

Inkshed Newsletter, January 2012

Introduction

The first issue of the new Inkshed newsletter celebrates both newness and collaboration.

- It starts with [Susan Drain](#)'s gleeful minutes from the May 2011 meeting in Fredericton, where a roomful of people committed themselves to continuing and expanding the tradition of informal Inkshed conferences and other opportunities for interaction and discussion, all under the aegis of the Canadian Association for the Study of Language and Learning (CASLL). (See also the call for the upcoming [Inkshed 28 conference](#) in May 2012.)
- [Theresa Hyland](#) expands on her remarks at that same meeting about the need for Canadian writing programs to adapt to, and shape, new conditions for teaching. She notes several trends and their accompanying challenges, and asks for further commentary and views.
- [Jean Mason, Janice Fung, and Wendy Freeman](#) provide one example of innovation in their account of the inventive course structures for the new Masters of Professional Communication program at Ryerson University. They note their own collaboration as teachers, outline the combinations of theory and practice that underpin the program, and describe their students' use of new media, with links to some fascinating samples.
- [Carl Leggo](#) rounds out the set with three poems about language and meaning. Enjoy their wit and savour their insight!

Articles

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Inkshed Reviviscent: May 2011 Minutes

Susan Drain, Mount Saint Vincent University

A meeting under the banner of INKSHED/CASLL took place in Fredericton at the end of May 2011, following the CASDW conference. The minutes below give evidence of an organization being galvanized to new life, not for the sake of CASLL itself, but for what CASLL makes possible: a community, a conference, and the hospitality for inkshedding on the issues that concern, engage and stir us as Canadian writing studies folks with a passion for learning and teaching.

Canadian Association for the Study of Language and Learning,

Annual General Meeting, May 31, 2011

Roger Graves called the meeting to order shortly after 9:15 am.

1. Election of the Board of Directors: The following slate of nominations was acclaimed unanimously.

One-year term	Two-year term	Three-year term
Brian Hotson	Michael Ryan	Karen E. Smith
Kathryn Alexander	Susan Chaudoir	Heather Graves
		Brock MacDonald

Brock MacDonald, acting Treasurer, agreed to continue to serve in the role of Treasurer.

2. Appointment of committees and chairs: The following individuals were acclaimed to recruit committee members and to serve as chairs of the following committees:

Newsletter : Margaret Procter

Publications: Karen E. Smith

Conference: Brock MacDonald

In the course of the discussion regarding a conference chair, the proposal from the University of Toronto to host an Inkshed conference in Toronto in 2012 in conjunction with CASDW and the Congress was enthusiastically supported, especially as the conference will celebrate the contribution of Margaret Procter to writing at the University of Toronto and in the larger Canadian writing community.

3. Proposal for a Committee to Revise the Constitution: Given the renewed enthusiasm for the elected office demonstrated earlier in the meeting, Roger Graves withdrew this item from the agenda. It was remarked that the Board of Directors might propose some revisions as a result of operations over the coming year.

4a. Financial Report: Brock MacDonald reported on the membership: paid-up membership is approaching 30. A financial report was circulated and accepted. A motion (MacDonald/Hyland) to authorize the designation of up to \$2500 as seed money for the 2012 conference was passed unanimously.

Inkshed conferences are generally planned to break even. Other CASLL expenditures are in support of Inkshed Publications and of students attending the conference. Karen E. Smith explained that the current cost of publishing a book might be between \$1500 and \$3500.

4b. Membership Fees: The current fee structure is \$40 for members and \$20 for students and un(der)employed/retired. Various possible fee structures were discussed, and the Board of Directors was instructed to continue the current fee structure for the immediate future, and to bring a motion regarding membership fees to the 2012 AGM. Among issues to be considered are the advantages and disadvantages of a virtual membership, and a third level of fees allowing for an optional "sustaining" membership.

5. Motion to renew inkshed.ca domain name: A motion from Sargent/ Cragg was passed unanimously approving Roger Graves's renewal of the domain name. It was pointed out that the CASLL/Inkshed website is now located on both the Saint Thomas University server and a server in Vancouver. Roger Graves and Russ Hunt will co-ordinate web efforts.

6. Report from Inkshed Publications: Karen E. Smith circulated and reviewed a report from Inkshed Publications. An eighth and final title (by Miriam Horne) is being edited and publication is anticipated later this year. An inventory of books remains on hand in Winnipeg; the more recent titles are published on demand. The team (Stan Straw, Laura Atkinson, Pat Sadowy, and Karen E. Smith) which has been responsible for Inkshed Publications since its inception in 1991 wishes to transfer the responsibility to a new team.

