

**SITUATING ACADEMIC READERS: EMOTION AND NARRATIVE IN THE
CLASSROOM**

by

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This dissertation seeks to address gaps in the teaching of academic reading at the middle, secondary, and university level by examining the pedagogical potential of emotion as a direct category of analysis. Despite a recent interdisciplinary resurgence in emotion, emotion itself remains untheorized in dominant pedagogical approaches, often associated with accounts of private reading, completed outside of the requirements of school. This dissertation argues that emotion is a productive category to explore in the classroom, and that direct attention to emotion can open up avenues of analysis new to readers.

In order to address how approaches to emotion could deepen academic reading, I designed a qualitative study of a sophomore English class in an urban high school. My analysis of recorded class discussions, student writing, transcribed conversations, student surveys, teacher interviews, lesson plans, and a daily research journal worked backwards, isolating moments of academic reading moves in order to analyze the pedagogical methods that invited these particular responses.

In this action research with students, I define emotion through a rhetorical lens, based on the cultural critic Sara Ahmed, as our readings of how we meet objects of our attention. I adopt social constructivist approaches to language – as invention, always situated within contexts, and continually shaping emotion. I conclude that emphasis on emotion leads students to increased

awareness of self, text, and others. Specifically, students situate speakers and characters in relation to their important objects. While defining those relationships, students investigate ambiguities in language use. At the same time, students position themselves in relation to the textual relationships they have mapped. Drawing on the transactional theory of Louise Rosenblatt, this dissertation considers acts of classroom reading as powerful events which include student readers and texts as participants. Ultimately, emotion as a direct category of analysis leads students to practices of academic reading based on relationships, which I offer as a redefinition of “close reading.”

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INTRODUCTION

Theories of reading and interpretation continually change how reading is taught and defined, both through development of pedagogical materials and through what those materials open and close within classrooms. In the most recently adopted sophomore English Language Arts textbook in the state of Texas, published by Prentice Hall, every literary selection concludes with a series of sections. Each section includes a new list of questions. The three main section categories are “Critical Thinking,” “Literary Analysis,” and “Reading Skills,” each of which, if read carefully, represents a theory of reading and interpretation that has wielded pedagogical influence over the past century. The first set of questions is “Critical Thinking,” and they are labeled according to a variety of types. The “Respond” questions are always listed first, and they are typical of a classroom approach consonant with Reader Response theory: “Do you sympathize with the headmaster after reading Sekhar’s critique? Explain,” or “With which character do you sympathize most strongly? Share your response in a small group. Record members’ thoughts about each character. Then, review the notes and explain how others’ responses affected your viewpoint” (194, 252). The sample questions ask students to identify their proximities to characters and situations through “sympathy,” commonly considered the quintessential readerly emotion, and these answers lead students to respond to diversity of opinion.

By emphasizing readers' first responses, a heuristic that values readers' individual experiences with texts as meaningful components of the reading transaction, this set of questions is emblematic of Reader Response theory. From there, the textbook's questions are matters of comprehension. "What reason does [a character] give for leaving home?" "How does [the main character] react?" "In what way does his reaction contrast with [another's]?" "Describe [a character's] approach to family," and "Is this approach sound?" (252). Though this final question elicits students' evaluations through recourse to "soundness," this first section as a whole typifies the "emotional," Reader Response section of student reading, as compared with the New Critical section titled "Literary Analysis." Here the textbook takes up specific literary elements. For example, questions may focus on conflict, theme, perspective, plot, foreshadowing, speakers, form, imagery, etc. Typically these sections ask students to identify how these elements function in the selected piece.

Finally, we end with the metacognitive strategies sections: the skills. These emphasize cognitive psychology's approach to the ways we make meaning and our awareness of those organizing mental acts. Examples include summarizing, drawing conclusions, and making inferences, to name a few (all included in *Strategies That Work*, the sample text I use to discuss metacognition's approach to reading and interpretation in later chapters) and ask students to construct summaries, conclusions, inferences, etc. through evidence from the text and their lives.

There is something valuable for readers in each of these sections; indeed, I recognize my own approaches to teaching reading and interpretation in each of them, evidence of my formation as a teacher and reader through mixed theoretical traditions. However, though these theoretical orientations are structured in a way that suggests each complements the other, they remain divided. Questions about reader sympathy are divided from questions of how characters

are developed, for example. Thus, it is unclear how the “response” question of sympathy might be valuable or relate to questions of textuality, or how seeing others’ reactions could change or deepen students’ readings. Correspondingly, questions about characters’ connections to others are also separated from questions of writing, inscribing a division between observations of emotion and literary awareness. Feelings in the text are something to recall and figure out in order to understand the story, while readers’ feelings come off as simply a good lead into the mental work of “critical thinking,” “literary analysis,” and “reading skills.” Ultimately, readers’ feelings and experiences do not seem to support the textbook’s guiding apparatus for making sense of and interpreting texts.

This textbook set-up fails to imagine how readers’ emotional responses could be a part of their interpretations of stories. Instead, emotion is a separate category of reader engagement or answers to comprehension questions. Both treatments are undergirded by accepted binaries, binaries that this dissertation will name and question. For example, emotion is too subjective, too interior, to be appropriate for the objective study of texts that we need to teach our students. Or, to invite attention to emotion is to invite inappropriate attention to individual lives and stories, to the self. In another formulation, reading with emotion is a defining feature of privately reading for pleasure –fundamentally a non-schooled, non-academic activity. Readers will experience the emotional contours of reading texts while *alone*. Of course, emotion itself is a concept historically linked to dualisms – body vs. mind, interior vs. exterior, biology vs. culture, sensation vs. evaluation, thought vs. feeling – and these dualisms make their way into my discussion of how emotion should be part of our teaching of reading and interpretation.

This dissertation is explicitly concerned with the reading that occurs within the walls of school and the reading taken home in service of those school requirements. Many studies have

been done on reading practices in general, and many scholars have written about their own reading. These writings offer relevant and powerful voices to this work, and I will rely on them in my efforts to think through emotion, reading practice, and school. That said, it is important that I delineate the reading practice I seek to investigate and extend: that of the middle school through undergraduate student as directed by educational contexts. I am choosing the perhaps surprisingly large age range for several reasons. Most honestly, I have taught middle school, high school, and college, and have found the emotional facets of reading experience to be a problem and site for investigation in each context. At the same time, I identify middle school reading (in many cases, reading after third or fourth grade) as marking a shift in educational intention. Decoding strategies are no longer central to instruction, most students have felt the thrill of finishing a whole chapter book, and thus *ingesting* literature, moving through it to completion in order to enhance fluency, is not the only or overall concern. During this shift, after pages have been read, students are asked to go back, to reread, to discuss, to write, to produce; evidence of comprehension and interpretation become stock components of the English classroom. Fluency may still be a struggle for many readers, but fluency is not necessarily the central and certainly not the sole objective of literacy practice. I remember a fifth grade student leering at me, appalled that I had asked him to return to a moment in the text with me to reread. "I've already *read* it!" he exclaimed, exasperated with my obtuseness. The book -- the reading -- was over. In this transitional moment, when readers are asked to return to passages, to consider possibilities, to interpret, to reclaim, retrospective reflection is the route, and the experience of school reading is dramatically altered.

Reading may seem to be a more school-driven activity in early elementary years. Texts are almost totally read out loud in class, and often their content drives language instruction and

student products. As students progress in grade level, more school reading and production of response spill into private space, a blurring of boundary that perhaps strengthens desires to oppose school and home reading. As reading spills into private space, however, the act demands an increased school presence. More written productions tend to be required, which demands an ever-evolving sense of an audience to one's perhaps privately performed reading. Certainly, such audiences are often materially real. Teachers, other students, web-users, etc. engage products of readings for school. Pedagogical expectations change; often there is increased pressure to be an interlocutor and to engage those available in discussion.

Finally, as students age, their experiences with texts and with life deepen, change, and layer. There are simply more opportunities to intertextualize – to recognize texts within texts, to relate texts to previously read and lived situations. Though this relationship building may never be shared, may be held silent by the student, suddenly other situations are at play, and they not only change one's reading experience, they often push separate spheres of situation (home, school, work, friends) towards collision.

My project is designed to rethink emotion, reading, and the classroom, and the structures of feeling we inhabit without reflection when we plan for and operate in this space. The student textbook as genre can never offer a pedagogy as complete as classroom experience – it is not a replacement for what happens in a classroom – but I begin my introduction to this dissertation with this example for several reasons. It allows me to take stock of historical formations that this dissertation refers to and responds to throughout, formations that I want to explicate here, albeit briefly. Each of the underlying traditions of the textbook sections – Reader Response, New Criticism, and cognitivist strategies for metacognition – laid groundwork for the other, and in many ways, all help form the integrated pedagogy I describe in the dissertation's second half,

during which I discuss the study I conducted with high school sophomore readers. Finally, the textbook highlights the assumed irrelevance of emotion to academic reading and what gets labeled as analysis. In an effort to offer historical reasons for this pedagogical separation, in this introduction, I point to several historical interventions that directly theorize emotion in reading.

Let me first address New Criticism, which in many ways remains the most influential theory of reading and interpretation in schools. It also remains one of the most powerful influences on my own teaching of reading and interpretation in its careful valuing of language, its stubborn name “close reading,” and its belief that all readers can approach a text – without required historical background knowledge. You might say that this dissertation reimagines New Criticism’s “close reading.” Though it is not a term I use -- it is too laden with past associations and called to champion too many diverse and yes, contradictory, pedagogical causes (see the Coda) – it is an act that some readers will recognize in my work with students in later chapters, and deservedly so. This is a new kind of “close,” however, with new forces to bear on the process of “getting close” and to what arrival point.

New Criticism is born out of a larger shift towards positivist evaluation, the idea that detached observation of an object could reframe disciplines even in the humanities. Describing the split between rhetoric and poetics in the American college, Berlin illustrates an overall shift to positivist, scientific approaches to texts and reading during the 1880s. In his analysis of textbooks near the turn of the century, he notes that they “even deprive rhetoric of a concern for emotion . . . because of its tendency to distort observation” (529). This scientific observation paved the way for New Criticism’s focus on the text as the objective container of knowledge and emotion as antithetical to analysis and evaluation.

In 1941, John Crowe Ransom published the book *The New Criticism*, which grouped together like-minded critics so that he could label and expound upon their practices and beliefs. The book doesn't just name a movement, however. It also argues against objectionable critical directions, including those of I.A. Richards, who, though often lumped with the New Critics, preceded them with a clear value for the reader and the reader's experience, as opposed to the dominance of the objective texts. Richards's distinction between symbolic speech (scientific prose, referential) and evocative speech (poetry, arousing attitudes and emotions) distracts him from what Ransom calls the cognitive aspects of a poem – its structure, context, logic, etc. Ransom argues against the distinction by insisting that emotions and attitudes are irrelevant to any kind of criticism. "Emotions in themselves are fictions, and critical theory should not with a straight face have recourse to them" (22). He further argues that all relevant emotions correlate with logical conclusions. If a critic interprets the text logically, he has implicitly covered any emotional response. There is a sequence, here, and a hierarchy: a reader makes logical sense of the text before responding emotionally. These emotions, in turn, make logical sense and "match" the sense of the text. If a critic only describes his emotional response, he's faking it; he can't have one without a "cognitive" understanding of the object (20). T.S. Eliot's "objective correlative" within the poem supposedly provides a footing for Ransom's theory of reading, though Ransom criticizes Eliot's concern for the fusion of feelings the poet experiences.

Wimsatt and Beardsley affirmed Ransom's dismissal of emotion with their easily remembered tagline, "The Affective Fallacy." Echoing much of Ransom's 1941 critique, the two even offered a corollary for composing: *don't claim what poetry does to us, but instead what it is*. Brooks provides the necessary mistakes for their critique:

"The last stanza," says Brooks in his recent analysis, "evokes an intense emotional response from the reader." But this statement is not really a part of Brooks' criticism of the poem - rather a witness of his fondness for it. . . . The distinction even when it is a faint one is at that dividing point between paths which lead to polar opposites in criticism, to classical objectivity and to romantic reader psychology. (33)

As Keith Opdahl points out, "the title 'The Affective Fallacy' . . . has been embraced while the substance of the essay has been ignored" (87). Notice here that though Wimsatt attempts to draw clear boundaries between the subjective and objective critic, *vague* emotional description seems to be his main criticism, not the possibility of emotional description itself. Brooks's comment above is easy to fault for its vagueness alone, and, as the authors later admit,

the more specific the account of the emotion induced by a poem, the more nearly it will be an account of the reasons for emotion, the poem itself, and the more reliable it will be as an account of what the poem is likely to induce in other - sufficiently informed - readers. It will in fact supply the kind of information which will enable readers to respond to the poem. (34)

Wimsatt and Beardsley don't deny the fact that people feel while they read. Poems are about emotions, they concede, and will produce them in readers, but our attention to them must be precise enough to take us to their facticity, the "pattern of knowledge" they form in the text. The authors highlight the difficulty of saying precisely how we feel, of locating the causes of emotions, and of analyzing emotions productively. In other words, we can read Wimsatt and Beardsley's critique as reasons why we need a framework for understanding emotion, a framework that could lead readers to specific descriptions and analytical inroads.

Brooks's and Warren's textbooks then distributed the idea that emotion is too nebulous and distracting to be relevant to literary study to students in secondary schools. Note their introduction to sentimentality in *Understanding Fiction* (1959):

We usually think of the sentimentalist as a 'mush' person. And so he is. He is having so much pleasure sloshing around in a warm bath of emotions that he

doesn't care where the emotions come from or whether they are appropriate to the situation which is supposed to call them forth. For example, take the person who builds up around a cat or a parrot all the profound emotional life usually devoted to another person or a family. We call such a person sentimental. We say he lacks a sense of proportion and is immature. (5)

The authors go on to contrast the sappy sentimentalist with the collected and appropriate "really grown up person." This rather severe emphasis on personhood suggests how a dismissal of emotion became a cornerstone of New Critical pedagogy, even though the New Critics' treatment of emotion is not entirely consistent, nor entirely dismissive.

Wimsatt and Beardsley and Brooks and Warren designate an emphasis that my own project shares: the more precise our descriptions of emotion, the more precise our understanding of the text, of the "situation" Brooks and Warren name. But the New Critics provide a very rigid road map for coming to those descriptions. Though I share key terms with Wimsatt and Beardsley – "objects," "description," and "situation" also circulate throughout this dissertation – these authors are referring to the celebrated objects of metaphor and paradox that the New Critics made so famous, the symbolic item that maintains the tensions of the poem. This method of reading privileges the guiding symbol and thus the hunt for it. Similarly, though New Critical reading is attuned to nuances in language, with their treatment of connotations and denotations (key New Critical words), emotion seems to be contained in the words themselves, not the situations which give rise to their use. In this formulation, emotion is removed from the contexts of life, captured in objects worth of poetic attention. For the New Critics, poetic emotion is universal – the same for all readers. Universal definitions of emotion are typically biologically based, which connects to New Criticism's positivistic aims and claims of scientific study. Yet, at the same time, emotion in New Critical readings remains distinctively poetic, elevated, removed from those readers who are not "sufficiently informed," or who may not understand the high

demands of language that poets (alone, maybe) can capture. Emotion is equally interior, abstract, best expressed through objective evaluations or composed patterns, and misleading for the average reader. We can see why New Critical training closed the door to emotion for readers in secondary and undergraduate classrooms.

Though it did not theorize reading solely, Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives, published as a preliminary draft in 1954, hardened the binary between thinking and feeling in K-12 education. The taxonomy has been called "arguably one of the most influential educational monographs of the past half century" and continues to be a "standard reference for discussion of testing and evaluation, curriculum development, and teaching and teacher education" (Anderson and Sosniak vii). Bloom separated out the cognitive and the affective domains, the cognitive domain including the following hierarchy from lowest tier to most advanced: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.¹ The affective domain generally has to do with being a student receiving information, responding to it and valuing it in some way, and eventually developing an individual value system that categorizes what is learned. Our use of emotions and feelings is relegated to the affective domain, which is separate from the intellectual actions of the cognitive domain. In a 1994 retrospective, Edward Furst critiqued the impossibility of the separation:

One can reasonably argue that the cognitive and feeling sides of mental life can neither be conceptually nor practically separated. Of course, the authors saw the distinction as artificial and saw the need to bring the two domains together after the analysis. Nonetheless, the distinction created educational and philosophical problems by separating the world of knowledge from the world of values. (32)

¹ These were revised in 2001 to name the verbs instead of the nouns.

The taxonomy's implication that emotion is a non-intellectual way to learn, a non-intellectual thing to look for and understand, and irrelevant to the purely cognitivized activities of school has no doubt furthered these assumptions in the teaching of reading in schools. Bloom's taxonomy works alongside of the positivistic objectivity of a New Critical perspective and certainly supports the mentalist language typically used in metacognitive instruction. The gesture to feelings and personal connections in the first question of this textbook sample, for instance, invokes the affective domain – a learner's receptivity – and then moves on to the good stuff: cognitive skills and the development of knowledge. Though I do not offer a critique of the taxonomy's divisions (though given how entrenched they are in the planning of curriculum and assessing of students, this would be an excellent line of inquiry), I mention them here as a component of the larger division between thought and feeling that this dissertation troubles.

I.A. Richards, though sometimes lumped with the New Critics, provides an earlier counter to these divisions. Like the New Critics, Richards wanted to separate literature instruction from its predominant focus on social and biographical contexts. Unlike the New Critics, Richards saw this isolation as allowing readers a chance to observe their *experiences*, not simply the text as object. Differentiating between these experiences provides readers with ways to evaluate texts, of course, yet emotions—despite all the ways they can distract a reader, which Richards elucidates – are key to those experiences and the evaluations they engender. Richards's focus on “experience,” a word famously elaborated by Louise Rosenblatt in her transactional theory, known under the heading of Reader Response criticism, is taken up by my own project's interest in how readers come to meaningful statements about literary texts in school.

