# LiCS

## Literacy in Composition Studies

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# *LiCS* MISSION STATEMENT

*Literacy in Composition Studies (LiCS)* is a refereed open access online journal that sponsors activity at the nexus of literacy and composition studies. We publish long-form scholarly articles and short-form pieces including book reviews, interviews, symposium essays, and work in new and emerging genres.

Given its ideological nature, *literacy* is a particularly fluid and contextual term. It can name a range of activities from fundamental knowledge about how to decode text to interpretive and communicative acts. Literacies are linked to know-how, to insider knowledge, and to social and cultural groups. Literacy is often a metaphor for the ability to navigate systems, cultures, and situations. Literacy is linked to interpretation—to reading the social environment and engaging and remaking that environment through communication. At its heart, literacy is situated within sociocultural contexts and is connected to power and inequality.

The term *composition studies* points to the range of writing courses at the college level, including FYC, WAC/WID, writing studies, and professional writing, even as it signals the institutional, disciplinary, and historically problematic nature of the field.

We invite authors to consider how multiple groups of people seize power and agency through literacy practices and to examine the ways in which literacy acts on and/or constitutes the writer, even as the writer seeks to act on or with others. By exploring the intersections of literacy and composition, we further seek submissions that draw from the broadest range of traditions possible to promote equity and justice within our disciplines, classrooms, and communities. We particularly invite work that:

- examines the literacy practices, processes, and histories of marginalized and underrepresented communities.
- adds new or challenges existing knowledge to literacy's history.
- analyzes the processes and power relations whereby literacies are valued or circulated.
- investigates the ways in which social, political, economic, linguistic, historical, and technological transformations produce, eliminate, or mediate literacy opportunities.
- analyzes how literacy practices construct student, community, and other identities.
- provides provisional frameworks for theorizing literacy activities.
- examines the literacies sponsored through college writing courses and curricula, including the range of literate activities, practices, and pedagogies that shape and inform, enable and constrain writing.
- considers the implications of institutional, state, or national policies on literacy learning and teaching, including the articulation of high schools and higher education.
- proposes or creates opportunities for new interactions between literacy and Composition studies, especially those drawing on transnational, multilingual, and cross-cultural literacy research.

# EDITORS' INTRODUCTION TO ISSUE 12.2

Welcome to our 2026 open issue. Alongside our readers, we at *Literacy in Composition Studies* join the growing chorus questioning the relevancy of scholarly work—of language and literacy studies, and of composition studies more broadly—in our current cultural and political climate. Sustaining long-term intellectual inquiry while  our social systems, democracies, and academic institutions are under attack is hard. We acknowledge this challenge  in solidarity with you. The topics discussed in this issue reflect our hope to contribute to ongoing efforts toward a more equitable and just society by drawing on the specific tools, training, and commitments that shape our field. As a preview for the rest of 2026and reflective of our commitment to justice , we look forward to publishing two special issues in the works. This spring, Alexandra Cavallero, Erin Green, Logan Middleton, and Marco Navarro will bring us a special issue on A*bolition Literacies: A Call for Critical Resistance in Writing and Literacy*, and this fall we look forward to Antonio Byrd and Alfred Owusu-Ansah's special issue entitled *Tracing Generative AI in the Life of Marginalized Writers*. We are excited about this range of innovative and expansive work and hope you will join us by sharing them with your networks far and wide.

Jason Hockaday (Karuk) opens this issue with "Refusal of Translation: Unsettling Writing Studies." Drawing upon his own identity and experiences as a student and teacher, scholarship in cultural and Native American rhetorics, and an array of scholarly work in Native American and Indigenous Studies more broadly, Hockaday stresses that for Indigenous students in particular, refusing to write in English is a matter of survivance. Through engaging with composition studies scholarship on equity-minded teaching practices like labor-based grading, Hockaday expands his focus from the unique position of Native American students in U.S. writing classrooms to all multilingual students, pointing out that we already have principles and practices in place to decenter English in the writing classroom, and imploring writing teachers to embrace being "unsettled" by a lack of knowledge of or control over students' writing.

In this issue's second article, "The Schooling of Gestural Listening," Laura Feibush expands our field's understanding of the affordances of a full range of embodied listening practices. Through an analysis of how gestural listening—defined as all of listening's embodied manifestations, such as nodding and nonverbal backchanneling—is leveraged, shaped, and ultimately evaluated in literacy instruction, Feibush demonstrates how gestural listening is eventually fused with notions of classroom management and student attitude. Such judgements can often disproportionately affect neurodiverse students. By highlighting the writing of two students with self-disclosed ADHD diagnoses, Feibush seeks to reanimate and reembody the full range of gestural listening's possibility beyond "correct" conduct.

This issue also features a symposium essay, our invitation for readers to take up issues circulating in the field or in the pages of *LiCS* with the goal of starting or contributing to a conversation. In "Literacy Sponsorship, GenAI, and the Entangled Economies of Experiential Learning," Kristi Girdharry examines the overlapping, fluid, and recursive nature of literacy sponsorship that can happen in community partnerships. Analyzing participants' experiences at the AI Innovators

Bootcamp—a one-day workshop at Babson College, where students lead workshops with local businesses on generative AI—Girdharry contends that "sponsorship did not follow a single path. . . . What emerged were reciprocal moments not necessarily equal in power but collaborative in spirit" (48). Girdharry further reflects on the similar way literacy sponsorship occurs bidirectionally in students' learning with generative AI. Ultimately, Girdharry's analysis invites us as writing studies teachers and researchers to consider different questions concerning literacy sponsorship, "asking not only who sponsors literacy but how sponsorship itself is being reimagined and redistributed" (50).

Carina Jiaxing Shi's book review of Zhaozhe Wang's *Doing Difference Differently: Chinese International Students' Literacy Practices and Affordances* highlights Wang's ecological analytic approach to a literacy ethnography. Wang follows four Chinese international students in the U.S., emphasizing the "rich repertoire and rhetorical sensitivity" in an expanded "range of literacy practices" (55). Shi calls this book "a timely contribution" to translingual research because of its focus on ethnographic research (ibid).

We end this issue with an expanded review that models our newly minted Review+ section, where we hope to contribute to a wider interrogation and re-envisioning of the idea and purpose of a "review." More than ever before, the traditional book review must open up to the rapid changes in academia's and society's meaning-making. Scholarship and academic discourse are no longer only (and have not been for a while) presented in the two limited genres of articles and books. Rather, we see the increasing value of editorials, symposia, annotated assignments and syllabi, and audio/video formats. We therefore recently invited submissions of reviews to be more open, inclusive, even experimental both in terms of the content being reviewed and the format of the review itself. We hope readers will be inspired to play with formats and modalities.

Following this invitation, Jennifer Trainor's essay, "AI is Manna for Writing Studies or, How to Stay Calm in Troubled Times" creates a conversation among a variety of authors and genres to engage the "intermingling sense of overwhelm and doom" experienced by so many writing teachers in the context of AI (58). Trainor follows Jennifer Sano-Franchini in resisting the "'camps' discourse" about AI and neatly sidesteps the "'resist' vs. 'lean in'" binary the conversation about AI in composition/rhetoric has adopted (59). Trainor revisits conversations that have been sorted into these camps, but by refusing to frame them through the binary, she is able to link our "overwhelm and doom" to much longer-term conversations in the field about sponsors of literacy, the composing processes of novices, the disruption and affordances posed by computing technology, and—most generatively—to the negotiation of authority first framed by David Bartholomae in "Inventing the University" and extended by Annette Vee. We hope readers get as much from reading this Review+ essay as we did and see it as an invitation to compose one of their own.

We'd like to highlight that this issue includes manuscripts developed through collaborative mentoring relationships between authors and mentors. These partnerships reflect our commitment to the recruitment, support, and visibility of marginalized, early career, untenured and graduate student scholars by emphasizing developmental and transparent editorial practices. As we end 2025, the Editorial Team is expanding our mentorship model to ensure we are supporting potential authors at multiple stages of the composing and publishing process and tailoring mentorship to authors'

needs and preferences. We invite prospective authors and mentors to connect with the Editorial Team to explore mentorship opportunities with *LiCS*.

—*Alanna Frost, Brenda Glascott, Al Harahap, Brian Hendickson,*
*Tara Lockhart, Juli Parrish, Katie Silvester, Lisa Termain, and Chris Warnick*

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# Refusal of Translation: Unsettling Writing Studies

Jason Hockaday—California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt

KEYWORDS

language reclamation; Native composition; decolonial writing pedagogy; refusing translation

On March 1, 2025, President Donald J. Trump declared English the official language of the United States by executive order. This order proffers several falsehoods that the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) were quick to debunk point by point.

The White House order states that: 1. English has been the national language since the country's founding; 2. having a national language "is at the core of a unified and cohesive society," in which the country is strengthened by "a citizenry that can freely exchange ideas in one shared language"; 3. an official language will help the economy; and 4. communication will be streamlined and reinforce "shared national values" for a "cohesive and efficient society" ("Designating English").

The LSA's response references empirical research on the topics, which range from addressing the ahistorical myths the statement proffers to mono- and multilingualism's effects on cultures and societies. This research counters the White House's unfounded claims. The LSA does a point-by-point response, stating: 1."The United States has always been a multilingual country, and this gives it strength"; 2. "Citizens of the US . . . inevitably have different linguistic ways of navigating their lives, and enforced monolingualism never achieves national unity"; 3. "'Official English' policies do not improve economic prospects for those who arrive in the US speaking another language, nor do they improve communication for those who live in multilingual communities"; and 4. "Supporting and promoting multilingualism makes a nation stronger, not weaker" (Linguistic Society).

In the midst of the Trump administration's misguided war against multilingualism in the United States, a country which has never had an "official" language until now, it is imperative that institutions support the linguistic diversity of their communities. This article explores the ways that monolingualism contributes to the erasure of the knowledges of various communities and counters monolingualist orientations to institutional learning, through arguing for *refusals of translation*.

In winter 2015, I took an undergraduate course taught by Wesley Leonard (Miami Tribe of Oklahoma) called "Learning Native American Languages" at Southern Oregon University. In this course, we focused on developing practices for Indigenous language learning. For instance, we created word and phrase lists based on semantic domains; we created immersion environments by giving weekly presentations exclusively in our Indigenous target languages; and we augmented learning semantic domains with learning our language's grammar structures.

One week, Leonard took us to the Stevenson Union, a place where people often congregate and where many student unions and clubs are housed. He required that none of us utter a word of English during this field trip. We were to talk to as many people as we could exclusively in the Native American language we were learning. If we ordered a coffee, we did so in that Native language. This served several purposes, but I will be focusing on one in particular: the fact that this exercise *unsettled* the space of the Stevenson Union because it insisted on Indigenous (language) presence in a settler colonial context where Indigenous peoples and our languages are expected to be in the past, deemed "dormant," or worse, "extinct." Leonard argues that terms such as "extinct" aid in the genocidal intent of colonization, as the term indicates non-existence and therefore, when applied to a language, which is necessarily connected to a people, says that the people, too, are extinct ("Challenging 'Extinction'"). Leonard argues instead to apply terms such as "sleeping" to situations where there has been a rupture to the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous languages ("When Is an 'Extinct Language'"). "Sleeping" more accurately captures the fact that Indigenous languages, even with such rupture, can be brought back—such as through consulting documentation (Leonard, "When Is an 'Extinct Language'").

I hadn't thought about my experience in Leonard's class, where we refused to translate our Indigenous languages for the comfort of those settled around us, for a long time, until I took a graduate seminar on First Year Composition pedagogy, instructed by Dan Melzer of the UC Davis University Writing Program (UWP). We were going over different approaches to grading, specifically the labor-based contract grading system which many in UWPs are proponents of. Labor-based contract grading considers the labor students put into work to determine a pre-agreed upon grade: if the student completes certain requirements and expectations (e.g., participation in peer review workshops), they will earn the grade which the "contract" states they will earn for doing that work (Inoue). This approach explicitly acknowledges the subjectivity inherent in grading (especially grading *written* assignments), as well as the fact that assignment creation is not divorced from the socialization (and therefore epistemological assumptions of) the instructor. Labor-based contract advocate Asao B. Inoue argues such assumptions more often than not come from "white, middle class teachers" (30). That is to say, assignment prompts themselves are "already biased toward a dominant discourse that is associated closely to a white body and a white discourse" (Inoue 40).

At one point during the pedagogy seminar, when we were in small groups discussing assignment creation within a contract grading system, my group discussed the fact that some students are technically being asked to do more labor than other students are. Sarah Biscarra Dilley (Northern Chumash Tribe) argued, for example, "Why should my students have to put in the extra labor of translation just for my comfort?" I was suddenly transported back to the Stevenson Union, thinking

about the dominance of English and institutionalized monolingualism, and how, despite research showing the benefits of bi- or multilingualism (and the fact that most of the world is bilingual, with monolingualism as the rarity), people *continue* to express concerns over the English skills of persons from non-English heritage language backgrounds (see work by Dewaele; Pittaka, Bielenberg, and Pittaka 173–175). With regard to the labor system we were discussing, we considered that some students might have work or family obligations that impact how much time they have to "labor" over assignments (see Carillo). Other students might have to undertake the additional labor of translating their heritage language into English.

A popular UWP assignment at UCD promotes practicing primary research methods by exploring the communicative conventions of a particular community. In this assignment, students choose a member of their chosen community to interview as a way of understanding the community's discourse (see works by Melzer; Schmidt and Vande Kopple; Devitt, Bawarshi, and Reiff). Sometimes, that community is one that the student and their family belong to, and their interviewee is their parent, guardian, or other family member. Often, this person speaks a language other than English, and the interview is conducted in that language. But because the institution privileges English and assignments are expected to be submitted in English (so that their English-speaking instructor knows what they're saying), students need to translate the community member's words when they transcribe their interview and write their paper. They are therefore required to engage in extra labor that students exploring the conventions of an English-speaking discourse community do not have to do. This example describes an inequity that is supported institutionally by nature of English being the dominant language through which instruction is conducted and assessments are completed.

What this labor imbalance essentially does is shift the focus from the student's learning to a focus on the instructor's linguistic comfort and ability to comprehend, thus restricting the student to writing only within the instructor's range of knowledge, forcing tones and rhetoric into ones that are palatable to the instructor. As Heather M. Falconer argues, "how we position ourselves within the hierarchies [of disciplines and institutions] is impacted by the rights and duties we see as being internally and externally ascribed to us: what are we allowed to do and not allowed to do within this space?" (33). In this text, I ask the questions: in what spaces are Natives "allowed" to use our languages, and who is assuming the right to give us "permission" to do so?

I argue that promoting student *refusals of translation* can be one way of unsettling writing studies classrooms, in effect promoting the decolonization of pedagogy, literacy, and composition. When students engage in refusing translation of Indigenous languages, this practice results in Indigenizing the academy by supporting the sovereign and human right of Indigenous peoples to be Indigenous, to think in Indigenous ways, and to speak Indigenous languages in any and all spaces where we see fit. In the remainder of this text, I analyze how refusing translation fits into current social justice-oriented practices of Writing Program Administration assessment.

## POSITIONALITY

There is a great deal of literature on why explicitly naming positionality is important in all

research pursuits. Here I draw primarily from Maggie Walter and Chris Andersen, who visualize a matrix consisting of social positions, axiology, ontology, and epistemology that leads to a thorough consideration of one's standpoint and how that standpoint informs research, specifically debunking claims of "objectivity" which insist on a singular Truth that is naturally existing and thus "discoverable" (also see works by Haraway; Hokowhitu; TallBear, "Native"). They instead argue that there are many truths that are in fact socially contingent and created. I apply Walter and Andersen's definitions here: axiology is "the theory of *extrinsic and intrinsic* values" (49); social position includes identifying one's positions in society such as race and class, including explicitly naming one's "invisible, unnamed, and unmarked" privileges (51); ontologies shape how we relate and categorize knowledge; and epistemologies are the "what" and "how" of knowledge production (47).

Interrogating positionality considers not only what someone's social positions are, but what the *implications* of those positions are for their research (Leonard, "Centering Indigenous Ways"). That is, whose axiologies, ontologies, and epistemologies have contributed to the conceptualization, design, and execution of the research project? Whose perspectives are presented, and whose are not? Whose definition of truth and reality are centered, and whose are dismissed or marginalized?

In explaining my positionality, I situate how and why I've come to think about promoting refusing translation pedagogically. I do this in the hopes that it might highlight where my strengths might be, as well as where I am missing particular views that should be explored so as to create a fuller understanding of the issues at hand.

I am enrolled in the Karuk Tribe and am a grassroots organizer for Konomihu music reMatriation. My family's ancestor, Grandma Ellen, was recorded singing Konomihu songs by ethnomusicologist Helen H. Roberts. These are originally on wax cylinders, which are currently housed at the Library of Congress. There are copies at Cal Poly Humboldt and UCLA. Some of my roles have included making connections across archives that host Grandma's recordings, collaborating with stakeholders to create protocol for sharing and use of the recordings, and organizing meetings between the community and archivists to foster relational accountability.

My background coming to this music project is primarily from doing language reclamation work. I held an internship with my Tribe's language department in summer 2016, and for my undergraduate senior research project I explored what knowledge surrounding gender and sexuality was being passed in the Karuk language community. I served on the 2023 Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival (AICLS) Youth Leadership Development Conference steering committee, and I was a graduate student researcher for the UC Davis Native American Studies Department's Native American Language Center. I am also a lecturer at Cal Poly Humboldt. My main areas of research are Native writing, rhetoric, composition, and literature, and I have had the privilege of teaching upper and lower division courses in both writing studies and Native American Studies.

These are the positions from which I look at the issue at hand, which is how the dominant expectation of English as the primary language of student assignment submissions in writing classrooms in the US limits opportunities for linguistic inclusion and justice and also burdens multilingual students. In response to this expectation and the ideologies it reveals, I argue that students should have the option to refuse translation.

A discussion of positionality leads nicely into one of the major benefits of "refusing translation," which is that Native students can effectively position ourselves via our languages (for commonalities among Native introductions, see work by Bissett Perea). This is particularly pertinent considering how "authentic" Native identities are confirmed or valued. In the current sociopolitical environment, for example, some "pretendians" (pretend Indians) are not being held accountable for their actions of committing ethnic fraud. When non-Natives claim Native identity, they build material wealth and prestige from doing so, take up space meant for Natives, colonize Indigenous knowledge by stealing Native intellectual labor and production, and, sometimes, simply make things up and claim that those things are Native (for discussion of self-indigenization, see works by Deloria, "Playing Indian"; Jaschik; Owen; Palmater and TallBear; TallBear, "Indigenous"; Teillet; Viren). Dwanna L. McKay (Muscogee (Creek) Nation) analyzed the US Census Bureau to find that "more than 67 percent of people self-identify with a racial identity of American Indian (and an ethnic identity if they purport a tribal affiliation) without official tribal membership status" (13). These numbers show an increase "from 524,000 in 1960 to 5.2 million in 2010" over the course of just 50 years (McKay 13). Pretendians speak over actual Native voices; usurp funding, opportunities, and other resources reserved for Native peoples; and cause emotional and other traumas to Natives who trusted them.