The possibilities of establishing a clearing house or of electronic publication were raised. The difficulty of finding the publications was noted.

Roger and Heather Graves offered to head a new editorial team. The following individuals volunteered to serve on the editorial board: Kathryn Alexander, Brian Hotson, Theresa Hyland, Anne Parker, Andrea Williams. A motion (Hyland/MacDonald) to approve the transfer of Inkshed Publications to the new team, after the publication of the Horne book, was approved unanimously. R. and H. Graves will arrange to pick up the existing inventory.

A motion of thanks (Drain/Hunt) to Stan Straw, Laura Atkinson, Pat Sadowy, and Karen E. Smith for their exemplary work with Inkshed Publications was approved unanimously.

Kathryn Alexander suggested that a book in association with the 2012 Inkshed Conference might be considered, although it was pointed out that a working conference is not always compatible with a proceedings. Another possibility is an electronic publication of readings before the conference together with responses compiled from the conference.

Karen E. Smith made the following suggestions to the incoming team:

- Involve a graduate student
- Consider applying for a SSHRC grant to explore multimedia /multiple source publication

7. Other Business: Marian McKeown, in her capacity as president of the Canadian Writing Centres Association, made an impassioned plea for her members to be drawn into the community of writing studies in Canada, particularly in association with CASDW and CASLL. She reported that their organization, currently a Special Interest Group of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, was completing the process to join Congress, and hoped to organize a meeting in 2012, perhaps in association with CASDW. Meanwhile, membership is open to anyone interested in Writing Centre Work, and CASLL members and other Inkshedders are encouraged to join and participate in the Writing Centre list. For information: <http://mailman.mcmaster.ca/mailman/listinfo/cwca-l>. Meanwhile, the organizers of Inkshed 2012 are encouraged to reach out to CWCA.

The Business Meeting was adjourned to lunch by unanimous agreement, not before several expressions of pleasure that CASLL seems to be well launched on a new period of vitality.

Writing in the Changing Post-Secondary Environment

Theresa Hyland, Huron University College, University of Western Ontario, thyland@huron.uwo.ca

At the Inkshed meeting on May 31, 2011, I made comments inspired by an article by Patrick Deane and Pierre Zundel in the December 2010 issue of *University Affairs*, "[It's Time to Transform Undergraduate Education](#)." The authors characterize the changing landscape of undergraduate

education at the institutional level and argue that we have to come to terms with these institutional changes to “reorient ourselves to our goals [through a] . . . radical re-conceptualizing of the teaching and learning process, where the goal becomes ‘helping students learn’ rather than ‘teaching’.”

Three movements in higher education in Canada today require us as writing instructors and writing service providers to reconceptualize our practices.

The first is the globalization of the university environment. This takes several forms, including an increase in the population of international students on our campuses and the attempt, in existing and new courses, to help our Canadian students understand the implications and consequences of living in a globalized world. Internationalization raises several questions for us as providers of writing services. How can we redesign our writing services to better serve the increased international population? What kinds of research initiatives can we participate in to help us understand and serve this population better? How do our services and courses help Canadian students participate in this globalized world?

A second change is the introduction of new programs of study. Communications and media studies programmes have introduced the study of different film genres, TV, cartoons, and comic books , as well as the study of how communication is changing with current technology (i.e. twitter, blogs, text messaging). There is also a trend towards interdisciplinary programs that are theme-based rather than discipline-based (i.e. Social Justice; War studies; Global Studies). At the same time, a new genre of courses is emerging that includes community-based learning and experiential learning alongside text-based learning. These often require reflective journal writing during the course, and end-of-term projects that synthesize the learning done through theory-based reading and practical community work. These writing projects increasingly bear little resemblance to the library-based, research essay format usually taught in writing classes. How can writing services better serve students who are writing in these formats? How does one teach or respond to reflective writing on experience? What are the expectations of different disciplines for this kind of writing? What kind of research can we do to illuminate these issues and determine best practices?

The final issue is budget cuts that result in the hiring of part-time instructors instead of full-time tenure-track faculty, and larger class sizes. Part-time instructors often teach three to five courses at different institutions during one term. Many are inexperienced and don't have the time or commitment to one institution to develop teaching practices that help optimize students' learning. More large classes require different assignments and marking strategies to help instructors deal with the larger workload. How can our services help these instructors in their disciplinary practice? Is there a danger of writing services being closed down as a “nice to have” service rather than a “need to have”?

