

---

# *Inkshed*

Newsletter of the Canadian Association  
for the Study of Writing and Reading  
Volume 11, Number 3, February 1993

---

## **Inside *Inkshed***

Rick Coe	What Is Inkshedding?	1
Anthony Paré	A Response to Rick Coe	3
Jamie MacKinnon	Those Lazy Students	5
Deborah Schnitzer	Two Responses to Judy Segal	
Bill Boswell	1. Reading the Classroom "Set-up"	6
	2. A Response to Judy Segal	10
	Registration for the Inkshed 10 Conference	11
	Position Available	12
	Conference Announcement	13

---

.....

11.3 February 1993

*Co-Editors*

Carolyn Pittenger      Anthony Paré

McGill University  
Centre for the Study and Teaching of Writing  
3700 McTavish Street, Montreal, QC, H3A 1Y2  
Fax: (514) 398-4679 – E-mail: INAP@MUSICB.McGill.CA

*Consulting Editors*

Phyllis Artiss      Neil Besner  
Memorial University      University of Winnipeg

Coralie Bryant      Wayne Lucey  
South Slave Divisional Board of Education      Assumption Catholic High School  
N.W.T.      Burlington, ON

Susan Drain      Richard M. Coe  
University of Toronto      Simon Fraser University

Lester Faigley      James A. Reither  
University of Texas      St. Thomas University

Judy Segal      Graham Smart  
University of British Columbia      Bank of Canada

Russell A. Hunt  
St. Thomas University

.....

*Inkshed* provides a forum for its subscribers to explore relationships among research, theory, and practice in language acquisition and language use. Subscribers are invited to submit informative pieces such as notices, reports, and reviews of articles, journals, books, textbooks, conferences, and workshops, as well as polemical discussions of events, issues, problems, and questions of concern to teachers in Canada interested in writing and reading theory and practice.

*Inkshed* is published five times during the academic year. The following is a schedule of submission deadlines and approximate publication dates:

15 September, for 1 October      1 February, for 15 February  
15 November, for 1 December      1 April, for 15 April  
Post-Conference: May - June

The newsletter is supported financially by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, the Centre for the Study and Teaching of Writing, and the Faculty of Education, McGill University, and by its subscribers. Make cheques for \$10.00 payable to Faculty of Education, McGill University.

.....

---

# What is Inkshedding?

This writing is about a genre and discourse community we all know – at least until we try to reach consensus.

## First Digressio

I'm reminded of a discussion in the back of a bus after an Inkshed conference. The topic was Inkshedders – what do we have in common, what do we all share, what makes us a community? And the perplexity was that no one could state a proposition about reading, writing, or teaching almost all Inkshedders would agree to. Then Russ Hunt suggested that Inkshedders share a belief in the efficacy of teaching. We believe we can make a difference, can touch individuals in ways that matter, that help them “toward a better life” (to use Kenneth Burke's motivating phrase), perhaps even toward a better world. Or at least that's what I remember Russ suggesting.

## First Narratio

The past three times I've attended an Inkshed conference (and even the last time I didn't attend), I've heard newcomers complain about an insider/outsider split. One consistent focus of these complaints has been inkshedding itself. At least some newcomers complain that we don't explain this discursive process of ours in ways they can grasp, ways that allow them to anticipate what they're getting into. And this isn't fair, they say. It's especially irresponsible because Inkshedders claim to abhor discursive practices that marginalize “outsiders.”

I don't think this is a crisis, partly because everyone who has complained to me has figured out inkshedding somewhere a bit past the mid-point of the conference. And partly (mostly, I suspect) because everyone who has complained to me has concluded that Inkshedders are pretty nice people who wouldn't do such a thing on purpose.

Still, there was some sense of unfair practice, of exclusion and abuse. At least a few first-time Inkshedders were unpleasantly surprised by what happened “to” them during their first inkshedding.

To me it seems ironic that a group of professional people who very genuinely care about learners, who specialize in enabling readers and writers, who spend a lot of time discoursing about process and genre, should introduce inkshedding in a way that fails some newcomers.

So what I'm trying to do here is to initiate a discussion, one outcome of which will, I hope, be a consensual explanation of inkshedding.

What is inkshedding? What is it used for? How does one do it? How does it vary? What is excluded (i.e., what practices resemble inkshedding but actually violate its essence)?

Such questions should feel comfortable to me (and thee). I was there at inkshedding's 1984 coming-out party in Fredericton and have been at most Inkshed conferences since. I use variations of inkshedding when I teach. I think I know what it is. And I frequently try to describe a genre and explain how it works in a discourse community. (Well, perhaps inkshedding isn't exactly a genre – we'll know after we reach a consensus about how to define genre – but it's something of that sort.)

But I want to admit some trepidation.