Natives are indeed confronted with an odd paradox—required to prove our "authenticity," often through explicitly colonial means such as enrollment, phenotype, speech, and sometimes through metrics such as alignment with what's dominantly deemed to be "tradition" (McKay). Regardless of these challenges, because there are indeed non-Natives who get away with claiming Native identities, it is necessary that we *somehow* evidence our claims of Native affiliation. Ellen Cushman (Cherokee Nation) argues for key rhetorical points which provide convincing evidence to many Native audiences of tribal affiliation, such as "clan affiliation, participation in tribal communities and religious practices, language use, a family's historical and current contribution to the community, and knowledge of and practice in the traditions, art, and history" ("Toward a Rhetoric" 342). I would argue, as Cushman does, that it's not about proving our identity/relations to non-Indians; rather, it's about being legible to our *own* communities, who can then confirm our relationship.

This approach of necessitating tribal corroboration of affiliation claims is based on the fact that Native nations are sovereign and thus have the right to determine who their own people are; this can and does go beyond enrollment and into intimate details of tribally specific community dynamics and histories (see Barker). Such messiness is sometimes part of what "authenticates" claims to Indian identity, as knowledge of intimate details are understood within a community that may not be understood outside of it (Cushman, "Toward a Rhetoric" 356). Refusing to translate an Indigenous language has the potential to reach Native communities in provocative ways, promoting a literacy that necessitates community involvement in the evaluation of identity claims.

Dylan Robinson (Stó:lō) uses an approach similar to refusing translation in a chapter of his book, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*, called "Writing Indigenous

Space." He argues for creating writing that is only for Native audiences, where non-Natives are asked not to read. In a similar vein, Falconer argues for learning and writing in counter-spaces, which are "intentional spaces where individuals with a shared identity can be free to work, talk, study, etc., without the physical or emotional pressures of specific oppressions and without the presence of potential oppressors" (36). I argue that such spaces can be created, too, by writing in Indigenous languages and refusing to translate them. This has various potential effects—one being that persons who are not from the language communities cannot know what is being said. Additionally, such spaces serve to support tribal sovereignty, the right of Native peoples to self-governance. Refusing translation protects knowledge generation meant to direct such self-determination. These spaces also become centers of linguistic justice.

Such approaches could be powerful means by which we are able to signify our Indianness to our audiences. While of course not everyone can speak/read their tribal language, I am imagining more so a space for Native students who are part of their language communities to continue the reclamation work they do outside of school in an institutional space (the university classroom) that was not made for them. This counter-space would explicitly make the classwork they are doing relevant to their own goals and interests. Moreover, because many California Indian language reclamation programs promote speaking over writing Indigenous languages (see Hinton), this is also well-tailored to multimodal projects and pedagogies. Such opportunities to refuse translation in assignments could also encourage Native students who are not part of their language communities to join those communities.

Furthermore, although I've focused on language thus far, my argument of "refusal" goes deeper than language—it goes into composition, and, at its core, is about refusing assimilation into dominant worldviews. Elissa Washuta (Cowlitz Indian Tribe) and Theresa Warburton show how composition goes beyond the content of a piece. From various Native worldviews, "compositions" can be epistemologically derived from culturally relevant vessels (such as baskets, bodies, and canoes). Beyond the items themselves, the composition of such vessels includes the process of creating them; the materials they're made of; the relations, reciprocity, and respect practiced in creating them; and the cosmological significance of any aspect of the piece (Washuta and Warburton 4). Washuta and Warburton state that these elements all hold true and manifest in the composition of a written piece as well; the vessel being the page.

Additionally, rhetorical components of Native writing tend to be another area where instruction based on Western composition norms fail Native students. Greg Younging (Opaskwayak Cree), for example, states that "Indigenous writing contains elements of storytelling that appear repetitious to a non-Indigenous mind, but which are not repetition" (24). The intention of refusing translation goes well beyond not translating non-English languages. It includes refusing to force one's ways of knowing, being, and doing into the

***"The intention of refusing translation goes well beyond not translating non-English languages. It includes refusing to force one's ways of knowing, being, and doing into the confines of settler-colonial communicative logics."***

confines of settler-colonial communicative logics.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE: EPISTEMOLOGICAL RIGHTS

When some students are required to translate their research (be it from primary or secondary sources) of writing and others are not, the translation process—again, not only language translation, but of ways of knowing—can be assimilatory in nature (for specific problems in translation of Native languages, as well as examples of contexts where translation is appropriate, see Swann). To uphold one language as the language of institutional access is to gatekeep knowledge production and insist on only worldviews that are developed out of that one language. Moreover, "inclusion" of "other" languages more often functions as a form of extraction. For example, this can happen in fields such as linguistics, where languages are dominantly viewed as objects of study that can be detached from their people and are valued for what they can contribute to linguistic science (see works by Leonard, "Centering"; Davis, "Resisting"; Cushman, "Translingual"; Schultz).

Institutional monolingualism colonizes knowledge production and commits ontological violence. In contrast, if or when a monolingual English-speaking instructor finds themself in a position where they do not know what a student has written/said, this creates an opportunity for them to fight the colonial hunger which seeks to know everything and assumes that everything should be or can be known, especially by anyone who wishes to know it. Robinson theorizes this "hunger" (desire to know) specifically from Stó:lō perspectives via the Halq'eméylem language, where xwelítem means "white settler" and is literally translated as "starving person" (2). This word emerged through contact: in 1858, Stó:lō people saw "the largest influx of settlers to the territory . . . [who] arrived in a bodily state of starvation, and also brought with them a hunger for gold" (Robinson 2). This "hunger," Robinson argues, continues to be part of the "settler's starving orientation" from which settlers assert a right to "knowing" (hearing, comprehending, *owning* and controlling) Indigenous knowledge (2).

The colonial assumed right to Indigenous knowledge is akin to claiming ownership over the knowledge itself. Robinson shows that multicultural and inclusion initiatives within musicology, for example, are a means primarily of allowing settlers the opportunity to consume (listen to) Native music, where "[l]istening itself may become an act of confirming ownership, rather than an act of hearing the agonism of exclusive and contested sovereignties" (13). These methods which may seek to "include" Indigenous peoples continue the ownership model grounded in colonialism and empire.

Models of inclusion that are not based on individualistic ownership, then, must recognize the collective nature of Indigeneity. This nature is relational rather than "identity"-based because "identity" models can turn Indigeneity into a possession that one has or owns in a vacuum. Kristin L. Arola and Adam Arola argue that rhetorical sovereignty is often misinterpreted in Composition Studies to refer to individualistic agency, when it instead refers to a Tribe's collective agency. An example of this is examined by Cushman, Baca, and García, who critique the ways that Malea Powell uses the concept in this very way (11–12). Cushman, Baca, and García state: "Stories told in Powell's scholarship recenter the self-told, self-validating story as prima facie truth told—it is claim

and evidence of the claim at once, a self-identified knowledge (who can question the grounds and evidence for such a story?)" (11). While Powell claims Indiana Miami tribal heritage, her approach to writing and story disallows for community verification of said affiliation and stories. Arola and Arola state, further, that "when understood by outsiders to [Native cultures], [cultural specificity] is lost" (211). I suggest that, in a writing studies context, an instructor's potential experience of having no means to know what a student has said, written, composed, or otherwise created, unsettles the institution and diversifies knowledge production by making the right to generate knowledge in Native or heritage languages accessible to students. While potentially "extreme" to some, refusal of translation protects that knowledge from assimilatory assessments based on assumptions, stereotypes, and misinterpretations. These kinds of assimilations of Native languages are not uncommon and not unlikely. Refusing translation makes space for any number of worldviews to emerge, while promoting accountability to one's community.

We might glean examples of how stereotypes can inform an assessor's feedback by considering ontological paradigms. Ontologies include the taxonomies we use to make sense of our worlds and relate knowledge (Walter and Andersen 52). Genres, then, fall within ontological taxonomies; texts within contexts are related to each other. Students in writing studies are often asked to practice rhetorical analyses of different genres in order to write across the curriculum or decipher the conventions of diverse genres of writing.

But Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee Nation) interrogates the fact that many of Indigenous peoples' writings are excluded from the genre of "literary realism" (a highly valued Western genre, informed by Western ontologies of what counts as "real"). For instance, even when an Indigenous author explicitly states that literary realism is their intended genre, Justice shows how dominant literary practices demarcate the author's literature only as "realistic" if it caters to stereotypes of Indigenous peoples (141). Examples of such "realisms" based on stereotypes include: representing Indigenous peoples as peoples of the past, as deficient, or as having "lost" Indigenous cultures and languages (Justice 142). These are the "realities" that Western society has constructed for Indigenous peoples.

Further, the "reality" of literary realism privileges Western ways of knowing, particularly those considered "objective," which renders many Indigenous realities "subjective" and thus not real (Justice 152–153; Maracle, "Memory" 76). For example, spiritual experiences, which many Indigenous peoples would assert belong categorically within genres depicting reality, are forced into genres such as fantasy or speculative fiction (Justice; see also Swann 4). Indigenous authors are also faced with the expectation that Indigenous character development should include an arc of "returning home." This is a problem because it standardizes a trope in Native literatures, creating a singular Native genre in which all Native writing is expected to conform to similar conventions. The "return home" story arc is expected of Native peoples because Natives have been forcibly removed and confined to reservations, rancherias, and the likes, which results in a restrictive conceptualization of where "authentic" Indigeneity exists (see works by Goeman 119–159; Maracle, "Memory" 75–76). Therefore, a *real* Indian will be, or should aim to be, on a reservation or ancestral territory in order to be able to embody their true authentic, nature-connected, rural self. "Home," defined as such, is

the ideal place for the Indian; knowing where Indians exist enables control over where we then go. This is not to say that returning home isn't a major arc of Native literatures. It's to say that "home" for Natives is conceptualized in much more nuanced, decolonial, and creative ways that are not restricted to colonial mappings.

Highly relevant to this discussion of so-called literary "real" markers of Indigeneity is the ability within nonfiction and especially academic writing to push back against misconceptions about Native peoples, such as restrictive, romanticized narratives which "immobilize Native emotional responses" (Washuta and Warburton 10). For instance, the noble savage stereotype, which insists that Natives are inherently hyper-spiritual and ultra-connected to "Mother Earth" is more than mythicizing rhetoric—it also imbues a mystical quality to Natives. Such stereotypes flatten Native peoples in a way that makes the full range of human emotion unexpected from a Native person—an ultra-spiritual person is not expected to get *angry*, for instance. Human reactions such as anger at injustice are unexpected from Native peoples, and, when they occur, are perceived as the binary opposite stereotype—the ignoble savage, the bloodthirsty warrior, the angry Indian. Philip J. Deloria argues that this binary perception of Natives is a form of political pacification, as both stereotypes disallow for Native sovereignty and reinforce ideas that Native peoples, savage or spiritual (or both), must assimilate into dominant society (Deloria, "Indians" 8). This racist view can result in institutions "including" only Native people who don't disrupt the status quo, who can be cited as a statistic, or who will perform their Nativeness in ways that don't disrupt the settler institution. Such inclusion contributes to the institution's perception of itself as culturally diverse. Rarely does this inclusion mean the inclusion of Native structures that challenge or dismantle settler structures. In writing studies, those structures include dominant compositional models and genre conventions that don't account or allow for Indigeneity in them.

Washuta and Warburton state that Native nonfiction writers disrupt "the expectation that Native peoples remain as *subjects spoken about* rather than as the *subjects speaking*" (13). But they also argue that most Native nonfiction is relegated to the realm of autobiography, which effectively "assumes a methodological framework grounded in a desire for cultural authenticity that can be easily translated to and for a non-Native reader" (Washuta and Warburton 13). Moreover, as Max Strassfeld and Robyn Henderson-Espinoza contend, autobiography is "an essentially Christian and Western genre" (289). The roots of a given field, practice, and legacy—and, I would argue, a writing genre—even if actively rejected contemporarily, are still going to have some remnants practitioners will need to consider. For example, Falconer highlights that within STEM, "When discussing race, science textbooks often explore the topic from a seemingly impartial viewpoint that nevertheless embraces a particular belief system about the relationship between genetics and race," despite the fact that research shows this serves to reinforce biological essentialism and has "a clear connection to the eugenics movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries" (32). When Native writers don't conform to Western expectations of Native-ness, and it's demanded that we make our Native-ness legible to non-Native readers, this necessitates performing cultural markers that are based on stereotypes, which points to another problem in research and writing concerning ethnographic methods.

Consider the history of why anthropology came to ethnology to begin with, as detailed by

Vassos Argyrou. The studying of "the other" was a desire to redeem "the others" by uncovering some secret universal, shared ontological worldview which in fact would reveal "the other" as "not so different from us" (Argyrou 60). Argyrou argues that ontological anthropologists, then, assert power by aiming to gift enlightenment/knowledge to the "others," because early anthropologists hoped to show that "human unity" exists (51). This idea of the universal relies on a "need to believe in the existence of an ethical order" over which human control can be asserted (Argyrou 63). Studying "others" stems, then, from a desire for control—and to control is to wield power. Additionally, Asao Inoue shows, applying a Foucauldian analysis, that power dynamics in grading also reveal that instructors dominantly have beliefs about what constitutes "honest" or "authentic" voices, and that those beliefs come down to employing writing that caters to "a middle class set of tastes but a clear white racial set of experiences and perspectives" (28). These, in turn, make grading and assessment "an exercise of power" (Inoue 28).

An instructor socialized into the dominant culture will have expectations of Indigenous peoples (whether they know it or not), and those expectations have often come from academic and research-based ethnographies and the unifying aims of this method (regarding ethnography's role in solidifying the "otherness" of Indigenous peoples, see works by Deloria, "Indians"; Risling Baldy; Teves 84). Assessment by such an instructor is bound to also function to "unify" or assimilate "the other" and exert power via the so-called "gift" of Western knowledge. With regard to writing studies, this has been clearly identified as an institutional inequity for first-year writing courses which, as Kate Vieira et al. show, often act "as a checkpoint of assimilation . . . instructing their students on the conventions of academic writing" (41). [1] They add: "most institutions of higher education require students to complete a first-year writing course, the success of students in higher education can hinge on their ability to 'write white' in order to compete with 'White Americans'" (Vieira et al. 41–42).

The problems of academic writing assessment also violate Indigenous sovereignty. Scott Richard Lyons (Ojibwe/Dakota) argues that "rhetorical sovereignty" is "the inherent right and ability of *peoples* to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit, to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse" (Lyons 449). Despite his foundational argument, writing assessment, often categorized in rubrics with criteria such as "knowing your audience," by extension impose restraints on when, where, and how Indigenous peoples use our languages. Refusing translation brings out the entitlement inherent in wanting to always be the target audience (as an instructor typically thinks they're entitled to be).

Student worldviews, themselves, are at stake when translation (making the composition legible according to the instructor's expectations, forms, and ontologies of literacy) is demanded in composition classrooms. Through refusing to translate what students think and say, students can refuse to be known/knowable and therefore capable of being *controlled*.

## CURRENT APPROACHES OF EMBRACING LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN WRITING STUDIES

I analyze the potential of refusing translation through the above frameworks as an explicit means

of centering Native American languages. I also see the broader concept of refusal as being relevant to non-Native American languages which are marginalized in US institutions as well. Refusing translation can be combined with similar decolonial approaches that have to do with embracing literacy diversity in writing studies.

Language is intimately connected to people, so when a language is devalued, so are its people. As H. Samy Alim and Geneva Smitherman have shown, standard(ized) English is explicitly connected to whiteness and white ways of knowing. They show that white people continually obsessing over former President Barack Obama's speaking (specifically labelling him "articulate") was part of "exceptionalizing discourse" (Alim and Smitherman 41). These labels function to either make Black people an exception to racist expectations (e.g., expectations that Black people *wouldn't* sound "articulate"), or to "[cast] them and their speech behavior as White" (Alim and Smitherman 44). In writing programs that focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and access, de-emphasizing standard(ized) English (with its socioeconomic, racial, ableist, and other hierarchical roots) includes liberatory approaches such as contract grading. These approaches can and should include assignments and assessments that support refusal of translation. Including word minimum criteria in assignments, for instance, is not conducive to refusing translation. For example, in Karuk, if I say "Nikxuriktih nanu'araarahi," Microsoft Word counts this as two "words," whereas written in English it is five words. Other examples abound.

I also want to situate refusal of translation within the context of writing program administration, because the power structures which support English-language privilege are institutional and structural. Cushman argues that changing small details within these structures and frameworks does not effectively deal with their problematic roots (e.g., roots of white supremacy), and argues instead for structural change ("Translingual and Decolonial Approaches"). For example, Marc C. Santos provides an overview of structural-level position statements on language diversity, such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication's 1974 "Students' Right to Their Own Language" statement (160–161). Santos argues that the statement, although expressing "passion and idealism," is far from how the majority of the college composition classrooms actually function (161). Santos theorizes the potential of contract grading as an antiracist pedagogy, given that the majority of traditional writing rubrics, even if they don't outright assess grammar, still "make token acknowledgements of students' rights to linguistic diversity but then frame linguistic diversity as out of line with the specific rhetorical context of academic writing" (161). The message to students when their language choices are not valued in terms of how they are assessed is that their languages are "valuable"—but are not academic languages.

***"The message to students when their language choices are not valued in terms of how they are assessed is that their languages are 'valuable'—but are not academic languages."***

One means of supporting refusal of translation and changing these structures is through writing programs' promotion of innovative criteria for writing assessment. Critiques of inequitable labor acknowledged, one such example is contract grading. Labor-based contracts de-emphasize

instructor *expectations* for the assignment content and emphasize student choice over elements such as language. Contract grading differs from point systems where grammar, punctuation, organization, and content are assessed in regard to how "correct" the writing is (which represents what the student is thinking/learning). These views of "correctness" are dominantly based on how much each student's composition conforms to standardized forms or dominant discoursal knowledge. These kinds of standards raise the question of "whose truths" are being valued or erased. Dominant forms of language, writing, rhetoric, and composition were standard*ized* because they are the "truths" (how language is heard/spoken/written) of those in power, who then enforce them as "correct," but not because they naturally, "objectively" are so.

Within majoritized white knowledge systems, if a piece does not meet predetermined ideas of "standard," the instructor typically provides feedback which guides the student in how to assimilate to those standards in future writing—in turn imposing rhetorical and compositional assessment structures which assimilate not only the student's writing, but, as Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pelkowski argue, also change the very thought process and logics which appeared in the original rhetoric and composition that the student created. To refuse translation is to refuse the possibility of feedback which aims to assimilate. As such, approaches like contract grading, which emphasizes labor through the completion of required assignments and flexible/accessible expectations of "participation," is well suited for "assessing" a student's work if a student refuses translation. Understanding what the student has written is not necessary for checking off completion of a task where labor (the writing or composing of *something*) is the goal. Therefore, refusing translation already fits within contract grading approaches that aim to embrace linguistic diversity in writing studies courses.