In the article in *University Affairs*, Deane and Zundel quote Kuhn's call for a "Profound escape from inherited paradigms" to deal with these changes. So, what does all of this mean for disciplinary writing? What are the generic skills students need to develop for different types of writing in terms of evidence-gathering, the creation of claims, and participation in new genres? Is our standard practice in providing appointments or in the construction of credit writing classes adequate to deal with these changes?

My talk at CASDW in 2011, just before the Inkshed meeting, had indicated some of the implications of globalization for the way we run the Writing Centre at Huron College, for research in writing, and ultimately for curriculum change. Our new multilingual writing tutors, who function both in English and Japanese or Chinese, are fully integrated into our team at the Writing Centre. Our *Multilingual Learners' Handbook* has just seen its first print run and has been distributed widely at the college. That publication has made me rethink some of the issues handled in our general handbook, and has created the basis for a new edition of that text. December will see me in China doing some research into how writing is taught at Beijing Language and Culture University; at the same time, a colleague from Dongbei University of Finance and Economics has been shadowing me in both my advanced writing course for native speakers and my beginners' and intermediate courses for international students. This colleague has also spent a couple of hours each week in the Writing Centre speaking with and shadowing Grace Howell, my senior Writing Tutor, as she tutors students. The premise of this collaborative study is to help both the Chinese universities and our own university to modify practices to better meet the needs of the students. Finally, as interdisciplinary studies become more commonplace in our university communities, we have begun a dialogue with faculty about their expectations for writing and how these are evolving as they experiment with new forms of writing. I've found that the faculty members welcome these discussions as much as I do.

I see many examples of changes at the course level that address these changing conditions. For example, a new course at UWO is described as offering "a basic understanding of the principles of 'visual rhetoric and argumentation.'" Faculty members, including part-time teachers, increasingly seek out consultations with writing centres to design appropriately-pitched writing assignments and workshops to help students complete those assignments. On the CASDW listserv, Roger Graves and others have discussed group writing appointments where students collaborate with each other in the presence of a tutor to produce or improve their assignments.

In exploring the changing conditions of our workplace, and in telling you about the new initiatives in writing that I have come across, I merely wish to begin a dialogue within our association about where our future lies both as an organization and as a profession. So, I'll turn the discussion over to you. What new initiatives are you exploring? What are the opportunities, or barriers that you have discovered in implementing these initiatives?

Interconnectivity and Interdisciplinarity at Ryerson

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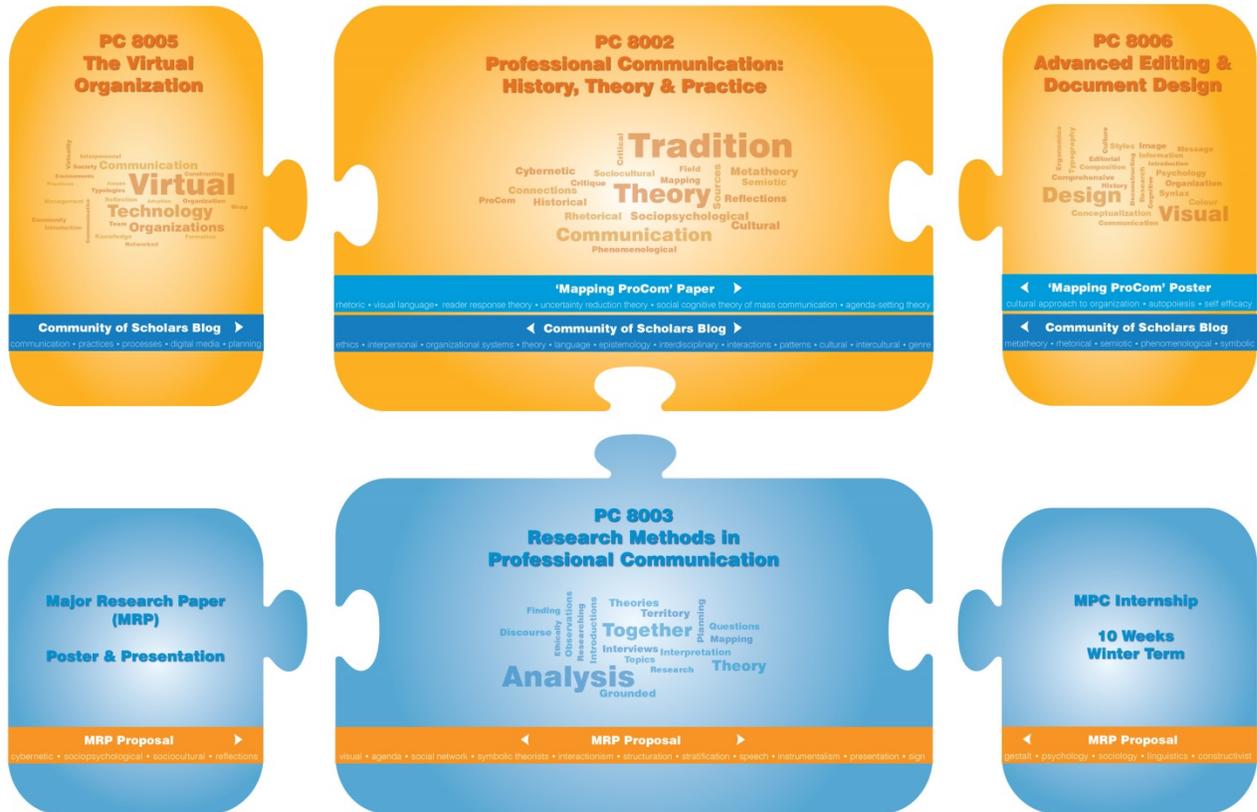
Janice Fung, Janice.fung@ryerson.ca