### Second Narratio

This trepidation is grounded in several experiences, most recently at last spring's very exciting Genre colloquium at Carleton University. After two days of stimulating presentations and roundtable discussion, several of us urged that an inkshedding activity would end the colloquium better than a summary panel (presented by the "stars"). At least I think that's how it happened. At any event, everyone did a bit of "freewriting" (though John Dixon's was the most polished, and the most British, "freewriting" I've ever heard). And then those who were so inclined – mostly the same people who had done most of the talking for the preceding two days – read their writing aloud to the group.

This violated my sense of what inkshedding is all about. Coming from a culture where, at least in "intellectual" discussions, people tend to voice their nascent opinions (trusting that the ensuing dialectical process will bring us closer to truth, justice, and harmony), I immediately denounced this "counterfeit" inkshedding and indicated what ought to be happening. Whereupon my dearly beloved friend Anthony (Paré), with whom I discussed newborns at that Fredericton Inkshed, told me (and everyone else) that I was quite wrong about the essential nature of inkshedding. And even afterwards, without some sixty people looking on, Anthony and I were unable to reach the consensus about this discursive practice that should come easily to two long-term members of an un-factioned discourse community.

So I promised Anthony I would write this writing that I am here writing. And he will respond to it (or so he said) and disseminate it in *Inkshed*. And others will join in, voice their understandings, and we will all soon be closer to truth, justice, and harmony – or at least closer to knowing what to say when someone asks, "What the heck is inkshedding, anyhow?"

### First Definitio

I think I am safe in saying that inkshedding involves shedding ink freely and responsively (i.e., freewriting in response to something), not carefully planned, revised and polished "final product" writing. Further, inkshedding is a collaborative social process, normally practised by a group, not by isolated individuals; the freely shed ink is somehow shared.

Not everyone present who sheds ink necessarily shares each time (and some inksheddors may be "present" only electronically, though that didn't work very well when Russ was in Germany, perhaps because he had read only our prior inksheddings, not heard what they were responding to). And the sharing mechanism varies quite considerably. But I think inkshedding is essentially a group process and, without at least some sharing, responsive freewriting isn't really inkshedding.

Am I still safe? Perhaps, but not for long.

What stuck in my craw at Carleton was that the sharing mechanism was an invitation for anyone who felt like it to read out their freewriting to the whole group. Predictably, this was pretty much the same people who had done most of the talking all colloquium long, including the same people who would have been on the summary panel. Which made me realize that, for me, one of the essential functions of inkshedding – a large part of what makes it wonderful and liberating – is that we get to read or hear the voices of people who, for quite varied reasons, don't often or easily speak in large groups. And it almost always turns out that many of them have been thinking interesting, insightful thoughts which, without inkshedding, the group would have missed.

So, for me, it isn't really inkshedding unless the sharing mechanism is very democratic. People shouldn't end up feeling they have been "tricked" or "forced" into revealing themselves – the complaint of those newcomers for whom we didn't adequately explain inkshedding. It is also important that many voices are heard, especially those that have been silent (silenced).

Inkshedding often (though not always) saves individuals from having to assert, "Everyone should hear this important idea of mine." Typically, the decision that all or part of a particular inkshedding should be heard or read by the whole group is made by (several) someone(s) other than the writer. Perhaps, as at other Inkshed conferences, everyone shares in small groups, which then report the intriguing bits. There are many potential mechanisms, some of which work better than others in particular contexts.

Before I am misunderstood, let me add that one reason many wonderful insights remain unvoiced is the very linearity of formal (or even quasi-formal) discussion. A topic is raised, someone says something, someone else responds, someone else responds to that response – and pretty soon all sorts of intriguing ideas about the topic seem digressive, tangential to the line of responses.

One of the wonderful qualities of inkshedding is that it breaks that linearity, destroys the need for transitions, thus creates space for all sorts of responses.

So where am I in this working definition?

Inkshedding is a type of freewriting (broadly construed). Inkshedding is responsive. Inkshedding is a sharing, collaborative group process. Inkshedding serves to break the linearity of "normal" discussion, lets us hear voices and responses we would likely not hear in traditional discussion.

That's how far I've gotten. Knowing Inkshedders, I expect my understanding will soon be modified, corrected, and expanded. I look forward to it.

Rick Coe  
Simon Fraser University

---

## A Response to Rick Coe

Did I really say that Rick Coe "was quite wrong about the essential nature of inkshedding"? Does such an absolute nature exist? And am I so certain of that essence that I can make such an assured claim? Well, maybe, probably not, and no. The details of our exchange at the Genre colloquium are fuzzy and, though I wish I wouldn't, I know I am not above using an authoritative voice; just ask my kids. So maybe I did make such challenge. But no, I am not so certain of the practice of inkshedding as my grandiose pronouncement to Rick would suggest. And, in fact, my own notions of freewriting jibe closely with Rick's version above. However, I do know that the dimly remembered event he describes and the many applications of inkshedding I have experienced, at conferences and in my classroom, have raised a number of questions that trouble me. So, I'll throw my thoughts in with Rick's and we'll see what happens.