## UNSETTLING EFFECTS OF REFUSING TRANSLATION IN WRITING PROGRAMS

Building off of Paulette Regan's concept of "unsettling the settler within," which places responsibility on settlers to "confront their own colonial mentality, moral indifference, and historical ignorance" towards Indigenous peoples (x), I argue that there are at least two key ways that refusing translation can contribute to an "unsettling" in writing programs. These are ethnographic refusal and centering ethnolinguistic identity.

Audra Simpson (Mohawk) identifies that Indigenous peoples practice ethnographic refusal by not sharing "insider" community knowledge with ethnographers because sharing some information can lead to misuse, misrepresentation, and appropriation of Indigenous knowledges on the part of ethnography. This method of "refusal" has taken off as an Indigenous research approach wherein Indigenous peoples refuse access to certain knowledges on the premise that the academy simply does *not* have the right to all knowledge. As Eve Tuck (Unangax̂) and K. Wayne Yang state, these refusals "attemp[t] to place limits on conquest and the colonization of knowledge by marking what is off limits, what is not up for grabs or discussion, what is sacred, and what can't be known" (225). Robinson offers a critique of this approach, stating that Indigenous actions which are "oriented

toward, defensive against, or responsive to the work of settler colonial sovereignty" (such as refusals) actually function to center settler colonialism (67). Nonetheless, "refusal" has resonated for many Natives as a way to articulate what we're doing when confronted with expectations of Indigeneity that don't align with our lived experiences, and I extend the concept into writing program administration.

Indigenous languages and languages which are not the language of instruction can and should be used by students as a way of refusing assimilation and colonization of students' ways of knowing. This process also refuses settler comfort/entitlement in which the settler assumes the right to know and "correct" what the "other" is saying or thinking. A student's refusal in turn creates a situation where the reader must sit in the potential discomfort of cluelessness, rendered by the institutional privileging of English. This can encourage instructors and administrators to engage in reflection and take responsibility for decolonization and *unsettlement* in their classrooms and programs, as described by Regan.

The unsettling of writing, according to Rachel C. Jackson (Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma) and Dorothy Whitehorse DeLaune (Kiowa), is necessary because through settler colonialism, non-Native institutions have placed "limits on Indigenous voices, practices, and perspectives" such that settler narratives (e.g., of Native disappearance) may reign (41). One narrative that is reinforced through settler colonial rhetorics and invigorated by settler colonialism's goal of Indigenous eradication, is the *expectation* that Native peoples are peoples of the past.

I draw from a very specific theory of "expectations" as outlined by Dakota historian Phil Deloria. Deloria notes how framings of "expectations" trade in harmful "stereotypes" that become normalized by masking the violence of their colonial ideological roots ("Indians"). Stereotypes, etymologically and when applied to people, mean that people within a given group are exact replicas of each other, and the simplicity of such monolithic representations fail to address the colonial reasons behind what non-Natives, and sometimes Natives ourselves, think about Native people (Deloria, "Indians" 8–9). Deloria argues that the ideologies behind expectations of Indian people come down to a few core beliefs about Indians: that we are disappearing, that we existed in a "pure" state prior to European contact, and (as discussed earlier) that we are either noble or ignoble savages ("Indians" 10). Deloria's analytic of "unexpected" offers an intervention through analyses of the assumptions that are related to but that are not necessarily the stereotype itself, which reveals how ideologies of expectedness are rooted in histories and ongoing practices of genocide and dispossession.

As Leonard argues, the dominant expectations of Natives are also imposed onto our languages, despite the prominent and active presence of Indigenous language work and activism in and outside of settler institutions ("Challenging 'Extinction'"). Language reclamation efforts, for example, insist on Indigenous language presence, and refuse the expectation that we and our languages will disappear (Leonard, "Challenging 'Extinction'"). One way to bring language reclamation into the writing classroom is to insist on our right to use our languages in all genres, texts, and spaces where we choose to. Submitting assignments in our Native languages in *any* class and refusing to translate them is part of our right to exist. Further, the instructor need not know what we've said.

Refusing to translate our languages also challenges the problematic "two worlds" model where the expectation is that anywhere beyond certain confines of "the Native community" (often delegated

to reservations) constitutes an entirely different "world." James Joseph Buss and C. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa draw upon Vine Deloria Jr.'s lamentation "that scholars of all types ha[ve] created a crisis by theorizing Native people as . . . trapped '[between two worlds]'" (Buss and Genetin-Pilawa 1). They explore how this trope reinforces Native peoples as savage, and Western culture as civilized. The impact on Native identities that such a narrative has is restricting, as Indigenous identities cannot be fractured and forced into a dichotomy (see also Raheja 110). University classrooms are constituted as non-Native "civilized" space, and Natives are not *really* expected to be in these spaces, and if we are in them, then we are perceived as having lost some essence of our "authentic" Native-ness. When Natives are in what's constituted as non-Native space, we are also considered exceptions to the rule. Refusing to translate Indigenous languages in these spaces, then, functions to unsettle the Two Worlds model. As such, refusing translation supports a healthy, whole identity that refuses the idea that 'authentic' Native-ness is confined to certain spaces.

This trope must also be understood through histories of removal, politics of migration, and economic choices made by Tribal Nations (Davis, *Talking Indian* 5). Jenny L. Davis (Chickasaw Nation) frames diaspora for Indigenous peoples as Indians who "are no longer located in their homelands, [. . .] are not authorized to exhibit political control over the entirety of their original territories, and/or [. . .] do not have access to full political sovereignty, even if they may practice various levels of tribal sovereignty" (*Talking Indian* 8). Because some Indigenous students may attend educational institutions in the circumstances of diaspora, supporting the use of Indigenous languages in the classroom maintains their connection to the broader communities from which their identities as Indigenous, and thus their existence in the world, are founded.

Therefore, Indigenous peoples asserting our *presence*, rejecting narratives of absence from certain spaces, and refusing translation are means of unsettling the composition classroom and dominant understandings of "literacy." Because, as Vieira et al. argue, bodies are subject to assumptions, "bodies marked as 'illiterate' may experience obstacles for accessing the material conditions of literacy, further reifying power structures" (43). Speaking, writing, and thinking in Indigenous languages, without making them legible to settler colonial ways of knowing, promotes Indigenous presence, unsettling classroom and institutional structures of privilege and power, and promoting language reclamation efforts more broadly.

## WHAT BECOMES OF THE ROLE OF THE INSTRUCTOR?

I have anticipated (or outright been told of) a few drawbacks to refusing translation. One is the longstanding critique that if instructors are too "progressive" in these sorts of ways, it denies students the "tools they need to succeed." The other is that if a student were to refuse translation of an entire paper, an instructor might have no means of providing feedback. In this section, I show why these positions continue the project of colonization, and offer ways to engage students in refusals of translation pedagogically.

In keeping with Cushman's arguments that institutional structures and systems should be the pressure point for change, and not individuals within systems, I am confident that it's the means

of feedback and assessment which require change, not the individual student's language, writing, and knowledge production. Note that I am not saying all feedback is assimilative in nature, and I hold that instructors and students can have valuable reciprocal relationships in all areas of learning and teaching. However, this section explores the role of the instructor when traditional teaching of the colonizer's language and thought processes are removed. Moreover, I argue that the role of the instructor can be to provide space for refusal of translation alongside a critique of the *why* and *how* of dominant forms of writing and language—and for students to engage in these approaches and critiques in ways that will serve their needs and goals.

Alim and Smitherman call for instructors to cease claiming that teaching standard English is 'just the way it is,' and that doing so is well-meaning. They argue for "changing the game" and urge instructors to "stop apologizing for 'the way things are' and begin helping our students imagine the way things can be" (Alim and Smitherman 191). This includes considering "How and why . . . we continue to measure the worth of People of Color largely by their level of assimilation into dominant White culture, a culture that rewards all students for 'sounding White'" (Alim and Smitherman 175–191). As we can be fairly sure that students will encounter "the game" (of sounding white), my goal as an instructor is that students are able to effectively challenge all pedagogies which require that they play such a game at all.

It is of course true that there are students who express desire to acquire "the tools of the master," despite the well-known argument from Audre Lorde, who states that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (112). However, even being taught dominant tools won't necessarily mean one "masters" those tools. Alim and Smitherman make the key point that "Asking people to unlearn or abandon their language is like asking them to go back magically in time and select a different speech community to be raised in [. . .] How many White speakers, for example, would be able to pass the test of sounding 'authentically' Black?" (58). Diane Lynn Gusa also shows how standard English upholds white privilege, stating that "people of color are evaluated aversely with Whiteness's dominant societal standards [and] nondominant groups are assessed as deficient in comparison to the White collective" (471). Gusa continues this critique, stating that "Whites are privileged in that they are not required to concede or exchange a part of themselves (Logan, 2002), have their U.S. citizenship questioned (Grimes, 2002), or have their culture viewed through deficit framing" (471).

When a student from a nondominant group does not perform whiteness to the approval of the assessor, this can be framed as a failure of the individual student. But as Falconer states, "The 'you can be anything if you believe in yourself' perspective ignores that there are very real vectors of oppression working to reinforce and reinscribe particular social structures and hierarchies" (33). In addition, Gusa situates how dominant means of assessment follow settler colonial notions of American individualism. Gusa states: "Historically, individualism, self-reliance, and independence were all essential principles for prosperity in the American frontier society of the 1800s and 1900s," and this "intertwined with the capitalist ideology of property, profit, and competition" (468–469). These ideologies, based on the false assumption that people have equal opportunity, place blame on the individual for not achieving the "American Dream" of upward mobility, rather than recognize

that those who hold cultural capital are positioned to have better access to opportunity (Gusa 469). Indeed, the "Fact Sheet" from the White House regarding Trump's executive order making English the official language of the United States references the "American Dream" as achievable through linguistic assimilation into English: "This Order celebrates multilingual Americans who have learned English and passed it down, while empowering immigrants to achieve the American Dream through a common language" ("Designating English").

However, even if students of color do "master" sounding white by using standardized English, they are typically still seen as "deficient." Here I highlight Inoue's point that continuing to cling to the idea that teaching white, Western "tools" is the equitable thing to do subscribes to false assumptions about race and language (31). One of these assumptions is that "people aren't racist toward people, but they may be toward the languages people use" (Inoue 32). This is false; racism towards BIPOC occurs regardless of the languages they use, because society structurally, systemically racializes bodies (Inoue 31). But, when bringing language into the mix, BIPOC bodies are further stigmatized (Inoue 32). Inoue states: "When we read the words that come from the bodies of our students, we read those bodies as well, and by reading those bodies we also read the words they present to us, some may bare stigmata, some may not" (34). This point is echoed by Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa, whose research shows that racialized "students classified as long-term English learners, heritage language learners, and Standard English learners can be understood to inhabit a shared racial positioning that frames their linguistic practices as deficient regardless of how closely they follow supposed rules of appropriateness" (149). Furthermore, as Gusa states, "Whiteness is not based on complexion; rather it is a socially informed ontological and epistemological orientation . . . reflecting what one does rather than something one has" (468). Gusa continues, outlining that "Historically, from the inception of the United States as a nation, the dominance of European culture produced an Anglo-Saxon core society rooted in and identified with English language and customs" (468). This aligns with an important point that Flores makes, which is that "any attempt at institutionalizing policies to ameliorate racial inequalities will inevitably reinforce the white supremacy that lies at the roots of institutions responsible for ensuring their implementation" ("Developing a Materialist Anti-Racist Approach" 567). Essentially, hiring more BIPOC without actually addressing issues (such as linguistic justice) is not going to change the white supremacist ideologies of the institution. There will just be more BIPOC harmed and assimilated into playing white.

Pedagogies that purport to give students the "tools they need to succeed" through standard writing, rhetoric, and composition models actually reinforce racist language ideologies and prevent cultural change aimed at creating a world in which we no longer need the tools of whiteness to succeed. In regard to the claim that teaching standardized English is a "tool for success," it is helpful to consider what we mean by "tools." In general, tools are things that are useful. For instance, students ought to have "tools" to engage in critical thinking. But what is actually meant by "tools" when people say "tools *they* need to succeed?" Note the othering pronoun usage that often accompanies this litany—who are "they"? These "tools" are referring to elitist *rules* of language, rhetoric, grammar, and composition often found in academia. Such language is not inherently, and is especially not exclusively, a "tool." It is an ideology which positions epistemologies of whiteness at the top of the

literate, academic hierarchy. Flores, who analyzed elementary school teachers' assumptions that their Latinx students are "lacking" or "deficient," illustrates that "academic language is a raciolinguistic ideology that frames racialized students as linguistically deficient and in need of remediation" ("From Academic Language" 22). Flores notes that educators define "academic language" as "content-specific vocabulary and complex sentence structures" (22–23). This definition ignores the fact that students' heritage languages do, in fact, have those very features—not to mention that, quite often, the teacher is largely "illiterate" in these students' linguistic background (Flores 23). Flores argues that pedagogies which acknowledge students' full linguistic repertoires—as ought to be the expectation—"are integral to the development of [students'] academic identities rather than simply a bridge at best or a barrier at worst" (28). Moreover, Flores reminds us that it is "important to keep focus on the larger political and economic factors that lie at the root of the marginalization of the language practices of racialized communities" (29). Even if a writing instructor as an individual does not provide instruction that expects assimilation, students are still and always encountering assimilatory pedagogies in other classes or society. Because this is the case, an instructor whose curriculum asks students to critically engage with the hierarchical roots of "standard" English and writing composition need not teach those "standard" forms to a student who expresses desire to learn them. Unfortunately, the student can and will receive such instruction elsewhere. I argue that instructor goals should instead provide a space for writers to explore their voices and ensure they can critique the project of assimilatory instruction if and when it is provided unsolicited in other contexts. Specifically, it would benefit students to be able to provide the assimilatory instructor with evidence for why the instruction contains agendas of white supremacy, ableism, and a range of other power structures that privilege the communicative styles of those in power. As Inoue states, "this antiracist project begins in our classrooms because it is the only place we, as writing teachers, can begin" (29).

Now to address the second concern, which is how instructors might provide feedback or "assess" student work in languages they may not know. Creating assignments that promote refusal of translation requires a change in the structure of assessment. I have addressed the labor aspect of doing the work of the assignment in any language earlier in this text, but I also want to emphasize that feedback can come in various forms. For example, observations of collaboration in groups; the exploration of visual, auditory, and other components of multimodal composing; and participation in peer reviews and class discussions. This approach to feedback is open—it's a discussion. How are things going in groups? Is there anything we can do to make the classroom community stronger to encourage discussion? How is your writing and research process going—is there anything I can do to help?

This focus de-emphasizes the power of "assessment" by the instructor and instead focuses on what will best serve the student in their learning goals. Melzer, Quinn, Sperber, Lisa, and Faye show that removing the stressors of grading helps students to move away from concerns about what the instructor thinks and toward deeper engagement with the material. I argue that the stress of "good grades" could be further reduced if a student refuses to translate their language for the instructor.

Traditional forms of assessment create power dynamics. Refusals, when students practice

them (intentionally or not), are a direct resistance to these power dynamics, which privilege "the advantages White students receive, particularly the ability to be assessed in school for using the same language and performing the same philosophical values as they use and perform at home" (Santos 166). Students who resist these systems are developing critical thinking and self-advocacy skills.

What I've found important as an instructor is that students acquire the tools to critique standardized English and institutionalized monolingualism as racially and socioeconomically loaded, especially in relation to colonization. It's important for students to learn how to support their arguments for refusing to participate in any monolingual project. Grading contracts can support this refusal through experimental writing assignments and other creative genres (vlogging, podcasts, storytelling). These kinds of assignments are particularly well suited for refusing translation, as well as for critiquing the dominance of "correct" English, because students can represent their ideas in multiple ways and choose their audiences. Instructor feedback is also less likely to promote assimilation when instructors accept student work in languages they do not know (and sit in contemplation of their own ignorance). Students get to experience and celebrate their own languages and ways of knowing when they are valued in their writing courses, and refusal of translation prepares them to transfer this practice to other courses in petition of assimilatory instruction.

## CONCLUSION

Refusing translation expands on current methods that promote linguistic diversity in the writing classroom. Refusal of translation has a particularly promising impact of decolonizing, unsettling, and Indigenizing student learning opportunities. The English language continues to be privileged as the medium of communicating ideas in universities in the United States, and student assignments are typically already expected to be written in English for most fields (with some obvious exceptions, such as where papers may be written in the target language the student is learning). This privileging of English as the medium of knowledge creation and dissemination not only creates barriers for multilingual and/or Indigenous students, it also sends the signal that English, and particular dialects of English, are *better* or *right*, or the sole means of succeeding in education or becoming "educated." In response, refusing translation resists and denies English as the only language capable of demonstrating an "educated" voice; further, when *Indigenous* languages are promoted as mediums of communicating knowledge, it *unsettles* colonized spaces by making Indigenous presence known, and refuses the colonization of Indigenous knowledge.

The expectation that students will submit assignments in English reveals it as structurally privileged in universities in the United States. If the prospect of a student submitting a paper in a language other than English *unsettles* the instructor—good. Discomfort is part of this process. Expecting that assignments be submitted in standard academic English reveals how entitlement is situated within the privilege of the institution—an entitlement to know what students are speaking, thinking, or writing. This works alongside the implied expectation that the institution and the instructor should be able to subsequently *assess*, suggest, enforce change to, and therefore restrain students' thinking and writing to dominant (white, English) institutional standards.

My position rests on three premises. **One**, requiring some students to translate their languages results in inequitable labor and forces students' epistemologies into the constructs and confinements of the English language. This results in a privileging of all that is associated with the English language, including its ontologies and epistemologies, thereby potentially upholding white supremacy, ableism, and settler colonialism. **Two**, the expectation that students will submit assignments which are legible to English-speaking audiences (e.g., through translation) promotes the goals of settler colonialism by oppressing Indigenous languages. This works in contrast to a more liberatory vision, where the classroom could actually be a place of continuing language reclamation work and activism that the student might already be engaged with and continue outside of the classroom. And **three**, students who refuse translation force the institution to find ways to *unsettle* itself by refusing to feed the colonial hunger to *know*, as well as the colonial entitlement and presumption that one has the right to know anything and everything, including what a student is learning or thinking.