My own project attributes a number of its foundational arguments to Richards, in fact. First, the emotional lives of readers in the world matter to readers' experiences of texts. Richards

explains that "there is no gap between our everyday emotional life and the material of poetry" (300). The material is the same – language. Language allows us to recognize the foundational sociality of emotion, an approach to emotion at odds with the universal abstractions of the New Critics. Second, Richards does not shy away from the complicated link between thought and feeling that defines the experience of reading. Richards understands this inextricable braid when it comes to our expectations as readers – of narrative, of form, of how we should feel upon completion, of how people typically sound, etc. In one example he explains how readers ought to use personal connections between literature and life to “shak[e] our minds out of the routine of expectation” (226). Feeling, in other words, can change our directions for analysis, which are in turn shaped by how we expect to feel. Finally, Richards comes much closer to positioning reading and analysis as ordinary activities that require emotional sensitivity, the same sensitivity developed throughout life. In other words, Richards moves literature and life closer together, not farther apart, and emotion is the foundation of that movement.

Richards is not grouped with the New Critics only because of their temporal proximity, however. The ultimate point of close reading for Richards is to achieve the right mental condition “relevant” to the poem, to think/feel the right mix, which for Richards “is the poem. Roughly the collection of impulses which shaped the poem originally, to which it gave expression, and to which, in an ideally susceptible reader it would again give rise” (195). To compare students’ readings with the “right mental condition,” Richards conducted the defining study of the book (one that has influenced English Education and Composition in his interest in student writing and response), which asked the best student readers at Cambridge to respond to untitled texts with evaluative responses. Though Richards recognizes language as making and defining emotion, he seems to abandon this rhetorical understanding of emotion in his treatment

of the “mental conditions” desired.² Similarly, though Richards admits diverse interpretations by defining the poem as the reader’s evocation – a feature of Reader Response criticism – Richards also defines emotional responses as ideal universalized experiences correlated to an objective text. In many ways, emotion’s flat universality, albeit at odds with his understanding of language as defining emotion, fuels his emphasis on the poor judgment displayed in his students’ evaluations. The students in his study are concerned with sorting poems into piles of good and bad, and typically, according to Richards, get it wrong. Ultimately, his own desire for evaluative remarks from the students opposes the kind of profound reading engagement he desires and laments, his version of “close” often suggesting discriminatory taste. Finally, the better the work of art, the more balanced the final mental condition, which educated readers ought to recognize.

Despite Richards's universalizing treatment of emotion and his distracting emphasis on taste, he inspired one of the most influential thinkers on students and their experiences reading. Though Reader Response criticism is generally linked to the boom in reception theories of the 1970s, Louise Rosenblatt published her seminal work *Literature as Exploration* in 1938, a text that is often attributed with inaugurating the Reader Response movement and that inherits much from Richards’s work, both in *Practical Criticism* and beyond. She directly credits him in multiple works, including her second book, published forty years later, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, which outlines her transactional theory of reading. Rosenblatt has been a constant source for this project, and I want to introduce here the key ideas Rosenblatt provides.

Like Richards, Rosenblatt’s primary interest is student readers and thus teachers’ pedagogies. Both she and Richards discuss student readers, reference the classroom, and

² Interestingly, both the New Critics and Richards are quick to analyze emotion in poems. Richards, in fact, uses several categories to talk about speakers’ emotions: sense, tone, and feeling. Both are aware of emotion’s social dimensions in terms of narration, yet neither extends those dimensions to consider the event of reading itself.

unsurprisingly, ended their careers within departments of education. The way she values the precise space of the classroom is perhaps one of the most powerful ways her work has influenced this project. Richards and Rosenblatt share a belief that literary experience is a particular way of experiencing language, and through language students voice their experiences in the world. As Annika Hallin puts it, “Central to Rosenblatt’s work was an idea that our perception of literary works cannot be separate from everyday discourse and everyday experience and that, ultimately, literary education ought to help students integrate their linguistic competence with their sense of who they are as persons” (286). For Rosenblatt, it’s not simply that literature and life are both made of language, but that by experiencing language through literary study, students deepen their sense of themselves as speakers in the world.

Drawing on Dewey, Rosenblatt’s transaction of reading charges that a reader’s evocation of a text *is* the poem, not the text itself. This is not an interaction, but rather a transaction, where a reader, an environment, and a text compose a total event: that experience in time, which reveals features of both reader and text, is the result of Rosenblatt’s aesthetic reading. When I discuss Rosenblatt’s transactional theory in this dissertation, I point out the pedagogical potential in her approach: reading is an event, and reading with others in classrooms ought to be eventful. In order for readers to recognize the eventfulness of their reading, readers need to be participants in the transaction (“participant” is an important word to Rosenblatt, key to her definition of the transaction), not passive recipients of a story or a passed down interpretation. Her focus on active reading corresponds with constructivist approaches to metacognitive reading strategies, a link I will develop further.

Where Rosenblatt differs most powerfully from Richards is her willingness to admit new endpoints for reading in the classroom and new beginning points as well. Rosenblatt imagines a

diverse group of readers and more explicitly honors their distinct experiences as part of their reading. Furthermore, Rosenblatt never dubs criticism or evaluative remarks as the desired achievements of her students. Certainly discourse – their own written responses and their discussions in class – are desired results of reading events, but Rosenblatt never identifies what form or direction this discourse must take, except to include what others had previously dismissed in pedagogical theories of interpretation: “literary judgment” encompasses “all the various and varied scales or categories of criteria – from the technical to the moral and political and personal” (*The Reader* 155). Literary judgment, then, is rightfully influenced not only by our sense of textual features and composition but also by our sense of the world, how it ought to be, and what kinds of feeling we can imagine possessing. Had Richards’s students been taught by Rosenblatt, this simple extension would have greatly changed their protocol responses.

Though Rosenblatt is one of the guiding sources of my study, this project seeks to address particular gaps in Rosenblatt’s legacy. As several researchers have noted, Rosenblatt’s transactional theory has proved challenging to produce viably in the classroom, a problem I explore in depth in later chapters. The openness of Rosenblatt’s theory – its strength – can also be interpreted as its weakness in pedagogical situations. In many of Rosenblatt’s pedagogical examples, she describes the students with whom she was working at the time: first year teaching students, for example. These students can take advantage of her direct response approach, which, like Richards, asks for an immediate response to reading, though these responses in Rosenblatt’s examples are not restricted to evaluative remarks, but rather whatever first thoughts come to mind. Both Rosenblatt and David Bleich in his quintessential 1975 Reader Response text *Readers and Feelings* rely on the heuristic of the immediate written response where readers are told to “start writing as soon as possible after beginning to read the text, and . . . asked to jot

down whatever came to them as they read. In this way, although they undoubtedly did not report their very first responses, they presented at least some of the very early ones” (Rosenblatt 123, “Poem as Event”). The desire for those “very first responses,” unspoiled by more directions, is powerful for research, often how Rosenblatt is presenting this work, modeled after Richards’s experiment.

Others have articulated how one uses these first responses to run a class and to form curriculum, especially for K-12 students, but Rosenblatt herself never offered this work, such as a competing textbook, for example, to her predecessors’ *Understanding Poetry* or *Understanding Fiction*. The pedagogical “filling in” that has ensued over the past thirty years has had limited success. Perhaps because Rosenblatt does not describe many specifics of the transactional theory at work in the classroom, this heuristic has proved to be the defining pedagogical practice of Reader Response. Though certainly this practice is useful for many different contexts, it has several major limitations. First, because Richards, Rosenblatt, and Bleich read and analyze these responses to discuss how individuals make meaning, there is little sense in this literature how meaning making goes *beyond* the first written response for a reader, and most certainly – and problematically -- for a teacher of a group of readers. How does the teacher gather the first responses and move forward – providing space for these responses to deepen or shift, if not towards what Mark Faust describes as the fallback of New Criticism? New Criticism offers defined end points (approved interpretations of an objective text for all readers) and Reader Response offers a wide open beginning: hence, the peculiar blend of the two found in many middle school, high school and undergraduate classrooms, including the textbook sample which begins this introduction.

Second, though Rosenblatt has readers in schools, their teachers, and classrooms in mind, like Richards, her protocols and discussions of them are geared towards analyzing the pathways of *individual* readers. In other words, like most of Reader Response theory, Rosenblatt is most interested in what theorizing the individual transaction among reader and text and the individual “poem” created. Student writing is of utmost importance in all three of the above theorists, but not to create a sense of the classroom's multiple voices. Rosenblatt does gesture to the classroom when she summarizes conversations amongst students at times, but those summaries are rare and again, produced by adult students whose willingness to opine does not match the typical group of students in grades 6-12, or even the first year of college.

Third, the first response heuristic, without additional directions or focus, demands particular features from a reader: bravery and confidence to know they have a way of making sense of a text individually, verbal fluency to move from reading to thinking as a writer on the page in a short span of time, and experience with success as a single reader of texts. To put in plainly, there are many students in 6-12 classrooms who cannot use the open-ended first response heuristic the way these theorists offer it up for the taking.

Finally, though Rosenblatt insists on the relevance of readers’ affective responses –their moral judgments, feelings, and past experiences – emotion itself is never theorized and thus the potential in its direction never fully explored. Rosenblatt’s transaction corrects New Critical arguments that poetry is full of emotion to say instead that a transaction that creates a poem is emotional – a correction that reminds us of the difficulty of pinpointing origins for emotion. Emotions are not in the text per se, or simply in me, but in the transaction that is my reading of the text, an event in time. Yet, I may recognize emotions as expressed by speakers and characters, and I may recognize emotion as belonging to me as I read these expressions. Now

add in other readers and a teacher, and many potential sources of feeling come into play. This dissertation spends little time on the argument that Rosenblatt needed to belabor when she began writing – that emotion is a part of reading literature – yet how we make it a part of literary experience, without divorcing it from measured outcomes of literary analysis, remains the defining question.

Finally Rosenblatt, this dissertation insists that emotion is a valuable part of reading literature in an academic setting and investigates the role it can play – throughout class meetings – within that setting and in reference to its goals. I began this work with the sense that without a framework for teachers and students to understand emotion, its ability to deepen students' experiences with texts would remain untapped, amorphous. In many ways, I returned to Wimsatt and Beardsley's desire for specificity, though without the presumption of shared reader feelings or placements. Instead, this dissertation looks to a group of diverse sophomore readers to help guide us towards what groups of readers can do with a framework for emotion and opportunities to share reading events. This dissertation is primarily pedagogical, a lengthy defense of reading literary texts with others in schools, but it changes the terms and analytical routes that have in many ways solidified in middle and secondary school instruction of reading and interpretation. In explicit response to New Critical and Reader Response interpretive practices, the teaching I describe theorizes emotion directly with students, and thus allows it to frame reading beyond the initial first response heuristic. This study explores what happens when emotion is defined with a rhetorical lens, allowing specific readers, texts, and situations to matter to reading experiences and interpretations, instead of being blanketed by objective universality. Instead of adopting a New Critical sense of words themselves containing layers of emotion – not the situations – and of poets as the sole purveyors of words of feeling, I argue, along with social-constructivist

theorists, that emotion is made through semiotic systems within situations. To teach students to read language is to teach them to read, to return to Richards, not only poetry, but also life. Expanding students' ways to feel and voice feelings is a crucial component of expanding their understandings of situations. This approach to language as metaphorical, to use Richards Beach's term, prompts students to use metaphor themselves to capture the complex situations they realize they are creating. Emotions we identify in texts and in ourselves as readers are created through reading transactions, and that transaction expands within the situation of the classroom.

In the original forms of this project, I wanted to think about how "close reading" named a practice so often understood in New Critical terms as "distant" and "objective," free of emotional distraction. "Shouldn't 'close' suggest the opposite – a reader who is involved, implicated, touched?" I wondered. The University of Pittsburgh, the institution where I am writing this dissertation, has a capacious understanding of "close reading" that encompasses the touched reader, but the term itself is so laden with historical reference and put to use in such contradictory ways, I use it here only to explore the reading practice I hope this dissertation unfolds in historical context.

Near the completion of the study I conducted for this dissertation, the participating teacher took me aside one day. "The students are actually doing close reading," she said. She was pleased with their abilities to participate in a sophisticated interpretive practice and surprised to recognize, suddenly, the reading practice transpiring in her classroom. Her comment caught me off guard, though, in that I certainly was not attempting to recreate a New Critical classroom and didn't quite know how that could have happened. Our reading highlighted discursive situations and emotions' social powers, not their universality or interiority. Furthermore, students were expressing their own feelings – about characters and speakers, situations, cultures, and each

other's ideas. This was not a room of objective readers, but rather readers aware of and interested in subjectivity. So what were we close to?

I have mulled over that question throughout the writing of much of this dissertation. Students were close to shifts in the transaction --- moments of judgment and sensation. They were close to the textual moments that seemed to evoke emotions. They were close to perspectives of speakers and readers – unique language use, expressions of feeling (subtle and direct), meeting places between characters and objects of importance. They were close to inventions of language – their own and those of speakers – language open for negotiation and crucial to understanding what matters to people in imagined positions. They were close to textual worlds, made through the ways characters speak, the things they care about, and the things they cannot say. They were close to textual moments and to their own descriptions of them. They were close to recognitions of life, and the ways those recognitions reframed textual situations.

In Chapter One, “Being in Relation: Emotion and Classroom Reading,” I explore the significance of the “affective turn” in literary studies. I read a number of autobiographical essays published by literary critics beginning in the mid-nineties, which reveal the secret emotional reading of their private lives, a reading practice stripped from pretense, suspicion, and argument. In these accounts and others’ discussions of them, critics continually oppose private, ordinary, and emotional reading with public, objective, academic reading. Despite some small gestures to undercut this binary, in these accounts, emotion appears relevant only to the self reading in isolation – a self inspired by the image of the past child reader, locked away in her bedroom: innocent, absorbed, alone. Throughout this chapter – and the project as a whole – I trouble this

image and its corresponding definition of private reading, uncovering assumptions of class, simplification of experience, and a reduced definition of emotion as solely interior phenomena.

In Chapter Two, “Finding Emotion: Academic Reading in the Secondary and College Classroom,” I turn to pedagogical research at both the secondary and post-secondary level to uncover what role emotion plays in formulations of the schooled reader. This chapter first seeks to establish a common definition for academic reading on the post-secondary level by examining recent research on first year students’ difficulties transitioning to college level reading and analysis. A key dialectic, crucial to becoming an academic reader of literary narratives, emerges in multiple accounts: involving oneself in fiction through concerned imagination while recognizing the madeness of textuality. My examination ultimately catalogs how emotion is implicated both as an impediment and a necessary component to academic reading, in particular to the suppleness of this dialectic. The list begins to describe how awareness of experience and reflective attention to a narrative situation are necessary to becoming an academic reader, descriptions we do not typically associate with “critical.” In that vein, the chapter identifies systemic reasons for this list of student difficulties: the cognitivist models of reading and the privileging of identification on the secondary level, along with the overused and underexplored term “critical reading” and writing assignments that ask for literary criticism on the undergraduate level. This chapter eventually articulates a definition of emotion using various philosophers, principally the cultural critic, Sara Ahmed. This chapter defines emotion as our contact with the world – a human experience of the body and mind at once (including sensations, judgments, attitudes) produced through our encounters with what we meet, what we read as not us, and made by and through language. Though I develop this definition through the pedagogical practices I describe in the subsequent chapters, here I suggest that a framework for emotion

could help us teach students in classrooms how to involve themselves in the fictional world while attending to the text. Put simply, emotion has a crucial place in our teaching students how to read narrative.

To set up the remainder of the dissertation, Chapter Three introduces the foundational study of the project as a whole: a series of instructional events designed around literary narratives, all set in one sophomore classroom in a low-performing, Title 1 high school in an urban Texan school district. I designed this study in order to evaluate what difference it could make in students' reading if emotion were a defined and privileged category of attention. This chapter describes the setting, participants, and data of the study, as well as the qualitative methods used. Resonant with the action research typical of organizations like the National Writing Project, my approach stems from a long line of teachers interested in the reading experiences of their students, beginning perhaps with I.A. Richards's foundational study of student protocols in *Practical Criticism*. This data occupies the remainder of the dissertation. In these chapters, I take up the aforementioned definition of emotion to explore how its emphasis in the classroom affects students' academic reading, as articulated by the academic reading moves compiled in the previous chapter: attending to the text, noticing what does not fit, slowing down, suspending declarations of meaning, involving oneself in the fictional world, and wondering about its madeness.

Chapter Four, "Literature and Life," takes on identification as the emotional response of readers most sought after in K-12 education and most lamented in undergraduate readers. I problematize both its simplified use and its rejection, instead developing Rita Felski's term "recognition" as a kind of "knowing again" that implies new insights – some change discovered through a similarity. I explore the pedagogical import of this term while describing a series of

instructional events focused on a single short story, Oscar Casraes's "Mr. Z." In my analysis of the data, I ask *how* students experienced recognition, what role emotion played in their articulations of recognition, and how acts of recognition connected to previously defined academic reading moves. During this portion of the study, I was most concerned with students' realizing how the feelings they experience in their ordinary lives could confront and deepen their understanding of texts. By identifying moments of life that echoed moments of the text – most often inaugurated by metaphorical "it's like" sentence stems – students articulated complex feelings or specific placements in the world, both of which prompted them and their peers to begin to account for the terms, motivations, and events of the *textual* world.

In Chapter Five, "Situating Speakers and Readers," I narrate and discuss a group of lessons that apply Ahmed's definition of emotion to students' analysis of a narrative text, Ishmael Beah's memoir, *A Long Way Gone*. Though I adopt a socio-constructivist approach to the learner, the reader, and the classroom, emphasizing how readers come to knowledge through experience, in this chapter I push against the constructivist metaphor of "building" in conceptions of reading narrative, which I argue too often pedagogically leads to textbooks, teachers, and students identifying literary elements, but not grappling with the narrative circumstances (the why of the telling) or the unfolding of the entire situation. Instead, I offer "situating" as a capacious verb that emphasizes reading narrative as a process of determining relationships and placements – within a textual world and its moment of composition as well as within a class full of disparate readers. Situating ourselves, characters, and narrators prompts readers to attend to emotion, or subjects' reading of their contacts with their objects, to use Ahmed's vocabulary. To help students put Beah in relation to his objects, I relied on Voloshinov's approach to tone, highlighting and expanding on his attention to epithets,

descriptive naming. In articulating how students situated speakers and characters -- or brought them into defined relations with what they first deemed objects of feeling, I explore the interconnectedness of reading and writing through description. Throughout the chapter, I read student samples of description as analyses of emotion that reveal the complicatedness of the narrative situation.

