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*October 2004*

# Correspondences Six

Broadside opinions and conversations al fresco

Dear Reader,

In *Correspondences Six*, we have a response from Peter Brown to Robert Garlitz's essay on Kenneth Burke in our last issue. I like the way these Burke-readers have developed versions of his style of inquiry: a lot of questioning, of circling back and around; avoidance of cant and the doctrinaire. For those coming to Burke for the first time (and for those who've earlier been turned off) I have two suggestions: don't try to read him by the book and stay away from heavy commentary. My own experience over the forty years I've been reading him is that careful study of almost any three or four pages in sequence will provide access to his central ideas about the offices of language and the nature of the creature who exercises them. Try starting with "De Beginnibus," the Bennington College commencement address I included in *Reclaiming the Imagination* (Boynton/Cook, 1984). Three very lively and instructive essays dealing with pedagogical implications are: Philip Keith, "Burke in the Classroom" (*CCC*, December 1977); Clayton Lewis, "Burke's Act in *A Rhetoric of Motives*" (*CE*, April, 1984); and Richard Coe, "Dracula Meets Kenneth Burke" (*CE*, March, 1986).

I once met a graduate student at Harvard who told me what a struggle he'd had with his dissertation—"But then I found Thirdness!" That is to say, he had read Peirce and found what it means to say that meanings are our means of making meaning. I don't know for sure, but I'll bet it meant that he stopped amassing 3 x 5 cards and began abducting in a dialectical notebook: "If we agree with Walter Benjamin that allegory devalues the intrinsic meaning of things for the sake of its own arbitrary meanings, then. . . ." What I hope is that *Correspondences* will help readers find Thirdness. Letters on thinking triadically (which, of course, is the foundation of Freire's "pedagogy of knowing") are welcome. Write me at the address below.

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In this issue, we include a few notes on method from readers, and we offer another piece on C.S. Peirce. Readers who've been with us will remember that *Correspondences* started out in 1984 with Gary Lindberg's meditation on Peirce's idea that each meaning-relationship is mediated by an idea that relates the symbol and what it represents: each sign requires another sign as its interpretant. Gary showed how our purposes lead us to start over and over again on the act of interpreting our interpretations. Neal Bruss and others showed how this activity creates what Vygotsky called "the web of meaning"—thus bringing to life the dead metaphor of *text*. Frank Lofaro in his comments here suggests that instead of the hackneyed idea of "audience," we should let Peirce guide us in concentrating on the representations we invent and construct and construe. Since positivist philosophers (and those suffering from RUP, as Owen Barfield says: Residual Undetected Positivism) edging over into rhetoric enjoy sneering at representation—which of course they reduce to meaning *copy*—we triadists must look sharp to protect the idea from gangster theories.

## Burke, Garlitz, and the "Power of Relation"

Peter Brown

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(Ontario)

Robert Garlitz is wisely reluctant to claim Burke as a doctrinaire "process" person. But surviving the disappointment and shock he felt at the realization that Burke did not sound at all "process," Garlitz underscores the continuing hope of Burkean allegiance through the kinds of ultimate progressions and regressions of which god-terms are capable. After all, one can start pretty well anywhere and end up pretty well anywhere. Terms imply terms and common sense rolls through the ages. Often (but not often enough) what is implied makes sense—for a writer, for a reader, and for those in between and around the act of writing and the act of reading.

I have always been critically comfortable with the notion that I really could not do anything with Burke; that, after all, it was what Burke did with me that was really important—Burke beginning and ending everywhere—the energies informing and shaping: a certain eclectic passivity was right for reading Burke. But Garlitz challenges; perhaps one small step in knowing what to do with Burke? Or *about*? Or *to*? No, after all, what is done is done *with* Burke. Together. Not too active though.

First, a note on Garlitz's subtle use of Charles Williams's fine logological recapitulation. "All things. . . held together by correspondence" does invite the taking up of "the power of relation," and is to the mark in this relational broadsheet, *Correspondences*. "Do you know what I mean?" Well, yes and no and back to Garlitz's earlier speculative key to doing something *with* Burke together, to knowing what Williams (and Garlitz) mean. To meaning. Trying to escape the vortex of endlessly regenerative god-terms probably is not a sensible effort. As Garlitz says, "With the right imagination and attention to the full dialectic, one could start. . ." Here to There or There to Here. "Right Imagination and Attention to the Full Dialectic." And here, perhaps, we can join with Burke. Of course, I know what you mean—we meant it together at the same time. We mean it—Burke, you and I. Whatever, Burke is the "power of relation." *Locomotive* metaphors appeal—he is both locus and motive and a very friendly guide who connects the motive to become with the source of being. His self, our selves, myself.