Students should have the right to say "no" to an instructor—including refusing to conform to the structural issues within assignments an instructor creates—without being penalized or intimidated with the prospect of a poor grade. When students can refuse translation, it interrupts a primary method of colonizing student ways of knowing, and it protects the knowledge which students have labored to create. Refusal of translation can happen in all subject areas—biology, chemistry, sociology, business, computer science, media studies, music, physics—because we can and do speak our languages according to our experiences and our need to talk about the world. Through refusal of translation, the ontologies we have access to in our own languages create an entry point into our knowledge development. Refusals of translation also resist assessment or feedback which might belittle and dismiss that knowledge. The ramifications of refusing translation could be disastrous for settler schooling.

And that's a good thing.

# NOTES

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# THE SCHOOLING OF GESTURAL LISTENING

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## KEYWORDS

listening; gesture; literacy; embodiment; neurodivergence; pedagogy

The pianist Glenn Gould was known throughout his career as a brilliant interpreter of Johann Sebastian Bach and as an innovative recording artist, but also for his unusual behaviors during performances. Instead of performing the repertoire and otherwise remaining contained and silent, as classical pianists are generally expected to do, Gould was famous for gesturing with one hand while playing with the other, and even humming along with the music as he played. Often attributed to eccentricity or isolation, Gould's singing and gesturing can also be thought of as a deep, multisensory involvement in the act of listening. Gould's listening is not still and silent, as listening is often thought to be; rather, it is lively and engaged. At times, Gould's movements and vocalizations seem not just to follow along with the musical phrases, but actually to draw them forth. His voluble, fully embodied listening does not just receive or follow alongside the music but seems to generate it, allow for it, make space for it.

While they may be much more subtle than Gould, people engage in responsive and visible listening in many parts of their everyday lives, especially in communicative situations where they are in conversation with others or forming part of an audience. I call this phenomenon "gestural listening," which I define as all of listening's embodied manifestations: from nodding and non-verbal backchanneling to note-taking and motions of the hands and body, including posture and choices about where to sit. Gestural listening resists the notion that listening is invisible, playing out only internally. Often assumed to be a silent activity, Gould's listening shows us that this is not really the case: instead, his listening is audible and visible, accompanied by vocalizing and embodied responsiveness. In fact, readers may share the sense that the gestural listening of a conversation partner, or of an audience, may have profound effects on what gets said and how; that is, gestural listening can shape rhetorical possibilities and outcomes. I have argued elsewhere that gestural listening should be understood as a bona fide rhetorical force, flipping a traditional rhetorical orientation from the impact of speakers upon audiences towards the ways in which listeners themselves exert influence and shape the conditions of discourse (Feibush).

In this article, I attend to gestural listening's early development in the lives of students: how it is used, shaped, and then evaluated by schooling. I aim to show how gestural listening is first leveraged to help students gain literacy, then disciplined into overly restrained embodied norms, eventually fusing with notions of classroom management and student attitude. To illustrate this trajectory, I

draw upon a 2002 film called *Être et Avoir* directed by Nicolas Philibert, as well as the work of early literacy figures such as Marie Clay and Megan Watkins. Throughout, I argue that gestural listening's relegation to an amalgamated landscape of "good" or "correct" conduct in school inordinately affects students who bring elements of neurodiversity to the classroom. I investigate this phenomenon by highlighting—with permission—the writing of two students with self-disclosed ADHD diagnoses, and by engaging with scholars of neurodiversity and disability such as M. Remi Yergeau, Shannon Walters, and Thomas Brown. By reminding readers of gestural listening's affordances in early literacy acquisition, and its subsequent flattening by the process of schooling, I ultimately aim to render it visible to educators once again, especially to those working in secondary and college environments where listening's rich gestural register is often paved over, smoothed into limited perceptions of "correct" conduct.

## A LITANY FOR GESTURAL LISTENING

Acts of reading, writing, speaking, and listening happen through deeply intertwined sensory channels. The role of listening, however, emerges as uniquely important, especially in early literacy acquisition, in the way that it bridges the auditory and the verbal, helping children move from speech to reading and writing. And yet, of the four literacy skills, it is listening that suffers the most under cultural perceptions, languishing under prevailing assumptions about its passiveness, invisibility, and silence.

My research into gestural listening has given me reason to challenge perceptions of listening as passive, invisible, or silent. Here, I offer my findings in the form of a "litany" for gestural listening, by which I mean not a lengthy or repetitive list, but a set of petitions, ideas that have emerged time and again from my investigation into gestural listening that push us to conceptualize listening in different ways—a new set of listening assumptions. Through this litany, I also aim to sketch out how gestural listening fits within strains of rhetoric and composition scholarship that deal mainly with sound and listening, embodiment and gesture, and disability, as well as adjacent fields like communication and sound studies, among others. The concepts here set the stage for a fuller understanding of gestural listening in school settings, which I later examine in more detail.

***"Acts of reading, writing, speaking, and listening happen through deeply intertwined sensory channels."***

Let the litany begin: *Gestural listening captures listening's dual material and metaphorical qualities.* Listening is often contrasted against hearing—the latter a simple reception, while the former denotes a deeper understanding or interpretation. In the same vein, listening is often invoked to carry a metaphorical meaning—as in the case of a National Wildlife Foundation headline that asks: "Animals are Talking—Are You Listening? (McNamara)." But positioning hearing and listening as opposites, or as separate, oversimplifies the act of listening, giving hearing over to the physical reception of sound while listening associates mainly with meaning and interpretation. In *Sonic Warfare*, however, Steve Goodman teaches readers that listening is always a physical experience in addition to being an

act of cognition, decipherment, or interpretation: "Before the activation of causal or semantic, that is, cognitive listening," Goodman writes, "the sonic is a phenomenon of contact and displays, through an array of autonomic responses, a whole spectrum of affective powers" (10). "Sound," he continues, is able to "caress the skin, to immerse, to soothe, beckon, and heal, to modulate brain waves" (10). Invoking this "array" of autonomic and affective responses the body has to sound, Goodman asserts that there may in fact be no hard line between hearing and listening, and that listening recruits the whole body immediately. Gestural listening acknowledges the dual physical and cognitive nature of listening, its joint material and metaphorical dimensions. This conceptual blur between hearing and listening lends itself to the next item in the litany.

*Gestural listening affirms sensorial fluidity.* Recent scholarship in rhetoric and composition, as well as adjacent fields like cultural studies, bespeaks an interest in a fulsome understanding of the sensorium as it pertains to rhetorical praxis. Steph Ceraso argues in *College English* for a multi-sensory understanding of listening, coining the term "multimodal listening," which refers to listening that engages the whole body kinesthetically, not just the ears. "Thoughtfully engaging and composing with sound," Ceraso writes, "requires listeners to attend to how sound works with and against other sensory modes to shape their embodied experiences" (103). In *The Ethical Soundscape*, Charles Hirschkind examines the practice of listening to cassette-recorded sermons in Cairo, and in doing so, finds similarly that acts of listening in this context are fully embodied across a sensorium that is not rigidly differentiated. Hirschkind notes that in his study of sermon audition, he "view[s] the body as a kind of fluid medium, one animated and traversed by an ensemble of interlinking movements: the gestures of the hands, the face and eyes, the nerves, muscles, and breath that . . . form the sensitive heart of an ethical listener" (103). My formulation of gestural listening embraces the idea of the body as "fluid medium," and of listening as happening across an "ensemble" of senses. Thinking of listening not as "merely" receptive and internal but as an act expressed through the body likely makes the next petition in this litany feel like a natural next step.

*Gestural listening resonates with understandings of listening that acknowledge its active and generative aspects.* While it may have been Carl Rogers's 1987 formulation of "active listening" that put listening on the map of scholarly attention, it was Krista Ratcliffe's 2006 *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness* that definitively repositioned listening as a vital dimension of rhetorical production. There, Ratcliffe conceptualizes rhetorical listening as a capacity that can be intentionally enacted: "As a trope for interpretive invention," she writes, "rhetorical listening signifies a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture" (17). Listening, for Ratcliffe, is a practice that creates rhetorical possibilities. In *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*, Cheryl Glenn, too, highlights the rhetorical generativity of listening as she explains how invitational rhetoric, an idea first put forward by Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin in 1995, "asks only that a listener listen, and in response that the rhetor listen—both sides taking turns at being productively silent" (156). In Glenn's turn of phrase here, when listeners listen, they are not passive but rather productive. The productive silence on each side "transforms the rhetorical discipline from one of persuasion, control, and discipline . . . to a moment of inherent worth, equality, and empowered action" (Glenn 156). Listening's energies can be felt in these re-readings of listening in the rhetorical

tradition, but they are not always cooperative in nature, as the next litany item shows.

*Gestural listening is often associated with performances of obedience or respectfulness, but those are not its only manifestations.* Investigating the role of auditory experience in Enlightenment America, Leigh Eric Schmidt notes how the gestural listening of congregants in early American congregations signaled respect on various levels: "Being a good hearer (by Anglican and Reformed standard) involved the whole body in a series of '*reverent Postures*' of humility that signified deference to God and, necessarily, to ministers as well" (74). Ministers knew that "the routine deferences of their auditories—the bodily habits of silent attention, the '*well-composed Countenances*, and *becoming Gestures*' of reverent concentration—were a constitutive part of their own standing" (Schmidt 74). Congregants in early American churches performed respectful listening in the form of "well-composed countenances" and the body language of humility, but as Glenn Gould demonstrates, the act of listening is not always silent or still; nor is it always acquiescent. Indeed, I have previously written about how resistant gestural listening can be found in the body language of protest or even the sulking of disgruntled students in class (Feibush). Megan Laverty illustrates one such resistantly listening student: "A student who refrains from 'speaking her mind' may indict her more powerful teachers by comporting herself in a condemnatory manner with raised eyebrows, offhand asides, and curt speech" (70).

Laverty's student makes a "statement" with her gestural listening, although she might not be described as a "good" listener by her teacher. That leads us to the next petition in the litany: *What constitutes "good" gestural listening in any environment is culturally and historically situated, not a natural "given," but something taught and learned.* While gestural listening carries strong associations with quiet obedience or acquiescence, "right" listening is context-specific and can be seen to change over time. This variability suggests that "good" listening is not an innate or given, but rather taught and learned through a process of socialization. Of the Muslim sermon listeners that he studies, Hirschkind emphasizes a process of learning to become the right kind of listener, "properly tuned": "For such a person (properly tuned, body and soul), auditory reception involves the flesh, back, chest, and heart—in short the entire moral person as a unity of body and soul. To listen properly . . . is to engage in a performance, the articulated gestures of a dance" (76). In a vision of "good" listening with a different interplay of reception and response, Cheryl Genn's *Unspoken* quotes an interview with Todd Epaloose, who discusses norms of interaction among the Zuni Pueblo. Epaloose notes: "As far as conversations go, we tend to listen more first and tend to be silent until we totally understand that the person talking to you is done" (Glenn 119). With a range of "good" gestural listening behaviors in mind, what counts as correct listening in school can be seen not as naturally "right" but as a set of learned preferences that affords students membership in the classroom if they can perform them.

So who is willing and able to perform "correct" gestural listening in the classroom? This question becomes particularly important when we learn that *gestural listening varies across dimensions of identity.* Given that gestural listening can take a variety of forms depending on where it is performed, it should come as no surprise that gestural listening differs across people. To illustrate this, Krista Ratcliffe turns to the linguist Deborah Tannen, who describes how men and women often perform listening in different ways. Tannen argues that "U.S. culture socializes men and women to listen

differently: Men often listen by challenging speakers to a verbal duel to determine who knows more and who is quicker on his feet; women often listen by smiling, nodding, asking questions, and providing encouraging verbal cues (yes, uh huh, is that right?, hmmm)" (qtd in Glenn 21). Gestural listening indexes gendered cultural preferences regarding likeability, warmth, and competitiveness, among others. Its variability is not limited to gender; it also extends to aspects of identity such as ability and neurodiversity. Referring to herself as a "deaf/hard-of-hearing" person, Brenda Jo Brueggemann describes the difficulty she experiences with appearing to listen the "right" way:

> I tend to control conversations . . . I ramble, chatter . . . It is safer this way: if I don't shut up, if I keep talking, then voila, I don't have to listen. And if I don't have to listen, I don't have to struggle, don't have to ask for repeats, don't have to assume any of the various appearances that I and other deaf/hard-of-hearing people often appear as—stupid, aloof, disapproving, suspicious. (93)

Here, Brueggemann points out how appearing to listen in the "right" way is an important social ability, with real social stakes. An easy performance of "correct" listening is not available to Brueggemann due to her hearing impairment; rather than trying to listen and risk appearing as "stupid, aloof, disapproving, [or] suspicious," she avoids the listening role by "controlling conversations," an approach she describes as feeling "safer." A gestural listening performance that is outside a normative bracket, it seems, renders Brueggemann socially vulnerable. In what follows, I will engage more deeply with the work of M. Remi Yergeau, among others, as I explore how gestural listening varies across ability.

The way non-normative gestural listening is often penalized in social and academic settings should increase our curiosity about how it tends to be taught and learned in school environments. With gestural listening's litany hanging in the air, I move in the next section to how I will approach my study of gestural listening in school.

## WAYS OF KNOWING ABOUT GESTURAL LISTENING IN SCHOOL

As a college professor, my work provides me with ample opportunities to observe and interact with college students. As education goes, the college environment is just the tip of the iceberg, however; students arrive on campus with a lifetime of prior experiences in classroom settings. In order to enrich my discussion of gestural listening in prior years of schooling, I turn to literature about early literacy and grade school. In early literacy studies, the 1970's and 80's saw a wave of new scholarship that redefined prevailing ideas about how children come into literacy (Teale; Sulzby, Barnhart, and Hiesima; Harste, Woodword, and Burke). Most prominent among these voices is Marie Clay, the New Zealand literacy researcher and psychologist, who developed the Reading Recovery program, widely adopted in the second half of the 20th century in schools across New Zealand, Australia, the United States, Canada, and Britain. The legacy of Clay's Reading Recovery program is a troubled one, with critics particularly noting Clay's emphasis on having children focus on "decoding" text to the exclusion of a phonics, or a "sounding-it-out" approach (Hanford). Nevertheless, one of Clay's other

legacies consists of moving the field from the idea of "reading readiness" in youngsters—the view that reading instruction should only begin when a child reaches a particular maturation point—to the framework of "emergent literacy," which holds that children begin acquiring the preliminary skills that enable reading in a continuous, organic way in early childhood, even before entering school (Morrow, Morrow and Strickland). More recently, Australian educator and researcher Megan Watkins also focuses on the juncture of early schooling and embodiment, bringing readers' attention to the way primary education shapes body and mind in tandem. Watkins, writing *Discipline and Learn* in 2012, furthers a "post-progressive" pedagogical approach, aimed at cultivating a kind of positive discipline in young learners that cultivates their capacity for literate practices like reading and writing. Both writers invite a reconceptualization of categories like active and passive in classroom settings, which lends itself to reconceptualizing listening.

At the beginning of the next two sections, I draw on scenes from Nicolas Philibert's 2002 film, *Être et Avoir*, which takes place over the course of a year at a rural elementary school in the French countryside. There, a small class of students, ranging in age from four to eleven, are led by a gentle, bespectacled teacher named Georges Lopez. *Être et Avoir* is documentary-like, focusing not on actors, but on Lopez, his local students, and their families. The film's "slice of life" approach foregrounds the small, daily efforts at discipline and direction that comprise elementary schooling for the minds and bodies of children. I include moments from the film at the beginning of sections to provide living, idiosyncratic examples of ideas that the article handles, invitations to explore how school shapes the language activities of students.

In a later section of this article, I draw on an aspect of composition studies that has a special history at the University of Pittsburgh: the analysis of student writing. Most closely associated with the work of David Bartholomae, this approach centers the voices of students not just as novice, not-presentable-yet writers, but as producers of intellectually rich texts that reflect the special dynamics and challenges of student writing, like developing a written voice and claiming the authority to make an argument. Contemporary research on ADHD and disability, especially from Thomas Brown and Shannon Walters, provides scholarly perspectives on neuroatypical and non-normatively-abled individuals. The inclusion of student essays, however, uniquely enriches our understanding of our students' lived experiences of schooling in their own words. The students whose work I include here can be seen to navigate their roles as student writers with skill and courage: in writing about their early schooling experiences, they change the dynamic of their classroom environment in our own course together, challenging me to see them as learners in new and different ways. I have received written permission from both writers whose essays I include in this article, and the names of these two former students have been changed to protect their anonymity.

## GESTURAL LISTENING AS RESOURCE FOR LITERACY ACQUISITION

*In a scene from* Être et Avoir*, a boy of four or five named Axel is seated at a low table, reading aloud. His teacher, Mr. Lopez, sits beside him. The boy reads a few words before something catches his*

*interest across the room. Lopez gently prompts: "Where's our book?" Axel smiles sheepishly. "Here," he replies, tapping the workbook. "So look here," Lopez says. Axel sounds out the words he doesn't recognize. Lopez supplies a word from time to time, but only after Axel has tried the first syllable, testing the word aloud with his ear. As he reads, Axel touches the text with both hands, alternately tracing the lines of text and holding the page in place.*

In this scene, viewers get the sense of how Axel reads with his whole sensorium: his eyes, ears, and even his hands. The sensory channels of hearing, seeing, and touching are all fully in use and generously overlap as he directs his eyes to the book, touches the words with his hands, and sounds out the beginning of each new word, listening for sounds he recognizes from his own daily vocabulary. Axel's listening, here, is gestural: it is not an act that is rigidly separated from speaking, seeing, and touching—rather, it is richly embodied and multimodal. A sensorially-fluid approach to reading helps Axel match combinations of letters with meaningful sounds that he recognizes from speech. In a later scene, a student of nine or ten works to write down the words of a dictation. During a pause, he mouths the words of a sentence read aloud a moment before, using his mouth and ear to help him arrive at correct spelling and grammar. Both students in the descriptions above are developing phonological awareness, an important skill in learning to read. Already, we can see how gestural listening is often leveraged, even celebrated, as a means for helping children acquire literacy.

In her late-career book, *By Different Paths to Common Outcomes*, psychologist and researcher Marie Clay describes phonological awareness in a way that highlights its entwined, multichannel nature: the intermingled listening, sounding out, reading, and writing that we see at work in the young students above. Nevertheless, it is really the role of listening that emerges as particularly important. Clay writes: "Writing forces learners to search their speech for the acoustic units that count in printed language so that they can represent them in writing" (146). In "searching their speech," children essentially listen to their own speech in order to help them recognize "acoustic units," thus gaining a foothold into reading and writing. Clay continues in a way that emphasizes listening, writing: "A child trying to write an unknown word, or literate adults trying to write down names they have never seen in writing *find ways of analyzing the flow of sounds* in words" (146, italics mine). When children or adults "find ways" to "analyze the flow of sounds," they listen in an embodied, gestural way, in a way that recruits the mouth, the voice, and even the hand in acts of writing. Gestural listening, then, takes on a crucial function in facilitating the movement from speech to writing and reading. Accordingly, early educators regularly make use of its sensorial and cognitive richness.