## A Response to Rick Coe

---

First, I see inkshedding as an attempt to put our money where our pedagogical mouths are. Am I right to say that Inksheddors believe in the personally heuristic value of writing? We use writing in our classrooms and our conference to help people discover/construct/explore ideas. The initial action of inkshedding is private: the individual – always responsive, always situated – composes (puts together or makes meaning) by entering the conversation. Thus, there really is no such thing as completely *free* writing, since all discourse is enabled and constrained by other voices. But though inkshedding is necessarily social, because dialogic, it is also initially private (unless someone watches over your shoulder). Before going public with my thoughts, I am still free to tear up or hide my private attempt to make sense of the voices I hear. Yes, all writing is social, but not all of it is public.

This function of inkshedding strikes me as essential (oops, there's that word again; perhaps I mean crucial). Before the din of open discussion chases my first thoughts out of mind, inkshedding allows me a space to articulate, experiment, agree, argue, and so on. Before the classroom or conference "stars," with their John Dixonish eloquence, can illuminate the shabbiness of my ideas, I get to "speak." At this point, of course, I am not truly "speaking," since I have not yet chosen to share with listeners/readers. But, for me, this is the first, profoundly democratic function of inkshedding: it creates a free space for individual reflection and discourse. I do not see this aspect of the practice reflected in Rick's definition, and this may well be the point of our difference. But I'll come back to this, because it is the relationship between this first, individual function of inkshedding and the second, public function that I find problematic.

This second function is our attempt to put even more money where our pedagogical mouths are. Am I right to say that Inksheddors believe in the socially heuristic value of writing? We use writing in our classrooms, conference, and newsletter to help our communities discover/construct/explore ideas. Here I find myself in complete agreement with Rick: "Inkshedding is responsive. Inkshedding is a sharing, collaborative group process." When individual inksheddings are shared, the activity mirrors the "conversations" of humankind: ideas merge, agree, and clash; new perspectives emerge; solutions are found; problems are discovered. Moreover, as Rick points out, this practice *can* serve "to break the linearity of 'normal' discussion, [to let] us hear voices and responses we would likely not hear in traditional discussion." This is the second, profoundly democratic function of inkshedding: it creates an equal-access space for collective reflection and discourse.

I've used all the graphic resources of my computer to highlight the word *can* above, because it is the transformation from private to public inkshedding that most concerns me. There is no single way in which inkshedding has been employed to overcome the problems of traditional discussion; and, as a community, I think we are far from consensus on the nature of that "sharing mechanism," as Rick calls it. In fact, in my (admittedly dim) memory of my disagreement with Rick, I think I was objecting to a general invitation to read other people's inkshedding out loud, without conferring with the authors. At the time, I was willing to have the three or four people in my vicinity read what I had written, but I did not want it spoken aloud. I occasionally see the same hesitation among my students. And am I the only one who, at conferences, has quite willingly shared my inkshedding with the members of my small group, but then decided not to submit it for publication? Do others share drafts with friends and colleagues before putting them away in the flawed-drafts' drawer? Sometimes my inkshedding is no longer what I want to say.

Well, I've rambled on long enough to help myself understand what troubles me. Perhaps too long, but since I'm co-editor I have no intention of cutting any of it (how's that for taking advantage of "traditional discussion"?). I agree with Rick's working definition, but I propose the following amendments (my additions are in italics):

Inkshedding is a type of freewriting (broadly construed). Inkshedding is responsive. *Initially, inkshedding promotes private reflection and articulation. Then, through some form of sharing mechanism, inkshedding becomes a public and collaborative group process.* Inkshedding serves to break the linearity of "normal" discussion, lets us hear voices and responses we would likely not hear in traditional discussion.

Like Rick, I value the many voices that inkshedding makes audible. But I think we need to acknowledge the private function of freewriting. And we definitely need to talk about the mechanisms/technologies of publication. Too often, conference inkshedding has become like too much school writing: an assignment imposed by authorities that, readerless, dies on the page. All those who want to be heard must be given the opportunity, but those who choose silence must be respected. How can we devise effective "sharing mechanisms": procedures that ensure that inkshedding becomes part of the conference conversation, rather than an empty ritual? And, because I don't think Rick and I have come anywhere near defining the range of opinion, I would like to hear from those Inkshedders who do not like inkshedding (yes, there are some).

Anthony Paré  
McGill University

---

## Those Lazy Students

Over the years I've heard the same comment a number of times from English teachers. It's expressed with a note of sadness and resignation, and sometimes just a hint of smugness. It goes something like this: "They don't really want to learn. All they want to know is, 'Will it be on the exam?'"

