant to our work -- a kind of professional development forum perhaps, to which we are all committed by the nature of our employment / careers?

Date: Thu, 23 May 2002 10:13:14 -0400
From: Patrick Dias <dias@education.mcgill.ca>
Subject: Re: Authentic writing (addendum)

An afterthought: More often than not, writing in the workplace is part of a larger activity, an interdependent activity. If I draw on Activity Theory, I can say that school and workplace goals differ and define different actions. While deadlines operate in both settings, in school work, deadlines can be met by reducing goals, trimming the task to fit in with changing exigencies. At work, an economic activity, goals are set, and modified if needed only within narrow parameters, and resources (coworkers, for instance) can be marshalled accordingly. Learning to write happens willy-nilly in the workplace; in school, one can juggle the several demands on one's time and effort in order to get by, presenting us with the challenge of creating the contexts that draw learners into writing from a felt need and discourage seeing writing-course demands as secondary to the seemingly more relevant and challenging demands of discipline-based courses.

Date: Thu, 23 May 2002 11:23:42 -0300
From: Russ Hunt <hunt@stu.ca>
Subject: Re: Authentic writing

I'm not so sure that "monitor[ing] what someone else wants" in the sense of fulfilling a writing assignment is all that similar to "considering audience." But leaving that aside, I certainly agree with this:

> I don't believe we can pull ourselves out of the "centre" of the writing exercise so long as 1. we are assigning it, and 2. we are evaluating.

But I suspect Rob 's making a different point about it than I'd make. I think if we don't find a way to create writing situations in which (1.) and (2.) don't happen, we're stuck trying to teach writing in the worst of all possible writing situations for education, the one that least affords learning. He says,

> What I think most of us ask for is that kind of engagement or urgency that Roberta noted.

I don't think the way to get it is to ask for it, though. This is true:

> The more senior the student, that is the more deeply "in" the student is to the discourse the more likely they are to both accept the dominant discourse AND to reshape it.

But the students who are "senior" and "in" *got there somehow*. I almost never encounter students who are "in" in that sense. How do I help them *get* in? How can I help them learn

> that they can shape a discourse community with their writing and thinking?

My central concern in this discussion -- indeed, for much of my career as a teacher -- has been this question: how can I create a situation in which more students learn that writing can do this sort of thing? Writing has never done that for them, and no writing they've ever done has been capable of actually having that effect. This may take us back to a rephrasing of Roger's original question about "the student's perception of the task."

My students arrive in my classes with the firm understanding that academic writing is display text. It doesn't "shape a discourse community"; it follows the rules involved in monitoring what someone else wants. When it actually does engage the student (and I *do* have students who are engaged by writing term papers), it does it without having any actual audience: the "audience" is a fiction (yes, the audience is always a fiction) the writer is able to create.

But the overwhelming majority of my students can't create that audience / reader (as Anthony pointed out years ago ("Ushering 'Audience' Out"), it's not "those folks out there in chairs": it's an active dialogic partner), or create really dysfunctional ones. When we, as writers, decide what's "new" and what's "given," what needs to be foregrounded and what can be assumed, what language is appropriate and what not, we do that with reference to a rich construct of reader. I'm doing it now: I left in the little joke about "the audience is always a fiction" because I expected that most inkshedders would get the allusion to Ong and wouldn't either find it incomprehensible or take it as a snobbish sort of putdown, as would most of my students).

Someone writing an assignment doesn't have that rich context, and if she can't make it up her writing will have that unmistakable, amateurish, clumsy feel that we all know so well. How can one learn to make it up?

Date: Thu, 23 May 2002 11:48:26
From: "Brenton D. Faber" <faber@clarkson.edu>
Subject: Re: Authentic writing

Russ Hunt wrote:

> Someone writing an assignment doesn't have that rich context, and if she can't make it up her writing will have that unmistakable, amateurish, clumsy feel that we all know so well. How can one learn to make it up?