I think Garlitz can claim Burke for all that "process" seems coming to mean. He notes the absence of other explicit terminological connectors with the latest research and the "up-to-dateness" of current theory, as when Burke was heard advising students on how to improve their writing by imitating models. But that moment of overheard advice may have been the wrong one to connect Burke with the latest terms and research of the "process" movement. Elsewhere, he has been most explicit, poignantly so in discussing "terministic screens." What seems to me to bathe Burke in the sense and sentiment of "process" is the ethical appeal signalized throughout his work. In all and as usual, but profoundly so with Eliot, Burke—the process progenitor par excellence—proclaims: when language works well, be sure you truly look at what makes it work well. Invoking Burke as authority for the ever-emergent "New English," the new kind of discipline, is a reasonable element in the rhetoric of those who would see English evolve towards greater humanistic value. For some, this evolution is a revolution to a new discipline, a "paradigm shift." Here, I think, is where Garlitz has been taking us on his own Burke journey—to the "new kind of discipline." And, personally, it is at this point with Burke that I normally get stalled. We do, after all, have this need to name and "process" wears thin. What to do with Burke? Or what is Burke doing with me?

This respectful reciprocity must remain the central dialectical questioning, but to *stay* here risks semantic solipsism. Taking up Charles Williams's "power of relation," the further question is where does Burke fit, besides with me and the general characteristics of the emerging "process" discipline? How can his "fit" help me "name" what I am becoming? Besides to me, to what does Burke relate? How does he direct my imagination and attention through his Everything to something that informs, shapes, and finally names my becoming? How is Burke to be useful

to us in transcending the terminological morass and drift to entropy that typifies our "new kind of discipline"? Burke's importance to me will ultimately have to do with how he helps consolidate and direct meaningful and enduring disciplinary and personal change. Burke's "correspondences," his image with other images, seem boundless and organic. But the "power of relation" in his argument does focus and does provide connection through and beyond his own Everything.

What chiefly interests me remains Burke's language: his "god-terms" are part of Burke and part of me and part of something else—they correspond. They connect us to ideas and further terms that may once and for all help us transcend the bipolar perspectives of paradigmatic debate. We, like Burke, through god-terms may become bigger than it all.

For Garlitz, the god-terms are the way into Everything: *terms* itself, and *language, thinking, dialectics, imagination, attention*. And through them to further forms and ideas—but first the warning from "Terministic Screens":

Also many of the "observations" are but implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made. . . much that we take as observation about "reality" may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms.

The reciprocity of thought and language in Burke draws the imaginative attention of Garlitz and through him to Barfield and Williams. From it all, Garlitz takes Burke the critic and makes Burke the composer—or commentator or both; Burke is made to speak to the "compositionists." Quality of consciousness remains the message. Do not just let thoughts happen—think through writing about them while they are happening. How is he different? What does he especially contribute? Above all, Burke teaches us to think about acting in, not only thinking about, the world. Any language, writing, is the action—the symbolic action.

I am not sure I would want to track through the development of Burke the "composer"—perhaps Ross Winterowd has done that as nicely as needs be. I found the Garlitz piece comforting in its reinforcement of the ties between Burke and the general notion of "process." "Comforting" and stimulative of a "corresponding conversation." I would stress now my dissatisfaction with merely claiming Burke as a "V.I.P." ally for our cause, which is overburdened by squadrons of supportive allies already. It seems to me that the importance of Burke for teachers of writing lies not so much in his various assurances that they are on the right track in pursuing "process," as in his ability to convince us that thinking differently is a legitimate option and that writing is both the occasion and vehicle for thinking that makes "difference."