Oh, those lazy students.

If we can ignore for the moment the improbability of the remark being literally true – it seems to me that students want to learn just as much as we do – it might be useful for us to consider why students ask the question "Will this be on the exam?" and why teachers find such a question off-putting or depressing.

One reason students might pose such a question would be to help them set priorities in their school work, to try to get a grip on what is most important among what must seem to them to behuge quantities of undifferentiated information. If this is the case, the question would seem to be an intelligent one. Why would a teacher deride this kind of practical motivation? We expect fairly instrumental motivations in adult learners. Why would we expect otherwise for high school, college, or university students?

The response to this question is often no answer at all, but rather another question imbued with tones of high morality: "Whatever happened to learning for the love of learning?" But this response is hypocritical, I believe, or perhaps just academic whistling in the wind. Does "learning for the love of learning" ever really happen? Don't people typically learn to do something (that they've decided they want to do), or to answer a question (that they've decided is interesting)? As Russ Hunt said in an inkshedding at Halifax: "Why do we persist in thinking people can learn in order to learn, other than to get something done?"

## Those Lazy Students

---

We might ask ourselves what students could possibly make of a teacher's exhortation to learn for the love of learning, while so much depends – divisions in the syllabus and the pace at which material is covered, accreditation and admission to further years and new programmes, bursaries, peer and parental approval – so much depends, not on a love of learning, but on tests and exam results. (I do not, incidentally, decry testing. I am puzzled by teachers who test, but refuse to “teach to the test.”) In a school system that is foisted on them, in a programme in which they have little choice, and with teachers, texts and forms of instruction and evaluation all imposed from above, is the question “Will this be on the exam?” not a reasoned one? It seems to me the student question is an insightful and intelligent response to the world that students inhabit.

Then too, we might wonder what students make of teachers who, for much of their learning, take paid professional development days and sabbaticals. Or of teachers whose learning largely coincides with the syllabus at the local teachers' college. Or of teachers whose only studies are university courses that enhance their standing on the pay scale. We might stop and consider: how many people do students run into who are visibly learning just for the love of it?

I would hazard that most folks, most of us, often want to know: “Is it going to be on the exam? Do I really need to know this?”

Of course people do learn to ends other than the carrots of money and pass, and sticks other than poverty and fail. Much of importance is learned unconsciously and through happenstance. And people learn much, consciously and through effort, for reasons other than credit and career. But this learning is always voluntary, and springs from individual interests.

Learning for money, or to please parents, or to “get something done” – or simply to pass the exam – is no bad thing. It's probably a good thing, or at least an okay thing. It's probably the most common motivation for most of the conscious learning we do.

Jamie MacKinnon  
49 Victoria Street  
Ottawa, Ont. K1M 1S9

---

## Two Responses to Judy Segal

### 1. Reading The Classroom “Set-Up”

**In** responding to Judy Segal's “Pedagogy, the Rhetoric of Failure, and a Call for Mail,” I am joining what I anticipate to be the legion who have felt student resistance to the emancipation offered in “nonauthoritarian” classrooms shaped by feminist pedagogy and practice. My exploration of the reality of that resistance has been informed by discussions in a number of institutional settings and by articles as engaging as Laurie Finke's analysis of student E. L.'s frustration with writing a term paper for an undergraduate feminist theory class Finke taught. In “Knowledge as Bait: Feminism, Voice, And the Pedagogical Unconscious,” Finke acknowledges that “students' resistance to being freed from authority may at times be as intense as their resistance to authority.” She records her own deepening awareness of the synchronic nature of two seemingly opposing forces: the pedagogical practices in the “feminist” classroom, on the one hand, which are subversive by design of the traditional institutional set-up that has privileged the teacher's centrality,

and those institutional values and processes, on the other hand, which remain embedded within the "liberated," student-centered environment. We misrepresent the real nature of the learning space, Finke advises, when we deny the extent to which inequities between students and teachers determine the nature of the "transference" that takes place: "The relationship between teacher and student, then, can be no more equal than the relationship between mother and child so valued by many feminists. An analysis of transference will necessarily be an analysis of the power relationship involved in teaching. Inequality sets off a process of discovery leading to a place from which [the student can produce] (rather than merely repeat) language," or to what we commonly refer to as "voice" (18-19).