Gestural listening, then, is leveraged to help young children come into literacy. Axel and his classmates demonstrate how certain types of listening, like his "listening-while-reading aloud," can be quite active and generative, undertaken with a certain amount of intentionality and effort. Further, Axel's listening has not yet been molded into certain performed behaviors, like the behaviors of stillness and quietness. The sensorium of literacy has not been partitioned off quite yet—it still exists as a perceptual field that is only vaguely differentiated, an idea that Charles Hirschkind and Steph Ceraso take up in the works I cite earlier. Springing as well from ideas in my litany, above, gestural listening emerges here as effortful, generative, multisensory; it is not just a "given" but something that

is learned, practiced.

And yet, as I mention above, listening is often conceptualized as a quiet, passive counterpart to the more productive, tangible skills of writing and speaking. We can see that, for example, in the way Marie Clay argues, elsewhere in the same book, against the tendency to position reading as a prerequisite to writing. She suggests instead that writing, even before its motor components are fully mastered, has much to offer the development of reading skills in youngsters. There is nothing essentially wrong with this claim, continuing as it does to acknowledge the rich sensory interconnections between the literacy skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. It does, however, show how easy and habitual it is to perpetuate the cultural constructions of listening that I outline above, including the idea that listening is silent, invisible, or only internal. "Writing," she claims, "is easier to attend to than reading when you are little" (Clay 104). She continues: "In the act of writing, somehow, what you look at, and how you do it, and what people around you do, are more apparent to preschoolers than the more mystical act of reading, silently or even reading aloud from a book" (104). Attending to the material and embodied differences between writing and reading, Clay observes that the act of writing tends to be a more overtly embodied activity, one with more readily observable movements of hand and arm, and more palpable results—a written text, a visible and touchable artifact. While listening does not leave a permanent mark in the way that writing does, to be sure, the pervasive tendency to understand listening as invisible, internal, or inactive is a perspective that forgets about how Axel—and how many children—learned to read. In fact, throughout years of schooling, gestural listening appears to move from a rich resource that helps children acquire literacy into a limited set of norms for classroom behavior, part of what might be called a hidden curriculum, which I explore in the next section.

## GESTURAL LISTENING'S NATURALIZATION

*In another scene from* Être et Avoir*, Mr. Lopez prompts Axel to speak about nightmares, but another child excitedly responds instead. Lopez gently shushes the interrupting student, shaking his head at her. When she continues to interrupt, Lopez intervenes, saying, "Axel's telling me about his nightmares. Shall we let him?" With eyebrows sternly raised, he asks again: "Will we let him tell us?" The other student, offscreen, falls quiet while her classmate speaks.*

Here, Lopez teaches his students about how appropriately interact in the classroom. In doing so, he teaches the children to enact a type of "correct" listening. "Good" listening, in this setting, means holding oneself still and directing one's gaze towards the speaker; it means refraining from speaking when someone else is already speaking. This is another moment that shows how the gestural listening that is "correct" in school, rather than being a natural or innate behavior, is in fact taught and learned.

Somehow, however, a kind of amnesia seems to set in as years of schooling progress. The idea of listening as a generative, active capacity fades away, and a performance of gestural listening that conveys obedience and respect becomes required of all students. The schooling of gestural listening moves from explicit, like Mr. Lopez's guidance of his young students, above, to something implicit—so implicit, in fact, that gestural listening melds ultimately into a broader category of classroom

conduct, collected under terms like "attitude," or "classroom management," among others.

In *Discipline and Learn*, Australian educator and researcher Megan Watkins provides an example of how gestural listening instruction in primary and secondary education is often elided with classroom management, or thought of as part of something much more nebulous, like a "disposition." In doing so, Watkins navigates a sometimes-uncomfortable balance between discipline that flattens students' gestural ways of being and discipline that "invests" them with capacities for schoolwork. When beginning to teach at the middle-school level, her students aged 12-14, Watkins notices that some of her students seem to have work habits, or what she calls "dispositions" that characterize their approach to learning. She calls them "as much corporeal as they are cognitive" (Watkins 2). Furthermore, these "dispositions" already appear to be deeply engrained as a result of their earlier years of schooling. Throughout her book, Watkins develops the idea of "pedagogic embodiment," or "scholarly postures" that lend themselves to the tasks of academic work. She writes:

> In class, students are constantly told to 'sit still,' 'put up your hand,' 'don't call out,' and in the playground, 'don't run,' 'line up properly' and 'don't litter.' The myriad of instructions given to children are designed to elicit a particular behaviour which when habituated constitutes a discipline that invests their bodies with the capacity to act in a manner both effective and efficient for schooling. (Watkins 23)

Some of the instructions that Watkins enumerates here are instructions for general comportment, like "don't run" and "line up properly." Others, however, are really directions for how students should show their listening according to the rubric of classroom correctness, like "sit still," "put up your hand," and "don't call out." What Watkins calls "dispositions," I identify more specifically as gestural listening behaviors, perceived as more or less "correct" according to a classroom rubric. After all, "good" or "correct" listening is context-specific, as I mention in my litany, above. By fusing listening behaviors with an overall "manner" that is "effective and efficient" for schooling, Watkins also risks eliding students' gestural listening tendencies with judgments about their capacity for learning or their belonging in the classroom (23).

Watkins takes a positive stance on what it means, ultimately, for students to enact the "myriad instructions" of schooling. At first, the list of instructions Watkins enumerates here has the pedantry of early schooling: do this; don't do that. The phrasing in the last sentence takes a different turn, however: Watkins writes that the habituated disciplines of school "invests" students' bodies with the "capacity" to do well in schooling. Taking seriously Watkins's perspective, it is important to note that the corporeal discipline of schooling is not necessarily, or always, a bad thing. Watkins believes that, in fact, the physical training of the classroom is an important form of enabling students to succeed in the world. On handwriting, for instance, Watkins writes: "Bodies need to be invested with the discipline to sit still and work at a desk for sustained periods of time to complete the often tedious process of mastering the mechanics of handwriting: a skill habituated through repetition" (98). Although she describes handwriting acquisition as "tedious" here, Watkins is careful not to overemphasize the negative connotations of school's forms of physical and mental discipline. In fact, she uses the same wording as above: from her perspective, bodies are "invested" with discipline, a process which culminates inreliable, legible handwriting produced with minimal conscious effort.

It is no accident that handwriting is the comparative example that Watkins turns to as paradigmatic of the global bodily control needed for success in school. Handwriting, after all, produces a tangible trace, an artifact that can be later evaluated against a standard. Listening, on the other hand, is often thought of as intangible and fleeting, as I described in the litany. If the "often tedious process of mastering the mechanics of handwriting" requires time and repetition, it should follow that the process of learning how to gesturally listen correctly in classroom environments also takes time, attention, and repetition. And indeed, it does, illustrated in the scene from *Être et Avoir* I recount at the beginning of this section. But because gestural listening is often thought of as invisible and passive, the schooling of gestural listening takes on a different character. The moment in Watkins's book, above, showcases the type of repetitive directions that, over time, shape students' listening behaviors. When she notes the familiar commands to "'sit still,' 'put up your hand,' and 'don't call out,'" readers glimpse, and perhaps remember from their own schooling, how directions for how to behave are often simply "in the environment," given unilaterally by any adult in the vicinity. Watkins demonstrates how rules that guide listening behaviors are often barked like commands, underscoring the authority of those giving them. They come to form a kind of generalized corporeal regime: palpable, yet so fully naturalized as to become unremarkable. Without a tangible artifact to assess after the fact, gestural listening resists documentation. So while the late 19th- and early 20th centuries saw a "golden age" of handwriting textbooks, no similar archive of "listening textbooks" exists. Penmanship textbooks helped enable the development of a range of handwriting styles, from elegant Spencerian script to the more workaday Palmer hand. Gestural listening's instruction, in contrast, happens through the school environment more generally, with no analogous manuals illustrating or propounding various styles. This may be why listening instruction and its resultant "correct" gestural listening behaviors tend to be more rigid and uniform than their handwriting equivalents. "Correct" listening largely looks like one thing in many educational settings: quiet, obedient stillness. If a student's listening looks different, it may be interpreted by their teacher as defiant, lazy, or spacey, and with Watkins's "dispositional" approach in mind, those characteristics are likely to be ascribed to the student's self, to their overall fitness for the classroom.

Stillness is a major part of preferred gestural listening in schools, yet it too battles negative connotations of passiveness. In Watkins's writing about the development of scholarly "dispositions," "active" and "passive" emerge as value-laden terms; we see her work hard to disentangle the ways that the stillness of listening is habitually associated with passiveness. She writes: "this discipline predisposes students to the regimen of academic work, listening and watching attentively and completing tasks in line with the teacher's instructions" (Watkins 24). The inclusion of the word "attentively" helps Watkins express that she sees listening and watching as effortful activities. She feels compelled, on multiple occasions, to forcefully reject the idea that stillness and physical control translate to mental passivity. For instance, she writes: "This formative period for the embodiment of scholarly posture

***"Stillness is a major part of preferred gestural listening in schools, yet it too battles negative connotations of passiveness."***

does not signal the beginnings of a passive approach to learning. It is the necessary precursor to the self-discipline required for independent learning and academic work" (27). Later, she writes: "The so-called passivity of students' bodies within more traditional pedagogies is generally considered representative of a passive mind, yet it may actually be indicative of a disciplined body in which corporeal governance allows for a highly engaged and therefore 'active' rather than passive mind" (99). Watkins seems to be reaching conceptually for a sort of "active-stillness," stillness that she feels enables students to succeed with classroom tasks. And it is a useful shift in perspective to think of students not as automatically still, but as actively *holding themselves still* in class, as Axel's classmate above, for example, is learning to do. Stillness takes on different significance if educators see it as a learned skill, rather than as the absence of movement, or returning to a default state. Nevertheless, as stillness coalesces as part of "preferred" gestural listening performances, a question nags about the "corporeal governance" that Watkins mentions, above.

The widespread preference for a still, quiet listening is perhaps no better demonstrated than in recent research suggesting that the opposite may in fact be better. An abundance of research in recent decades suggests that forms of movement may be connected to better focus and better performance in both work and school (De La Cruz). Cursory research into this area turns up the rise of education movements aimed at incorporating more motion into the school day (i.e., activity breaks), trends in some schools to have student sit on large exercise balls instead of chairs, and movements to support or even encourage the use of "fidgets" to improve focus during class (Carlson, et al; Rotz and Wright).[1] Fidgeting, a term most often associated negatively with an "inability" to sit still, refers in new studies to small movements with certain objects to help prevent distraction and keep the mind on task. Some research points to evidence that listening to music, in distracting the brain somewhat, may even help some individuals focus on a main task (Rotz and Wright). All of these pieces of new research challenge the idea that still, quiet listening is the best or most effective kind.

The way gestural listening behaviors are collapsed into more generalized categories of classroom management, or "disposition," as Watkins put it, is especially important when it comes to groups that have been historically marginalized in classroom settings. Earlier, I state that gestural listening varies across categories of identity, and I mention Brenda Jo Brueggemann's discussion of how deafness has affected perceptions of her gestural listening behaviors, for example. Not appearing to gesturally listen according to a certain rubric places a similar burden onto people with other types of disabilities, too. In "Occupying Autism: Rhetoric, Involuntarity, and the Meaning of Autistic Lives," M. Remi Yergeau writes about how an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis imposes particular narratives onto her embodied way of being—especially narratives of "involuntarity" with regards to her gestural presentation, noting: "the construct of involuntarity is culturally inscribed into autism as a condition" (86). When she goes on to highlight gestural dimensions of autism, she rehearses commonplaces about the condition in a way that ultimately challenges her readers to question them, as she does: "My flapping fingers and facial tics signify an anti-discourse of sorts: Where is my control? Where is my communicability? Would anyone choose a life of ticcing? How can an involuntary movement, an involuntary neurology…how can these things be rhetorical?" (Yergeau 87). Yergeau illustrates how she does not conform to a constrained rubric of "correct" gestural

listening, and further, calls into question the assumptions that are often made about "control" and "communicability" in gestural behavior. She rejects the blanket statement, found often in literature about autism, that her gestures cannot be meaningful: the significance of her gestures cannot be dismissed on the basis of their involuntarity or on the basis of their non-normative shapes and rhythms. In "Cripping Neutrality," Ai Binh T. Ho, Stephanie L. Kerschbaum, and Rebecca Sanchez, in conjunction with M. Remi Yergeau, similarly call out how "demands for neutrality," in college classrooms in particular, magnify the scrutiny disabled faculty find themselves under in professional environments (138). Invoking the term "bodyminds"—coined by Margaret Price to emphasize how "minds and bodies are always mutually imbricated"—they write that, rather than appearing within a bracket of "neutrality," their "bodyminds themselves are accented; they move, gaze, tic, and interact in ways that may be unexpected or surprising" (127). Referring to bodyminds that "move, gaze, tic, and interact," the writers imply that their gestural listening behaviors may at times exceed a constrained normative limit, a limit that comes to mean "neutrality." Writers like Yergeau and others call into question the conceptions of the active and passive, and of the global bodily control that has long been associated with "good" classroom comportment. Gestural listening that is considered "correct," or even "neutral," in any given context takes on outsized importance when we consider who it excludes.

At this point, readers have a sense of the second and longer chapter of gestural listening's story in school environments: from a sensorially-generous resource for acquiring literacy to a physical way of being in the classroom characterized by remarkably stringent norms that at times serve to marginalize those who do not perform them effectively enough. But in fact, it would be more accurate to say that even in early literacy education, gestural listening is simultaneously leveraged and shaped, as we can see in the scene where Lopez begins to teach his young pupil how to listen politely when another student is speaking. Watkins reminds us that discipline is not essentially a bad thing and often allows for new capacities and freedoms. But educators should remain cautious of discipline that calls for a unilateral flattening of students' gestural ways of being in class, and of a naturalized collapse of gestural listening behaviors with judgments about students' belonging in the classroom. In the next section, I illustrate the consequences of that flattening and collapse for two first-year college students, both enrolled in my section of a general education first-year writing class.

## THE COSTS OF "INCORRECT" GESTURAL LISTENING

One semester, I have a student I will call Dylan. Dylan sits in the back corner of the classroom, as far away as he can get. During class, I rarely see him looking up to the front of the room; he contributes a comment to class discussion occasionally. He's often the first to pack up his things at the end of class, poised to leave. On a few occasions, he approaches me after class with a question that I've answered already—sometimes multiple times—during class. He seems somehow industrious in his back-row seat, though, with his head down and his hands busy on his desk. I find myself assuming that he doesn't care much about our mandatory writing course, that he's busy doing homework for other classes. I tell myself: don't take it personally. His writing assignments are thoughtful and turned

in on time.

During group work, Dylan works with two other students seated in the same back corner. They are often the group that moves the fastest through the tasks I give them—too fast. On one of these occasions, I approach their group to check in. "I'm finished, so I'm drawing a house," Dylan says, showing me a doodle in pencil on a sheet of paper. He says it like he's bored, but dealing with it, and I suddenly get the sense that he's pulling from a repertoire of ways to "keep himself busy" in class that he's been encouraged to develop in the past. I imagine a previous teacher saying to a younger Dylan: "Okay, if you're already done, just sit and draw a picture."

The preferences that instructors harbor for gestural listening behaviors are no more obvious than when they are broken by students who can't or won't perform them. In the paragraphs above, my assumptions about what "correct" gestural listening behaviors in the classroom look like cause me to view Dylan negatively, as checked out, defiant, resistant. Only when I gain more insight into his embodied and mental experience in academic spaces do I check my own knee-jerk reactions to the way he appears in class. In this section, I focus on two students who self-identify as having ADHD in an effort to illustrate how expectations for schooled listening behaviors can disadvantage students who deviate from those expectations.

***"The preferences that instructors harbor for gestural listening behaviors are no more obvious than when they are broken by students who can't or won't perform them."***

In class, we read an excerpt from Susan Griffin's *A Chorus of Stones,* which uses a segmented, collage-like style, juxtaposing different elements that may not seem to harmonize at first. As a writing assignment, I ask students to produce a collage of their own. In his essay, Dylan juxtaposes sections of narration from his experiences in school with quotations: inspiring ones, but also quotes that appear to have shaped him in other ways, like the words of parents and friends. He begins:

> I remember almost every desk and classroom I've had to sit in. I remember the walls, the decorations, the teacher's desks. I memorize them not on purpose, but because they are there. "Dylan? What are you looking at?" "Nothing I just got distracted" I must have had this exchange hundreds of times now. The only reason it doesn't happen anymore is as I got older people became expected to be able to control their own thoughts. So now it's no one's job to keep me on the subject. (Anonymous Student A)

Here, Dylan recounts classroom memories that demonstrate an idiosyncratic attention—he remembers clearly, but not what may seem like the right things to remember. He attends to details, but of things seemingly tangential to the stated aims of the curriculum. He then gives an example of a common interaction for him in school, in which he is singled out for not paying attention to class content. But what this type of interaction reinforces—"What are you looking at?"—is the expected performance of what attention looks like, how it manifests in the body (Anonymous Student A). Specifically, in the passage above, Dylan is looking at the "wrong thing," his gaze tipping the instructor off to his distraction. Dylan notes that as he "got older," he was expected to "control his thoughts" (Anonymous Student A). But in fact, what this interaction highlights is really more of a visual and

embodied regime. What's truly mandatory, it seems, is to control one's physical comportment, to look as though one's thoughts are where they should be.

Going forward, Dylan's writing often deals with attentional problems not just as a question of neurological attentional abilities, but additionally, as a social phenomenon that requires students' bodies to behave in certain ways. "Everyone falls in line eventually," Dylan writes:

> Kids raise their hands, they write when asked to write and generally as time goes by they become extremely obedient. There are however the ones that don't fit in. Those who don't seem to grasp this mentality like all the others, the ones that just don't seem to want to listen. (Anonymous Student A)

This moment illustrates a keen awareness of the physical regime of school, to which Dylan struggles to adhere. What's interesting, furthermore, is the connection Dylan creates between writing "when asked to write" and just not seeming to "want to listen" (Anonymous Student A). Both writing and listening are formulated as actions done out of subservience, actions that "as time goes by" cause students to become "extremely obedient" (Anonymous Student A). Dylan portrays listening as something he's subjected to, the obedience of a subordinate.