Chapter Six, "Classroom Space," continues my elaboration of situation by examining the classroom space in which the study's participants and I now found ourselves.. I first explore how the location has been theorized historically as public space by some and private space by others, eventually using Elizabeth Ellsworth's theory of "transitional space" to theorize the English classroom as relational, a space where participants are called on to be in relation with multiple objects and to look for those relations in their textualizing. Attending to students' reading of Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" as well as their final reflections, I then take up the question of how to define the kind of relational space that emerged from making emotion a privileged category of analysis. This analysis yields a number of pedagogical arguments beginning with an expanded understanding of Louise Rosenblatt's reading transaction or event, a pedagogically explicit approach to language as invention -- metaphorical and situated, and a unique definition of reading in classroom space as a type of experience that creates situated "concern," a term borrowed from Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle, which, precisely because of the presence of other voices, drives us to speak.

Ultimately, this dissertation is not an argument that high school students across the country need to theorize emotion. Rather, it is an exploration of how emotion as a category of attention can deepen students' readings of texts -- and in this case, their sense of themselves as students in an academic group. In other words, the joy of textualizing with others, of sensing and

making sense of language, was remarked on by students and their teacher. Emotion allowed situations to unfold, involved students in terms “open for negotiation,” and gave them a way to negotiate, to read and interpret. This dissertation implicitly argues that all students deserve and are capable of cultivating that kind of academic joy, an assumption that rarely shapes discourse on public education today.

1.0 BEING IN RELATION: EMOTION AND CLASSROOM READING

By the transport of books, that which is most foreign becomes one's familiar walks and avenues; while that which is most familiar is removed to delightful strangeness; and unmoving, one travels infinite causeways; immobile and thus unfettered.

- M.T. Anderson, *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing*

I remember when I first reflected on what it meant to read. I was a freshman in college, taking the standard religious studies class, “The Bible as Literature.” The class focused mainly on the Old Testament; much of it I had read before in religious settings, in which I typically watched someone else explain meanings, meanings which suddenly seemed obvious and instructive, even if unattainable by my own reading. In my undergraduate class, I did what seemed the best thing to do -- I remembered all the interpretations I had learned growing up and explained them: what they taught, where they came from, how they made sense now, and why they mattered.

Needless to say, this enthused regurgitation was not what the professor had in mind. He already knew all these interpretations and wasn't interested in them. He wasn't engaged by my memory, and I found that I was consistently at a loss for words during class discussion, despite my distinct memory that I wanted very much to have something to say, that I listened more closely than I had before. My only comfort was that the whole class seemed to be in the same

position. We were serious students and serious about the Bible, but no one could figure out how to make that mean anything in this course. I studied our silences and was strangely exhilarated by them. I remember the professor expressed dismay at the end of the class that we were quiet, that we struggled to locate arguments and articulate responses, but I remember wanting to reassure him that the silences were everything. They were when we learned.

What I relied upon when entering the class – my experience listening to Bible stories become meaningful -- wasn't relevant, useful, even important. I soon found that I had no way to read the Bible; it wasn't a textbook, yet it also wasn't a novel, despite the professor's insistence that we were reading the Bible as *literature*, and thus needed to encounter it with what I now imagine as a kind of literary expectation. What did a reader do when she encountered the literary? Despite my experience devouring all kinds of novels, I couldn't answer this question. I couldn't get myself started or recognize a new kind of appreciation. I had never learned what it was that I did when I read literature, and I'd never had reason to consider it until then. In many ways, reading had been too easy, too accepted of a process. I knew I did it well. I knew I liked it. That seemed sufficient.

I found my breakthrough when reading the story of Abraham and Isaac. In this foundational narrative, God asks his faithful servant Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, thus proving, terribly, the utter strength of his devotion. Genesis 22: 2: “And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” Abraham seems to agree without protest and goes with his son and several servant men under the pretext of worshiping in the wilderness. After three days, "Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off" (vs. 4). Leaving the men and taking his son,

Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. (vs. 7-10)

In this instant, of course, an angel halts Abraham, and the sacrifice is avoided, but God's final intervening hand doesn't erase the action Abraham was calmly about to take. I had never liked this story, nor the handed-over interpretation that Abraham displayed profound faith – a faith that could lead him to commit any terrible act that God requested. Rereading the story in Dr. Henze's class and struggling to respond, it occurred to me that my dislike, in fact, my overwhelming discomfort, was worth fully acknowledging. I was relieved to admit how frightening the story was to me, how frightening as a child it was to learn that Abraham represented the paragon of faith. Being free to explore this long-sitting emotion became a continual entry-point to the narrative of Abraham and Isaac and all its troubling missing pieces.

This was (is still, to me) an unfinished and upsetting story. I realized that I was disturbed and disappointed by the laconic narrator; did Abraham really never fight with God, never plead or protest? How could he be so calm and dutiful when God himself had granted Abraham his precious son so late in his life? Abraham was upset when Sara, his wife, wanted Ishmael, the offspring of Abraham and the slave girl Hagar to leave, but God comforted him and encouraged him to let Hagar and Ishmael go. Given that earlier story, how could Abraham refuse to protest the slaughter of his son, and by his own hand? Did Abraham implicitly trust that God would stop him? Did he have faith that God could not dash human life and spirit so selfishly, that he would protect Isaac, bring him out of Abraham's terrifying breach of trust? The questions came, each

allowing me to look at Abraham, the narrator, God, and their situation in new ways, each further allowing me to revise my feelings towards the story, its impact, and the authority it carried as an integral part of the Bible. None erased my initial and long-lived unease, but rather colored it in, revising the charges of textual moments. Rereading the story again, I have no arrival points, no decided upon interpretations that I have taken as truth, but a rehearsal of feelings and questions that mark my experience of this story, a story that has made its way, again and again, into my lived experience as a reader, student, daughter, and human.

The class was a conversion of sorts. My reading, not only of literary texts but of the difficult academic analyses we were required to read, deepened and sharpened. Emotion had been primarily a way I recognized that I *enjoyed* reading, but in this class I realized that emotion had everything to do with my ability to pursue a textual experience, to engage with language, to ask questions, and to create meaningful encounters with other voices (or their silence), those in a text and a room. In other words, to become what was called a critical reader – or what I understood at that time to be a “college reader” – was to expand my awareness and use of emotion. I have spent much of my academic career trying to articulate this shift and much of my teaching career trying to put it to pedagogical use. To do both is the intention of this dissertation.

It is interesting and perhaps oddly appropriate that my awakening as a reader occurred with a religious text, through which reading and interpretation have had enormous consequences on real human lives. Frank Kermode might characterize this shift in reading as provided for by the Bible’s many “invitations to interpretive license,” “its narrative and stylistic eccentricities” (11). These are exactly the oddities that ought to provoke, Kermode explains, going beyond the “primary sense” of a text and lingering in the mind, ear, or heart of a reader.

1.1 EMOTIONAL INVESTMENTS

Reading literary works, works that call on the imagination, is fundamentally an emotional act, one that draws on the mix of sensing and making sense that makes up human experience. I have come to dwell on this observation more and more as I have read texts with my students, students from 5th grade through seniors in college. Every classroom situation has presented more ways for me to wonder about the rich problem of engaging emotion while reading, particularly unfamiliar or overly familiar texts (as in the case with the Bible).

My interest in emotion and reading comes at an opportune time. Throughout the past decade, scholars across the disciplines have seized on an interdisciplinary move in the sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities towards non-cognitive ways of being and knowing. With various purposes, researchers are investigating the role of the body, emotion, and the unconscious within rationalized processes like thought, inquiry, and social action. For years, these interests seemed to have operated in isolation from each other; perhaps due to the recent proliferation of these related inquiries, diverse conversations have developed, offering different (at times conflicting) approaches to emotion and the body. Kathleen Woodward marks this academic energy, noting a shared complaint among contributing voices that “the emotions are undervalued in contemporary life” (759). As scholars have begun investigating this problem, Woodward comments, they have set “discourses about the emotions—into circulation in the academy,” a discursive change that has recast the “stringent rationality” of research and writing

in emotional terms. As feminist epistemology has shown us, emotion, though perhaps hidden by academic language and performance, is a significant part of academic labor. Woodward's article helps me establish for my readers how extensive this academic interest has been, but it also nudges me to state what this project means for me. Though I will trouble the dissolution of emotion and the self (the assumption that to talk about emotion must mean to tell one's story, for example), to disrupt the "stringent rationality" of academic research requires me to place myself in relation to my work, my questions, and my subjects.

Perhaps St. Augustine's autobiography set a pattern for scholars, as work on the experience of reading tends to use personal narrative as grounds for questions and as layers of evidence. As my initial anecdote suggests, this project is born out of my experience as a reader, student, and teacher. My observations and concerns in the classroom have formed the impetus for my research; thus, including pieces of my experience as a reader, student, and teacher is not only an effort to work within a genre of study that relies on the personal in some capacity. It is also designed to render the origins and investments of this work transparent. As I write about others detailing their childhood reading experiences, I, too, remember important reading experiences. To read others' memories, memories that have served their arguments about why we read and should teach reading, has meant reading (and writing) my own, thus implicating myself in a similar engagement, a wrestling with "experience."

"Experience" operates meaningfully for me as a researcher, allowing me to create myself as a subject, acknowledge that subjectivity, and investigate how other forces have come to form my own and others' positions as readers. On the one hand, in my research, I identify "experience" as, in Teresa de Lauretis's words, a process through which "one places oneself in social reality and so perceives and comprehends as subjective . . . those relations – material,

economic, and interpersonal – which are in fact social, and in a larger perspective, historical” (11, qtd. in Scott). I use my past occasions reading, learning, and teaching not to prove what reading truly is, but to notice aspects of these specific moments of process, to situate myself as bounded and provided for by context, and to inquire about both. By including my experience, I acknowledge that memories of reading, expectations for reading, and understandings of reading’s purpose are anything but universal. Indeed, this underlying fact allows me to consider the place of experience (both where one is and how one is placed there) and to highlight the material place of the classroom, the location – in all its diversity – in which I am most interested and to which this work is most committed.

At the same time, I also employ a powerful secondary use of the term, one that has had a rich history in literary studies. A word I will theorize in regards to its Deweyan roots, “experience” also points to my topic itself – the experience of reading with emotion in a classroom. Here I take up Raymond Williams’s secondary definition in his *Keywords*, from aesthetic contexts of the twentieth century and prior religious contexts: “the fullest, most open, most active kind of consciousness, and it includes feeling as well as thought” (126). This definition seems derived from Dewey’s development in *Art as Experience*, where experience is the “undergoing of this and that, irrespective of perception of any meaning” (45). Dewey explains that “we lay hold of the full import of a work of art only as we go through in our own vital process the processes the artist went through in producing the work” (325). “Vital process”

is the “undergoing of this and that,” what Williams explains as an “active kind of consciousness” and what Dewey ultimately calls “sincere personal experience” (325).³

Though I applaud Dewey’s use of “personal” and “sincere,” particularly when talking about the work of the critic, both Dewey and Williams paint experience as perhaps too rare and mysterious to recognize or articulate in our private and public reading. Dewey is clear that experience itself doesn’t lead to the articulation of meaning, for example, and that it, like Richards’s idea of synaesthesia, resolves all tensions. However, when I talk about the experience of reading, I do not assume that all students and teachers would describe each occasion as the “most active” kind of consciousness, or as smooth and uninterrupted as Dewey maintains. Instead, like Rosenblatt, I refer to the experience of reading as a *happening through* an event, an undergoing, at times full of interruptions or breaks in movement (these tend to be definitive of a group experience and, despite the gloriousness of Dewey’s enclosed experience, are often productive).

Finally, I approach the students I teach and have taught – and thus their progress or lack thereof as readers – with love. Gayatri Spivak has described “ethical singularity” as “engag[ing] profoundly with one person,” yet with “a sense that something has not got across” (xxv). This is a dedication to an engagement that is not quite transparent, bounded by lines of power; it is, Spivak says, a kind of “love.” This expectant love – a responsibility to make what can be familiar, familiar – resonates with my approach to the students in my classroom who have inspired this research and participated in it.

³ In this phrasing of Dewey’s one can recognize the seed of Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reading. Dewey warns prospective critics that nothing can supplant the richness of sincere personal experience, a tenet that Rosenblatt brings to literary instruction.

1.2 THE AFFECTIVE TURN

Along with Woodward, other scholars have noted the academy's invigorated concern for emotion. Calling this joint investigative focus the "affective turn," Patricia Clough reminds us that a shift towards affect signals a shift in how we understand the human. When "thought" is "becoming indistinguishable from affect, the unconscious, and desire," she writes, we need to rethink what human bodies are and how they act in the world (Schneider 61). Clough's work on bodies relies on her exploration of affect; along with others such as Brian Massumi and Mark Hansen, Clough identifies "affect" as distinct from emotions, "in excess of consciousness" and defined as "bodily capacities to affect and be affected" (Schneider 70). Michael Hardt introduces Clough's publication, *The Affective Turn*, edited with Jean Halley O'Malley, by instructing us on how affect allows us to think through human causality – what causes our minds to think and our bodies to act – and reminding us that the problem between reason and emotion, or what Spinoza (the orientating source of their anthology) calls actions and passions, is continual. I include Clough here not because I share her approach,⁴ but because I want to highlight, before I begin drawing lines around my sources and interests, the significance of all of these related works. If we are to think about the emotional experience of people reading together (as I do in this project) or how affect can change our understanding of the social (as Clough and her contributors do in *The Affective Turn*), then we are rethinking human experience and how we have been trained to talk about it, think about it, and – perhaps most importantly for my project – teach it.

⁴ Though Clough's term has stuck and others have also referred to the movement as a whole as the "affective turn," affect is not my central interest, nor is it a term I use throughout this project, except with specific reason.

Within literary studies, Rita Felski has identified the affective turn as a “current surge of interest in emotion and affect across a range of disciplinary fields,” which has contributed to “an intellectual climate” far more interested in the hidden details of experience (19). I am writing within this climate, created partly by those, like Felski, who have grown weary with an academic “hermeneutic of suspicion,” or what she dubs “a quintessentially paranoid style of critical engagement” (3); to begin looking at how emotion could reinvigorate how we understand and attend to reading, I offer a brief analysis of how emotion has been recast within the academy’s high-profiled conversations about reading. I begin with Felski, as she offers a direct and recent charge to the academy to rethink reading and literature, as made possible by the affective turn.

Felski and other literary scholars are suddenly interested in literary value; how do we describe it - in all facets of our life, not simply through our work in the academy? Felski wants to investigate the ordinary, everyday reading of spare time, a kind of reading we engage in for the pleasure it gives us, and one Felski suggests most readers do, even professionalized literary critics. How do we value movie-watching on the weekend, her recent book, *Uses of Literature*, prompts us to ask. Her answer is found in her classification of “emphatic experience,” our various types of emotional engagement (the Deweyan use of the term). Recognition, Enchantment, Knowledge, and Shock, are the categories of Felski’s taxonomy, which she argues offers a way for people to talk about their individualized reading experiences in emotional terms, to name what happens and how it is important. They give us, she says, “multiple axes of literary value,” which move beyond the particular labor of scholarly reading, reading, she reminds us, that researchers are paid to do (35).

In this effort to describe self-sponsored reading, a practice that is not “subject to the judgment of other professional readers” or generated by a discursive community, Felski sets out

to distill binaries, to show how “folk reading” and “scholarly interpretation . . . share certain affective and cognitive parameters” (14). Though the situation of scholarly reading differs dramatically from the non-communal reading people choose to do in their spare time, she ultimately means to suggest that “the act of reading fuses cognitive and affective impulses,” that “it looks outwards to the world as well as inward to the self” (132). It is both critical and emotional, both a part of intellectual conclusion and felt experience.

However, the binaries that call for Felski’s manifesto unfortunately remain firmly in place in her treatment of them. For Felski, the “ordinary reader” opposes the academic one, the former’s innocence defeated by the latter’s authoritative insights. Aesthetic encounters, despite the Deweyan ring of Felski’s “emphatic experience,” are represented as solely inner phenomena, which presents a striking detour from Dewey’s aesthetic pragmatism.⁵ Aesthetic encounters, then, surface as the preoccupations of ingenuous, non-trained readers; critical reading emerges as the anti-emotional, product-oriented work of the academy; and emotion materializes as a private and problematic experience that scholars must put in its social place, lest it bury itself too deeply within persons.

All these binaries have significant reason for their existence. They are instantly recognizable, distinctions easy to accept. Too easy, I argue. Felski’s charge to cloud these binaries, to convince scholars that attachment and feeling might make their way into their own practices of reading, does not extend to any material shifts in academic work. In other words, Felski does not imagine how expanding our understanding of literary value to include emotional interactions with a text could rework or recharge the mission of academics or the classroom.

⁵ Despite Felski’s broad bibliography and her reliance on the term “experience,” she does not mention Dewey or any developments of his pragmatic theory of art as experience.

Instead, the aesthetic encounters Felksi imagines serve as reminders to scholars, evoking an earlier time, one lost but perhaps partially regained. “The point is not to abandon the tools we have honed, the insights we have gained; we cannot, in any event, return to a state of innocence, or ignorance” (22). Though she goes on to encourage scholars to blend “analysis and attachment, criticism and love,” no doubt the implication is that “attachment” and “love” lie with the innocent and the ignorant, simply intuitive, unable to produce value within the context of school.