For Finke, this "inequality – the student's position of ignorance and resistance, the teacher's of supposed knowledge and mastery – is the "bait," the "ruse" or the "lure" that sets off the differences between transmission theories which create the illusion of a "straight exchange" of knowledge and dialogic frames which create the illusion of the dynamic nature of the discursive strategies (interpretation) which construct knowledge in the classroom (19). I am presenting my "story" within the context of Segal's sense of "failure" and Finke's "bait" theory because the terms that we often use to describe the process of decentering are wonderfully telling. Finke suggests that our attempts "to eliminate authority serve only to mystify" what theorists like Paula Treichler and Constance Penley define as "the hierarchical distribution of power embodied by the university's institutional structure." And Finke concludes her work within this section by noting that – while the decentering strategy "may have been more or less successful during a time when feminist teachers were themselves in precarious and vulnerable positions within the academy, when many were untenured or adjunct faculty" – the situation has changed because "feminist teachers have achieved tenure and full professor status, [and] the fiction of the teacherless classroom becomes harder to maintain." For Finke, students "enter the classroom believing that the teacher knows the right answer; her refusal to reveal that answer – and feminist teachers quite often claim that they have no right" answers – can and often does cause more distress than empowerment. Regardless of our attempts to de-center our authority as teachers, we must evaluate our students and must do so from the position of a subject supposed to know" (17-18).

Finally, Finke concludes her story of E. L. by observing that E. L.'s expression

of her own resistance to writing feminist theory (which was not, I would add, a resistance to feminist theory itself) – may finally be less significant to what it revealed to E. L. about her relations to learning than for the insight it provided me into my own ambiguous relations to authority as a feminist teacher. Because E. L. so dutifully kept it, the diary provided a record of our communicative and enunciatory strategies. Reading the diary after the class had ended compelled me to interrogate my own position of mastery and authority in relation to the claims of feminist thinking about pedagogy, which often purports to have dispensed with mastery and authority. It forced me to look at the blind spots in what Evelyn Fox Keller and Helene Moglen have called the "romance of women's culture." (25)

My story engages the terms that we use to narrate our experiences within the classrooms we construct with our students. Finke's language so clearly articulates the character and drive of the patriarchal signifier that we hear the coercive grinding of the system's wheels and re-experience its training, its "fiction" which many have celebrated as the "realism of the male order." We shudder under the impact of our learned "respect" for "real" words like dutiful, compel, mastery, authority. These are the words that understandably assert their power even as we cling to the long and arduous journey many of us, both male and female, little and big, have made to become aware of the devastating consequences of tactics that depend on the exposure (humiliation) of the one who is not

## Reading The Classroom "Set-Up"

---

"in control." And, Finke can press my buttons: my resistance to performing in this usual plot, this suggested second-rate "romance of women's culture"; my sense that if I've jumped through the requisite number of hoops, have received my "papers," I can join the ranks of the fully-fledged, the "tenured"; my hope that my students will take note of the knowledge that I have acquired and appreciate the essentially "liberal" nature of the academic community to which I have been admitted.

I look with alarm at the pressure Finke's "insider" account exerts despite my own deepening feeling that the very terms she relies on to image the classroom set-up demonstrate the extent to which we all can forget that the students themselves really do count. E.L.'s diary of the term project which she was researching and writing is not "finally less significant for what it revealed to E. L. about her relation to learning than for the insight it provided" Finke "into [her] own ambiguous relations to authority as a feminist teacher" (25). To suggest that it is "less significant" to E. L. is to invalidate in some measure Finke's claim that her relations to authority as a "feminist teacher are 'ambiguous.'" In fact, what Finke also may have forgotten is that the classroom set-up is emphatically and irrevocably a "set-up": the more teachers and students cultivate and share an awareness of the artificial nature of that landscape, the more able they are to ensure that resistance to authority and freedom from it inform every dimension of the work that is done together within its boundaries. A discussion which enforces very limited concepts of teacher authority and student ignorance simply denies that these are "fictions," illusions that are created by the institution and endorsed in the variety of its measures of successful performance. To do any less is to extol the virtue of the pedagogy of the impressed – to simply support the process of mystification we are obliged to interrogate as members of the university community itself.

I am not suggesting that the university abandon its standards any more than I would require teachers to undervalue the years of preparation and study that mark their commitment of the "mastery" of some aspect of their discipline. But even if we allow the term "mastery" to stand in this one instance, it is important to remember that as teachers we are in the process of mastering a discipline, not the students who have voluntarily entered the territory which we call home. So too, we should not simply see student resistance to a process which values their own inquiry as a measure of the inadequacy of a decentered classroom, unless we are aware of the extent to which the measures we are in fact using to make that assertion more appropriate respond to the traditional classroom set-ups they were intended to assess in the first place. Student resistance to the challenge of the academic tradition a teacher's pedagogy deliberately engages can be seen as a positive outcome, provided, as well, that the students themselves are fully aware of the implications of the challenge. In essence, this mutual understanding becomes an integral part of the course itself. Being "in this course" means accepting the fact that the tables will be turned, that understanding how knowledge is made up, exchanged, altered, and recovered within artificial settings, in both the individual classroom and the larger university building, is a declared objective. In this sense the what and the how intercede on each other's behalf and work against privileging content over form.