This "difference making" function of writing seems an experience that can be provided and a learning that can be taught. And Burke's testament to all this is, of course,

continuing good news to teachers of writing. Burke allows us to transcend the worn out polarities to escape entropic drift and to genuinely think differently about what we are about. I don't think we've done this with Burke because of the continuing rhetoric of servitude and gratitude that seems to accompany any critical account of him. Shouldn't we be attempting to understand Burke as part of a non-English disciplinary tradition, rather than forever eliciting him as our own luminous progenitor within a framework of our own remaking of him? Why is Burke not considered as part of the development of contemporary hermeneutics, particularly the philosophical hermeneutics of H. G. Gadamer? Our frame of reference, with Burke's help, can become philosophical in a transcending or transforming, rather than a synthesizing, sense. Some of the basic tenets of contemporary hermeneutics, set in constructive dialectic with the Burke canon, could help us think differently—and not just put the parts together in new ways.

The heart of the hermeneutic experience is to understand, not better, but differently. In reading, seen as an interpretive act, the difference occurs through the fusion of personal and textual horizons. (Gadamer and Bernard Lonergan most fully develop this metaphorical notion of "horizon.") For Gadamer, Lonergan, and Burke the active agent is the interpreting reader; the act—reading. Now, an increasingly powerful research theme of the process school is the exploration of how reading and writing are both interpretive acts and, as such, interdependent. But if the fusion of horizons in the hermeneutic act of reading merges literary and personal text, what of the writing analogue? When one writes, what fusion of horizons occurs? If writing is an interpretive act, what and where is the horizontal fusion? How does the developing text on the page parallel the literary text, the reading of which is the occasion of the hermeneuticist's fusion of horizons?

"Imaginative attention" to what is going on inside while the writing is happening outside—the language of this attention is not yet teacher-based, let alone student-owned. If the interior mirror of the language occurring on the page is to be a real concern of teachers, then language suitable for students' purposes is needed. Our sanctioned language is the language of the page. If the interior function is to become more than the shadow image of publicly-appropriated language of the page, we need to "name" what is going on there and share and develop these names with students in



much the same way Burke has been sharing and developing his names for things.

Scholarship is needed in connecting Burke and the hermeneutic tradition. Here are some preliminaries:

1. Both the hermeneutic experience and the Burke experience are intrinsically historical—and the temporal/spatial location of meaning shared and mutually possessed by text and the reader/writer is the locus of meaning.

2. Both are intrinsically linguistic—beyond communication and beyond conscious manipulation, language is essentially revelatory of the world without and within.

3. Both are dialectical—this centrality of the "Negative Marvel of Language" rebounds from negativity to a renewed apprehension of Self (or an apprehensive renewal?).

4. Both are ontologically referenced—the being of things is the goal and linchpin; the Self as cause and effect remains the beginning and end of things.

5. Both offer a subjective renewal of objectivity—the ontological "character" of a situation is conveyed not by devising language to fit it, but by finding language demanded by the situation. What is ultimately expressed in language is situation, shaped by the dialectic of self-reflexivity.

6. Both renew and define the sense of "text"—beyond mere analysis, the reader's response is to the full otherness of text; reader and text are in constructive meaning-making dialogue.

7. Both escape mere relativity and absolute dogmatism in regarding truth. Grounded in negativity, truth is the action of discovery proceeding within a dialectic. Neither blunt fact nor ultimate concept—truth happens. It is a verb.

8. Both swallow up aesthetics in cognitive theory and epistemology—truth becoming manifest through the shaping power of language abides as the "moment" of art, a moment beyond the simple senses.

9. Both transcend subject-object schema—dead-end conceptual/perceptual dichotomies remain pervasive in our "new"/"old" kinds of disciplines. Again—the Dialectic.

"To 'make one's own' what was previously 'foreign' remains the ultimate aim of all hermeneutics," concludes Paul Ricoeur. Certainly, this appears to be Burke's accomplishment. His "ownership" is prodigious; his reading of "Everything" is exemplary and is commended to us by the power of his accomplishment. But to turn Burke on Burke? As always, the sense of the overweening critical "dare," the interpretive "hubris," lingers. In proposing a hermeneutic context for Burke, I am saying that Burke the reader/writer seems to have dramatized himself in a career-long hermeneutic endeavor and that we should be bold in our own reading/writing of Burke and regard the project as essentially hermeneutic. Always we should be worried and guided by the advice of "Terministic Screens"—but we should try.