I feel a pull in what Russ writes to go full circle in what is a great discussion and note what everyone has already said about school-based assignments and work place writing. Strange though, that students can understand and interpret rich contexts in other semiotic areas -- dress, dialect, music, food (?) but many don't translate the daily strategic choices they make in those areas to their academic work. I hedged here with "many" because I'm not sure all of my students want to be good writers and fewer probably want to be good academic writers. For many, "passing" (to be perceived as a good writer) seems sufficient.

More and more I'm being drawn to "strategy" as a metaphor rather than "writing" or "rhetoric" -- partly because it is a term my students understand and can relate to other areas of life. I tell them that in service learning contexts we are learning "strategies" for creating change. In some cases the strategy includes writing, in other cases it necessitates an understanding of the organizational context and politics of a situation. I'm learning too that even if all of my students are eloquent writers, there are times when the political / social / temporal context is simply inappropriate and there is no writing that can be persuasive.
How do we make it up? Dare I propose that we stop teaching writing? Instead, as others have noted, we place students in difficult or dysfunctional communicative situations (team-based work, client-based work, community contexts, simulations) that require them to figure out what to do / write / read next. Such situations denaturalize communication as a strategic issue: "the client isn't listening to us," "Bob keeps missing meetings" and they seem to blend the purposeful with the technical.

Date: Fri, 24 May 2002 23:09:48 -0400
From: Charlotte Hussey <Charlotte.Hussey@mcgill.ca>
Subject: Re: Authentic

Thought I'd throw in something from an slightly different angle as concerns the word, "authentic," "Authentic," always reminds me of that old, out of favour word, "inspiration." It also reminds me of Authentic Movement, a somatic technique combining movement therapy and depth psychology that was invented by a Martha Graham dancer named Mary Starks Whitehouse. To do Authentic Movement, a Mover closes her eyes and suspends purposeful doing to let bodily impulses surface spontaneously. Rather than consciously willing bodily efforts, she waits for an inner energy to animate her. Often her improvised gestures are accompanied by feelings, images, or memories. There is usually a Witness who sits silently and witnesses the Mover's improv. At its end, Mover and Witness often write or draw silently to bring the richness of the Mover's inner world further into consciousness through an accompanying medium. Then they talk.

If you were to try this technique, you would feel very inauthentic at first, and continue to do so off and on through a number of sessions. Often you feel clumsy or extremely inhibited. Strangely what begins to happen over time is that you begin to find yourself down on the floor making regressive, baby-like movements. At other times, you might get "stuck" in repetitive movements, which if you can relax into them, just accept where you are with them, they will carry you somewhere unexpected and become very freeing, inspiring, and "authentic."

What Authentic Movement is closest to in writing is expressive free-writing, something we certainly can encourage in the classroom. But as any Authentic Mover will tell you, a session of moving will perhaps release vital, "real" movements, but then the arduous work begins to craft a choreography out of such "real" gestures, sequences, phrasings.

So I guess if I apply this to the classroom, I would say that allowing students an expressive base, that is a chance to free-write, to talk in small groups with each other, to play around with their emergent thoughts, to be present to where they really are, can be very helpful. As teachers / facilitators, standing out of the way of this is laudable. Still, I think we do students a disservice, if we don't also teaching them how to edit and "craft" these "authentic" voiced-bits into their fuller potential. As "authentic" and supercharged as we would like our every moment of teaching to be, there's a lot to be gained from that old adage: "10% inspiration, 90% perspiration."

One of my most gratifying moments as a teacher occurred when an Asian student of mine showed me a series of poetic fragments she had drafted about being sexually abused by an uncle. By the end of the semester she had written the A+ report on how tourism in Thailand supports / depends upon prostitution in that country. She had moved her "authentic" inner experience out, at first, through expressive self-explorations which then led her to write an emotionally compelling, yet rigorously "authentic" academic text.

Date: Mon, 27 May 2002 12:04:00 -0300
From: Russ Hunt <hunt@stu.ca>
Subject: Authentic writing (or, is this horse really dead?)

I want to go right back to the question Roger raised at the beginning:

> I'm wondering about whether or not or to what extent this depends on the student's perception of the task -- phenomenalism ("a thing as it appears to and is constructed by the mind" Random House Dictionary). This is what Russ is saying -- maybe -- that the situation must be perceived by the writer as demanding or desiring a response.