To further understand Dylan's situation, it is illuminating to look at some of the major debates in the conversation around attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and its earlier relative, attention deficit disorder, or ADD. For instance, one strain of conversation about ADHD is a debate around whether attentional disorders are "real" or if we, as a society, are in fact just "taming" our children. Why is it that vastly more boys than girls are diagnosed, for example? What accounts for the dramatic rise in diagnoses over the last decade (Schwartz and Cohen)? While it does not deny the existence of a true disorder that some people really have, a *New York Times Magazine* article in 2017 argues that "the rapid increase in people with A.D.H.D. probably has more to do with sociological factors — changes in the way we school our children, in the way we interact with doctors and in what we expect from our kids" (Koerth-Baker). Another theory has it that diagnoses of ADHD ultimately help fund schools by increasing a calculated average of test scores that takes into account students performing with an attentional disorder (Novotney). This confusion about what is neurologically "real" in terms of diagnosing attentional disorders reflects an underlying concern with the control of students' bodies in the classroom, and their conformity to its corporeal demands. Many individuals who are later diagnosed with ADHD often encounter the exasperation of their parents and teachers, who voice concerns about whether their children really "can't" or just "won't" perform the corporeal idiom of the classroom. Dylan's language blends the distinction between can't and won't when he writes that there are "those who don't seem to grasp this mentality like all the others," whom he also calls the ones that "just don't seem to *want* to listen" (Anonymous Student A, italics mine). For Dylan, difficulties attending to the right thing for the right amount of time are entwined with, but not always the same as, resistance to enacting the preferred embodiment of school. For Dylan, listening may chafe both because of the challenges he has in sustaining attention to the "right" things, but also because of how it has been presented to him and his classmates as still, quiet obedience, as docility.

Dylan's experiences are only one of the ways in which ADHD can manifest in classroom environments, and in which students' schooled lives can be shaped by the condition. Another

student in my class, Sarah, is present every day, on time and prepared. Always quite still, facing forward, she makes comments in discussion on a regular basis, even at times when that hard-to-break quietness has crept over the room. She nods, takes notes—she is diligent about a certain enactment of studenthood, what Dylan might call "falling in line," but which Megan Watkins might refer to as being "invested with capacity." When Sarah writes about ADHD, her essay focuses on a different struggle: for credibility and respect. "Some people thought I was a bad kid," she begins, writing:

> I ran around, yelled, screamed, sang, I just couldn't sit still. As I grew as a student I realized people looked at me different, I wasn't given the same opportunities as everyone else… ADHD clouded how I was viewed as an intellectual and respected classmate. (Anonymous Student B)

Interestingly, Sarah never writes about struggling to pay attention in class. In fact, she writes:

> On paper, I did well; I did my homework, I did what I was supposed to do. But socially it was quite the opposite. I was constantly scolded for acting out in class, I didn't fit in with all the other kids. I was looked at as unusual, a problem, a pain in the neck. I lost respect from my peers. (Anonymous Student B)

Evidently, Sarah did fine in her academics, meaning she found ways to listen or otherwise learn the material even without being able to sit still or stay quiet. Nevertheless, her inability to comport herself physically according to the embodied expectations of the classroom resulted in her sense of not being respected by teachers and peers. She continues: "When thinking about my personal experience, I felt bias in the way I was evaluated by my teachers. It was a subtle difference; but they didn't treat me the same. Due to my behavioral problems, I lost credibility in my efforts as a student" (Anonymous Student B). At one point, Sarah even muses about whether it's wise to reveal her attentional disorder to me, her instructor, in her essay. Sarah's experiences align with the thinking of Shannon Walters, whose work on disability focuses on how those with disabilities often do not have the same access to traditionally-recognized ways of establishing rhetorical agency. Walters argues that people with disabilities sometimes cultivate rhetorical agency through means often ignored by the discipline of rhetoric, especially through the sense of touch. Sarah's description of herself in primary school, yelling, screaming, and singing, may reflect an individual locating herself rhetorically in the world through voice and movement rather than through "correct" school comportment.

It is notable that Sarah expresses concern about whether to reveal her own educational history and diagnoses with me, her professor, in the way it aligns with Walters's analysis of how disabled rhetors often navigate the need to establish and maintain credibility. In one chapter of *Rhetorical Touch: Disability, Identification, Haptics*, for instance, Walters traces how during her life, Helen Keller's unusual writing processes, involving the assistance of her teacher, Anne Sullivan, were periodically doubted by outside authorities. Her authorship was variously called into question, whether through accusations of plagiarism or through skepticism about whether her writings could really be called single-authored. Walters describes how "by doubting and disbelieving Keller and her rhetorical productions, audiences separate themselves from her, drawing 'a line in the sand' that prevents rhetorical identification between audience and rhetor" (27). Sarah, similarly, may have been concerned that if I, as the authority in her classroom, knew about her diagnosis or prior classroom

experiences, I might begin to question aspects of her rhetorical production such as her writing and her classroom presence, to foreclose identification between us. After all, as Yergeau explains earlier, a diagnosis often imposes narratives upon a person from outside that are hard to escape. In addition to rejecting the idea that her gestures cannot be meaningful, Yergeau decries the way her behaviors are often chalked up to her diagnosis in a way that negates any other possible intentionality or cause: "When my fingers twirl in the air, fidgety and tangled in series of rubber bands, it is because I am autistic. When my eyes dart away or when my sentences grow long, it is because I am autistic" (Yergeau 87). Especially because she now presents gesturally in class within a normative range, or in the words of Brueggemann, because she can now "pass," Sarah may have been concerned about allowing an ADHD narrative back into a teacher's perception of her, even as she chose to explore the issue in her essay for our class.

It can once again be helpful to look at ADHD discourse to contextualize the apparent divide between Sarah's academics and her comportment. For decades, ADD and ADHD were seen as primarily behavioral problems—failure to "fall in line," as Dylan might say, or of being a "pain in the neck," as Sarah writes. Consciousness has arisen more recently, however, about ADHD as a set of chemical impairments to the brain, especially its "management system," or executive functioning. In a major recent book on attentional disorders, *Attention Deficit Disorder: The Unfocused Mind in Children and Adults*, Thomas Brown writes: "ADHD children often have combined problems in listening, speaking, and pragmatics," each of which, he states, involves executive functions (102). "Listening," he continues, in what we should now recognize as a familiar move from the litany, "is not a simple or passive skill . . . [rather] it involves actively receiving and organizing verbal and nonverbal information: words spoken, tone of voice, facial expressions, and gestures presented by the speaker" (102). Brown goes on to further elaborate on what listening entails cognitively, which evidently amounts to a heavy mental lift:

> Listening also involves grasping elements of the other's message that are implicit, or that refer to facts or experiences linked only indirectly to the present moment or topic. Also involved are processes of 'putting the pieces together' to understand what the other person is saying, sorting out the important facts, ideas, and feelings, as well as monitoring the interpersonal interaction. (102)

Here, Brown describes listening as nuanced, and as containing many, simultaneous demands: grasping, putting together, sorting, monitoring. "Monitoring interpersonal interaction," in particular, strikes me as a manifestation of gestural listening. When monitoring social interactions in the classroom, students need to take in social information and adjust their gestural listening performances accordingly. For students with compromised executive functioning, like Sarah, however, the added layer of making sure to perform an acceptable form of gestural listening for school is no small feat. The way she listens to take in the information she needs to do well on her academics may preclude the functions of listening that enable her to gesturally listen according to expectations for classroom behavior. With that in mind, as educators, it is important to remember the diversity of what listening can look like and how limiting it might be to some students to restrain the "correct" performance of listening in school to a narrow—and deceptively "neutral"—margin of behaviors.

## WAYS OF LISTENING, WAYS OF ATTENDING

Dylan's paper concludes as follows:

> Although there is a shared desire to "just focus for once in your life" …I can assure you that it's not all bad. Talk to anyone with an attention deficit disorder and they will see the world for so much more . . . People with these types of brains are able not to process but to acknowledge much more than their counterparts. (Anonymous Student A)

In this passage, Dylan once again confronts strains of the dominant contemporary rhetoric and research on attentional disorders, with its "just focus for once in your life" exasperation on the one hand, and on the other, its neuroscientifically-informed discourse that produces the phrase "people with these types of brains." Even as he confronts both of these dominant discourses, Dylan also pushes back against them, and the implication that having different attentional abilities is inherently negative. When he writes "they will see the world for so much more," Dylan implies that the ADHD brain functions, and well, in its own way. In doing so, Dylan points towards forms of attention that may have as-yet-unexplored capacities, but which require an expanded range of acceptable listening behaviors in order to be recognized.

***"What constitutes 'good' gestural listening in any environment is culturally and historically situated, not a natural 'given,' but something taught and learned."***

It remains to consider: what might different ways of listening—and different forms of attention—look like, if students, parents, and instructors widen their vision of what constitutes "good" gestural listening and attentive behavior? Malcolm McCullough, *in Ambient Commons: Attention in the Age of Embodied Information,* suggests one possibility. McCullough encourages readers to notice "the distinction between attention as something that you pay and attention as something that flows," which he goes on to write is "a distinction subtler than the distinction between voluntary and involuntary" (85). This subtle distinction between "paying" and "flowing" begins to build a vocabulary for acknowledging diverse forms of attention that should include the "intentionality, sensitivity, conditioning, and contextual clues," McCullough writes, that "usually enter the process of attention" (85). Taking a cue from McCullough, the ongoing task of educators will be to develop pedagogies that acknowledge, and even harness, the possibilities of listening and attention in their many forms.

# NOTES

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# Symposium: Literacy Sponsorship, GenAI, and the Entangled Economies of Experiential Learning

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Deborah Brandt's concept of literacy sponsorship—agents who enable and regulate literacy while also benefiting from it—remains foundational in writing studies. Yet as Brandt noted in a 2015 commentary, the theory's sharper insights into power, ideology, and asymmetry have often been tempered in practice. Over the past two decades, scholars have extended the framework to account for more diffuse and layered networks of sponsorship: from community organizations and online platforms (Wargo) to legal systems (Tomlinson), families (Webb-Sunderhaus), and even spatial or infrastructural conditions (Pennell; Perry). While some sponsors are human, others are material, technological, or abstract.

In this symposium piece, I return to Brandt's framework to explore how the rise of generative AI (genAI) invites a renewed look at sponsorship under current conditions of literacy work, which is already increasingly multimodal and experiential. These conditions suggest that sponsorship in this space is shaped through co-inquiry and shared uncertainty; however, asymmetrical power relations in the realm of genAI might look different in sponsorship when roles and bases of knowledge become more fluid and when literacies are co-authored in real time.

## REVISITING BRANDT AND LITERACY SPONSORSHIP

Deborah Brandt's foundational concept of literacy sponsorship emerged from a broad historical inquiry grounded in over 100 interviews spanning nearly a century of American life ("Sponsors" 167). From these accounts, she identified recurring patterns in which individuals' literacy learning was shaped by agents—teachers, employers, institutions—who not only facilitated access to reading and writing but also gained from that literacy in ideological, economic, institutional, or reputational terms (166). Sponsorship, in this frame, is not neutral: it reflects transactions structured by power, access, and institutional investment.

Although Brandt did not focus explicitly on community partnerships or reciprocal learning exchanges, her work laid a foundation for later inquiries into those spaces. In my earlier research on digital community archives, for instance, I traced how users and organizers co-constructed literacy practices through a mix of institutional support, community values, and personal storytelling. There, I observed multiple, overlapping sponsors—some visible, others latent—shaping literacy in distributed and often improvised ways. That experience deepened my attention not only to who sponsors literacy but how sponsorship circulates and becomes shared or co-authored across

communities.

Still, Brandt herself expressed concern about how the theory has sometimes been softened. In a 2015 commentary, she noted with some dismay that "sponsors of literacy" had been taken up as more benign than she intended. Rather than neutral enablers of access, she emphasized, sponsors wield power and often shape literacy's terms in ways that reinforce broader social and economic inequities ("Commentary" 330). To re-engage that sharper sense of sponsorship's reach, I turn to scholars who build on Brandt by complicating where—and how—literacy sponsorship happens.

Michael C. Pennell, in his article "(Re)Placing Literacy: Space and the Discourse of Citizenship," examines how literacies are shaped by the spatial and civic infrastructures of urban environments. Through mapping tools, he traces how individuals navigate systems such as public housing, education, and transportation to access literate practices. Pennell conceptualizes literacy sponsorship as spatially and socially distributed in that it is tied to institutions as well as the material, infrastructural conditions in which literacy unfolds. While Brandt emphasized asymmetry and economic gain, Pennell brings deeper into focus how individuals navigate and reshape the routes that connect them to sponsors. His work underscores the agency of the sponsored as he found they asserted influence, reinterpreted resources, and sometimes reconfigured the systems that shape their literacy lives. Sponsorship here is not a one-way transmission but a dynamic, reciprocal process conditioned by institutional power, material constraint, and personal adaptation.

This distributed, negotiated view of sponsorship finds further refinement in Kara Poe Alexander's concept of reciprocal literacy sponsorship. Writing about service-learning contexts, Alexander argues that students and community partners often sponsor one another's literacies. Rather than casting sponsorship as a top-down transfer, she describes a more fluid relationship in which learning is mutual even amid asymmetry. In her framing, reciprocity does not necessarily involve an equal exchange; however, there is a pedagogical possibility grounded in co-learning and shifting roles.

Alexander's model helps clarify how responsibility, authority, and learning are distributed in experiential contexts. It also foregrounds the stakes of naming: when we call something "reciprocal," what kinds of labor are we recognizing? Whose authority are we affirming? These questions feel especially urgent as experiential learning environments now include, in addition to students and community members, genAI.

Reciprocity, in this light, involves more than participation or access. It signals a relationship marked by responsive, shared learning. This distinction becomes critical in settings where genAI and experiential learning converge, including spaces where learners interact with human and nonhuman sponsors in ways that are enabling and constraining, interdependent and affective. These layered sites of literacy work ask us to think of reciprocity as situated co-creation of knowledge.

# INSTITUTIONAL CASE: GENERATIVE AI AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

To explore this in practice, I turn to my institution, Babson College—a small business school in the northeastern United States where undergraduate students take half of their courses in the liberal arts. Here, students are encountering genAI technologies both in traditional classroom settings (such as writing and marketing courses) and in more hands-on, experiential environments. In our yearlong Foundations of Entrepreneurship and Management course, for example, all first-year students start a business, and genAI tools are now integrated into venture development processes. Outside the classroom, student-led clubs and co-curricular events extend these encounters. Many students are also learning independently: watching YouTube tutorials, sharing experiments, and weaving genAI tools into personal projects.

One recent initiative co-led by faculty and students asked: what happens when undergraduates, still developing their own understanding of genAI, help local small business owners explore how these tools might support their work? Called the AI Innovators Bootcamp, this full-day event—designed and delivered by The Generator, Babson's interdisciplinary AI lab—brought together small business owners and student leaders to explore genAI's practical potential. While faculty helped facilitate, students led the workshops, introduced tools, and guided conversations about real-world application. Topics ranged from customer insight and sales management to rapid prototyping and no-code development.

In this setting, sponsorship did not follow a single path. Business owners—many of them Babson alumni—brought deep contextual knowledge of their industries, clients, and constraints. Students offered technical fluency as well as a readiness to adapt. What emerged were reciprocal moments not necessarily equal in power but collaborative in spirit. Knowledge, authority, and learning moved across lines of age, role, and experience. Students helped business owners navigate emerging tools, while business owners pressed students to make literacy decisions with real stakes such as tone, branding, customer experience, organizational identity. These exchanges created a recursively sponsored engagement with both technology and one another's values, assumptions, and literacies. In grounding tools in lived entrepreneurial realities, it appeared students were reshaping their understanding of genAI literacy in real time given the real stakes of the work.

As one student reflected, "The greatest barrier to AI adoption isn't complexity—it's the absence of welcoming spaces where business owners can experiment without judgment" (Ishoof). The bootcamp, then, was more than a training: it became a site of tentative co-sponsorship where participants took turns guiding one another through unfamiliar terrain and, as observed in the process, reshaped what literacy in this space meant.

## GENERATIVE AI AS SPONSOR, SPONSORED, AND MEDIUM

In the context of genAI-mediated experiential learning, tools like ChatGPT are also actors that shape how literacy unfolds. When students prompt these systems to brainstorm solutions or generate content, they are not only developing new literacies but also encountering the assumptions embedded in the systems themselves. These tools encode particular logics about audience, genre, efficiency, and tone. In this sense, genAI functions as a technological sponsor: mediating access to literacy and influencing which forms of communication appear viable, valuable, or legible.

At the same time, genAI is not a fixed force. It is trained and interpreted in use. Students must evaluate its outputs, refine their prompts, and make decisions about when to accept, revise, or discard what it produces. In doing so, they participate in shaping how genAI is understood and operationalized, in this case, by themselves and by the small business owners with whom they collaborate. In this way, students become sponsors of genAI literacy, particularly as it stands within the cultural and rhetorical frameworks that define how it is read and assessed.

This bidirectional dynamic blurs traditional distinctions between sponsor and sponsored. GenAI is both structuring and structured: it shapes literate activity even as it is interpreted, challenged, and constrained by human actors. These dynamics become especially visible when students guide business owners through ethical or strategic questions about genAI use. When I talk to students about their genAI usage and various ethical considerations such as the homogenization of thought and whose ideas become the default, they often find themselves negotiating between the promise of automation and the demands of representation, fairness, or trust. In these moments, they are not simply conduits for a new technology; instead, they are literacy brokers who are interpreting tools and surfacing values.

## RETHINKING LITERACY ECONOMIES

The literacy economy emerging from genAI-mediated, community-based learning resists clear transactions or linear exchanges. It operates instead as a distributed, dynamic ecology shaped by institutional ambitions, technological infrastructures, local knowledge, and mutual improvisation. In this context, literacy is a shared, evolving practice formed through iterative acts of dialogue and experimentation.

This framing invites us to reconsider what it means to benefit from literacy and who gets to define that value. In Brandt's original model, sponsors often gained from the success of the sponsored in ways that aligned with institutional, corporate, or ideological goals. In the example explored here with the AI Innovators Bootcamp, those dynamics still apply, but the benefits are more layered and uneven. Students gain rhetorical agility, technical fluency, and a deeper understanding of genAI literacy. Business owners gain access to tools and frameworks they might not otherwise prioritize. The institution accrues reputational benefit and community goodwill. Yet none of these gains are

neutral. They are mediated by access, shaped by labor, and conditioned by the structural inequalities that determine who participates—and who profits.

What makes this economy mutual is not its balance but its entanglement. Participants—human and nonhuman—co-author literacies in motion, shaping one another's understanding while moving through various constraints. GenAI, in this light, is a site of negotiation and interpretation and a space where values and practices are tested. Sponsorship here operates less as a gatekeeping function than as a diffuse network of influence that is enabling and constraining, generative and precarious.

As writing studies continues to engage the pedagogical and ethical dimensions of genAI, this kind of experiential site underscores the need for a more flexible vocabulary of sponsorship—one that reflects the negotiated, distributed, and multidirectional nature of contemporary literacy work. Rather than asking only who sponsors literacy, we might also ask how sponsorship circulates, through what platforms, toward what ends, and under what conditions it begins to feel reciprocal (not reciprocal in the sense of equivalence but in the sense of shared investment and mutual consequence). These are questions of economy and also of ethics and responsibility.