I harbor this final unease about Burke. Why has he not had a more direct and visible impact on "Everything"—English, things "English," English Educators and terms forever ascending? Maybe he has and I have not noticed it. His value for profound change seems ever to be becoming. Sometimes I wonder if he nears the wondrous "might-have-been." His optimism that things can be right if we could only get them right seems sometimes to fade in what others do or do not make of him.

In "Rhetoric and Poetics," Burke describes something of his own development:

Basically the situation is this: I began in the aesthete tradition, with the stress upon self-expression. Things started moving for me in earnest when, as attested in *Counterstatement*, I made the shift from "self-expression" to "communication." The theory of form (and "forms") centers in that distinction. For quite a while, as with many critics, I found it enough to work with these two terms, treating them as principles that variously correct and reinforce each other. But I am happiest when I can transform any such dyad into a triad—and I subsequently did so by adding what I call "consummation." One can "track down the implication of a terminology" over and above the needs of either self-expression or communication (for instance, Beethoven's last quartets in his time, or James Joyce's later works)—and I'd want to treat such formal thoroughness as not strictly reducible to the arousing and fulfilling of expectations in an audience.

Most reading/writing of Burke seems dichotomized in a manner similar to his earlier "self-expression" and "communication" perspectives. In unraveling the meaningful implications of Burke's terminology we need a locus of need which is not audience-based. Burke's own transformation from dyad to triad, from the expression/communication opposition to a transforming recognition of consummation, seems to suggest a different kind of energizing need. Throughout "Rhetoric and Poetics," he demonstrates the futility of artificial absolutes. Motive, form, and function interrelate as things being various, and interpretive/terminological closure seems always the unwise course. The dialectic Burke proposes changes things: at once, Burke himself, his terms, and the possibilities of meaning have been changed. The task in reading and writing Burke now is to use Burke himself as the hermeneutic, to really appropriate Burke. "Appropriation" is a notion and term basic to contemporary hermeneutics. In order to appropriate Burke, one first appropriates oneself—or vice versa? A tricky business, as Lonergan notes: "to become fully involved you have to be extremely detached" and the self-appropriation sought is, after all, a "matter of maximum detachment." What is it in Burke that needs to be understood and consequently appropriated? Ourselves. Myself. Back to Garlitz quoting Burke:

And the more I puzzle over the reflexive, the more convinced I become that all of us, in pious terror, should

be on guard regarding the role of reflexive in our idea of identity.

The disclosure of possible ways of looking at things is the power of the Burke text; the continuing and alarming surprise, though, is that the disclosure of terms upon terms always and ultimately unravels ourselves. Burke provides his readers with a new capacity for knowing—for knowing themselves and thereby knowing him. And, of course, vice versa. Dialectic.

And finally and again to the Burke drive to the self—the self to be confronted, grappled with, feared, and won over. With the winning over, the appropriation of self, the dynamic consummation of the eternal triad allows us with Burke to be at our "happiest." Not Burke or (our)self, but both, together.

### Peirce's "Speculative Rhetoric" and the Writer's Audience

Frank Lofaro, SUNY at Albany

Descriptions of the writer's audience offered in contemporary textbooks generally reflect the assumption that readers respond to texts in stable and predictable ways that writers may factor by applying formulaic principles to their writing habits. Their accounts make it seem as if the production of good writing depends more on a writer's ability to imagine a subject from someone else's point of view than on the ability to frame thought in language. Textbooks seem to suggest that writers can make a valid claim to knowing the details of an audience's probable response to a text, regardless of whether they know that audience through prior significant relationships.

Whether or not framing thought in language depends on imagining others' viewpoints, can a writer's composing strategy incorporate other minds as accurately as it can exploit the meaning-making possibilities inherent in language alone? To what extent do writer and reader share the responsibility for a reader's interpretation? Does the act of reading require that readers think about not only the patterns of interpretation and meaning suggested by the text but also the mind "behind" the piece? Since a reader's response to a text exists only as a future possibility, can anyone expect writers to imagine the potential disposition of readers' minds with anything other than a fallible and subjective intuition? Can a text mean the same thing to readers as it does to the writer? Rather than positing the writer's ability to predict the probable responses of others in order to construct texts which match a reader's expectations, may not the composing task revolve more precisely on the ability to create the potential for meaning while leaving the determination and interpretation of that meaning for readers?