If we work to understand the effects of our expectations, their capacity to resist and embrace, to discern and ignore, to shape and dismantle the patterns the discipline offers as well as the structures within which those encounters take place, then we no longer concede that the student-teacher relationship articulates a preconceived and "necessary inequity." To accept that inequity is to reify inherited roles and to squander the dynamic nature of the dialogic process that depends on the multiple roles students and teachers experience within the classroom itself. If I ask a student to present a seminar as part of the course requirement, I am obliged to respect the fact that this student accepts the role of "teacher" during that presentation. I hold in abeyance as much as possible my role

as evaluator, just as the student handles the anxiety that accompanies the shift to the role of expert. It is a matter of trust and respect. I sincerely believe that the student has something to teach me and the student sincerely believes in the integrity of my declared position within this context.

In addition, both of us are simultaneously aware that a single classroom engages a variety of contexts. There are constraints we are obliged to represent because everything we do is taking place within a classroom whose existence is determined by university rules and regulations, as is our acceptance of the responsibilities those rules and regulations dictate. The student will receive an official grade, published in a transcript, determining in some measure his or her "entrance" into another set-up. But I cannot concede that student evaluations of my work simply do not have value by comparison. I'm not only talking about the official record – the statistical analysis that is available to students and the more private written commentary that is available to me but which I might make public through activity reports and applications for promotion. These evaluations take place at the end of the course; I read them when my grading is completed. The delay doesn't diminish their impact. I explore alternatives. I am really serious about the way I can redirect the energies that have entrenched unnecessary inequities between student and teacher in more traditional classroom set-ups. I can introduce a variety of interim evaluation formats; focused journal entries inviting students to assess a particular unit of study, approach, discussion format; more formal mid-term evaluations designed by the students themselves and analyzed by them; open discussions of the value of the feedback I've provided on drafts, on the way I've handled a delicate roundtable session, on the merit of the in-class essay we designed together, on the usefulness of small group activities in relation to a particular text, on the accessibility of key information, on my techniques of organization. The opportunities are as varied as the vulnerability required to sustain them is deeply felt by all participants in the process.

When I walk into lecture halls with their mighty and tortuous incline planes and see the extent to which the fear of falling and the fear of failure coincide, I acknowledge that it is by no accident that this space deifies the instructor's position and entrenches the lecture as the preferred mode. I ask my students to be aware of the implications of this set-up, as well as that engaged by the variety of other learning stages within the university so that we can respect the complicated nature of the relationship we are about to shape together during the course of a term. By investigating how these contexts determine what it means to be "in this course," we are more able to accept the creative way in which feminist pedagogies themselves acknowledge diverse "power" relationships within the life of a learning process.

Segal notes in her *Inkshed* invitation that in the class in which she did not "relentlessly" lecture, in the class where she relied on an image of herself "conducting a group using nonperformance strategies, student evaluations remarked that she had been insufficiently directive, insufficiently informative, even insufficiently organized" (16). Segal interprets that insufficiency as failure. Yet her very choice to work with collaborative designs and to see her students as resources must challenge the appropriateness of the student evaluation forms themselves, whose questions I can only guess were designed to measure the quality of more traditional teacher-student relationships. Segal I'm sure has asked whether the questions her students responded to could in fact comprehend the nature of the experience she had attempted to provide. She had chosen to be less "directive," to take less control in matters of information transmission and organization. Her students recognized this fact even though the evaluation form may have sabotaged their ability to communicate this understanding as well as the frustration these changes naturally present. The building of trust that is required when these kinds of risks are taken on all "sides" has to be part of the course's stated objective so that the courage it requires is given the credit it deserves.

In her CCCC proposal, Segal observes: "the lecture as a hegemonic genre is so firmly entrenched in the academy that efforts to diffuse power in the classroom can meet student resistance in part because no genre is in place to accommodate relinquished power – at least no genre with conventions so well-established that all students are comfortable with (or even trust) the move." Because the lecture-hall set-up dominates how we perceive the geography of alternate spaces – seminar, meeting, and "regular" classrooms, we have forgotten that other genres are already in place within the university. We enter their horizontal planes everyday. Finke argues that she has been forced to look at the "blind spots" of the romance of women's culture. This "romance" I suggest encourages us to value the stress that accompanies the process of empowerment which can define student-teacher work. It is clear that Finke's sights themselves have been too narrowly focused by the hierarchical modes that train her eye. Segal's invitation asks us all to take a second, a third, even a fourth look at what is no longer familiar terrain.