Felski’s analysis brings to light a powerful distinction: the schooled skeptic, distant from the feeling of experience, versus the childlike believer, held fast to reading by her emotions. This is a past reader other literary critics recognize and lament. Caught in a nostalgic wave, J. Hillis Miller’s book *On Literature* explains this pure literary undergoing as “an innocent, childlike abandonment to the act of reading, without suspicion, reservation, or interrogation” (119). Remembering his love for reading *Swiss Family Robinson*, Miller describes the scenes he visualized: “I can still see the fully developed farm the Robinson family constructs, with a winter house and a summer house, farm buildings, fields of potatoes, rice, cassava, vegetable and flower gardens, fruit trees, fences, aqueducts, all sorts of domesticated animals multiplying like anything – duck, geese, ostriches, cattle, pigs, pigeons, dogs, a tame jackal, tame flamingos (!)” (127). “Abandonment” to reading meant detailed visualizing, a vivid recreation of scene. He concludes that the book offers a “hyperbolic version” of the pleasure of the “nest-making instinct,” a “creation of a new world,” analogized by his youthful act of reading. Creating new worlds was the literary delight of the child, Hillis Miller explains, not the trained adult who practices slow reading, “being suspicious at every turn, interrogating every detail of the work, trying to figure out by just what means the magic is wrought” (122). Felksi’s “hermeneutic of suspicion” echoes Hillis Miller’s thorough examination of a subject that seems guilty until

proven innocent. But as Felski says, and as Hillis Miller himself admits, there is no return to their own innocence as a reader, to the worlds embarked on as a child.

I am spending time articulating Hillis Miller's rather hasty, simplified descriptions of reading in order to explore the concepts supporting them, concepts that fuel glorification of child reading and solitary reading, and, as I will demonstrate later, that dismiss the classroom reading experience. Hillis Miller urges us to try to return to our childlike practices, arguing that readers ought to cultivate these two modes of reading despite their fundamental opposition. Now that the reader is grown up, Hillis Miller reinscribes this "childlike abandonment" as "being in love, . . . a matter of giving yourself without reservation to the other" (120). At the same time, though, the public, trained reader demystifies the text by paying close attention, snuffing out linguistic devices and irony, interrogating presentations of class, race, and gender relations – all descriptions that seem strikingly antithetical to new romance. Hillis Miller argues that we need these critical functions to make knowledge for ourselves, though yes, perhaps they have contributed to the "death of literature," or our inability to step into imaginative worlds and inhabit them, the loss of our prelapsarian state (126). Readers run two extremes, navigating an "aporia" of innocence and suspicion, trust and cynicism.

1.3 INTERIOR EMOTION AND THE SELF

Both Hillis Miller and Felski published their paeans to literature's affective powers fairly recently, 2002 and 2008 respectively, yet both echo an earlier wave within English departments to draw attention to what Jane Tompkins has called our "inner lives," our "non-intellectual ways

of knowing” (xii). Published in the mid-nineties, Tompkins’s memoir, *A Life in School*, seems awash in the inter-disciplinary turn towards emotion that had already taken hold outside of literary studies⁶. Also in 1996, the same year as *A Life in School*’s publication, Tompkins’s colleague at Duke, Frank Lentricchia, published his controversial rejection of theory, “Last Will and Testament of an Ex-Literary Critic,” in *Lingua Franca*. Autobiographical in nature, Lentricchia’s article also cried out for unveiling our secretive, inner lives, the readers who recognize literature as “pleasurable,” the academics who can “accept their amateur status – that is, their status as lovers” (65). “Pleasure,” “love,” and “non-intellectual ways of knowing,” all signaled a shift towards valuing emotion anew, a focus that became linked, as evidenced in Tompkins and Lentricchia, with autobiography. This connection makes sense, as other works of autobiographical scholarship were percolating at the time⁷ and expressivist rhetorics had already taken hold in composition departments and in secondary schools.

In his history of twentieth century rhetoric, James Berlin describes the great impact of progressive education on rhetoric and writing instruction, noting that two competing views on writing emerged during the twenties and thirties, the era of progressivism. On one end, writing was a creative and individual act which nurtured a writer’s aesthetic appreciation and overall mental health. In the midst of the Great Depression and two world wars, the other view looked

⁶ Though, as I note later, few of these writers would identify themselves as purposefully advocating an “affective turn,” their writing falls into a category of scholarly work drawing attention to the potency of emotional response. Though Reader Response is clearly an earlier movement within literary studies, it has affected, in unexplored ways, much of the recent motion within literary studies. Literary critics like Veenser, Felksi, and Hillis Miller are clear to distinguish their motivations from those of Reader Response, and, as I discuss later, researchers within English Education, even those who focus on emotion’s place in reading, study Reader Response’s shortcomings within the actual classroom.

⁷ Nancy Miller’s *Getting Personal: Feminist Occasions and other Autobiographical Acts*, Jane Gallop’s anthology, *Pedagogy: The Question of Impersonation*, Jeanne Perrault’s *Contemporary Feminist Autobiography*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson’s *Getting a Life: Everyday Uses of Autobiography*, prompted by the Modern Language Association’s convention in 1992, Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography*.

beyond the individual to the time's social concerns and reforms; writing was a public and social undertaking, one that reached audiences and thus affected more than the growth of the individual. Berlin notes that "in examining writing instruction during these two decades, one finds the two orientations everywhere" (60).

Discussions of emotion within literary studies, rhetoric, and composition pivot around a version of these two orientations: is emotion private, a function of our biology and thus universally shared, or is it socially constructed, a product of cultural placement and situation? Certainly, the dominant view of emotion within Western culture is biological. Propagated by the spread of modern psychology, emotion is often considered to be contained within the body, part of our chemical makeup, driven by physiology, and formed by evolution. This wide-spread perspective, though often supplemented by admissions of cultural and environmental factors, undergirds academic research. A product of shared mind/body processes, emotions exist within us. We make them, and we contain them.⁸

In discussing a dismissed psychosocial view of emotion, one extending from Aristotle, Daniel Gross wonders how the claims of the biological emerged: "So where did we get the idea that emotion is a kind of excess, something housed in our nature aching for expression?" (*Secret History* 5). His question highlights how definitions of origins – where emotions come from, how they are produced – have travelled. Someone may not define emotion as patterned neurological happenings, but she could still imagine emotion as inner phenomena, trapped until released, until let go. With the dominance of the psychobiological, we have come to a colloquial understanding

⁸ Catherine Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod note that prior to 1980 anthropology defined emotion as "psychobiological processes that respond to cross-cultural environmental differences but retain a robust essence untouched by the social or cultural" (2). They go on: "From early culture and personality work between World Wars I and II through much contemporary work in psychological anthropology, the amount and kinds of emotion that people experience are assumed to be predictable outcomes of universal psychobiological processes" (2).

of emotion as interior. Gross attributes this to the oft-blamed Descartes and the mind/body split he disseminated to the Western world. His “reductive psychophysiology of emotion,” Gross remarks, “informs both romantic expressivism and latter-day sciences of the mind and brain” (*Secret History* 5).

As Berlin explains, emotion’s interiority began framing writing instruction when an emergent subjective rhetoric started to define composition courses during the turn of the century, a time when undercurrents of Freudian psychology were making their way through public institutions. Using Lawrence Cremin’s work on Freud and Progressivism, Berlin writes that “the aim of education for both aesthetic expressionists and Freudians became individual transformation – not social change – as the key to both social and personal well-being” (74). Cremin characterizes this as a “preoccupation with the emotions, a denial of rationality” (74, qtd in Berlin). Here Berlin and Cremin identify a critical coordinate between the psychobiological and rhetoric. Emotions are not only interior – they are *problematically* interior, needing excavation in order to promote one’s mental well-being. Emotion is now associated with buried memory and covered disturbances; it is an impediment to healthy resolution, and as Cremin says, to rational thought.

The subjective rhetoric of the turn of the century is reinvigorated in the sixties as compositionists turned to theorizing an expressionistic outlook. Through figures such as Donald Murray, Donald Stewart, Peter Elbow, composition modified and extended subjective rhetoric’s Freudian impulses. Language moves away from mental health and instead towards self-discovery, self-knowledge. Emotion’s relevance, then, is to the self – not to time, place, others, circumstance; hence, emotional writing is equated with “personal writing.” Similarly, in what

Ann Berthoff calls “debased versions of reader response,” meaning is made by and within the self of the reader, autobiographical details powering identification with characters and situations.

Rhetorics of emotion’s interiority inform literary studies’ autobiographical products during the mid-nineties, yet critical theory exacts caution, as scholars separate themselves from expressivist calls. Aware of autobiography’s connections to expressivism, Aram Veeseer immediately distances his anthology, *Confessions of the Critics* (published the same year as Tompkins’s memoir and Lentricchia’s article), from Peter Elbow, Donald Murray, and other foundational developers of process writing pedagogies. Similarly, he steps back from autobiographical reader response criticism, noting that the reader will not find “hopelessly emotional readings of literary texts” (xv). The autobiography he promotes represents a fusion of expression and argument, as we “can no longer accept antithesis between expressive, ‘process’ writing and objective, logical thinking” (xiii). Confessional critics model an art that “falls somewhere between writing and performance” (xiii). To perform requires a living, moving self. Indeed, Veeseer begins by reminding us that teachers, known to us by their authoritative minds, have bodies, too – through these autobiographical acts, these teacher/critics will be speaking from those bodies. Similarly, introducing feminist autobiography in her 1995 publication, Perrault describes Audrey Lorde’s “integrated sense of mind, emotion, and body,” demonstrated by the embodied self Lorde creates in her autobiographical writing (24). Like Lorde’s body, the bodies Veeseer describes are integrated with mind and emotion, even if they are reluctant to step on the autobiographical stage. “Anecdote,” Veeseer offers to the cautious critic, “cuts a channel from mind to sensation, and is useful for intellectuals who ordinarily keep emotions to themselves” (xvii). Even in seemingly unintended instances, “half-buried private emotion pokes up,” Veeseer says, finding its way into analysis, argument, logic (xviii).

This mid-nineties move to autobiography illuminates an exasperation with accepted methods and subject matter for making meaning; a tiredness with separations between body, mind, and emotion; and a recognition that we compose and perform the self. 10 years later, Felski, too, understands reading as a “new and formative role in the shaping of selfhood” (19). These autobiographical representations, along with Felski and Hillis Miller’s investigations of reading, are aware of potential critiques that emotion as subject produces egregious navel gazing, a narrator ignorant of external situations, and a product irrelevant to -- maybe even uninterested in -- an audience. In Tompkins’s utter rejection of school (an extreme assessment that seems to ignore factors of human development and of institutions), we can sense an insistent rebuff to these appraisals. Veesper simply insists on what his collection is *not*, while Felski produces the same steps forward and back, wanting to honor “non-intellectual” values for literary experience, yet steeping herself in literary analysis, argumentative rhetoric, and a review of theoretical perspective. She promises (repeatedly) that she “will not fall into truisms and platitudes, sentimentality and *Schwarmerei*” (22).

Surprisingly, Veesper’s confessional critics, Tompkins’s memoir, Felski’s recent “Uses of Literature,” Lentricchia’s rhapsode – not one theorizes emotion itself, despite their defining gestures to emotion. Instead, rhetorics of interiority make their way throughout all these accounts, without question or challenge, a problematic feature of this discussion that, as I describe later, restricts its relevance. Briefly, one of the consequences of this consistent lack of attention is emotion’s conflation with the personal, the self. To write emotionally is to write the self. The implication? Emotional responses to the world do not and could not lead in other directions. In Salvatori’s review of three of these autobiographical accounts, including Tompkins’s memoir, she worries that “the recitation of one’s life produces and is echoed by

another recitation, and another, in a responsorial mode that excludes as much as it includes, since it seems to be based on congruence and affinity of thoughts, feelings, and positions" (570). Though a critique of Nancy Miller's chapter, "Teaching Autobiography," Salvatori's comment resonates with a larger anxiety about the personal as a genre of writing – and I might say, thinking. She critiques Jane Tompkins for making a similar move of exclusion, a move "designed to make me think of my desire to engage her argument critically as an imposition of authority" (572). The personal draws the "hermetic circle" around itself, similar, as I will demonstrate, to the protected privacy of the emotional, childlike reading experience. If the personal remains a private genre, one that can only be responded to with an echo of privacy, then how and where do these recitations ever really meet? As Felski notes, reading, too, is a process of self-making, and as I will discuss later, our simplified understanding of emotional reading has come to mean private rapture, or mere identification, echoing the textual recitation with our own affirmation of its image.⁹ Salvatori understands the "personal's" exclusionary standing as a symptom of "the hermetic process by which American culture contains the 'personal,' the 'self,' and 'individual identity,' only to make each untouchable and to place it safely beyond the reach of critical analysis" (581). For my purposes here, I am interested in noting how, in emotion's conflation with autobiography, or the personal, emotion, too, is "contained," falling outside of "the reach of critical analysis" and the work of school.

Certainly investigations of emotion have progressed throughout the past ten years. That said, investments in emotion have animated the work of other disciplines, Women's Studies for example, for several decades. Thus, though Tompkins and Lentricchia seem caught up in these

⁹ Identification is not always easy, nor does it always feel good. I will adopt Felski's term, "Recognition," to expand the notion of what identification while reading can be.

issues alone (one of the unfortunate consequences of speaking only from the personal), other disciplines had already begun making similar strides before their publication dates, and with much consequence. Antonio Damasio's groundbreaking challenge to the long-held Western belief that body and mind are separate, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*, published in 1995, argues, based on years of neuroscientific research, that emotions are integral to our ability to make decisions and live independent lives. Closer to English, in 1990, Catherine Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod, anthropologists, published an oft-quoted anthology of essays titled *Language and the Politics of Emotion*. Though far more thoughtful about what "non intellectual ways of knowing" are and where they come from than any of the aforementioned texts within literary studies, both Abu-Lughod and Lutz share with these writers a concern that our emotions have everything to do with our worlds, that "inner" lives (a reliance on interiority that they trouble) cannot be considered irrelevant to outer lives, even one's public academic interests. A year earlier in 1989, Alison Jaggar's foundational piece, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology," argues against the limits of positivism and the resulting "myth of dispassionate investigation" (154). In Jaggar's appraisal, scholars, operating under the belief that knowledge must be scientific in order to be true, strive to claim objectivity in their intellectual pursuits, thus freeing their academic work from the adulteration of subjectivity and emotion (155). This is precisely the environmental ethos that leads to the "lopsided person" Tompkins worries that the university creates, the student who has developed "purely intellectual and informational aspects of learning" (211). The "dispassionate investigator" also plays a role in the disciplinary critique of Lentricchia: forgetting the "imaginative landscapes" of literature, literature professors become "scientific impersonators" (65), aspiring to positivist standards and ignoring the imaginative demands of an "honest act of reading" (66). Jaggar's article, published

within the anthology *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing* that she co-edited with Susan Bordo, was followed by later attempts to name and classify feminist epistemology. Mary Field Belenky, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule's classic study, *Women's Ways of Knowing: the development of self, voice, and mind*, relies on interviews with university students to determine how it is women in the university come to know what they know. A year after Tompkins unwittingly supported their findings, the authors conclude that higher education operates with "impersonalness," as opposed to a "sense of connection" (178). Like Tompkins's example, "healing the split between intellect and emotion" emerges as a particular problem for women in the university.

Though none of these texts announce themselves as participants in a larger movement towards revaluing emotion, they all contribute to an inter-disciplinary story of reconsidering (and revising) our understandings of emotion and school. Those within literary studies, despite their attempts to value emotion within acts of reading and writing, present specific problems for my argument that emotional response is an important and underused act of reading. To sketch these problems further, I return to Hillis Miller's and Lentricchia's remembered child readers.

1.4 THE CHILD READER

Hillis Miller's child is a remarkably fluent reader and traveler; traversing boundaries, he is a willing follower, his reading seemingly uninterrupted – an easy, joyous movement. The child is caught up in and by the feeling of reading the text, the feeling of the world he imagines; this

experience is solely his, not something articulated or shared, but experienced deeply precisely because of his isolation. Really, then, Hillis Miller's child reader reveals the bravery implicit in the generous act of imagination literature demands. Without other voices to shift the adventure, to direct or remind a reader how to exit, this child reader bounds into a new world and revels in it, relishing the trip. The child isn't troubled by aspects of the journey; there is no stopping and asking others for directions; wondering about why's or where's, even the typical questioning of reality; "Is this real? Did this happen?" We are presented with no reasons to go to other voices, to gather information, to intertextualize. Hillis Miller's reader encounters no difficulty, no interruption, no resistance to the experience of reading. All in all, his narrative suggests that private childhood reading experiences are fluent, willing, non-critical, available, and safe.

Lentricchia's reader, his sixteen year old self, sexualizes and intensifies Hillis Miller's willing traveler"

The first time that I traveled it was 1956 and I was sixteen. I was in bed. Ever since, I like to do it in a bed, or reclining on a couch, or on the floor, with my knees drawn up – just like the first time, the book leaning against my thighs nestled in my groin. . . After supper, I withdrew to my room, shut the door, and read deep into the night. Next morning, I didn't bother with breakfast. My mother looked in to ask if I was sick. I kept on going into the early afternoon, when I finished, still in my pajamas, unwashed and unshaved. (63)

No longer a marker of childhood, this abandonment to the text is sexualized and romanticized, though the reader, like Hillis Miller, is unable to let in anything of the world outside, the body rejected ("Too bad I couldn't have hooked up a catheter," he jokes (63)).

Powering this distinction between trained adult reader and rapturous childlike reader (or newly sexualized adolescent reader) is the separation between private and public reading. Private reading is performed by the self, for the self, and with only the self. One reads for enjoyment, for emotional satisfaction, and one reads without recourse to others, or – as in Lentricchia's case –

even the body. This aloneness is unadulterated by school, by public performance or judgment, by potential production. Following this stock image, adult literacy narratives often reveal a nostalgia for reading alone in the shadows, reading as "a form of comfort and safety," with "pillows and quilts" (Grumet 134). While discussing the lost body of the reader, Madeline Grumet quotes Stanley Elkin's assessment of private reading: "We read to die, it has something to do with being alone, shutting the world out, doing books like beads, a mantra, the flu. Some perfect hermetic concentration sealed as canned goods or pharmaceuticals" (134).