This gets us away from the distraction of whether the words "real" or "authentic" are appropriate, and takes us to what I think is the heart of the matter. And I want to raise three ancillary questions, ones that have been bothering me for some time.

> 1. Can we make a principled distinction between "a response" and a reaction -- in the sense that there's a distinction between what I might do when someone said, "produce a sentence with a nominative absolute in it" and what I might do when someone said "wait a minute, I don't know what you mean by 'nominative absolute'?" I'm trying to find a way to phrase the way in which the discourse produced in the two cases is likely to be radically different.
>
> 2. Assuming there's a dramatic difference between (a) perceiving a situation as desiring a response and (b) seeing that an assignment to produce an example of discourse has been given, is it reasonable to think that a student could, *in the context of a formal course*, ever see a situation as the first and not the second? And by "see" I mean there something more than "accept as a true statement"; I mean treat the situation as one in which an actual interlocutor asked a genuine question, or one the student perceived as genuine.
>
> 3. To what extent is it reasonable to imagine what students need to learn to do *as students* is to put themselves, or allow themselves to be put, in a position where although no one has actually asked a genuine question, they can imagine the situation as one in which someone has? In other words, to engage fully in what is finally ("really") at best a simulation?

My bottom line seems to be this hypothesis: participating in rhetorical transactions which are (or are seen to be) "real" in just this narrow sense is the strongest possible support for learning how to participate in such transactions. All the evidence from oral language development suggests that it's by using language to get important stuff done -- like getting fed or changed or hugged -- that children learn to use language in the remarkable ways we all use it. All the evidence from early childhood literacy suggests that it's by seeing that written language serves immediate felt purposes (like knowing which is the toothpaste or getting *Goodnight Moon* read again) that produces literacy development.

All the research from studies of workplace writing suggests that when learning happens in workplaces it usually happens according to that model: Odell & Goswami's insurance executives learned the sophisticated rhetorical strategies they were deploying from the situations around them, and it seems pretty clear something like that is going on throughout *Worlds Apart*. As Anne Hungerford pointed out during the discussion that Sunday morning, workplaces aren't always such great learning environments, but they do have one thing we normally don't offer our students -- or I don't see that we do: situations which are "perceived by the writer as demanding or desiring a response."

(My own suspicion is that Patrick's paraphrase of Roberta is right: "we need to get out of the way, not front and centre, not the primary audience, and then at least, writers will attend to finding, discovering, what it is they want to say, what matters and what is realizable given constraints of time and other commitments. It is in such contexts that we learn whatever we learn as writers.")

Date: Mon, 27 May 2002 20:15:15 -0500
From: " Roger Graves " <rgraves@condor.depaul.edu>
Subject: RE: Authentic writing (or, is this horse really dead?)

Here's a suggestion: why don't we try to answer Russ' questions by describing situations in which students have or have not seen situations as desiring responses (#2 above ? Here's one I'm working with tonight (still teaching on the quarter system):

A student in my technical writing class is writing a manual for writing center tutors. She herself is a writing

center tutor (undergrad student, peer-tutor), and the document she is writing responds to a situation she and other tutors perceived as a problem in the writing center: that first tutorial comes up way too fast and tutors don't feel they are prepared for it. So she is writing this document in response to that felt need. In the process of writing it she has interviewed other tutors, had those tutors read the draft and respond to her efforts, and has been revising it based on those responses. Ultimately it will be used next fall as one of the documents used to train the new tutors as they start their careers in the writing center.

In answer to Q3 above, I've been trying to construct assignments that put the onus on the student to identify what they regard as a genuine question and then support them as they work from that question out into some kind of discursive process and product. It doesn't always work in the sense that some students fail to take up the conversational gambit, but it does attempt to situate the writing as purposeful and important beyond context of the class assignment in a way consistent with Russ' paraphrase of Patrick's re-statement of Roberta's comment (above).