Deborah Schnitzer  
English Department  
University of Winnipeg

### Works Cited

- Finke, Laurie, "Knowledge as Bait: Feminism, Voice, And The Pedagogical Unconscious," *College English* 55, 1 (1993): 7-27.  
Penley, Constance. "Teaching in Your Sleep: Feminism and Psychoanalysis." *Theory in the Classroom*. Ed. Cary Nelson. Urbana: U of Illinois P. 1986, 129-48.  
Segal, Judy. "Pedagogy, the Rhetoric of Failure, and a Call for Mail." *Inkshed* 11.2 (1992): 16.  
Trieckler, Paula A. "Teaching Feminist Theory." *Theory in the Classroom*. Ed. Cary Nelson. Urbana: U of Illinois P. 1986, 57-128.

---

## 2. A response to Judy Segal

I think Judy Segal is right when, in *Inkshed* 11.2, she writes about the lecture being so firmly entrenched in the academy and thus students being uncomfortable when exposed to alternate modes of instruction, but I feel there are other reasons to explain what happened in her classes. The sad fact of the matter is that in far too many instances kids in high school are discouraged from independent thinking. In spite of what the philosophies of many Boards of Education might proclaim, students are often expected to look to the teacher for the right answer or for approval. Thus these same students feel threatened if they find themselves in a non-directed classroom. No wonder when they come to university they prefer the lecture where the teacher is the authority.

For a number of years I taught high school with a man who epitomized Douglas Barnes' transmission teacher. He was the font of all knowledge, which he duly passed on to his students. He was very good at what he did; he was also generally well liked, which is not surprising. All his students had to do was exactly what he told them, and they would do well. Some – usually the very bright – challenged his teaching and were not successful in his classes, but the majority accepted his authority and thus felt safe. I wonder what these students really learned about education. I am sure of one thing though: they would be uncomfortable in, and therefore resistant to, a student-centred classroom. I feel therefore that a main cause for students' reactions to Judy's two different classes originates in their early schooling.

I also feel that it depends on the makeup of the students themselves. Last year at McGill I taught a course in English Curriculum and Instruction to student teachers; as much as possible I

decentred the class. The reactions of the students were mixed. Some were strongly in favour of my approach – they liked the idea of discovering new methods and trying out new ideas on their own.

Others were equally strongly opposed – they felt that because I had taught high school for over 25 years I should tell them exactly what to do. I must admit that, a week or so before the students were to start on their practice teaching session, I took pity on the latter group and lectured to them about things such as classroom management and the creation of lesson plans. They were delighted – they felt that these were the best classes they had had. The former group, on the other hand, were horrified. In their journals I read remarks such as the following: “Is this the same Bill? This remote authoritarian figure who teaches from the front?”

The point of all this is to illustrate that I don't think the cause of Judy's situation is necessarily that the lecture has become entrenched in the academy. I think that it depends on students' earlier experiences with education. I have often found that in the same class I get reactions to my teaching, which is usually student-centred, that vary according to what kind of teaching they have had earlier. Certainly, if my students have never come into contact with a non-directive teacher (as I try to be) before, they are very uncomfortable – at least in the beginning.

Bill Boswell  
McGill University

---

## Registration for the Inkshed 10 Conference

Inkshed 10 will be held from the evening of Thursday, June 3 (about 7:30 p.m.), to noon on Sunday, June 6, at The Opinicon, a resort at Chaffey's Locks, Ontario. The Opinicon is an old, family-owned resort with beautiful grounds. The resort is relatively isolated: there are no nearby urban distractions. The Opinicon offers a number of recreational activities including swimming, tennis and canoeing.

Since the Opinicon's conference room seats a maximum of 52 people, registration will be limited to this number. Registration forms will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis. All people who would like to attend, including presenters, must register.

The Opinicon operates on the American plan, so fees are all-inclusive. The fees cover: three nights accommodation, all meals and coffee breaks from breakfast on Friday, June 4, to lunch on Sunday, June 6 (Thursday dinner has not been booked), use of recreation facilities, a staff gratuity, P.S.T., G.S.T., and registration and administrative costs.

Bus service from Ottawa to Chaffey's Locks will be available, but will be charged separately (about \$30 for the return trip). The bus trip will take about 2 hours.

The village of Chaffey's Locks, on the Rideau canal system which links Kingston and Ottawa, is about 45 minutes by car from Kingston, about three-and-a-half hours from Toronto, and about three hours from Montreal. Registrants will be sent further transportation and accommodation details later.

A registration form is included with this issue.

---

# Position Available:

## Director, Centre for the Official Languages of Canada, Laurentian University

Laurentian University seeks applications for the position of the Director of the Centre for the Official Languages of Canada to take up the position on July 1, 1993.