Private reading – according to Elkin, a nurtured, incomplete dying -- seems to be its sweetest when it shuts out, not opens up, when it seals tight, not invites breath. Without breath, no one talks. Private reading, childlike reading, self-sponsored reading is marked as a practice that completes itself; the circle of beginning to end is uninterrupted and unmotivated towards the outside, reminiscent of Salvatori's critique of autobiography's self-containment. In Victor Nell's study of the psychology of pleasure reading, *Lost in a Book*, he describe a reader who reads only to forget so that he can begin the book again, recreating the innocence of the reading experience as closely as he can. The closure of the circle, of shutting out the world – even one's own recent lived experience, it seems – keeps this kind of reading caught in its own trap. As enjoyable as it might sound, possessive privacy doesn't go anywhere. Nell's reader, analogous to an amnesiac who keeps trying to fall in love for the first time, is caught. By closing off the circle of reading, Nell's reader cuts off lived experience and thus obstructs any illumination of what those happenings have to do with his reading experiences.

Stephen Greenblatt labels this type of reading enchanted. "Looking may be called enchanted when the act of attention draws a circle around itself from which everything but object is excluded" (54). As Greenblatt's definition notes, an enchanted reader is, by definition, locked

in passive voice; he is not a reader, a self in a particular situation, but the means through which an object is read. Felski defines enchantment as self-loss, the overwhelming experience of looking in Greenblatt's visual description, or in a brief aural description of Felski's, a listening "associated with a decentering or displacement of the self" (71). This is a unique and full receptivity, and though our language typically directs us towards Felski's definition of self-loss (being carried away, escaping), I would like to resist the assumption that the self theoretically disappears in such an intense act of involvement. At the same time, I want to distance myself from enchantment as goal. Involvement need not be predicated on the degree to which one forgets herself; from a pedagogical perspective, forgetting my situation – inspiring my students to forget theirs – is not an option. That said, we need not, as Felski at times does, let Greenblatt's narrowed act of looking subsume all acts of enjoyment. Wonder, appreciation, desire, and amazement do not assume the concentrated objectification of enchantment. On the contrary, often wonder and play emerge from our locations with a group and the particular intensity of a shared attention.

1.5 TROUBLING PRIVACY

In making cases for the emotional experiences of reading, nostalgic examples like Hillis Miller's or Lentricchia's are touted as proof of literature's affective dimensions, as if emotion is relevant and important only when the door is shut, others kept out. In this case, it's as if we've scrupulously cleaned up reading for public consumption, private reading being too erotic, too

intimate, too intensely emotional between text and reader to allow into the public sphere. Indeed, Lentricchia begins his provocative article admitting just that:

I once managed to live for a long time, and with no apparent stress, a secret life with literature. The secret me was me-the-reader, in the act of reading: an experience in which the words of someone else filled me up and made it irrelevant to talk about my reading; an experience that I'd had for as long as I can remember being a reader. This secret life implicitly denied that any talk about what I had undergone could ever be authentic. My silent encounters with literature are ravishingly pleasurable, like erotic transport. (59)

Lentricchia's private reading was not only a private experience; it was a private fact of his existence. Why the secret? For one, the words of literature enacted a kind of possession that seemed to make "it irrelevant to talk about [my] reading"; the silence encased the experience, a potent removal, an "erotic transport." Talking about one's reading is rendered irrelevant, even inappropriate. For Lentricchia, "an honest act of reading" is at stake here; "all true readers are shut-ins," preferring to read themselves into oblivion, alone, ignorant of their body or physical space.

There exists also an expectation for the smoothness of reading, for reading not provoking difficulty, challenge, impatience, boredom, etc. These, I would argue, punctuate the reading experience of adult and child. Hillis Miller says childlike, almost gullible reading is fast, thus so smooth; fastness avoids interruptions, it denies provocations. Though child readers may not adopt the interrogative tactics of Hillis Miller's trained reader, many, I argue, would have other kinds of critical reading experiences, other ways their reading may run counter to Hillis Miller's and Lentricchia's enchanted isolation, their smooth listening. Many childhood reading experiences involve interruptions, both generative and limiting; even in the minutest of ways, readers search out other voices that might be brought to bear on their experiences. For example, there may be aspects of a literary fiction that don't make sense, that they don't believe, that they

don't like, that they can't imagine, that they think is strange, that they want to know more about, that they need to share, that bother them, that amaze them so much they want to see available examples, etc.

As a child reader, I distinctly remember continually negotiating fact and fiction – in novels, in TV, etc. My mother says that I struggled with how to decide whether something was real. But I remember recognizing that “real” meant many different things. When I asked if “the guy on TV was real,” I wanted to know if that man was a real man, if he was walking down the street somewhere, and I didn't just meant the character, I meant the physical man, the actor. “Real” also was temporal, however. Was it happening right now? Was I snooping, watching complicated events in someone's life play out? No answer my parents gave me ever fulfilled the extent of my questions. Similarly, reading Laura Ingalls Wilder's books, my first chapter books, I remember asking my parents about whether Laura was a real person. Finding out she was real provoked new questions; was she still alive? If not, did she have kids and grandkids? Could I meet them? Have they read all the books? What was it like to live in a house built into a hill on the ground, with flowers growing out of your roof? Would I be a good settler, too? Would I be as brave as Laura? This concerned me, because I suspected the answer was no. Laura was impulsive, but she was strong-willed; she wasn't scared to pick up and leave, to work hard, to explore alone, to recognize and fix problems herself, and she noticed so many things about the world. I wanted to be a settler, to test my innate ability to adjust. I felt closest to Laura when we moved from the city life of Pittsburgh to Iowa, a state where she had lived; there I encountered prairie grass, a new school system that was publicly dismayed with my inability to cut construction paper in straight lines, strange kinds of mailboxes and trees, and rows and rows of corn – a landscape in its persistent monotony that held me in locked stares. As I grew, the books,

now years away, snuck up on me. When I first ventured a few hours west into South Dakota, not far from where Laura had lived for years, the desperate blankness of the plains seemed to expose anything and anyone. Exposure in isolation made me re-appreciate the snugness of her underground house, where, standing above it, “nobody could have guessed it was a roof” (*Plum Creek* 344).

Later, then a sixth grade teacher, I found myself using Ingalls’s description to teach what I called “slow motion writing.” The passage began:

Laura jumped up and stood still. She saw something. Deep in the dark beyond the firelight, two green lights were shining near the ground. They were eyes. Cold ran up Laura’s backbone, her scalp crinkled, her hair stood up. The green lights moved; one winked out, then the other winked out, then both shone steadily, coming nearer. Very rapidly they were coming nearer. (*Little House* 33)

After we read the scene, we picked out details that built suspense, that made us more expectant. I still have an old list of one of my students: *green lights, shining, crinkled, hair stood up, winked, coming nearer, rapidly*. I then described why I chose it as an example of “slow motion writing.” It takes her paragraphs to get to what the “green lights” are, yet we know they are “coming rapidly,” and so we feel that movement, too. We’re nervous, we know the “eyes” are moving closer, and we know at some point Laura and the lights will meet. All of her details make the event even longer, even scarier, putting the scene in slow-motion, but not slowing down our interest, not watering down importance. I had a new appreciation for Laura’s eye, her ability to see “deep in the dark beyond the firelight.” I was glad to share it with my students.

An active reader since childhood, I have had many self-sponsored reading experiences. None, however, strike me as purely private. They are all punctuated with other voices or directions, however faint: questions, discoveries, comparisons, concerns, loud wonderings, prompts to read, to go back, to stop, to reject. The childhood reading experiences that have

stayed with me, that have lived in my memory, were not smooth and quiet, locked away. They were never solely mine. As in my reading of the Laura Ingalls Wilder books, these reading experiences prompted new interests, things to notice “deep in the dark,” and a burgeoning sense of rereading’s chorus: new voices, new texts, new images at play with memory. (Rereading always comes with background noise.) I wonder about Lentricchia’s, Hillis Miller’s, and Tompkins’s childhood narratives of privacies. The tucked away child reader, keeping the book for himself, is an appealing, nestled image, fulfilling a promise of young self-making. I wonder, though, how if these narratives were ever disrupted, interrupted, punctured – air coming in and seeping out. Memory and story might not have room for the myriad pauses, breaks, intertextual occasions, announcements, and/or questions that made their way through these private reading experiences, but I can only suppose they existed, even when we’re tempted to remember an effortless and concealed event.

So who are these remembered children, mine and the others? What is implied, buried, in these descriptions of childhood reading? To put pressure on where these narratives and their stock images take us, we look at where they come from. These are children who have access to books and to solitary time, who have rooms and doors to shut, time to pass without disturbance. They are children who have perhaps witnessed the force of reading at work in adults around them (I certainly did), adults who might also use time and space to read privately and silently, who have modeled absorption. They are children who do not encounter difficulty, who seem – with a simple push from another – to enter books without coming up for breath.

Class is part of this story, as are familial expectations for literacy and understandings of literacy. Many students within American schools cannot tell this story, may not even be able to imagine it. By articulating the powerful contexts supporting these depictions, I want to put

pressure on our expectations of childhood, our ideals of reading, the classroom full of students that we imagine, and ultimately, the emotions these stories allow and support. What Tompkins, Lentricchia, and Hillis Miller articulate through memoir is the pleasure of utter absorption, connected to a childlike stance perhaps because of the relative few responsibilities of childhood—a measure of class, situation and experience. But by the sheer fact of their set apart-ness, these stock, private readers set up their own critique. While remembering the comfort of home reading, Tompkins herself suggests the limits of this private absorption, its utter removal from the school, the world, and where (and how) one meets these realities. Describing the great joys of being sick at home, she writes:

Then there was reading in bed. A great pleasure and comfort, for a book made you doubly safe. Safe from the world and safe even from your own thoughts, though I wouldn't have put it that way then. I read Will James's *Smokey* and cried floods of tears. All the horse stories did that to me, but *Smokey* more than the rest. . . . I think the reason I loved those books is that they gave me a chance to cry for myself without seeming to. I could let myself go, abject, awash in misery, because it was for this poor, abused horse I was crying . . . Books might be sad, but they were the remedy for whatever ailed me. No matter what might be happening, if I could get inside a story, I could live sheltered and absorbed for as long as the book lasted. Books were a home away from home, and away from school. A safe refuge. (43)

Reading alone in bed is a “safe refuge,” makes you “doubly safe,” and keeps you “safe from the world and safe even from your own thoughts.” Ultimately, the escape these critics describe is defined and produced by total isolation, “even from your own thoughts.” Precisely because of this experience’s definitive seclusion, it is unteachable, I think, and maybe even, unspeakable. Though our work in the classroom may inspire self-sponsored reading, we cannot teach students to lose themselves by reading a book, not unless this loss produces speakable gains.

While teaching in an urban high school in Austin, TX, where 99% of our students received free or reduced lunch, I continually came across disavowals of private reading. (Not

surprisingly, I also continually came across descriptions of one or two room apartments for entire families, students sharing bedrooms with siblings and parents; privacy itself was hard won.) Many of my students insisted – vocally, yet nonchalantly, with experience – that they didn’t like to read and simply didn’t do it; it wasn’t an activity they would ever choose for themselves, and it wasn’t an activity that they saw as part of their lives, now and beyond. Many students avoided reading tasks in the classroom, and homework completion rates were low. As far as I could tell, reading outside of school, at least for 80% of my students, was minimal. If reading didn’t happen in front of me where I could see it, I could assume it wouldn’t happen at all.

I begin here to make the basic point that many, many of our students are not private readers and *may never be* private readers. If we assume a shared memory of private reading with high school students or middle school students, even college students, we are ignoring the vast diversity in our students’ lives of literacy. Though on some level I teach reading because I wish for my students to become private readers, to choose to read literature because they have learned to enjoy it, I do not expect or dream that they all experience reading as the closed circle, as the intense pleasure of forgetting, of which privacy is a particular feature. At the very least, I do not expect that this experience, if they do have it, should be represented for me or accessible to me to develop and evaluate (hence enacting my role as a teacher). The enchanted reading experience, the “shut in” Lentricchia describes, is not available for classroom purchase.

1.6 WHO TO BLAME?

If others must be kept out for reading to be pleasurable, remembered and experienced with emotion, then the most common kind of reading – reading in school – is classified as unemotional, maybe forgettable, in the service of something else. What Tompkins’s meditation on “safety” reminds us is the difference between public and private worlds, between the school and the home. School houses the people and ideas that eventually snatch private reading and make them visible – acts to be performed, judged, even dismissed. School runs on presentation and evaluation, again and again and again. It is no surprise that child readers, carrying a cherished activity into the realm of public review and comment, have considered school reading a violation or corruption. Tompkins blames school not just for relegating reading to steps of meaningless decoding in her early years but for casting reading as an intricate matter of exposure during her academic career. As Tompkins argues, school can powerfully – and destructively – reinscribe ideals about pleasure, emotion, and academic purpose.

When I look back at my schooling today, I see what Johnstone sees--a person who was taught not to feel. The long process of coming back into possession of my feelings, learning to recognize their presence, then learning to express them in safe situations, allowing them to be there instead of pushing them down as I had always done -- this education has dominated the last several years of my life. When I look at my undergraduate students, I see how their schooling is forcing them into the same patterns I have struggled to overcome: a divided state of consciousness, a hypertrophy of the intellect and will, an undernourished heart.

Human beings . . . need to feel a connection between a given subject matter and who they are in order for knowledge to take root. That security and that connectedness are seldom present in a classroom that recognizes the students' cognitive capacities alone. People often assume that attention to the emotional lives of students, to their spiritual yearnings and their imaginative energies, will somehow inhibit the intellect's free play, drown it in a wash of sentiment, or deflect it into the realms of fantasy and escape, that the critical and analytical faculties will be muffled, reined in, or blunted as a result. I believe the reverse is true. The initiative, creativity, energy, and dedication that are released when students know they can express themselves freely shows, by contrast, how accustomed they are to holding back, playing it safe, avoiding real engagement, or just going through the motions.

The real objection to a more holistic approach to education lies in a fear of emotion, of the imagination, of dreams and intuitions and spiritual experience that funds commonly received conception of reality in this culture. And no wonder, for it is school, in part, that controls reality's shape. (212-213)

I am quoting Tompkins at length because my project, in many respects, grows out of a shared concern. Tompkins recognizes Jagger's myth of dispassionate investigation. She knows that students live lives. She recognizes that students' reading, researching, and composing are part of these lived lives, that these lived lives should be brought to bear on the work of school, and that emotion – somehow – is the key. At the same time, Tompkins paints school as scary, controlling, and limiting – in every way a place that provokes emotions, but the wrong ones, ones that limit not only student enjoyment but also academic richness. Tompkins offers a limited view of school and of schooling, a view this project seeks to overturn. Several of the literary critics I read here blame school for corrupting the safe absorption of child reading, and I am amassing how these accusations have been made in order to consider their assumptions and how they have shifted what we imagine school reading to be.

In Tompkins's formulation, dismissing emotion as irrelevant to academic life deadens, hardens, and limits one's imagination, belonging, and engagement in the world. Reading,

whether alone or with others, is a step towards a public life; in Tompkins's case, this is first portrayed to be a life of discipline, criticism, and control – far from the safety of home. I suggest throughout this project that the public literacy of school is also a means to listen and respond to other voices and experiences. I stand with Tompkins, however, in regards to readers; dismissing emotion as irrelevant to reading deadens, hardens, and limits one's imagination, belonging, and engagement in a textual experience, and consequently, in the world. And as I have pointed out, for many students, though Tompkins does not speak of this many, reading in school may constitute the most prominent literary reading experiences they will encounter in life. These experiences, then, will define literary reading practices and will teach literature's possibility.

Tompkins is not the first to complain of school's deadening effect on the imagination or the heart. C.S. Lewis, an ocean away and fifty years ago, charges school with numbing readers, making them unable to receive, respond, and enjoy. Early in his book, *An Experiment in Criticism*, Lewis writes, "One sad result of making English Literature a 'subject' at schools and universities is that the reading of great authors is, from early years, stamped upon the minds of conscientious and submissive young people as something meritorious" (10). Schools try to make "serious readers" out of students, Lewis says, but the seriousness becomes skewed, "grave" or "solemn," and the "serious student" becomes one who "studies hard." This misses the point of reading: "the true reader reads every work seriously in the sense that he reads it whole-heartedly, makes himself as receptive as he can" (11). Writing in 2001, Robert Scholes complains that as English educators "we have managed to make reading seem too difficult and to trivialize it at the same time" (25). His perusal of online messaging boards illuminates this result – students asking for symbols and meanings while admitting they're "having a hard time enjoying the book, so reading between the lines is a little tough" (25). As Scholes puts it in his essay on teaching

poetry, we have “lost sight of poetry’s private pleasures,”; “we, English teachers, then – in our bumbling, well-meaning way, have done a lot of the damage, and we have done it both at the college level and at the level of secondary school” (6).

Let me pause here to trace some echoes, words that have reappeared in this collection of writers I have amassed thus far. Both Lentricchia and C.S. Lewis worry about the “true reader,” about protecting the reading of literature from a professionalized apparatus where “serious students” make their way by discipline and standards, not “whole-heartedness” or “love.” In Lentricchia’s account, the clearest evidence this “true reader” is threatened occurs in the voices of graduate students, students who proclaim to know – “Before I could get a word out, a student said, ‘The first thing we have to understand is that Faulkner is a racist,’ ” – and students who ignore texts, let alone the experiences they engender – “Later in the course, another student attacked Don DeLillo’s *White Noise* for what he called its insensitivity to the Third World. I said, ‘But the novel doesn’t concern the Third World. It’s set in a small town in Middle America’ ” (64). These are irritating comments, made by a close mirror to the professor, the aspiring professional reader. These comments illuminate the approach these graduate students perceive as publicly worthy within their discipline. Students, particularly graduate students, are in the situation of imagining and adopting professional purposes, and this can be thorny, our voices either overzealous or underdeveloped.

Felski makes room for professional pressure, reminding us that reading always has situated purposes; for the academic, these include a myriad of professional functions, which, she says, tend to preclude emotional response. She seems to worry, though, that the accepted rendition of critical reading has limited emotion’s perceived relevance to academic goals. Surely these graduate students’ lack of sensitivity to a textual experience and a classroom situation

illuminates the detrimental result of a deprived understanding of “critical.” Felski questions the aggrandized academic leverage of critical reading; being “invoked in mission statements, graduate speeches, and conversations with deans,” critical reading (“the holy grail of literary studies”) is the unfortunate mark of C.S. Lewis’s serious student (2-3). Lentricchia’s parodied students are the most serious of readers, yet they stray farthest it seems from the possible experience of a text, perhaps, to be closer to the supposed voices of a professionalized community.