Wendy Freeman, wfreeman@ryerson.ca

The first year of any academic program is an incredible challenge. After nearly five years of proposing and planning, Ryerson University's [Master of Professional Communication \(MPC\)](#) welcomed its first cohort of twenty-three students in fall 2010. Three intensive semesters later, those same twenty-three marched proudly across the stage to receive their graduate degrees while the equally proud School of Professional Communication faculty looked on (and then rushed back to their duties with a second cohort of twenty-four).

The MPC is a one-year, three-semester, fulltime program that includes seven courses, an internship and an "MRPPP"—a major research paper, presentation and poster. Part of Ryerson's Edward S. Rogers, Sr. Graduate School for Advanced Communication, the MPC joins other Masters programs including Documentary Media, Journalism, Media Production, Photographic Preservation, Fashion, and Communication and Culture (the latter a joint MA/PhD program with York University). The MPC is housed in the Rogers Communications Centre—a 140,000 square foot structure featuring state-of-the-art computing laboratories, media production facilities, networked media and print facilities and high-tech classrooms.

Not surprisingly, it wasn't only the students who learned during the first year. Reflecting on that initial experience as we entered our second year in Fall 2011, we've been able to iron out some wrinkles, develop some value-added elements and eliminate some unnecessary complications. As we look back, however, we can also commend ourselves on some very careful planning that resulted in an overall smooth and successful program launch. In particular, we all agree that the conceptualization and execution of the program's four required courses as an interdisciplinary curricular module was an integral element in moving students through such a demanding program in such a short time. The image designed by Dr. Janice Fung represents the interdisciplinarity and interconnectivity inherent in that model:



Of the seven courses MPC students must complete, four are required and three are electives. Three of the required courses and one elective are taken in the fall semester, while one required course plus two electives and the internship are completed in the winter term. The spring/summer semester is devoted to completing the major research paper and preparing the research poster and presentation (MRPPP). Let's look at a more detailed description of exactly what takes place.

The required courses in the fall and the faculty responsible for developing and teaching them are as follows:

- Professional Communication: History, Theory, Practice (Dr. Jean Mason, who is also the Graduate Program Director of the MPC)
- Advanced Editing and Document Design (Dr. Janice Fung)
- The Virtual Organization (Dr. Wendy Freeman)

And in the winter:

- Research Methods (Dr. Catherine Schryer, who is also Chair of the School of Professional Communication)

These four core courses each contain interconnected elements common to one or more of the other core courses. Specifically, the three fall courses share a joint Community of Scholars (COS) blog in which students critically inquire about what they are learning and make interdisciplinary connections among the three courses. Students have used this opportunity to explore how the visual, technological and theoretical concepts they are examining come together as they pursue their individual interests. For example, one student in this year's cohort wrote a blog post tracing the relationship she identified between the concept of organizational co-optation of citizen journalism and the adoption of street styles by major fashion labels. In this blog post the student connects a reading for the Virtual Organization course about CNN's use of private citizens' content with a reading that same week in Advanced Editing and Document Design on personal branding. In another post, the same student wrote in detail about Social Presence Theory as she prepared her research paper for Professional Communication: History, Theory and Practice. By writing consistently throughout the semester about her courses, the student was able to follow the trail of her learning across time and topic. The blog is assessed collaboratively by the three instructors and counts for 10% in each of the three courses. If you'd like to take a look at the COS blog, [click here](#), but don't forget to return for the rest of the story....