The well-known conception of the audience as a "fiction" invented according to criteria derived from the genre

in question suggests that writers "invoke" potential audiences rather than "address" actual persons. Such theories define the writer-audience relationship in terms of a convergence of text and reader, but that complicates the issue because a "convergence" exists neither wholly in the minds of writers and readers nor in texts. If research indicates that a writer's attention directs itself neither simply toward other minds nor merely at the text, then what precise object-of-attention stands in reference to the exact task demanded by the phrase "accommodating the needs of a reader"? If writers do indeed evoke a hypothetical audience, then have they actually accommodated readers or have they accommodated abstract concepts represented by the continuities of a text? How do writers persuade actual readers to alter their attitudes and conceptions and to accept the particular abstractions represented by texts as their own? Do writers succeed by attending to the needs of persons? texts? neither? both at once? If, relative to the writer's frame of reference, audiences exist only as abstractions, then do writers need to maintain a precisely defined "audience-representation" prior to composing, or may they first compose and then decide upon the ideal readership to match the significance of their texts? Can anyone really "know" another's mind, or can one know only one's own mind? Does anyone's mind exist separately and apart from all others, or does the individual mind reflect and represent the sum total of minds in an "interpretive community"?

If the reality of other minds remains inscrutable, then writers can only hope to know their own mental representations of their audiences. Rather than appealing directly to other minds, discourses create relationships among their own mental representations. Writers use language to make indirect appeals to others, and language itself remains the great determiner of what writers can or cannot successfully articulate. Understood in this way, the act of writing represents more accurately a problem in poetics rather than the problem of knowing other minds. Writers must enact the discipline of becoming ever more aware of the potential implications and meanings of the language they attempt to shape into discourse, and, likewise, readers engage in the same activity by forming their responses and interpretations. The finished text offers its own implications and demands its own exfoliation, but the idiosyncrasies of readers enter into the transaction and alter the directions of meaning in discourse.

Peirce's *Speculative Rhetoric* can help us reform the concept of audience. For Peirce, knowledge of any object-of-attention consists always in a mental representation of that object and never in knowledge of the object-in-itself. In Peircean terms, consciousness consists in signs alone. My knowledge of a subject for discourse and my knowledge of my own attitudes and thoughts concerning that subject consist in signs. Likewise, my knowledge of other minds consists in signs. It follows that others' understanding of things also consists in signs. Thus, what I write comprises a network of signs mediated by my consciousness for the

purpose and intention of mediating the sign-constructions (interpretations) of others. Peirce's investigation of the nature of signs implies that understanding consists in the various processes of interpretation people employ in order to analyze language and produce meaning; i.e., thought and language interpenetrate in the sense that each acts as an element to mediate and make knowable the other. A writer's composing process creates meanings and the corresponding mental state referred to as "understanding," and this seems so regardless of whatever subject, purpose, or audience adopted by a community of inquiry for the resolution of doubt might be. If the argument that persons compose their understandings rather than receiving them whole as absolute givens has any validity, then access to the reality of the other minds (audiences) that writers hope to affect resides in a complex of what Peirce called "interpretant signs" which writers can attempt to mediate, influence, and determine by means of language, the symbol-making and mind-influencing medium of expression.

Peirce's major concern in studying and classifying signs stemmed from his belief that "a sign is something by knowing which we know something more." He devised *Speculative Rhetoric* as a method for thinking about how one thought might with accuracy elicit another by means of language, and he analyzed that process in his theory of "semeiosis" (sign-mediation), the study of the development of interpretant signs. The notion of "sign-development" aligns itself closely to the concept of "entailment" in rhetorical studies, or what Peirce referred to as the "illative conjunctions" of a line of reasoning in discourse. He defined interpretants as the mental representations arrived at as a result of efforts by interpreters (readers?) to understand any object-of-attention (texts?). Peirce categorized signs in their aspects as icon, index, and symbol in order to determine how they function as instruments of thought, and to determine further how to construct representations of thought according to the nature of their particular aspects.