Lentricchia and Lewis undeniably have a point; as the seriousness of school intensifies, the purposes of reading and thus, what the reader brings to her experience, change. As Lewis suggests, however, these changes are a product of *teaching*, of a discipline endeavoring to make “serious students.” Louise Rosenblatt warns against this phenomenon: “Aesthetic reading, by its very nature, has an intrinsic purpose, the desire to have a pleasurable, interesting experience for its own sake. (The older the students, the more likely we are to forget this.)” (qtd in Lewis, Cynthia, 256). Lentricchia’s response is to “slip happily underground,” to hide in a sod house, a private reading space that people can walk by without noticing (64). Indeed, “the first thing I do in my classroom is shut the door and make sure it’s shut tight,” he announces (65). Erasing the classroom and hiding underground –privatizing space – Lentricchia feels he can create the open stance Lewis articulates so well: “wholeheartedness.”

Schooled readers do have reason to complain. Madeline Grumet, a former teacher and professor of education, describes the secondary school classroom as a place where silence, teacher authority, and texts often delimit institutional behaviors, including that of reading. Describing Harold Herber's widely used *Teaching Reading in Content Areas*, Grumet points to the worrisome result of overly-cognitivizing reading practice: a cleaned-up and simplified

sequence of steps emerges (first decoding, second deriving meaning, third applying to previous knowledge), while literary imagination, not to mention the complicated mess of co-engagements (decoding WHILE relying on previous knowledge, for example), disappears. Reading is made spare, the act distorted, and students, the readers to be reached, dismiss it as *institutional* reading, *school* reading.

In the secondary school classroom described, there is no "body reader," a term Grumet bases on Merleau-Ponty's name for human consciousness, the "body-subject." "Bodyreading," the progressive form of the verb, is Grumet's specific concern, an act notably absent in her portrayals of English classes. Bodyreading is to bring what we live to the act of reading, to read with and as selves in acts of living, C.S. Lewis's "wholeheartedness." Merleau-Ponty's original term represents an attempt to bring our understanding of "consciousness" to the location of the body -- to selves who sit in chairs in schools, who turn pages, pass notes, listen and look, sigh and smile. In Grumet's assessment, these selves, the "body-subjects" of our students (and even us, the teachers) are too often not recognized, too often not invited into the classroom. Thus, the classroom does not become "a place where we live," but rather a place where we learn to constrict and ignore (129).

Here the divide between private and public is encrypted into reading practice. Reading, to be pleasurable, to be thick – to be an act of living – is enacted in private, off school grounds and away from school requirements. In Susan Hynds's 5-year qualitative study on adolescent reading practice, interviewed middle school students continually oppose school reading, defined by them as a limited and conscripted product-oriented practice, with home reading.

[In school] I worry about not finishing [a book] in time and getting the details and everything . . . I look for key words and stuff like that. (Libby)

If you're reading for a report or something in school, you maybe skim through until you find the answers. (Kim)

[In school] they're usually, like, ten page stories and then [there'll] be a whole list of questions, comprehension checkbook, and you know . . . I just remember it was such a pain . . . when you have to read something and then answer questions. (Margaret) (46)

Home reading, on the other hand, provides one middle school student with an experience that capitalizes on the "synesthesia that integrates all our perceptions" (Grumet 129); for another, home reading becomes enfolded in his lived experiences and motivations.

The books I read in school are better literature, but the ones I read at home are for enjoyment . . . If I'm reading for enjoyment. . . I'll listen to what I'm reading. I'll visualize what's going on. (Maria)

About two months ago I started to read Stephen King. I loved him and decided to read all his books. I then decided to write like him. I want it to be real good and something every horror lover can enjoy. (44, 47)

To solve what Felski deems a professional crisis – a rupture between our justifications for reading in the home and those of the academy (or classroom) – Felski looks at the motives and experiences of readers untouched by a professional imperative. Why do people read literature, on their own? What motivates the student to read “all” of Stephen King’s books? Why allows Maria to listen and visualize at home, and why does she enjoy it?

Perhaps this interest explains Felski’s excessive use of the term “ordinary.” Within her introduction, there are “ordinary intuitions,” “ordinary motives,” “ordinary reading,” and “ordinary persons.” The OED defines “ordinary” as “belonging to the regular or usual order or course of things; having a place in a fixed or regulated sequence; occurring in the course of regular custom or practice; normal; customary; usual.” For Felski’s purposes, “ordinary” refers to the everyday practices of those outside of the academy. “Ordinary persons” are non-academics, those who choose to read for pleasure without specialized knowledge or literary rationales. Though Felski’s gaze remains focused on the academy (and fictional examples of

“ordinary” reading), the school-sponsored reading of middle school and high school emphasizes the ritualized everyday of “ordinary” far more than the various reading practices of individuals. Practically every person under eighteen has read in school and recognizes the activity as a “normal” practice, a “regular custom,” an expected “sequence,” a mark of the “usual order or course of things.”

School reading, the reading I will take up in this dissertation, is definitively ordinary. I throw this word into the mix with *private, public, interior, exterior, emotion, pleasure, wholehearted* – because it brings us a bit closer to situations, to everyday realities of classrooms, to all schooled readers. When we blame school, the narrative glorifies private reading only. Readers would be private readers, enjoying literature’s aesthetic powers, emotionally rich, but school – the machine that publicizes reading and literature ruins it, making reading something systematic, purely cognitive, argumentative, a lesson in authority (text, teacher, method). This narrative fits readers who found they *didn’t need anyone else* to create and appreciate all sorts of literary experiences. Best done alone.

Anyone interested or invested in the education of America’s public cannot adopt or accept this narrative. This dissertation is meant to undo it, to offer examples that run counter not only to the villanization of school, but also to the myopic focus on purely individualized reading that sustains most work on reading literature and emotion. To argue that emotion is relevant to reading is one thing – several people agree and have written about this – but to argue that foregrounding emotion is a relevant, necessary, and ideal aspect of reading in the classroom, seems to go against the assumption held dear in our formulations of private and public, reading and school. That is the underlying argument directing this project.

2.0 FINDING EMOTION IN ACADEMIC READING

Before we can explore what role emotion plays in the reading of literary texts in classrooms, I want to think through what kind of reading it is we desire students to do. My “we” here is rather expansive and thus the generalizations I make are exactly that – generalizations. I refer to teachers of English at the middle, secondary, and post-secondary level, particularly within introductory courses. In colleges or community colleges, these courses receive many different names and even appear in different departments: English, Composition, Developmental Writing, Developmental Reading, to name a few. I am concerned with those classes where students are reading literary texts – texts whose form and language cannot be separated from their content, texts which represent human relationships in some way. These considerations, then, are most directed towards reading not only fiction but also non-fiction which asks us to encounter and create scenarios, not only arguments. Teachers of middle school and high school students operate within different institutional boundaries, encounter different students and concerns, and given the developmental and situational placement of their students, operate under different goals for their work (for example, higher percentage of students passing state exams and graduating from high school). Though I do not deny these powerfully felt differences and will indeed reveal them as I describe my own pedagogical inquiries within a high school setting, I also seek, along with others, to establish commonalities between secondary and post-secondary ideals for reading, to

pinpoint theoretical approaches that would serve both locations. I also hope to reveal particular histories and pressures within the secondary and post-secondary spheres that impede shared approaches to reading.

To think through the kinds of reading practices we ultimately desire for our students if/when they reach an undergraduate institution, I begin by looking at comments from teachers of freshmen students in colleges. What is it that they want from their students that students struggle to do? What kinds of reading practices seem to be missing from students' repertoire?

Robert Scholes has spent much of his later career trying to name what the academy values in literary reading, and what it is readers struggle to do upon entering college. In his article, "The Transition to College Reading," Scholes begins with a response from his colleague, Tamar Katz, after inquiring about the "most important problems or deficiencies in the preparation of first-year students in her literature courses" (166). She writes:

I think that the new high school graduates I see (and sophomores with no previous lit classes) most lack close reading skills. Often they have generic concepts and occasionally they have some historical knowledge, though perhaps not as much as they should. I find that they are most inclined to substitute what they generally think a text should be saying for what it actually says, and lack a way to explore the intricacies and interests of the words on the page. Sometimes the historical knowledge and generic concepts actually become problems when students use them as tools for making texts say and do what students think they should, generalizing that all novels do X or poems do Y. Usually the result is that they want to read every text as saying something extremely familiar that they might agree with. I see them struggling the most to read the way texts differ from their views, to find what is specific about the language, address, assumptions etc. (Tamar Katz, pers. com., 17 September 2001) (166)

To characterize the overall definition of academic literary reading is impossible, as the academy is not disciplined to conceive of reading in a unified framework, which secondary and middle level education often is. Instead, individuals' approaches are results of their particular lines of training. That said, there are common strands that run through the diagnosing of reading within

the academy, and Katz's email points to some of these shared elements. When we make her negatives positive, she (and Scholes) present academic reading as a mix of "close reading skills," which she goes on to define as "exploring intricacies and interests of words," attending to the text itself, "reading the ways texts differ from one's views," and "finding specificity in language, address, and assumptions."

Arlene Wilner, her article published along with Scholes's in this 2002 issue of *Pedagogy*, acknowledges that the reading of the academy that her developmental writing students simply have not been trained to do is a reading defined institutionally, a practice, then, one needs to be taught, a practice one needs to learn. To begin such teaching, Wilner starts where this chapter begins, naming what kind of reading the academy requires. "But how often do we articulate, even to ourselves, arguments about how readers acculturated to the academy read—or should read, according to our own perspective?" Wilner writes. "And how does this awareness of the constructedness of our disciplinary assumptions shape our teaching strategies?" (180). She comes to a definition of academic reading through an awareness of her students' difficulty and their inability to fulfill certain expectations: "that a persuasive argument for an interpretation cannot ignore contradictory or anomalous elements of the text; that articulating a story's theme generally requires contemplating the narrator's point of view; that recognition of image patterns, sentence structure, narrative structure, and other formal matters shapes the way readers make meaning in an academic setting" (177). These were concepts her developmental writing students lacked. Without them, Wilner concludes, "students naturally rely on habitual patterns of reaction, often shaped by unexamined emotions that encourage them to convert nuanced, complex relationships (among characters or ideas) into simplistic, distorted ones" (177). In this instance of Wilner's article, emotions take the place of the disciplinary concepts and practices

literary readers use to navigate their reading. In contrast with the rules of disciplinary practice, her students operate under “unexamined emotions,” or reactionary responses, which simplify the complex, twisting realities along the way. In Wilner’s formulation here, though her article as a whole moves beyond this notion, it seems that disciplinary practice is the way to counter these reactions, to replace them, that is. As she encountered students’ problematic reading, she came closer to naming the continual negotiations her students struggled to perform: “to read challenging, multilayered texts both with sympathetic imagination and with critical detachment necessary for basic comprehension . . . the practices essential to 'reading' in the academy and in the world beyond” (183). As a reader in the academy and a teacher of reading, I recognize Wilner’s dialectic of “sympathetic imagination” and “critical detachment,” though I can only imagine how difficult/paradoxical this is for developing readers. Indeed, I’m not sure this formulation names really what these stances are, “critical” a particularly guilty word in covering up for students what indeed we want them to do. The feeling of reading encompasses more than these two stances, with identifying and detaching, yet Wilner’s formulation points to an important, indeed a foundational readerly negotiation: for involvement in story and for recognition of madeness. We need to teach students how to negotiate the many back and forths reading requires, the previous perhaps being the primary and predominant one that marks reading literary texts. Much of this chapter is interested in how we teach students to embark on such negotiations, suggesting that those “unexamined emotions” need not be replaced with “concepts,” but may be part of a literary reading, initializing and furthering conceptual practices.

Before we look at what informs this valuation and definition of academic reading, let me introduce some other voices interested in the movements back and forth readers make. In a 2001 article in *Pedagogy*, Jerome McGann offers an account of what he calls “Reading

Fiction/Teaching Fiction – A Pedagogical Experiment” during which he taught a section of a course titled “An Introduction to Literary Studies” to undergraduates, while graduate students enrolled in a seminar regarding the teaching of literature to undergraduates taught the remaining sections. The experiment’s primary revelation seems to be the undergraduates’ problematic “critical reading skills” (143). In defining their problems reading, McGann was surprised by his students’ difficulty reading fiction, given “the relative ease with which the undergraduates seemed to negotiate the fictional texts,” compared to, for example, poetry or non-fiction. For McGann, that relative ease was the problem, their smooth involvement in plot, in what happens next, keeping them from recognizing details of language, exploring character complexity as it relates to plot, noticing historicalities, and investigating fictional construction and structure. As McGann defines it, academic reading is “critical reading,” or “see[ing] clearly what is being read,” an object of reading that poetry makes more readily apparent (145). “Fiction is different,” McGann explains. “Only trained readers have the skills to negotiate, back and forth, the relation between the textualities of fiction and its sublime imaginary constructions”(145).

Though I am not dealing exclusively with fiction (literary essays, for example, with narrative structures), I pause on McGann’s quotation to note his description of “trained readers.” Readers are moving and negotiating in McGann’s framework; though he disparages students taking plots too seriously (“We all know how young students, in discussing a novel, want to talk about characters (as if they were ‘real’) and plot (as if it were a sequence of events”), McGann’s explanation of reading fiction reveals his acknowledgement of taking, though they be ‘constructions,’ characters and events seriously (146). Many readers begin here, responding to happenings, to characters, and then moving, as McGann explains, to elements of construction, to “textualities.” The relationship between “sublime imaginary constructions” and the “textualities

of fiction” is continually made and questioned by the reader, a dialectic that marks academic reading, or what McGann calls “critical reading.” These movements back and forth challenge our perception, our desires to create and question relationships, and our sense of “ease,” as McGann indicates. As I detail through others’ examples and my own, some readers fail to cocreate the imaginative reality scripted by the text, others do so but without interest in its “madness”; still others, more trained readers perhaps, recognize the “textualities of fiction” but without reference to the powerful “imaginary constructions” the reader creates. I will present several dialectics in this chapter, each its own mutually specifying sphere of notice. In the case of textualities and imaginary constructions as in the other dialectical relationships I explore, I ask a similar question: might emotion have to do with these back and forths? In McGann’s framework, how might emotion influence how readers arrive at “sublime imaginative constructions” and move to “textualities”? How might experienced emotion change how perceived textualities shift our “sublime imaginative constructions”?

This is a version of what Deanne Bogdan calls the “life/literature” problem. Do we read literature to see life, its mimetic source? Or do we read literature to recognize and deal with the intricacies of text? Do we see and believe in the connections we make to our own lives as we read? Or do we read for the author’s purposes in creating these characters and situations, or read the text as indicative of its situated making, symptomatically? Do we make the “mistake” of McGann’s students, reading plot as if it were a sequence of events and characters as if they were real? McGann’s ‘real’ admits the complexity of the problem. Having taught struggling readers at all levels, I have worked with many students who struggle to determine “realness,” unsure whether or not a text represents events that transpired in life. McGann’s ‘real’ intimates that his students understand this distinction, but yet somehow take characters too seriously, while

language, the textual material, is ignored. As Wilner admits at some point, sometimes students just don't seem to take the right parts seriously.

All of these teachers/scholars agree on several basic elements of academic reading. Academic reading attends to the text itself, to its language, its structure, its sentences and rhythms. All aspects of a text are considered as one reads, especially, perhaps, the most puzzling or difficult ones. To read a literary text, a reader needs to slow down, suspend declarations of meaning, and linger in what perhaps does not make sense, in the strange or unfamiliar. Indeed, Katz, Wilner, Scholes, and McGann problematize the “familiar” and that which seems to proceed with “ease.” Despite the comfort, perhaps even perceived success that accompanies familiarity and ease, their smoothness covers up the activity of reading and, as McGann illuminates, the work and pleasures the reading of a text could inspire. These foundational elements of academic reading – attending to the text, noticing what does not seem to fit, slowing down, and suspending declarations of meaning – are about as close as we can get to articulating a shared conception of reading in the academy.

2.1 DESCRIBING READING DIFFICULTIES

As I've indicated, Wilner and McGann attempt to describe an academic literary reading practice precisely because their students were struggling to read in the ways they expected. Like Scholes's push to listen to the other, Wilner's students have not been trained to appreciate/evaluate unfamiliar human relations. They need to be taken in on the level of narrative/story before they can achieve a critical distance.

In describing the difficulties of her Developmental Writing students, Wilner explicitly names emotion as an impediment to reading. "For many freshmen," she writes, "it is a leap to see the interpretive act itself -- rather than an unreflective reaction -- as a desirable option" (179). The unreflective reaction, instead of a catalyst for textual investigation, is seen by her students as a stopping place, their reading completed, their like or dislike confirmed. For Wilner, this is an issue of instruction – the reading of the academy, the reading practices and values we want our students to engage – are not simply inferred, instinctual, but need to be taught. "But how," she asks, "do we teach an experience?" When her students present their "unreflective reactions" as satisfactory interpretations, Wilner is reminded of the opportunity of the classroom, the pointfulness of reading challenging texts together with students under conditions of production (discussing, writing). It is also, however, a reminder of the broader capacities implicit in acts that include "unreflective reactions": investigating provocations, examining mixes of emotions, or making our emotional life an area of reflexive practice. Examining our feelings, even articulating them, is difficult in life, whether texts are involved or not. Wilner had already struggled with a particular class of students' reacting "to texts in such self-centered, such willfully naive ways that, instead of interpreting or even shedding light on the text, they appeared simply to defy it," (174) but, she writes, "the most troubling and disorienting moment came when most of the male students in one of my sections refused to read, let alone write about, an assigned short story that charts the emotional growth of its homosexual protagonist" (173). Though these rebellious acts of reading revealed what she assumed to be "a fundamental failure in reading comprehension," Wilner's analysis of the class – her pedagogical intents and responses included – suggested that the root problem involved "connections between feeling and thinking and with the differences between automatic responses and more critical, more reflective

ones” (173). Wilner’s experience highlighted a consequential gap in her conception of academic literary reading – the relationship between feeling and thinking, between reactions and reflections. Wilner impressively names this gap, a gap that not only implicates emotion as a problem for readers but also as a necessary solution.