In addition to the COS blog that spans the three required fall courses, two of those same core courses, the professional communication theory and the document design courses, share a major assignment known as the "Mapping ProCom Poster and Paper Project." In this assignment, students write an analytical research paper that develops an argument around a selected theoretical area. Students engage with a remarkable and diverse range of topics exploring concepts such as certainty reduction theory, visual rhetoric, genre theory, symbolic interactionism, presentation theory, autopoiesis, social cognitive theory, social information processing theory, to name a few. The research for that paper provides students with content for the poster for which they learn visual communication principles and application in the document design course. Visual solutions that inform the audience of the theory and connections between theorists and foundational or succeeding theories also range from metaphorical representations to iconic or symbolic solutions, typographical compositions to image-driven layouts. The process to develop the paper and poster is recursive, and students not only need to balance research and writing, but also to use the skills they develop in visual language (both theoretical and applied) to create a resolved and informative visual product. The Mapping ProCom poster is assessed collaboratively by the two instructors and counts for 20% in each of those two courses. To view a virtual exhibition of this year's (and few of last year's) Mapping ProCom posters, [click here](#), but again please remember to return for our final thoughts....

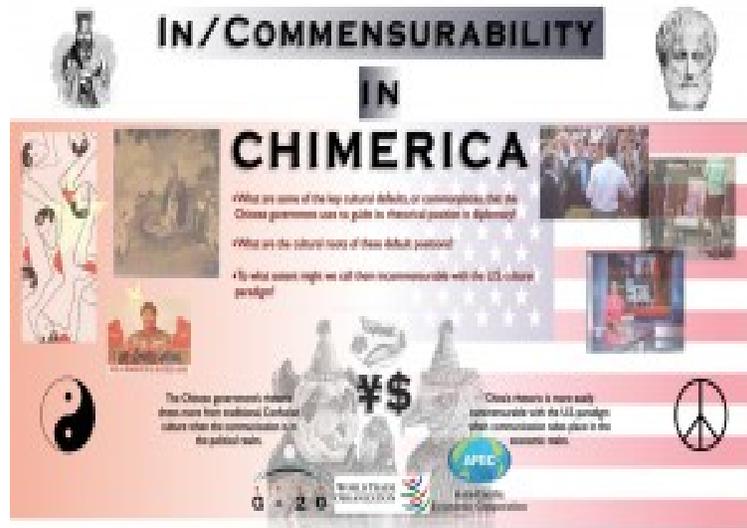
The collaborative assessment of the blog and the poster assignments has several obvious benefits. It draws on the shared expertise of all three course instructors, it breaks down intellectual silos among courses, it creates an enhanced sense of community among MPC faculty and students, and it provides a balance between theory and applied knowledge in the overall evaluation of student

work. Students are fairly assessed and commensurably rewarded for their efforts for cross-course projects. In a program as intensive and time sensitive as the MPC, allowing a reasonable portion of marks to count across two or more courses helps to balance student workload and streamline the process.

The final piece of the puzzle falls into place in the winter semester when all students take the Research Methods course. Their acquired expertise with communication theory allows them to prepare their MRPPP proposals under the direct guidance of the course instructor and with input from students' individual MRPPP supervisors. Moreover, a book of case readings is common to both the methods and the theory course, giving students a head start on their second-semester reading and building bridges between theory, practice and method. Students may collect data for their MRPPP during the internship, and the Research Methods class guides students through the research ethics approval process. Students finish the Research Methods course (and the winter semester) having virtually finished their major research paper proposals and gotten their research for this final project underway.

During the spring/summer semester students complete the major research paper and poster and prepare their presentations. The critical mindset acquired in writing their analytical course papers and the many oral presentations in their courses prepare students for the paper and presentation components of the MRPPP. The skills they acquire in the document design course enable them to produce the accompanying research poster. The MRP research poster is intended to be a visual representation of the MRP research question(s) and the research results. The objective of the poster is that a viewer should be able to look at it and grasp the essence of the MRP at a glance.