## CONCLUSION: A NETWORKED THEORY OF SPONSORSHIP

This symposium essay has proposed a broadened theory of literacy sponsorship that accounts for the relational, networked, and recursive dynamics taking shape in genAI-mediated experiential learning. Drawing on a case where undergraduate students acted as both learners and provisional sponsors alongside small business owners, I've observed literacy practices unfolding within tangled webs of interaction among students, institutions, communities, and generative technologies. These webs disrupt linear models of sponsorship and invite us to see literacy development as a process of co-creation that is shaped by shifting roles, uneven access, and shared stakes.

This work builds on Brandt's attention to the ideological and economic dimensions of sponsorship, particularly in terms of its movement—how it circulates, reorganizes, and surfaces in contexts where learners become teachers, tools offer instruction, and institutions are shaped by those they aim to guide. Literacy gains in these settings are deeply contextual, often plural, and bound up in relational insight. As technologies like genAI continue to reshape collaboration, we'll need to keep asking not only who sponsors literacy but how sponsorship itself is being reimagined and redistributed.

By framing genAI-inflected, community-engaged learning as a site of tentative co-sponsorship, I hope to encourage further inquiry into the economies, ethics, and pedagogies of literacy in an age of distributed expertise. In this context, terms like *mutual* or *relational* don't necessarily signal any form of balance, but they might help us name moments of shared investment, however partial, across human and nonhuman actors. Though these conditions are uneven and contingent, they call us to remain attuned to both the generative possibilities and the ideological freight of emerging literacy systems and to keep justice, access, and reflection at the center of our work.

This symposium piece is just one example, offered as an opening to which I hope others might

respond. What other sites of co-sponsorship are we overlooking? What ethical and rhetorical tensions emerge when literacy circulates across students, community partners, institutions, and machines? And how might we—as researchers, educators, and participants—revise our theories to better reflect the messy, entangled economies of literacy already taking shape? Observing students work with small business owners gave me a measure of critical distance to begin sorting new ideas about sponsorship. It has also unsettled my own image of myself as the main expert in my writing classrooms and is prompting me to look more closely at how sponsorship already circulates there. Especially in this moment of genAI, perhaps I need to be more attentive to what my students are teaching me in return.

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# All Are Connected: From Traditional Chinese Medicine to Students' Literacy Practices

## Review of *Doing Difference Differently: Chinese International Students' Literacy Practices and Affordances* by Zhaozhe Wang

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In Summer 2024, I visited Uncle Qingjie in China, a long-time family friend, chiropractor and acupuncturist, whose family specialized in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) since the Qing Dynasty. Hearing that I was bothered by a chronic pain on my left shoulder, Uncle Qingjie pulled out two acupuncture needles, gently pushed each needle into two specific acupuncture points of my right palm. Within seconds, I sensed subtle alleviation from the pain on my left shoulder. Within minutes, the pain was completely gone. I have long heard how 博大精深 TCM is, but it was not until that visit that I was fully convinced of its miraculous ability to heal. "How do the two tiny pressure points on my right palm have anything to do with my left shoulder?" I asked. Uncle Qingjie simply answered: "All are connected." I witnessed a lot of Uncle Qingjie's practices that summer: how he treated someone's cough by inserting the needles into the patient's upper back; how he alleviated someone's toothache by inserting the needles into their legs and massaging their ears. Compared to Western medicine practices where everything is compartmentalized, Uncle Qingjie convinced me through his needles and hands that the answer to the problem may not always center around the problem. All are connected.

Upon reaching the last sentence of the book under review, *Doing Difference Differently: Chinese International Students' Literacy Practices and Affordances* by Zhaozhe Wang, I thought of my visit to Uncle Qingjie and realized how everything indeed is connected, including what we do with literacy practices, to which I return in a few paragraphs.

In *Doing Difference Differently*, author Zhaozhe Wang uncovers the complex and diverse literacy practices of four Chinese international students to problematize and critique the "institutional discourse of cultural diversity" (23) that often inevitably limits our understanding towards this marginalized cultural group. Through a pragmatic ethnographic case study, Wang builds rapport and participates in the four students' literate and cultural activities across contexts and modalities. Through an ecological affordance analytical framework, Wang analyzes each of the students' literacy practices using six dimensions of affordance: structural, semiotic, experiential, social, bodily, and material. On one level, the four in-depth case studies uncover the rich, multimodal, diverse literacy

practices of the Chinese international students and showcased how they experienced, resisted, and negotiated their differences differently from how they were characterized by the institutional discourse. The case studies also reveal the power of the six ecological affordances in their conditioning of individual's literacy practices. On another level, this book (essentially) unpacks a question—who the Chinese international students actually are— contributing to the ongoing scholarly efforts taken up in recent years by North American-based language, writing, and literacy scholars of Chinese descent.

The exigence of Wang's book, as presented in Chapter 1, arises from the problematic "institutional discourse of cultural diversity" promoted by US higher education institutions, which Wang defines as "a set of typified tropes associated with and often used to characterize socially and institutionally constructed identity attributes" (24). According to Wang, "rights and resources" are two widely circulated tropes undergirding such discourse, with the trope of rights appealing to historically underprivileged minority groups and assuring them of inclusive educational experiences, and the trope of resources being "reflective of the current neoliberal political climate that conditions the operation of institutions" (25). Wang explains in detail how universities in the US resemble corporations for profit who use the discourse of diversity as a way to market and achieve a neoliberal political agenda. Under this agenda, the institutional discourse of cultural diversity becomes a marketing strategy that does not necessarily provide service to its student consumers but serves as a tertiary marketing strategy to make the university itself competitive on the global market. As a consequence, being an international student in a US university means being caught up in a "confounding and contentious space between the institutional discourse of cultural diversity and discourse of deficit" (27), pushing a student to "develop a heightened sensitivity to conflicting representations and asymmetrical power dynamics resulting from such representations" (27). Under such contexts, Wang conducts ethnographic case studies of four Chinese international students' literacy activities at Wabash University to uncover how they complicated and problematized their oversimplified institutional label of Chinese international student, and how they performed their difference differently from the institutional discourse to reveal more accurate and nuanced images of their complex identities.

The rest of the book (Chapter 2 through Chapter 5) devotes one chapter to each student—Manna, Wentao, Yang, and Bohan—to document their literacy practices. Using the data collected from autobiographies, interviews, and on-site observations, Wang analyzes each set of literacy activities using the six ecological affordance frameworks I mentioned earlier. In Chapter 2, "Manna: From the Dance Floor to Writing Tutor's Table," we see how Manna made connections between her dance choreographing practices to writing an argument essay; we see how she challenged herself in becoming a writing center tutor and overcame her insecurity in a traditionally native-speaker role. In Chapter 3, "Wentao: A Structuralist Poet in Disguise," we see Wentao's rich lexical and metaphorical resources, which gained him the reputation of "People's Poet" among his Chinese friends. We see how he experienced a lack of recognition and understanding when collaborating with his American peers in class; we also see how he grappled with the sense of "belonging" through volunteering to be the secretary of a performing arts club. In Chapter 4, "Yang: A Translingual Gothic Musician in the

Making," we peek into Yang's creative translingual creativity in music composition using Japanese, Chinese, and English; we also see how she struggled with a written exam on Western rhetorical concepts sponsored by institutionalized rhetorical education, despite her demonstrated rhetorical versatility and sensitivity in her literacy practices. In Chapter 5, "Bohan: A Cosmopolitan "Robot Master," we see a "self-proclaimed pragmatist" (120) embracing cultural differences from a young age given his Shanghai upbringing; we also see his skepticism towards an Intercultural Communication course on campus targeting international students. We see Bohan deliberately demonstrating rhetorical absence—"making a strong case by dodging the main argument and allowing it to emerge through the rhetorical exigency within which an audience is involved"(126) as he negotiated his skepticism and pragmatism.

While introducing the four students' literacy experiences, Wang analyzes how each of the literacy activities were mediated and conditioned by a complex network of ecological affordances—structural, semiotic, experiential, social, bodily, and how each affordance is simultaneously conditioned by one another. While reading each student's experiences, I found myself questioning things, such as what do Manna's dance practice, Yang's lyrical composing process and her disposition towards the Chinese music industry in China, Wentao's involvement in a student club, or Bohan's early experience with tourists visiting Shanghai have anything to do with literacy practices or the teaching of literacy? Why account for all the ecological affordances that are not directly associated with the act of reading or writing? In the last two chapters of the book, Wang made me reexamine my questions by synthesizing how these four students embraced, leveraged, resisted, negotiated, and redefined their differences. He revisits the six ecological affordances in explaining how attending to these ecological forces help us unpack the four students' literacy practices of doing difference: "only through accounting for the ecological forces that condition and mediate their everyday literate lives can we critically appreciate their "will to difference" and call into question the institutional discourse of difference" (166).

As Wang references in the book, scholars have long argued that "literate activity as social practices are situated, embodied, mediated and dispersed" (166). His ethnographic study using an ecological analytical framework confirms this performative nature of literacy practices. Analyzing an expansive range of literacy practices by Chinese international students in particular, Wang uncovers a rich repertoire and rhetorical sensitivity that we would not necessarily discover in the classroom under an institutional discourse of diversity. Knowing that these four students cannot account for all Chinese international students' experiences, Wang asks that the least we can do is "to be a little better prepared or show a little bit more compassion as we discover our students' emerging differences" (149). Oftentimes, the author's positionality has a direct impact on the scope of the study. I think only another researcher like Wang, who is himself Chinese and personally experienced studying and living in the US, could deliver such a thorough and honest account of these students' voices, which would otherwise go unheard.

As someone who researches translingual theories, I cannot help but see this book as a timely contribution to what many US translingual scholars (particularly in composition studies) called for: an empirical account of students' translingual reality and how students themselves benefit from

translingual acts (Lee); testifying that difference is the norm instead of a deviation from the norm (Lu and Horner); uncovering the labor involved in producing differences and what the differences can do (Horner and Alvarez). This book strengthens the theorization of translingualism by focusing on first-hand empirical data from the students, which is a collective effort translingual scholars should continue in support of the theorizing of translinguality.

On reaching the last note of the book, I cannot help but think back to my visit to Uncle Qingjie. How two tiny pressure points connect to the pain in my left shoulder, I still do not know. Yet, the body is a whole, and everything is in relation to one another. Wang's study makes me realize how literacy practice, too, is connected to and conditioned by all ecological forces, leading us all to read, write, think, and perform in our unique, individual ways that no institutionalized discourse should erase. We need to look beyond institutionalized frameworks and attend to the inherently heterogeneous, particular, and complex identities we encounter every day. Finally, I hope my readers understand that my brief review of the book is unable to account for all the details of these students' experiences as documented in the book. As a graduate student, I was advised early in my career to learn to skim while reading. While skimming may come in handy as we accommodate the heavy reading tasks, it takes a toll on knowledge retention and costs us: we miss out on the subtle yet important details that come with close reading. Through close-reading, readers will learn that this book is not only about literacy activities by Chinese international students, and how they do difference; it is also about embodied rhetoric, rhetorical absence, transnational identity, comparative rhetoric, professional writing process, linguistic justice issues, translingual dexterity, cosmopolitan sensitivity, multimodal creativity, constructed identity, othering, and so on. With that being said, I hope my book review will serve not as a substitute for the book but an invitation for readers to actually close read the book—to embody the students' experiences along the way, to feel what they felt, hope what they hoped, and struggle with what they struggled with as they shuttled among the multiple contact zones on a daily basis. For a book that intends to delineate this marginalized populations' true identities and differences, such close reading is necessary.

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# AI is Manna for Writing Studies or, How to Stay Calm in Troubled Times

## Jennifer Trainor—San Francisco State University

In 2024, Nupoor Ranade and Douglas Eyman summed up a now familiar feeling of overwhelm regarding automated writing technologies:

> Following the release of ChatGPT a surge of interest across the media and in communities of teachers and educational technologists lead to a flurry of blog, medium, and substack posts, as well as opinions in editorials in trade journals. . . . In the year that followed, "AI" has become a top-level category at IHE, in recognition of the continuous high volume of news reports and opinion pieces on the topic. Posts and commentaries presented arguments and alarms, ranging from hailing generative AI as finally allowing universities to ditch First Year Writing courses (Nicolas, 2023), to a utopian vision of AI teaching assistants and graders. . . . Those of us trying to keep abreast of AI news were overwhelmed with the daily output just from writing teachers alone, not to mention AI researchers, scientists . . . policy makers, and the AI companies themselves. (1)

The overwhelm Ranade and Eyman describe is layered, perhaps especially for writing teachers, with a sense of crisis. Overblown media panics about cheating seem to collide daily with realities on the ground, as teachers grapple with assignments littered with synthetic text. At campus-wide committee meetings, administrators and non-writing faculty are newly armed with arguments about efficiency (*do you really need small classes, now that AI can give feedback?*—a question unfortunately circulating on my campus right now). In text exchanges with colleagues at other institutions, worries proliferate: *will our required courses survive? What about linguistic justice? How do we safeguard academic integrity? Teach information literacy? Should we change how we teach the writing process?* And in hallway conversations, I routinely hear comments like these: *I can't keep up with another AI resource list; I'm tuning out re AI; waiting for retirement; I don't have time to revamp my entire curriculum; I need a break from AI doom scrolling*. I've heard versions of these comments so many times—colleagues ignoring AI out of overwhelm and anxiety—that I started using a picture of an ostrich with its head in the sand on my opening slides for faculty development meetings.

The word I keep landing on to describe this intermingling sense of overwhelm and doom is textapocalypse. Originally coined by Matthew Kirschenbaum in a prescient *Atlantic* essay about AI slop, the word, for me, captures many teachers' sense that there is too much to read, that our journals and meetings are all AI all the time, combined with a related sense that our work as writing instructors is threatened, and that students' literacy education is being co-opted for profit, irrevocably harmed.

Literacy crises are not new, of course. But this moment does feel perilous: What's the future of our work? How do we move forward in our classrooms now? How do we guide new and veteran writing teachers, who often have wildly different responses to this technology? How do we revamp—

or find the time to revamp—our curricular approaches to ensure students get the literacy education they need and deserve? As Annette Vee, Tim Laquintano, and Carly Schnitzler write, "It will take all of us to respond to this moment . . .[G]enerative AI is the most influential technology in writing in decades—nothing since the word processor has promised as much impact. And generative AI is moving much faster" (*TextGenEd*).

This review—of public-facing scholars in our field who are addressing AI in substacks, social media, and online collections of teaching strategies—attempts a partial answer to our sense of overwhelm and crisis. It does so by connecting new to old in our field, and reframing textapocalypse as manna. Manna literally means "what is it?"—as good a first-principles question as we could ask for right now. But it also means "abundance," and "gift." AI is a gift in that it has shone a bright light on questions and issues with which our field has long wrestled, imbuing these questions with new relevance and urgency.

Accordingly, this review is not organized in the familiar "resist" vs. "lean in" camps that often structure campus discussions about AI technology and that, I believe, worsen our collective sense of foreboding. I'm suspicious of the "camps" discourse as a false set of choices that limits our thinking, causing us to miss the echoes and amplifications between the AI conversations we're having now and older lines of inquiry in our field. Camps discourse obscures how much work we've already done—decades of scholarship on the social, material, mechanical, embodied, and political dimensions of literacy—that prepare us to meet this moment.

In tracing a few of those conversations here, I pay homage to those who public-intellectualed early guidance and understanding of the implications of AI, and who, in some cases, have been focused, in their scholarship, on writing technologies since well before the release of Chat GPT. Their perspectives suggest we can address the textapocalypse by viewing AI as "normal technology"—not that we normalize AI, but rather that we connect the questions it raises to questions we regularly wrestle with in our field and our classrooms. As Antonio Byrd writes, "AI and writing requires more thoughtful, careful rhetorical and ethical frameworks" ("Truth-Telling" 140). Note that he doesn't say "new," that instead he resists crisis discourse, insisting only that we continue the work we've always done. The scholars reviewed here were chosen to represent these normalizing connections, to help teachers and scholars who feel adrift find some grounding, and to highlight some starting points of entry for teaching faculty who have not been given time to read and educate themselves, and hence who may be feeling this moment of overwhelm and crisis in acute ways.

## REFUSE AI: WHAT WOULD PAULO FREIRE SAY?

The first time I felt firm ground under my feet post-ChatGPT was last year, when a colleague sent me Jennifer Sano-Franchini's 2025 CCCC keynote address. The keynote was my introduction to the Refuse AI movement in Writing Studies. I think of the scholars behind this movement as the critical pedagogues of the GenAI era, Luddite Freireans who situate their critiques of automated writing technologies in bracingly familiar terrain: literacy and language justice; students' rights to their own languages; and the relationships between literacy, culture, power, and social justice.

At the heart of AI refusal is a principled stance against the nihilism of automated writing: AI's tendency toward linguistic and cultural erasure, its corporate homogenizing of language, and its alignment with authoritarian and colonial logics. These issues are baked into the technology, scholars like Sano-Franchini, Megan McIntyre and Maggie Fernandes argue, and hence principled refusal is warranted.

Publicly, Sano-Franchini, McIntyre, and Fernandes' work circulates through the Refuse AI blog and website, which offer theory and guidance for resisters. Their quick start guide for resistance names the harms AI brings and frames them in commitments our field has long cherished. In a recent post on their blog, Fernandes reflects on being an AI killjoy, using Sara Ahmed's theoretical framing: "killjoys kill the fun by naming systemic sexism, queerphobia, transphobia, racism, and ableism, and very often, they are held responsible for the unhappinesses they name—the unhappiness caused by systemic oppression" ("On Being A GenAI Killjoy"). The Refuse AI website spotlights writers like Alfred Owusu-Ansah. In "Defining moments, definitive programs, and the continued erasure of missing people," Owusu-Ansah shows how AI positions linguistically minoritized people as outside public understandings of what it means to write: in his experiments with ChatGPT, he finds the tool "echoing decades of imperialist framing that positioned English varieties of the Global South as being diametrically opposed to the English varieties of the North" (144).

Automated writing, for AI Refusers, is thus an arm of authoritarianism and colonialism, giving rise to epistemicide, or what Freire once called the "necrophilia" of banking approaches to education. In this view, the horror of AI is not the sci-fi scenario of machine sentience but rather the deadness that accrues to algorithmic word prediction in place of human meaning making. Several non-Writing Studies folks have made this case—Emily Bender, Ruha Benjamin, Audrey Watters, Brian Merchant—but Sano-Franchini's keynote and the Refusing AI blog connect these issues to core values in our field.

The Refusing AI website is by definition light on teaching ideas and classroom strategies, but the authors' approach dovetails with emergent online resources for curriculum building, such as the MLA Task Force teaching archive: Christopher Jimenez's *Teaching Social Identity and Cultural Bias Using AI Text Generation;* Anna Mill's *Testing Bias in Google Search;* and Cindy Tekobbe's *Critical AI and Indigenous Story-Telling*. And Fernandes, McIntyre, Kat Gray, and Cara Marta Messina have curated an extensive student-facing "Critical AI" reading list for those who want to cultivate critical AI literacy in their classrooms.