Other researchers describing undergraduate reading difficulties move circuitously around naming “connections between feeling and thinking,” yet suggest versions of this capacious problem. As McGann’s description illustrates, our resistance to texts may not always register as negative, fearful, or even resistant. McGann noted quite the opposite in his undergraduate students. It was their pleasure reading fiction, their enjoyment, that seemed to keep them from “reading critically.” McGann contrasted their reading of fiction with their reading of poetry; though they found poetry difficult, unfamiliar, and not directly pleasurable, his students approached the texts with attention, a recognition of unfamiliarity, and a care for language. There are reasons for this beyond the particular kind of involvement fiction demands from us; generically, a poem announces its language, visually and aurally, while fiction, as McGann puts it, can “lead us beyond its world of words, engrossing us in imagined events and people” (145). His students’ successful involvement in these imagined events and people translated to difficulty conceiving of the madeness of the text and moving beyond Wilner’s “unexamined reactions.”

So long as the fictions were not self-consciously reflexive and experimental, the undergraduates met the texts with pleasure and a certain kind of understanding. That pleasure and understanding, however, proved a serious obstacle to the students’ ability to think critically about the works and their own thinking. It generated a kind of “transparency effect” in the reading experience, preventing the students from getting very far toward reading in deliberate and self-conscious ways. (146)

Unlike Wilner’s students’ outright resistance, McGann’s students’ difficulty with fiction was a difficulty quite “difficult to realize”; it hid behind a perception of smooth reading.

McGann's framing of the reading problem is illustrative; despite students' pleasure, their reading, he contends, does not move in "deliberate and self-conscious ways." Indeed, a lack of self-awareness is one of McGann's problems with his students' reading practices and demonstrated self-awareness one of his measures of the class's success. Engaging the class in repeated acts of recitation, McGann argues, eventually became "a device for heightening readerly self-awareness" (151). Self-awareness for McGann is a matter of physicality (articulating text by constituting tone), identifying and explaining how and why textual moments make impressions, and "being alive" to a text, noticing and reacting to moments that may not seem, on the surface, to further plot, yet arrest us in other ways, perhaps even in their strangeness (151). It is difficult to imagine a developed self-awareness that ignored emotion, or a version of "being alive" that determined importance, identified impressions, or uncovered apprehensions without the acuity, revelation, or sensation of emotion. McGann is after an elongated reading practice, an experience of moving through a text that he characterizes in two, it seems, disconnected phrases, "reading critically" and "being alive to the text." To "be alive to the text," students need to "open themselves to a second-order process of reflection," a verb choice that rings true with Wilner's students, who simply needed to "open themselves" to reading a text that confronted them with a situation they were scared to cocreate, fearful to understand. In McGann's conception, "opening" and "being alive" are critical acts. Wilner, I think, would agree, as would I, though I pause here to nestle these terms together (critical -- again and again -- alongside open, self-aware, being alive) so that we consider their dissonance and the potential consequences for students. This is a set of words to which I will return.

McGann seeks to foster the self-awareness necessary to read critically, yet "self-centeredness," a term Wilner uses that is descriptively echoed by McGann and others, obstructs

this particular kind of self-attention. For McGann, students “were reading not to investigate the book on its own terms but to process the book in terms they could ‘understand’” (152). In this framing, it is easy to see how readers would of course operate this way, recasting a text so that they conceive it, “understand” it more smoothly. Yet this benign mode of self-direction, I think, is a version of Wilner’s self-centeredness, a rejection of textual difference or incoherence in order to make things work the way we expect, like, or believe. Scholes calls this “a failure to imagine the otherness of the text’s author,” (167), “a difficulty in moving from the words of the text to some set of intentions that are different from one’s own, some values or presuppositions different from one’s own and possibly opposed to them” (166). Scholes situates this problem within the context of American ignorance, a refusal to hear what we might struggle to acknowledge or imagine. As McGann describes with his students, this “refusal to hear” may be characterized as an inability or a lack of awareness. Certainly, too, it is a lack of imagination; without recognizing what it means to hear difference, we fail to imagine it. Without imagining that we have not experienced, it is difficult to hear. “Students simply assimilate the thought and feeling in a text to their own thoughts and feelings,” Scholes writes, a practice that eases the difficulty of reading while minimizing its imaginative activity (and thus, I would suggest along with Scholes, our imaginative capacities) (170).

The unreflective reactions of Wilner’s students, the refusal to hear the otherness of a speaker or to imagine the otherness of an author, both imply a lack of attention to the text itself, the words on the page. These authors all share the same complaint – perhaps as English has reached towards universality in a push towards multiculturalism, readers have not learned how to identify and value moments of difference and distance, how to listen to what does not make

sense to them, or how to mark the distinction between endeavoring to imagine and recognizing in full.

Wilner describes an instance when her students read James Baldwin's story "Sonny's Blues." Despite the fact that Sonny's brother narrates the story, recounting the new ways he comes to listen to and appreciate the life of his drug-addicted brother, now clean, most students concluded that "Sonny had undergone the greatest change, from being addicted to drugs to jamming in a club, free of their influence" (183). Wilner goes on: "The students wanted to turn this intimate, emotionally gripping, narratively complex story into an illustration of 'just say no.' Consequently, many of them seemed oblivious to the dramatic change in the narrator, a change crucial to the theme of the story and powerfully portrayed through the first-person narrative consciousness" (183). Recognizing this instance as a "fundamental misunderstanding," Wilner points out how narrative expectation can erase the text itself. "Given a story about a jazz-playing heroin addict and a middleclass algebra teacher, they assumed that its focal point had to be the addict"(184). This is not simply, I would argue, about which types of narratives we recognize and expect or the students' lack of real knowledge of important literary conventions (first person narration, for example), though it certainly does indict both. Wilner's students' identification with the "Just say no" story could illuminate our expectations for how narratives should *feel* (not simply how they should end or proceed). Looking at Wilner's story from this perspective challenges us to teach our students how to recognize, progress through, and value unfamiliarity in experience, in quality. When do we have them try to name distances between what they expect and want – what seems "right" to them in a narrative – and yet what they discover in a text? Perhaps if we allowed the focus to be on such disconnects, such discomfort, we could create alternative avenues to mastering a story, to making it feel and fit the way we assume it must.

Barbara Schneider lodges a similar complaint in response to teaching an intensive summer preparation program for underprepared freshmen students. In designing the class, Schneider wanted students to be able to talk about race, note their own advantages, and sense the differences between their situation and those of others, particular key textual others. She had students read bell hooks and Mike Rose in order to write their own literacy narratives, a genre that she believes calls on “the emotions, attitudes, and beliefs that constitute the affective domain and the analytical, critical, and synthetic capabilities of the cognitive domain” (198). Schneider recognized from the beginning of her course that both domains needed to be involved in her students’ development as writers and readers, yet I can only wonder if the disappointment she comes to feel in her students has something to do with the clean break she imagines between her students’ emotions and their analysis, their attitudes and their modes and results of synthesis. Needless to say, Schneider is dissatisfied with their writing: “What I got were stories that were historically thin, naively positivistic, and wholly predictable” (199). She is intensely aware of the marked differences between her students and hooks; they are attending an urban university near their homes with many other working-class students, while hooks left her rural southern home for a private, mostly white university in California. Her students, however, did not seem to recognize these differences, and they did not, to her disappointment, bring up race. Instead, they all found ways to identify with hooks, to build up affinities that either ignored glaring differences or emerged from little in the text.¹⁰

In writing the article, Schneider names what explicitly captures her – difference made by historical realities – yet she continually seems to keep this hidden from her students, leaving her

¹⁰ Schneider eventually admits that her students’ desire for identification might have something to do with teacher expectations and assignments (it seems quite possible that reading mentor texts and writing one’s own could launch projects of identification).

desires, her emotional investments, distressingly unvoiced. Why not tell students we are interested in the affinities but also the unbridgeable distances? Why not ask how they see and feel those distances? How might hooks' very different experience change their perception of their own, just commencing, college journey? I ask this not only of Schneider, but of myself. The secrecy of pedagogy can elude us, a quality of teaching that becomes all the more striking when emotions and reactions – features of experience communicated through acts of impression, sensation, and revelation – are part of what we want our students to communicate. When we want students to attend to the careful emotional negotiations they make as readers, we need to introduce this value and model. Indeed, the main goal of this chapter is to set groundwork for explicitness. Much of this chapter engages with theories that seek explicit descriptions of the reading process, and I begin with these pedagogical narratives in part to value the explicitness a voice like Wilner has with her own dialogue about teaching.

In one effort towards explicitness, let me list the reading difficulties the previous authors describe, except here with attention to emotion. Naming these problems helps us track how emotion cuts through the academic expectations for literary reading. Some of these problems are layered, but I hope to isolate as many different aspects of the emotional qualities of these difficulties.

Unreflective reactions: Students react to a text and stop there. These reactions often turn in to statements of like or dislike and unfortunately do not provoke rethinking, reconsidering, rereading, or refeeling. The unreflective reaction is desired perhaps because it provides the pleasure of involvement and feeling without analysis (which may or may not reveal something we want to recognize).

Articulating and Examining Feeling: Even if a reader recognizes she possesses a feeling, articulating it in words is a struggle, particularly when those feelings speak to a tension or ambiguity. To articulate already requires a degree of analysis, of taking what is not made known in language to language. To examine what perhaps makes up a version of “sad, disappointed,” is to break apart their components, a breaking down which requires a construction of the situation in which the reader is involved. This problem also contributes to vague statements of like or dislike.

Expectation for Smooth Enjoyment/Reading: When we expect reading literature to be smooth and pleasurable, a measure of our ease of involvement, we probably are not paying close attention to the text, ourselves, or our situation. Emotional expectation here – what reading literature *ought* to feel like – impedes our awareness. Of course, as Wilner points out, we do want students to have expectations for experience, but, as she asks, “How do we teach an experience?” – especially the particular experience of reflective involvement.

Resistance to Feelings/Situations: How do we ask students to think and feel while cocreating situations they do not understand nor want to imagine, narratives they do not want to recognize, or characters they do not want to acknowledge? There are many dimensions to this question, not only the homosexual protagonist of the text Wilner’s students refuse. There is also – and I use examples from articles I reference within this dissertation –the voices of Sethe’s former masters in *Beloved*, the sexist narrator in Updike’s much anthologized “A&P.” There are many, many stories, characters, and situations readers resist and avoid because of the emotional challenges of imagining, listening, recognizing, or acknowledging.

Ignoring the Unfamiliar/Incoherent: When aspects of a text don’t fit our conceptions, it’s frustrating. When we think we understand the point of a character, a situation, or a text, and

then a scene comes along that doesn't cohere, it can be easier to avoid it than to rework our ideas. Reworking our ideas generally requires reforming our feelings and attitudes towards our subject to account for the full sensation of the piece that doesn't fit. Not only that, dealing with what puzzles, what feels unfamiliar, what interrupts the smoothness, often demands inhabiting discomfort and accepting a lack of closure.

Lack of Awareness: I could use many adjectives here (physical, emotional, textual, situational). What McGann wants and what he doesn't find in his students is a kind of wakefulness, "being alive to the text." When readers do not notice, sense, or become *impressed* – then possibilities for analysis are limited.

Desire to Master the Story: Discomfort, ambiguity, awareness of multiple impressions – none of these experiential features capture what most readers in an academic situation believe they are (and on some level, they are) expected to do – master the story: explain its meaning and defend their response. I include this in this list because it is a desire and understanding, I think, that runs counter to student readers learning how to "be alive to the text," instead fueling some of the previously stated problems.

Identification as Privileged Emotional Act: Though some students resist outright any possibility in cultivating what Wilner calls a "sympathetic imagination" towards characters, other readers seem to presume identification, which is both an assumption of feeling and knowing, even when there is not adequate grounds for claims of identification. All of these writers frame this problem at some point in terms of a desire to see and listen to oneself, not the difference of another. Thus, in some ways an overly identifying reader is also a resistant reader, failing to see and feel difference, failing to note the contours of boundaries, and failing to hear specificity.

Ignoring Reader Feeling: Our feelings bind us to what we are reading, offering us textual moments of impression that are interpretable. Part of being an academic reader is determining moments and reasons to reread, as shifts in feeling offer us cause for attention. When readers are not marking and collecting such moments, we lose the potential consideration of specific impressions.

Failure of Imagination: Imagining feelings is distinct from claiming to “identify.” When we imagine, there is an admission of distance, a jump. By cocreating a situation, I may imagine what kinds of feelings players in that situation possess. *How does a person feel when he does x in these circumstances?* is a question a sympathetic imagination requires. When I can imagine the feeling that punctuates their situation, even if it is a situation I would never find myself in, or a feeling I would never possess, I can move with a narrative. When characters do not echo the feelings I have imagined them to possess, I now have a reason to ask why, to push on the gap. We imagine the situation beyond the text while we negotiate with the text; noting the breaks between imaginative expectation and textual presentation provokes new emotional response.

Ignoring Character Feeling: As Wilner describes, her students missed the significance of “Sonny’s Blues” because James Baldwin’s narrator’s feelings weren’t on their radar, outshined by the titular drug afflicted Sonny. Whether we take it at its word, a speaker and character’s feeling is always a textual location we should value, pursue, and create. Once we build it up, we can see consider why an event is being narrated, for example, what its significance is for our narrator. These realizations require attention to the active toldness of the narrative.

Unable to Imagine a Text Could Speak to Us: No matter what we are reading, if we do not proceed with some level of what Wilner calls “openness,” we probably won’t determine

much of significance. Granting a text the possibility for having something to say to us does not mean agreeing with its statements or identifying with them. Rather, it delineates describing a decision to listen to a text with a willingness to hear and the idea possibility that an author might have crafted something that could speak in some way to any reader. D. Sell calls this a “responsiveness to hope,” the idea that the author’s hope for a text to speak to an audience and future generations might be realized in the reader’s willingness to engage the text.

2.2 ROOTS OF THE PROBLEM

Though the above difficulties are nothing new (philosophers and poets have written about the activity of reading for ages), I’d like to place them within a contemporary pedagogical context. How might we (instructors of undergraduates and/or secondary students) be implicated in these problems? What traditions of reading instruction might be implicated in the above list?

Quoting David Dobrin, Wilner reminds us that reading always involves both emotions and cognition. As we read, we “mobilize involvements that [leave] us appropriately open to the author’s ideas” (175, qtd. In Wilner); this “openness,” one she recognizes as necessarily emotional as well as cognitive, is required to read academically, a challenge for students who “do not seek or value the dissonance that often accompanies such openness” (175). At the heart of Wilner’s diagnosing of her students is a critique of the cognitivist model of reading, a model that has shaped how reading is taught in elementary, middle, and even high school. As Wilner describes it, the basic cognitivist argument goes that “as we read, we fit new information into preexisting ‘frames,’” a problematic model of meaning making evidenced by

the troubling results of the above authors' critiques (175). In Scholes's formulation, squeezing what we read into the frames we already have might work for us, but not for attending to the text, which more often than not would require the openness Wilner describes – new frames, new borders, changed configurations. Wilner concludes that students' "capacity for effective literacy in both reading and writing will vary inversely with their resistance to 'leaving themselves open,'" a statement that certainly demands from teachers as much as it does from students (175).

Wilner is my heroine in this group of articles, the speaker who most realistically describes pedagogical situations, most cogently names their difficulties, and most insightfully identifies intersections of thought and emotion in both; her primary purpose here is to describe how the challenges of this particular group of readers surfaced. Thus, Wilner's article fuels my own work, a testament that we need discussions of how thought and feeling do intersect for readers and how we can address a more nuanced sense of this reading reality as educators. Clearly, as Wilner demonstrates, counter to the first chapter models of private emotion, the classroom cannot escape – nor should it – the emotional demands/opportunities of reading fiction.

For Wilner, one of the crucial things we mean, which will dramatically influence students' capacities as reader and writers, is "openness" to ideas, feelings, situations, impressions – a word I cannot hear ("openness") without emotion's implication. Wilner defines this "openness" as the mode of reading of the academy, yet it is odd, in grouping these articles, how closed most of these authorial voices seem. Wilner is the only one who offers scenes that include student voices, the only one who decides that despite her students' "fundamental misunderstanding" listening to *them* was crucial. The problem isn't solved by students simply

becoming more open, more sensitive to texts. In fact, the practices Wilner desires to instill in her student readers are those she seeks to enact as a pedagogue. “Like our students,” she writes, we must be constantly reflective and sensitive to emergent occasions; perhaps most important, we must be willing to entertain, and to nurture, uncertainty even as we bring our disciplinary expertise to bear. Accepting the ultimate uncertainties of our enterprise, we can help each other by telling our stories and by listening closely to those of others, both colleagues and students. (194)

Though Wilner encourages it here in her closing, the other authorial voices do not suggest an “openness” to ideas or feelings, at least not when it comes to students, nor do they seem comfortable acknowledging or attending to what seems to me (and apparently to Wilner) to be a serious missing component of their presented theories of academic reading: emotion. What covers up emotion in these descriptions of academic reading? What historical or generic understandings make emotion hard to find, so that even when, in descriptions like McGann’s “being alive to the text,” or even Scholes’s complaint that students’ refuse to listen to the other, emotion is never unearthed?

2.2.1 Critical Reading

My first culprit is the hero – at least in name – of most of these writers. “Critical reading,” the point of academic training, the furrowed-brow practice of the educated, a favorite phrase among English teachers, seems worth a pause.