The Centre for the Official Languages of Canada is responsible for the development of students' writing and language competency in their first language and for staff's language competency in their second language. The Centre administers both Laurentian's graduation writing competency requirement, and its Writing Across the Curriculum Programme/Langue Intégrée aux Programmes (WAC/LIP). It is also intended that it will be a centre for research into writing and language. As a result of the approval of the bilingualism policy by the Board of Laurentian University, the role of the Centre in second language teaching is expected to expand over the next few years. At the same time, Laurentian is committed to the continuing improvement of its WAC/LIP Programme.

Candidates should be fluently bilingual, be able to direct applied research projects, and have relevant education and experience. A Ph.D. in a language and writing related field is preferred. Experience in administration and especially in the administration of similar programmes will be a major asset. Written applications, accompanied by a résumé and the names of three referees, should be submitted by February 28, 1993 in confidence to:

**Dr. Paul Cappon  
Vice-President, Academic  
Laurentian University  
Ramsey Lake Road  
Sudbury, ON  
P3E 2C6**

Laurentian University has an employment equity policy. Applications are encouraged from aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, and racial minorities. Applications from qualified women are particularly welcome. Laurentian University is a smoke-free environment.

In conformity with the requirements of Immigration Canada, priority will be given to Canadian citizens and permanent residents.

---

# Conference Announcement

The Canadian Association of Teachers of Technical Writing/Association canadienne des professeurs de rédaction technique et scientifique (CATTW/ACPRTS) will meet at the Conference of the Learned Societies at Carleton University, May 30, 31, June 1, 1993 (just before the Inkshed Conference). The programme is as follows:

## SUNDAY, MAY 30

- 9:15- 10:30**
- Lilita Rodman, University of British Columbia "The Active Voice in Scientific Articles"
  - Jeanne Dancette, Université de Montréal "Eléments d'explication des problèmes de traduction dans la langue des affaires au Québec"
- 10:30 - 10:45** coffee
- 10:45 - 12:00**
- Janet Giltrow, Simon Fraser University "Evaluation and the Ideology of Correctness"
  - Amanda Goldrick-Jones, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute "Just the Facts, Ma'am!: Evaluating Objectivity, Gender, and Power in Technical Writing Texts"
- 12:00 - 1:15** lunch
- 1:15 - 2:15** Invited Speaker
- Thomas Huckin, University of Utah "Linguistic Prescriptivism and Stylistic Rules"
- 2:14 - 2:30** coffee
- 2:30 - 3:45**
- Louise Larivière, Université de Montréal, Concordia University "La résumé documentaire comme genre"
  - Christine Parkin, University of British Columbia "Do the Canadian Charter and Provincial Human Rights Acts Impact upon the Preparation of the Résumé and the Conducting of the Job Interview?"

## MONDAY, MAY 31

- 9:15 - 10:30**
- Diana Wegner, Douglas College "The Influence of Authorities and Standards in Writers' Choices: A Protocol Analysis of what Writers Themselves Monitor in Negotiating Different Criteria of Appropriateness"
  - Michael Jordan, Queen's University "Evaluating Mature Writing: The Complex Noun Phrase"
- 10:30 - 10:45** coffee
- 10:45 - 12:00** POSTER SESSION
- 12:00 - 1:15** lunch
- 1:15 - 2:15** Invited Speaker
- Stephen Doheny-Farina, Clarkson University "From Student to Expert: Praxis, Product Innovation, and the Teaching of Technical Writing"
- 2:15 - 2:30** coffee
- 2:30** ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

## Conference Announcement

---

### TUESDAY, JUNE 1

- 9:15 - 10:00 • Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway, Carleton University; Patrick Dias and Anthony Paré, McGill University "Report on Research into Workplace and Classroom Genres"
- 10:00 - 10:15 coffee
- 10:15 - 12:00 • Pamela Russell, Université de Sherbrooke "Evaluation: A Holistic Perspective"  
• Anne Parker, University of Manitoba "Evaluating Collaborative Projects and Assessment Methods"  
• Geoff Cragg, University of Calgary "Evaluating Speakers and Speeches"
- 12:00 - 2:30 • Charles Horn, University of Victoria "The Role of Discourse in Constituting the Relationships between Medical Practitioners and Patients"  
• Michelle Valiquette, Simon Fraser University "Analyzing the Fraser Institute's Discourse on Women and the Economies of Labour"
- 2:30 - 2:45 coffee
- 2:45 - 4:00 • Bruce Lundgren, University of Western Ontario "Reducing Uncertainty in Evaluation: Marking Modalities"  
• Catherine Schryer, University of Waterloo "Stability and Change in the Technical Communication Classroom: Teaching with M. M. Bakhtin and Raymond Williams"

For information about registration, accommodation, and so on:

Learned Societies Conference 1993  
Carleton University  
1125 Colonel By Drive  
Ottawa, Ont.  
K1S 5B6

FAX: 1-613-788-5781  
Phone: 1-613-788-3978

Janet Giltrow  
Programme Chair