Date: Tue, 4 Jun 2002 14:15:07 -0400
From: Linda Schofield
Subject: "Real" writing

I've come late to this discussion, so forgive me if this thread is now stale, or I repeat what someone has said, but haven't had a chance to read.

This issue has been preoccupying me for awhile, though lately I've been concerned with my ability to assess a hypothetical writing situation. After all, just as a student is not familiar with a specific, imagined workplace context, neither am I, so why should I be able to assess the validity of audience analysis for a reader that I will never be?

Though I do see the pedagogical value of hypothetical writing situations, and I confess I use them all the time and enjoy creating them, I feel much more "authentic" myself when I have students create a document specifically directed to me. For example, this term I had students in sections of my Information Technology Management course write me a report on a subject I really needed to know about in their field. I discovered with this exercise that few students knew how to anticipate my needs. If this had been a workplace situation I probably would have said something like "This isn't at all what I wanted -- rewrite it." If, however, this had been a hypothetical situation, with me imagining how the reader might react, I probably would have been less aware -- dare I say, less emotional--about how far short the assignments were of the mark.

My defensiveness about my role as chief imaginer is perhaps why I see some of the issues raised in *Worlds Apart* from this angle.

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INKSHED 20

Thursday, May 8 to Sunday, May 11, 2003

Come and Celebrate 20 years of Inkshed conferences at Hockley Highlands Inn and Conference Centre, Orangeville, Ontario. It's a relaxing spot, with all kinds of amenities (like an indoor pool and exercise facilities); however, for most of us, the prime recreational activity will undoubtedly be walking (or sitting on the huge outdoor deck looking out at) our famous Bruce Trail.

Cost: a very reasonable $130 a night for a single room with bath shared between two rooms or $140 for a single room with private bath; all meals included. The conference fee itself will probably be similar to last year's conference: $75 ($35 student and un[der]employed)

Details about registering will be distributed later . . . Right now we want you to start thinking about how you can contribute to this year's program. Inkshed conferences are always good, but we want this to be a REUNION conference so we encourage all current and former Inkshedders to return to the fold. We also encourage first-timers to come and experience what has kept us going for 20 years!

This year's theme:

TEACHING IN CONTEXTS: READING, WRITING, SPEAKING, LEARNING

Thinking about context is a crucial part of understanding any rhetorical situation, but what is the exact nature of such thinking? How do we teach our students to do it? And how does the context in which we do that teaching -- the classroom, the discipline, the institution -- affect our efforts? Do the differences between the classroom and the world outside (the oft-invoked "real world") help or hinder our efforts?

For Inkshed 20, we invite proposals that address topics in this area, broadly defined. What role does context, and thinking about context, play in your teaching and in your students' learning of reading, writing, and speaking? Here are a few of the kinds of context which might be important here:

- classroom contexts in which our students read, write, and speak
- contexts in which we ask our students to imagine themselves when reading, writing, and speaking
- contexts in which we respond to our students' reading, writing, and speaking
- non-university contexts, in which expectations and learning objectives may be very different
- contexts where physical contexts are not shared, such as distance learning situations
- political, ideological, and sociocultural contexts
- contexts that ease or enhance the processes of teaching and learning
- contexts that hinder teaching and learning or render them problematic

Inkshed encourages presentations in unusual and innovative formats as well as straightforward "stand and deliver" papers of the sort given at most academic conferences. Proposals may be individual or collaborative; workshops, panels, and performances are all welcome, and a special session will be set aside for poster presentations. The conference will also feature a reading table to which all attendees are invited to contribute items they would like others to read, and which will furnish the basis for a structured discussion session and lots of informal discussion.

Please note: Some funding is available to subsidize travel and conference expenses for graduate students and underemployed individuals.

PLEASE SEND PROPOSALS BY JANUARY 30 TO THE CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS at **Inkshed20@yorku.ca** . Conversations about proposals are welcome on the CASLL listerv -- or on the special Inkshed 20 listserv, about which details will follow.

From your trusty conference organizers: Margaret Procter, Barbara Rose, Brock Macdonald, Patricia Golubev (the U. of T. ers) and Leslie Sanders and Mary-Louise Craven (from York, where else?)