An interpretant sign emerges from a flux of significant events in consciousness and hardly remains stable. Peirce refers to this flux and its products as "semeiosis," the sign-mediation process. A sign presents itself to consciousness through the mediation of a prior sign in a series of such mediations that consists in an infinite regression of interpretant signs. Peirce also suggested an infinite progression of interpretants extending into the future; i.e., given the continuation of consciousness in the extended community of thinkers, interpretant signs will yield new interpretants as long as intelligence exists. Thus, an interpretant sign, at one and the same time, marks the end-point of one line of reasoning and the beginning of another.

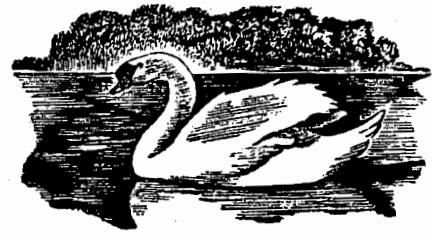
Adopting Peirce's conception of language and meaning demands thinking of writing as a semiotic process with an internal organization of its own which becomes relevant to both the production and reception of discourse. Writers constructing texts and readers constructing their interpretations of texts must respond to discrete complexes of

interpretant signs; yet, both parties engage in composing processes in such a manner as to constitute the meaning of their common object-of-attention—the text. As writers engage themselves in language problems aimed at mediating others' understandings of their subjects, they rely on whatever audience-representation they have determined in guiding themselves toward textual closure. As readers engage themselves in their own language problem—the interpretation of another person's composing act—they engage in their own act of composing meanings and arrive at their own author-representations. Neither writer nor reader has direct access to the mind of the other, but each relies on the symbolizing force of language to provide them with a necessarily indirect access to the reality of ideas and the achievement of understanding. The language as represented on the page serves as the basis for any transaction shared by writers and readers, and language itself exists as the field of discovery that makes possible the communication of intellectual effects. Thus, writers and readers discover each other symbolically through their representations in discourse.

A Peircean perspective on meaning also views it as the sum total of the effects of interpretation extending into the future. In terms of writing and reading, the effects of all possible readings (past, present, and future) constitute the meaning of a given text. Since no one can expect to identify the potential limits of such a complex audience with any degree of precision, the writer may more realistically aim at attending to the patterns of meaning implied by the linguistic signs comprising the logic of the text. Thus, when Peirce examined the process by which one thought might with accuracy elicit another in discourses, he referred to the development of interpretants. He distrusted the possibility of knowing other minds directly or with certainty, but he believed it possible to identify the logic of representations of thought. In maintaining his doctrine of "fallibilism," the idea that conceptions of reality originate from interpretations and do not necessarily constitute knowledge with certainty, Peirce distrusted the kinds of insights gained by introspection; rather than focusing on other minds, *Speculative Rhetoric* seeks to identify the "illative conjunctions" in a series of sign-mediations comprising a line of reasoning, the logical links between one thought and another, and asks for the presuppositions which guide the elements and arrangement of particular signs in the development of meaning in discourse.

Peirce's semiotics aims at a description of language made in terms broad enough to apply to all manner of perception and intellectual activity. His approach demands thinking about language in terms which may seem impersonal at best; yet, if Peirce's ideas have any validity, we engage ourselves in the processes he described with each and every utterance we make. By considering language in this broadest sense, in its semiotic aspect, we see that language

mediates all experience of self, others, and the world. As a philosophical enterprise, *Speculative Rhetoric* focuses on describing how language mediates experience by means of signs, and it attempts to enrich our knowledge of that process to work for our advantage in discourse.



## Correspondence

1. Reading Paul Kameen's "Coleridge: On Method" in *Correspondences Five* sent **Angela Dorenkamp**, Assumption College, to STC himself, where she found this passage:

Alas! how many examples are now present to my memory, of young men the most anxiously and expensively be-school-mastered, be-tutored, be-lectured, any thing but educated; who have received arms and ammunition instead of skill, strength, and courage; varnished rather than polished; perilously over-civilized, and most pitifully uncultivated and all from inattention to the method dictated by nature herself, to the simple truth, that as the forms in all organized existence, so must all true and living knowledge proceed from within; that it may be trained, supported, fed, excited, but can never be infused, or impressed.