Interestingly, Refusing AI'ers also reject some of the solutions to student AI use that routinely pop up on my campus, including process tracking (note that they are not opposed to teaching students to engage in the writing process but rather question the wisdom of surveilling students' process as an antidote to AI). In "Drafting Defensively, Documenting Authorship: An Analysis of Draftback and Grammarly Authorship," McIntyre and Fernandes argue that process tracking technologies like those being marketed by Grammarly are essentially "process surveillance interfaces" that "reinscribe normative values for writing as process and facilitate feelings of suspicion, anxiety, and defensiveness for users" (76). Given alarm about edtech companies' pivot toward AI (see Marc Watkins' recent post, An Open Letter to Perplexity AI), and their turn toward problematic marketing pitches

that undermine academic integrity and weaken public understanding of the non-transactional dimensions of writing, this essay is worth a read. It's a reminder that technology companies are selling us not just problems, but also, conveniently, the solutions to them. Indeed, my colleagues, Martha Kenney and Martha Lincoln, at SF State make the case, in a blistering article about Cal State's "partnership" with Open AI:

> these AI "partnerships" play into dynamics that concentrate wealth and power into the hands of the few, while potentially eroding the quality of higher education—a process the journalist and science fiction author Cory Doctorow calls "enshittification" . . . . This is a particularly ironic outcome given the tendency for universities to describe AI as a panacea for higher education's woes and a bold step into the future of research, teaching, and learning. Against these optimistic assumptions, we contend that universities may be unwittingly preyed on by an industry they tout as a partner. (7)

Like the Luddites and killjoys before them, the Refuse AI'ers may not win the day. As many relentlessly point out, this technology is here to stay, and students *are* using it. Under such conditions, resistance is not easy. But the Refuse AI website—and adjacent resources like Fernandes' and McIntyre's podcast, "Everyone's Using AI Except" which contains interviews with a variety of AI skeptics—offers strategies for resistance and community to ease the way.

## TECHNOLOGICAL SPONSORS OF LITERACY

Where the Refuse AI movement resists, other public voices in our field have been pushing us to think more about how technology sponsors (not just disrupts) literacy. Antonio Byrd is a leading example. His scholarship examines coding and computing as literacy practices within Black communities. Like Deborah Brandt, whose materialist *sponsors of literacy* framework showed the surprising non-school twists and turns learners take on their route to literacy, Byrd focuses on coding camps as sponsors of literacy and empowerment in African American communities. His recent work extends this inquiry into the AI era, arguing that large language models are not just tools but infrastructures that shape—and can be reshaped by—our values.

In the post-ChatGPT era, Byrd has become a strong voice for a deep understanding of the materiality of LLMs. In a 2023 *Composition Studies* article, he agrees with the Refuse AI critiques that LLMs homogenize language and erase linguistic diversity; they have been trained on racist language and ideologies. But from there, rather than arguing that we need to avoid LLMs because of these problems, he argues that as language scholars and educators, we have a responsibility to ensure that the training data of the future reflects our values and our students' voices, to protect against continued, future erasure. Put another way: we have an even greater responsibility, now, to eschew linguistic violence in the work we ask students to do, as their writing will become part of the training data for LLMs of the future:

> [W]riting classrooms can be a counterweight to the historical moments that turn into corpus texts, with marginalized social identities now more prominent on the mainstream stage than ever before, and our pedagogies shifting (although slowly) toward linguistic justice

> and care. Writing instructors *across disciplines* have an opportunity to partner with their students on creating digital content that the next iteration of LLMs will one day scrape. To this end, we are positioned to launch critical inquiries on corpus texts: how they are made, what they contain, how they shape our own literacy practices when they filter through the literacy practices of LLMs, and how we participate and write in the histories that LLMs consume. (Byrd 138)

Here Byrd argues for engaging students in corpus analysis and ethical data creation and sees these practices as acts of resistance to oppressive literacy systems. Technical as his writing and ideas may sound, this perspective is rooted in familiar materialist, non-school literacy research like Brandt's, and the work of Katherine Kelleher Sohn. Kelleher Sohn, in her 2006 book, *Whistlin' and Crowin' Women of Appalachia: Literacy Practices Since College*, examined the non-school literacy practices of women in Appalachia, for whom writing was embedded in economic struggle as well as a vehicle for personal empowerment. Like Brandt, Sohn focuses on literacy's accumulations, its "layers of earlier forms of literacy [that] exist simultaneously within the society and within the experiences of individuals" (Brandt, qtd in Kelleher Sohn 55). Kelleher Sohn notes as well "vertical layers of reading and writing"—intricate layerings of incentives, sources and barriers that learners must negotiate. Byrd asks us to see these layers as they exist in current and future LLMs, and to consider our role in preparing students to navigate them.

Like Sofia Noble, Joy Buolamwini and Ruha Benjamin, Byrd sharply critiques the whiteness and racism underpinning technology. But also, like Brandt, Ellen Cushman, and more recently Kate Vieira, Byrd is ultimately interested in a broader understanding of literacy and technology. Vieira, for example, examines literacy as "communication hardware, software, writing practices, and literacy knowledge that migrant families often circulate" as they cross borders (Vieira 4). Like these writers, Byrd is less focused on systemic critique than on systemic navigation—how individuals, including teachers, can hack their way into inhospitable territory, acquiring new literacy practices along the way. He encourages teachers to see technology in similarly expansive ways.

As a public scholar of the AI era, Byrd has helped create many emergent online resources, including the MLA task force website, which is a treasure trove of resources and guidance. He has a talk on YouTube on academic integrity and one on equitable teaching in the age of AI. In both of these videos, Byrd frames teaching tips with more theoretical and technical understandings; viewers will find teaching strategies alongside theory. In his video on AI and academic integrity, he quotes Brian Street and Kate Crawford: AI is a "registry of power," serving "dominant interests"; literacy is a social practice, embedded in social systems, rather than a neutral set of skills. Here Byrd presents academic integrity as something we use or do, rather than a static quality to be protected or policed. This aligns with his interest in agency and navigation: how do students enact academic integrity? How do the systems and culture in place in our institutions support or undermine students' navigation of academic integrity practices?

On Byrd's LinkedIn page, he regularly reposts a variety of AI and writing-related articles and information. I learned about MIT's AI Incidence Tracker from his LinkedIn; I found Elizabeth Wardle's recent article in entrepreneur magazine, cogently explaining the importance of writing for

thinking and human connection; I discovered this report from Anthropic on how students are using AI in education. Byrd also often reposts Anna Mills' invaluable contributions to our AI conversations. I wasn't able to fold Mills' work into this review, but she is also an important voice who has helped shape our field's response to this moment.

Byrd's work may be technical, but he brings the technical and the social-political dimensions of literacy into provocative view, extending Brandt's framework of literacy sponsorship to the age of AI.

## MACHINE-IN-THE-LOOP COMPOSING PROCESSES

Another first responder who has made a sizable contribution to our AI conversations is Jane Rosenzweig, who started "The Important Work" substack in 2023. Aimed at broadening the conversation about AI and writing, "The Important Work" features personal reflections from teachers across ranks and contexts, including high school, about their classroom experiments with AI. Since its launch it has evolved into a teaching commons where instructors reflect on what we're gaining and what we're losing when we bring AI into the writing classroom.

At "The Important Work," you'll find explorations of how students use AI in their writing process as well as how teachers are reinvigorating our old adage—process over product—as a way to recenter and protect students' opportunities to engage in writing as inquiry. In an essay I particularly love, Danielle Kane and Claire Masson redesign in-class writing away from the punitive timed blue book tests of old and toward community writing to support student voice and agency. In another post, "What Are Students Using AI For," we gain an up-close glimpse into students' machine-augmented writing processes.

Rosenzweig is a creative writer and the director of Harvard's Undergraduate Writing Center, a post long held by Nancy Sommers, whose seminal essay on the composing processes of novice and experienced writers has always been an anchor point in my first-year writing classes. Rosenzweig's motive in starting "The Important Work" was her sense that we've "entered a new era in which the lines between process and product [are] no longer clear." Here she echoes Jason Guyla, who has recently argued that an uncritical embrace of process as a way to address AI risks flattening out and standardizing writing processes, which are messy, idiosyncratic, context-specific, and not well-understood. As Laquintano, Schnitzler, and Vee write "[o]ur writing environments will inevitably be shaped by these AI integrations, but it's unclear what effects this integration will have on our writing or writing processes" (*TextGenEd*).

This risk and the critique of process that emerges from it has existed since long before AI (more on this below). It may be more difficult than ever to understand—and design curriculum that adequately addresses—students' changing writing processes in the era of AI. But understanding student writing processes has always been a difficult, and central, core of scholarship in our field. Consider this, from Linda Flower and John Richard Hayes in 1981: "[S]tage models [that distinguish between] the operations of planning, writing, and revising may seriously distort how these activities work. For example, Nancy Sommers has shown that revision, as it is carried out by skilled writers, is not an end-of-the-line repair process, but is a constant process of "re-vision" or re-seeing that goes

on while they are composing" (367).

So it is perhaps not surprising that writing process scholarship is undergoing something of a renaissance now, when technology seems to be obscuring the mysteries of process more than ever. In "Machine-in-the-Loop Writing: Optimizing the Rhetorical Load," Alan Knowles, for example, introduces "rhetorical load sharing" as a way to conceptualize writing processes undertaken in collaboration with technologies. His article is a deep dive into the classical stages of process (from inventio to arrangement to delivery), exploring whether and where AI can share the load with human writers. He distinguishes between cognitive off-loading and rhetorical load-sharing, and makes some provocative points about the nature of collaboration in general, drawing from John Gallagher, Kyle Wagner and Jordan Canzonetta's essay, "When Collaborating Turns into Dishonesty: A Data-driven Heuristic Comparing Human and AI Collaborators."

So *can* machines lighten the rhetorical load? Is there a place for machines in the non-linear process of re-vision that is so central to how we teach writing? Knowles, like the writers at "The Important Work," is cautious. Citing safety and accuracy concerns with LLMs, Knowles recommends that we relegate machines to a largely assistive role, with humans maintaining the lion's share of control over each aspect of the rhetorical load. This accords with Adrian Rowland, who teaches scientific writing. In a post at "The Important Work," he writes: "In my experience of experimenting with their application to scientific text, text written by my students and by members of the chemistry faculty for whom I have provided editing assistance, LLMs are highly effective at improving cosmetic aspects of prose, but even with specific prompting cannot be relied upon to fix problems of meaning: to identify that a paragraph has failed to state its real point or that an explanation has made an excessively large leap in the middle, to correct sentences that are misemphasized or ambiguous or outright wrong" ("The Important Work").

Knowles argues for human-in-charge drafting all the way up to the final stages of the writing process. At The Important Work, most writers agree, and are tinkering their way toward curriculum that relegates AI to just another tool in a writer's toolkit.

## RE-INVENTING THE UNIVERSITY

One of the strongest voices among first responders in our field is Annette Vee. Perhaps as much as anyone, she has done the heavy lifting of contextualizing an alien technology in familiar pedagogical terms. Vee has co-edited the excellent *TextGenEd* collection and is a co-editor of the forthcoming *AI-Aware Teaching*. She has two, equally excellent, substacks: her own, "Computation and Writing," and a Norton newsletter, "AI and How We Teach." In a recent post from this past September, "AI and Student Agency," Vee argues for recommitting to student agency and collaboration as a way to address AI use in the writing classroom. Other posts include quantitative and qualitative data on how students use AI, as well as detailed teaching ideas and assignments, complete, in some cases, with her classroom slide decks. Like Mills and Marc Watkins (another strong voice who has carried so much of the work of guiding teachers over the past few years), Vee synthesizes her deep understanding of the technology with empathy

for overwhelmed teachers, and an abiding curiosity about students' perceptions and practices.

With Laquintano and Schnitzler, she has written a history of automation and writing (in their introduction to *TextGenEd*) that should be required reading for writing teachers. Throughout, Vee and co-authors show us the imbrications of writing with technology, and AI research, extending well before the release of Chat GPT: in the 1950's,

> Turing speculated on a prompt from his teacher, philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein: Can machines think? Both men thought it was a ridiculous question—Wittgenstein because he thought machines were nothing like humans and Turing because he wasn't even sure we knew what *humans* thought. But, Turing argued that if a machine could fool a human into thinking it was a human, then it could be said to think. The machine—a computer—would naturally use writing for this deception. Writing, in other words, is thinking—and the automation of writing is machine thinking. (3)

As I'll discuss in my conclusion, historical perspectives—knowing that many in our field have been exploring and conducting research about automation and writing for decades—can be an important grounding that protects against AI overload and anxiety.

A colleague of the late David Bartholomae, Vee extends his vision of writing as identity-building, inquiry, and participation in disciplinary discourse. She often reframes AI not as an existential threat but as an invitation to collaborate with students, to put them in charge of meaning-making. Bartholomae's work helped a generation of composition instructors understand the importance of this kind of student agency, of treating students like novice members of our community. He was famously against a basic skills approach to basic writing, even as he argued for students' inculcation into academic ways of reading and writing. I see this commitment to what Adam Banks called "transformational access" in Vee's work as well. Her substacks channel this perspective in a variety of practical, accessible posts about how students are using AI, about how to think about the risks of AI, and how to adapt assignments to make them "AI-aware." Throughout these posts, she centers student agency and recommends partnering with students in the classroom.

It is hard to imagine that Bartholomae would have had any love for automated writing, and yet Vee manages to invoke Bartholomae's legacy, not to critique AI but to face, and in some ways embrace, it. In a beautiful essay in *Composition Studies*, she pays tribute to Bartholomae, who passed away in 2023, as she attempts to think through what AI might mean for the kind of writing classroom Bartholomae pioneered:

> Making productive use of uncertainty runs counter to what large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT represent, and even what ChatGPT outputs when I ask it about the value of writing: to explain, to argue, to persuade. ChatGPT is—infamously—never uncertain. It responds with confidence if it's right and even if it's obviously, tragically wrong. More importantly, it has no relationship to what it means to be uncertain, to inquire, to examine its own experiences. It has no stakes in what it writes.
>
> The writing for critical inquiry that our first year students do isn't about projecting confidence. It's not about getting points in a row with a thesis statement that lays them out

> and a conclusion that restates them. Writing for productive uncertainty isn't that neat or simple. It's based on the idea that students can thrive wrestling with difficult texts, that they can come up with new and important questions about their worlds and their own words. The point isn't what kind of writing students produce, exactly, although writing is the medium students use to pursue their inquiry. The point is the process they went through to get there. The point is the challenge: the pleasurable difficulty of writing and reading. (177)

I find Vee interesting because of her effort to bridge that perspective with her interest in technology, and her non-panicked approach to students' use of AI in their writing. Vee makes me realize that as much as Bartholomae would have detested a ChatGPT-ed essay during one of his infamous basic writing seminars, he also would have been deeply curious about new affordances, about what such a moment might represent, about the many possible questions it opens up for classroom inquiry and meaning making.

Vee, like Bartholomae, sees pedagogical value in students' negotiations with systems of authority—whether textual, institutional, or technological. Bartholomae's insight in "Inventing the University" was that students learn to write not by escaping authority, but by inhabiting their own version of it. His curiosity about student error and imitation was ultimately about how students construct knowledge by testing themselves against, and by working within, the language of power. Vee's curiosity toward students' use of AI echoes this stance. She's not lamenting AI as the death of voice but asking what new forms of collaborative authorship and agency might emerge as students learn to write with, or against, these systems. Like Bartholomae, she's interested in how students appropriate a dominant discourse—in this case, machinic or algorithmic language—and make it mean something personal or situated, purposeful or learningful. Many have decried the robovoice that AI encourages in students, and some, like John Warner, have connected that voice to the inauthentic voices that our standardized approach to writing in school has encouraged in students. Warner, like so many of us, wants to rescue student "voice" from AI. But Vee encourages us, in her Substack and in the curricular work she's been part of—to treat AI as a generative, collaborative problem-space: as she writes, "We have never written alone, and students are now writing in the company of AI. We can acknowledge that fact and support them as they learn to write effectively in collaboration—with humans or AI."

In this, Vee echoes Bartholomae, who imagined voice not as liberation from authority but as transformation through it; as he wrote, the student who uncomfortably takes on an authoritative voice they don't yet (may not ever) fully own is engaged in a "necessary and enabling fiction." Of course, there is a world of difference between momentarily inhabiting the voice of a scholar, or trying on Richard Rodriguez's sentence rhythms, and cut and copying synthetic prose that sounds official but says nothing. And yet, here are Vee and Tim Laquintano on "voice" as a valuable framework used by everyday writers in their negotiations with machines: "For many of the writers in our study, voice exists as a metaphor framing a bundle of concerns related to AI text generation and machine-assisted composition. It helps writers generate heuristics of value as they decide what practices can be—or should be—off-loaded to a machine" ("Everyday Writer").

In these ways, Vee is pushing us to *re*invent the university, to make clear Bartholomae-esque

distinctions between authority (whether synthetic or teacherly) and authorial for students, to see the affordances, for learning and meaning-making, in borrowing or trying on others' words, whether those words are derived from generative textual commonplaces of the They/Say I/Say variety, or other authors or machines.

## SAME AS IT EVER WAS

It's common these days to point to tech panics of the past to calm fears of AI (Watkins has recently reminded us of the fallacy of the new, in this post). In the connections we see between old and new in the writers I've reviewed here, I have tried to show where we've been in order to clarify and ground where we are. I've been less interested in how we may have worried about past challenges and changes, and more interested in how we have built—and are building— from them. The tech panics of old are amusing (if one more person brings up Plato…) but it's bracing to hear Gail Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe in 1991: "Computer technology offers us the chance to transform our writing classes into different kinds of centers of learning if we take a critical perspective and remain sensitive to the social and political dangers that the use of computers may pose" (56).

And in 1998: "students must develop technical literacy practices that go well beyond the conventional conception of literacy education" (Selfe and Selfe 358).

What dangers were Hawisher and Selfe predicting, all the way back then? What "technical literacy practices" did they have in mind? The answers, in some ways, are so obvious to us now as to be inaccessible, invisible, perhaps much like our experience of textapocalypse will someday be.

Same as it ever was. Here is Elizabeth Sommers, a professor of English at SF State, my own institution, writing in the 1980s:

> Microcomputers do have exciting possibilities as writing tools if they are used well. The problem is separating the many ineffective uses from the good ones . . . Most of what we learn is learned in cooperation with others, and writing is no exception. The most useful thing we can do for student writers . . . is to provide audiences for their writing, audiences who will read and respond in supportive and helpful ways. . . . Computer-assisted instruction can help, but cannot take over the central roles played by writers and respondents." (4, 7, 8)

Fear not, all ye who are worried and overwhelmed. We've been here before.

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