Students in this professional master's program are discouraged from creating the kind of research posters one sometimes sees at academic conferences—posters that are targeted solely to an academic audience and that are often so overloaded with information in general and text in particular that they have the opposite effect from communicating the essence of the research clearly and quickly. Students are encouraged to produce posters that engage a broader audience and prompt further discussion or, perhaps, a request to read the entire paper. The challenge is to present enough information on the poster that the purpose of the research and the main findings are evident in a graphically proficient and aesthetically pleasing design, while not overwhelming the viewer. MPC student Robert Delaney's poster complements his MRP research on "In/Commensurability in Chimerica: An Analysis of China's Rhetorical Strategies in Diplomatic conflicts with the United States" and illustrates the objective of the MRP research poster:



The culmination of the MPC program is the MPC Research Day held in early fall during orientation week for the next MPC cohort. This scheduling allows the incoming students to attend the Research Day when the outgoing students present their major research to faculty, peers and industry partners and to enjoy the research poster exhibition. Our first MPC Research Day was a huge success and was followed by an evening reception for all participants—an ideal occasion for everyone to mix and mingle while celebrating the achievements of the graduates (soon-to-be alumni) and welcoming the new class. Our incoming students told us how much they appreciated gaining a sense of program expectations by viewing the graduates' work and how motivated they were to witness them cross the finish line!

This article has focused principally on the four core courses of the MPC; however, undoubtedly, students also value their three electives chosen from among Advanced Speaking and Presentation Technology; Audiences and the Public; Communication and Legal Issues; Communication and Technology; Crisis Communication; Media Languages; Proposal Writing, Grant Seeking and Fundraising; Strategic Media Relations; Cross-Cultural Communication; and Visual Rhetoric in Public Contexts. We're also experimenting this year with trading a limited number of spaces with Ryerson's Ted Rogers School of Management MBA program to broaden our (and their) electives. Finding ways to sustain and expand options and programs in an economically viable way is a constant challenge that can ultimately lead to some creative value-added alternatives. But that's for another article....

A one-year professional Master's degree such as the MPC offers distinct advantages in a fast-paced, financially constrained world; however, the accelerated pace also requires an exceptional degree of organization and coordination if students (and faculty) are to move smoothly through their journey and arrive at their destination on schedule. Conceptualizing and developing our four compulsory

courses as a foundational unit tightly integrated with the Internship and the MRPPP is the engine that drives the train. The interdisciplinarity and interconnectivity of the MPC's core requirements—supported by new media—expedite the process and, perhaps most importantly, model the professional communication practices central to the MPC program.

Three Poems by Carl Leggo

Carl Leggo, University of British Columbia, carl.leggo@ubc.ca

Spelling

in school I learned to spell words with precise correctness
but I seldom learned the sensuous spell of language

in school I learned the rules and stipulations of grammar
but I seldom learned the glamour, the alchemy of prepositions

in school I learned the conventions of syntax
but I seldom learned the lyrical resonances of connections

in school I learned to chant the teacher's dictums
but I seldom learned the enchantment of poetry

in school I learned facts, fat fatuous facts full of lies,
but I seldom learned the restorative joy of fiction and fantasy

in school I learned to color inside the prescribed lines
but I seldom learned about wild places beyond, elsewhere

in school I learned the denotative definitions of words
but I seldom learned the magic of capacious connotation

in school I learned to be good, an anesthetic obedience
but I seldom learned to ask with aesthetic wonder, what is good

in school I learned to be neat tidy clean even pristine
but I seldom learned to enjoy the body's erotic energies

in school I learned to grow my brain-mind-head like a cabbage
but I seldom heard my heart beat or the hearts of anyone else

in school I learned to fear the arts like wild lions, lacking logic,
but I still caught glimpses of dandelions in the cracks of sidewalks

and so I dance with lines, straight and slant, curvaceous and cursive
and I dance with dandy lions, too, no longer fearing their ferociousness

Conjunctions

while I once sought the whole
I only ever found holes

because I can never tell
a whole story, I seek fragments

since I am an incomplete sentence
I seek communion with others

like the possibilities of conjunctions
ghosts are everywhere, everywhen

as they call us eagerly to connect
like bridges that lean on light

with invitations to walk in places
where we have been but never been

conjunctions invite us to know inter-
connections, even if our eyes are dim

Literally

pragmatic practical
with
prosaic exactitude

faith in the actual
factual eschewing
the figurative

we construe words
with too little imagination
we follow words

in the original
a literal translation
letter by letter

without
exaggeration
the nature of letters

is domesticated
in the alphabet
the literator is no

liberator
lashes with literalism
too literal

we need to lie
in the possibilities
of the littoral

know how
literacy & literature
are not owned

by the literati
we do not need
the letter of the law

we need
the love of the letter
the letter's love