2. From J.A. Quattrini, Canajoharie Central School:

On the process of writing about writing as a process. We are using language to try to understand how we are changing at the time that we are changing. Physicists studying molecules must decide which sacrifice to make: to get more precise information about structure, some information about motion and change must be sacrificed; to get more precise information about how things are moving and changing, some information about structure must be sacrificed. When we use language to study language, aren't we sacrificing at both levels—once with the thing studied, and once with the thing with which we study it? What does PROCESS MEAN? I must use a student's unintentional but startling metaphor: it MEANS "taking too much for granite." The word PROCESS wasn't, isn't, and won't be carved in stone. Perhaps someone could help me place the expression "writing as a process" on this lifeline: avant-garde...promising...revolutionary...current...dominant...accepted...traditional...hidebound...archaic...non-researched-based.

3. From **George Moberg**, Manhattan Community College:

"Method," for some of my colleagues, means *gimmick*—for me too sometimes: I certainly fight my own battles with the Fix-It-Quick-God. These colleagues hear of a new approach (or "method") and embrace it on the spot, expecting it to work overnight, as if it were a new potato peeler. Then they scream to heaven when they cut themselves and draw blood. Right now I have to be cautious in recommending computers, fearing that some would use them in hope mainly of making teaching "easier." (Which, in fact, it does. But that is a fringe benefit that comes if we do many other things right.) Actually I think that I stumble on methods (procedures?) the way the Princes of Serendip stumbled on gold: we look for one thing and we find something even better. When I began using groups all the time instead of occasionally, I had simply wanted to solve the problem of the students' inertia whenever I asked them to get up and form groups. But instead—or in addition—I discovered an approach to solving the problem of students' inertia when asked to write, a much bigger order. Here's how it happened:

In preparation for the CUNY W.A.T. final exam, I usually give my classes several "practice tests," simulating the W.A.T. This past term (first one with computers), I wanted the students to learn from personal experience how the scoring is done, so I instituted a new procedure: after each practice writing test, the groups would score each other's essays. I thought they might groan at the new labors and do a superficial job to get it over with so they could return to their exciting computers. Instead we hit pay dirt. Though I had scheduled 15-20 minutes for this scoring activity (holistic, fairly rapid), I couldn't drag them away from it—and so I naturally let them stay with it, because what I heard and saw was animated, in-depth peer criticism. Technically, they were supposed to read the essays in silence, but I promptly forgot about that rule when I heard the lengthy group discussions about the development and editing of their own essays, sometimes going on for an hour until the end of the class, even spilling into the next period so I had to physically retrieve the papers. On many previous occasions when I scheduled peer criticism with my carefully prepared "feedback sheets" as a guide, it would be slow or superficial going. But now, when I hadn't asked for peer criticism, I got the best I've ever seen. So I ended up with a new "method." The Princes would smile.



### *New B/C Books for Teachers*

#### THE CONSEQUENCES OF WRITING:

Enhancing Learning in the Disciplines  
*Robert P. Parker and Vera Goodkin*

#### ENGLISH TEACHERS AT WORK:

Ideas and Strategies from Five Countries  
*Edited by Stephen N. Tchudi for IFTE*

#### IN THE MIDDLE:

Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents  
*Nancie Atwell*

#### THE JOURNAL BOOK

*Edited by Toby Fulwiler*

#### THE MAKING OF KNOWLEDGE IN COMPOSITION:

Portrait of an Emerging Field  
*Stephen North*

#### READERS, TEXTS, TEACHERS

*Edited by Bill Corcoran and Emrys Evans*

#### RECLAIMING THE CLASSROOM:

Teacher Research as an Agency for Change  
*Edited by Dixie Goswami and Peter Stillman*

#### TEACHING WITH WRITING:

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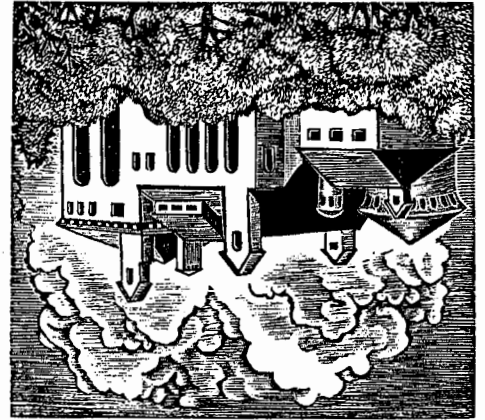
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