The word “critical” receives vast use and I would say little attention within English and its closely related disciplines. Wilner alone uses it 26 times in her article – McGann, 44. The

OED defines “critical” primarily as “given to judging; *esp.* given to adverse or unfavourable criticism; fault-finding, censorious,” a definition that I would guess captures our students’ primary understanding of “critical.” Though the OED offers a definition explicitly tied to the work of critics, “belonging or relating to criticism,” criticism itself defined as “the action of criticizing, or passing judgment upon the qualities or merits of anything; *esp.* the passing of unfavourable judgment; fault-finding, censure,” with a second definition as “the art of estimating the qualities and character of literary or artistic work.” The work of a critic, even in the OED, seems vague, “estimating” a slightly more neutral version of “criticizing.” When we look at what these articles are hoping to develop in their students as readers, it does not seem to be estimation only – or even, I would argue, mainly -- but rather a generous attention, reflective practice, and a self-conscious co-creation. “Critical” and its associations do not inspire the listening ear Scholes laments, but rather a feeling that one ought to be smarter than the text, finding fault, judging and evaluating, even –with Wilner’s students particularly in mind – poised to enact censure or rejection.

Think, for a minute, about what the idea of “critical” might provoke in students not trained in academic reading practices, but well-tuned to the English language. McGann wants aliveness, yet “critical” sounds dry, detached, disembodied. Wilner wants the navigation between “sympathetic imagination” and “detachment,” but “critical” suggests a single stance, no productive bumps in the road, no being taken in on a surprise wave. If “critical” is the main modifier for what we do (read), then what does this say about the text we engage, Felksi asks, and our motives for doing so? “Are these objects really inert and indifferent, supine and submissive, entirely at the mercy of our critical maneuvers? Do we gain nothing in particular from what we read?” (3).

Hillis Miller describes the fast quality of reading for pleasure, as opposed to the slow suspicious reading that qualifies critical reading. Suspicion brings in another tradition of critical, perhaps more tied to “critical pedagogy” or “critical literacy,” yet suspicion more accurately bears out the connotation of the word. Hillis Miller gives two types of critical reading, “rhetorical reading and cultural studies,” both different forms of “demystification,” both reasons for the “death of literature.” Eve Sedgwick, as Felski notes, comments that a hermeneutic of suspicion, reading to expose, has become *the* mode of literary criticism. Though the authors whose pedagogical descriptions I describe in this chapter are working towards an opposite goal (listening and appreciating the difference of the text, not exposing and interrogating), I wonder if the associations criticism has amassed – both Sedgwick and Felski comment on it as a “gloomy” and “paranoid” style of engagement – have overshadowed other notions of “critical reading.”

Suspicion is obviously far from what Wilner wants from her students (“openness” is her key term), but certainly the affective weight (what Felski labels “inescapably negative”) of “critical reading” within the context of English studies bears down on teachers of reading, despite the huge gulf between their students as readers and their colleagues. That gulf is continually apparent. Hillis Miller reminds us that “critical” or suspicious reading is slow, inspecting. When we look at Wilner’s account, it seems that “critical” could have been construed by her students as the opposite: one should be equipped to make a determination, to be fast, unreflective, and ready to announce approval or disapproval. Her students are so prepared to adopt these evaluating roles, they even blow off reading. McGann’s students, also, in their approval of the fictions they read, proceed smoothly and quickly. I have seen many students at different levels interpret their fast readings and quick conclusions as a strength and a legitimate reason to pronounce like or dislike (what “critical” can become in a classroom).

McGann seems to realize there is something off in the title “critical reading,” despite his insistent use of it. Though he is clear from the start that this course was designed to teach undergraduates “critical reading skills,” in both his syllabi to his graduate students T.A.’s and his undergraduate students, his language differs sharply. “There will be some readings in criticism and theory, but at all points our direction will be toward the students and what they need to **understand and appreciate** these texts,” he explains to graduate students” (161, my emphasis). To his undergraduate students he is slightly more direct about the experience he is after: “We will be mystified and amused. We will also, we trust, be instructed” (159). Unlike Hillis Miller, McGann is encouraging “mystification” as part of the experience of academic reading, of reading “critically.” Instead of slowing down in order to inspect and solve, McGann wants his students to delight in/notice/struggle with the mysteries of a text. Instead of a smooth, “expected” reading experience, instead of receiving confirmation of our pre-existing frames, we will be a bit bewildered. Perhaps what is most important about the tension between the language of McGann’s syllabi and the language of the article is his focus on experience when writing to his students. “Critical,” is a word already looking forward to results, already closing in on “criticism.” It erases experience.

2.2.2 The Precritical: Literature and Life

Defining literary reading through Northrop Frye’s models of criticism, Deanne Bogdan also qualifies the reading of the academy as a reading of openness, defined by delayed gratification, acceptance of bewilderment, deferring moral judgment, negotiating multiple points of view, and resisting closure. Frye was a vocal defender of “critical reading,” which he theorized through the

“educated imagination.” Bogdan’s 1992 book *The Re-educated Imagination* challenged Frye’s formulation, arguing that its “logical priority of criticism over the direct or participating literary response, the sharp distinction between the literary and the political, and the separation of the worlds of ordinary existence and imaginative experience . . . posit a disembodied reader who, in adhering to the tenets of the educated imagination, is conditioned ultimately to split off actual feelings from the experience of reading” (xxxiii).

Bogdan is worried about readers in the academic classroom who undergo a “dissociation of sensibility” because of “the infinite regress of delayed gratification, the continual suspension of value judgments on the way to a ‘full literary response’” (xxxiii). In other words, Bogdan is worried about the students who have been trained to understand and practice “critical reading” in Frye’s sense -- readers who delay judgment and what McGann and Frye call “precritical” response. Writing in the early nineties, when theory and developed forms of Reader Response led to renewed conceptions of the reader as the actor and to appreciations for how meaning is always filtered and made through a reader’s social stance on the world, Bogdan recognizes that this openness, this continual delay of judgment and reaction, denies readers not only their embodied perspectives but also their full capacities of response. To re-embody and re-politicize readers, Bogdan encourages readers to respond, judge, and react as they read, to be impressed both positively and negatively in the unfolding of a text.

Yet Wilner, writing ten years later, reveals the problems with Bogdan’s re-educated imagination. Her students –ignoring distance between author and narrator, relying on what Frye would call stock response or cliché pre-existing frames – read literature as if it were life, rejecting what they don’t like without reflection or apparent cognizance of literature’s madeness. Reading the decade as a linear split between the two, it’s almost as if Bogdan’s willingness to

encourage attention to emotional response, the many mini reactions of embodied readers, and to allow student readers to close texts down (one group of graduate female readers in her first feminist literature class refused to read Updike's story "A&P," for example), eventually led to the unwillingness of the undergraduate students these authors describe to read texts for what they are. Putting Bogdan and Wilner next to each other illuminates the problem of either/or: if we encourage our student readers to value reaction as they encounter and move through texts, how do we teach the practice of remaining open, able to recognize and accommodate what we do not know or understand, and the practice of reflection, reactions giving us moments to ponder and a shaping of experience we can endeavor to articulate?

All of these authors recognize the both/and of reading, the opening and closing. Wilner puts it simply – but helpfully – when she summarizes Scholes: "any critical, or 'unsympathetic,' reading must be preceded by a 'sympathetic' one that attempts to connect with the author's intention" (178). Howell Chickering, when describing his first year literature class at Amherst, describes the reading they are teaching in terms of joining a world and yet recognizing its construction: "We want students to lose themselves in a fictional world while they are also paying attention to how it is structured by literary artifice" (267). We want students, then, to open and close, to "suspend disbelief" and inquire about it, too, to be willing to listen while still taking into account the judgments they make from the positions they occupy. This is difficult –to involve ourselves in and care about created situations, and then to consider the madeness of it all, rhetorically, structurally, politically, poetically. We are asking for emotional insight and flexibility.

2.2.3 Predetermined Ends

As I have discussed thus far, emotion, though it always seems to be sneaking up on discussions of teaching students to read literary texts, is obscured by the sheer complexity of its involvement and the misleading naming of “critical reading” (along with the general overuse of “critical” in our defense and explanations of what we teach and what students should be doing). One of McGann’s main goals for his students is the recognition of “critical reflection . . . as an experience, as something to be discovered and exposed, rather than as a predetermined goal” (152). How do we teach students to operate without predetermined ends as readers, particularly within the pedagogical situation where everything has a predetermined end (an assignment, an exam, a grade)? Though McGann’s desires for his students are no doubt constrained (and of course provided for) by pedagogical realities, they point to another important reason for emotion’s obscurity: the predetermined end of a literary education – criticism.

For Frye, and for Bogdan’s critique of his “critical reading,” “critical” is born out of the privileging of “criticism,” a product of reading that I, like Bogdan, problematize, particularly within a discussion of real classroom readers, such as Wilner’s. Does the product of criticism echo the actions of a critical literary reader? In Frye’s formulation, resisting closure and accepting bewilderment qualify critical reading, while “criticism” itself suggests the opposite – a determined exploration that closes, explains, determines, masters. Thus, though “critical reading” leads to criticism, there is a complex distance between reading critically and creating criticism, and if creating readers (not critics), is our goal, perhaps we need not push our students to produce such stances. This problem is really one of assignments: what kinds of writing challenges readers to wakefulness?

Wilner describes her own negotiation of assignments when dealing with her students' outright rejection of Leavitt's essay, "Territory." After hostile and stunted responses, she asked students how many thought they had good imaginations or had acted before. Moving from the platform of "imagination," she asked students to write briefly in class about why Neil, Leavitt's gay protagonist, brought his boyfriend home to his unaccepting mother. "Why would he do such a difficult thing?" Wilner asked, reminding students this would take acts of imagination. Asking students to "imagine," as opposed to "critique," allowed students to make their first step into the world created by the text (and at the same time, their first step into the living realities spoken to by the text). Some of the answers she received:

"Neil is an extremely shy person who has trouble expressing himself." "His motivation is love; he wants to share the person that he loves with his family." "It was sort of a test. A test for his mother to confront the issue and still accept [his] homosexuality after she sees it." "Neil wants to feel secure with his family, his own flesh and blood, [so] that if he ever has a problem, he [can] go home with it. Society today does not accept homosexuality, and it would be great to have somebody on your side." (186)

Labeling their activity an imaginative one allowed students to read the text, essentially for the first time. In crafting their written assignment, Wilner continued with this success in mind. I quote her at length.

For the students' "formal" essay, I decided to offer them an option that I do not normally make available. Instead of writing analytically about the story, they could write a letter from Neil to his mother, explaining what he cannot say to her face to face—or a letter from Mom to Neil. I pointed out that, like the earlier free-write, this assignment would require thoughtful role-playing, a kind of "impersonation." Almost all the students chose this option, which seemed to evolve naturally from the earlier assignments. Although no one in the class identified himself or herself as gay, just about everyone seemed comfortable in assuming the identity of a gay person, imagining and scripting the deeply felt emotions Neil cannot articulate to his mother. "Every text," Scholes (1998: 131) observes, "offers its audience a certain role to play. Textual power involves the ability to play many roles—and to know that one is playing them—as well as the

ability to generate new texts, to make something that did not exist before somebody made it.” Relinquishing the analytic paper was difficult for me, but at the time it seemed, and it still seems, like a good trade-off. Encouraging my students to play an unfamiliar role helped them move from revulsion so profound that they could not even read the story, let alone reflect on it, to an appreciation of Leavitt’s portrayal of his characters’ painful attempts to accept their own identities and their most intimate relationships. The students had taken a step toward enhanced literacy and an understanding of multiple perspectives that William G. Perry Jr. (1970: 54) persuasively argues is essential to moral maturity. As Peter Elbow (1986: 268–69) adds, the ludic aspects of role-playing can play a vital function in fostering critical habits of mind by distancing the “players” from their “real” positions. (187)

I hear Wilner defending this decision at the end of this paragraph, calling on Perry and Elbow to support her choice in assignment, yet it seems clear that she is simply responding to the reading needs of her students, students whose unreflective acceptance of emotional responses — what Frye would call the precritical — precluded them from co-creating textual emotion, without which they could not respond, let alone understand, the story. In calling on them to write Neil’s letter, she is asking her students to imagine, to co-create the situation of the text, and to reach for a voice. There is quite a bit of “wakefulness” implicit in this assignment in order to do it well. It asks for sympathetic imagination, as opposed to a simplistic identification. It asks readers/writers to inhabit the character’s speech and attend to his impression points. It requires a conscious attention to a text’s subtleties: a character’s tone and mixes of feeling, his word choice, his relationship with the audience of the letter, his occasion to write. How do we provide students with written opportunities to read with attention, but an attention that allows for new moments of recognition or response? If our students are struggling to listen, how do we give them more opportunities to do so? These questions animate one of the subsequent chapters, and Wilner’s assignment is a preliminary answer that I will explore further. At this point, I want to emphasize the flexibility of Wilner’s pedagogy, her ability to recognize that criticism as predetermined end

does not necessarily teach the many actions we have labeled “critical reading.” Wilner revised her assignment and her approach by imagining, given where her students were sitting, how she could invite them to activate their sympathetic imagination to reread the text.

Schneider, too, upon the writing of her article, reflects on the struggles of her students, readjusting her pedagogical approach to address what she calls her students’ “narcissistic reading.” Imagining a new kind of assignment, she describes the questions she wished she would have asked so that she could have created an “othercentered analysis of someone else’s story”:

What were the institutional barriers hooks had to overcome to get to Stanford? What historical conditions meant that she was one African American student in a sea of white students? What is different between her situation and yours? What could she realistically hope for, and how did that shape her experience? What feelings does she express in the text? How do you think when you feel that way? (205)

This set of questions – based on Ellen Quandahl’s focus on “social scenes,” “feelings,” and “ethics” and Cornel West’s development of the “discernment” of “prophetic thought” – is born out of Schneider’s realization that we must “school the emotions,” not simply the analytic faculties we typically make our focus. In these questions, Schneider wants students to note specific differences between themselves and the speaker, to pay close attention to hooks’s feelings -- to read for feeling that is, and to build to identification through emotion itself (*how do you think when you feel that way?*). Instead of asking students to recognize themselves in situations that they simply have not occupied, she wants them to recognize *textual feelings*, mapping both difference in situation yet similarity in emotional response. The implication here is that feelings themselves, which are prompted by relations, are possible routes to understanding.

Feelings themselves invite imaginative relation, extending from and beyond precise situations.¹¹ Can we place our recognition on a continuum of similitude? This may be a feeling we know, but not one we know in this precise way, in this precise and powerful situation. What are the differences, even, between these shades, these mixes of feeling? Schneider wants to move students outside of the language of identification, but to do this, she realized she needed to redesign student writing towards “listening” and situating through feeling.

2.2.4 Reader Response and the Self

Schneider and Wilner’s teaching narratives describe similar root problems – looking for the self when reading texts. The pleasure of identification is something all readers have been encouraged to experience, Cynthia Lewis notes, to the exclusion of other definitions of “personal” and “pleasurable.” In her article, “Limits of Identification: The Personal, Pleasurable, and Critical in Reader Response,” Lewis argues that identification has come to supplant Louise Rosenblatt’s nuanced theory of transaction, though her theory is typically the theoretical source for the teacher textbooks that instruct teachers to focus on the lives of readers in response to literature. Though Reader Response theory shares a major theoretical base for this research (a concern for the reader’s experience and the process of reading -- its slips and slides and changes), it also suggests why identification has become, for many readers and teachers, synonymous with emotional response, echoing the flattening of the autobiographical personal with the emotional

¹¹ There is of course a danger here. For example, I have had white students, born and raised in the United States, who have claimed, “I’ve felt that way before, too,” when responding to Jamaica Kincaid’s description of growing up in a colonized Antigua. Obviously this flattening universalization is not what Schneider intends, but as we attempt to build bridges through textual feeling, it is a possible pitfall.

that I discuss in chapter one. In Cynthia Lewis's assessment of how Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory has made its mark on schools, she writes that "aesthetic" has been reduced to "personal," and "personal" seems to be reduced to "identification." In this "watered down" version of Rosenblatt's theory, efferent reading is traditional reading comprehension (test questions), while aesthetic reading is text to self connections. "Conflating the personal and the aesthetic is problematic because it strips the aesthetic stance of its interpretive and critical possibilities," Lewis writes (255). The text as "constructed world" gets lost behind recognition of the self, while emotion itself is narrowed. Lewis reminds us that "privileging the personal separates the reader's emotional life from the textual codes and conventions," instead relegating emotion only to acts and memories of the self, or our limited palette of emotional schema (256). Part of the reason for the conflation between Rosenblatt's theorized aesthetic stance and identification is Rosenblatt's orientation towards the individual reader. "As I have written elsewhere," Lewis begins, "Rosenblatt sees the individual reader's transaction with the text as primary over the local context of classroom or sociocultural contexts beyond the classroom" (257). Thus, imagining what the situation of the classroom offers, narrating experiences with texts within social constraints and possibilities, and considering the social forces that shape and are revealed by our readings aren't direct spheres of Rosenblatt's notice.

Though Lewis calls attention to it in elementary and middle schools, this reduction (and it is a reduction, despite Rosenblatt's gestures towards identification as literary pleasure), has its mark on secondary school students as well. The conflation of emotional response and identification (or its opposite, emotional response as sharp disidentification) summarizes the key problems Wilner and Schneider find in their students' reading. Both groups look for identification – when it happens, reading is fulfilled, and when it most definitely doesn't, reading

is halted. Given that emotional response is most linked to Reader Response theories, and that much of this work has been linked to moments such as these in classrooms, it is not a surprise that emotion has been considered a limited, unhelpful category for considering response in the classroom – distracting, vague, unmanageable.

Teacher/scholars have made a concerted effort to imagine the shape of Rosenblatt's theories within classroom contexts. Robert Probst's *Response and Analysis*, first published in 1988 and widely taught to secondary school English teachers, epitomizes Rosenblatt's transactional theory of a reader activating text, what Rosenblatt describes as "participation" in an utterance which "will consummate the speech act" (*The Reader* 173). Probst adapts Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading to the classroom, moving beyond her focus on the individual and providing sample exercises as well as theoretical grounding for pedagogical decisions. Though Probst is far more concerned with a classroom setting (unlike Rosenblatt) and thus details readers sharing responses together, student responses remain separated from their analyses. In Probst's hands (and in much of the published descriptions of Reader Response in the classroom) response becomes a reader's first reactions, while analysis is a reflection of what those reactions reveal (how they are different from others', how they may or may not be supported by the text, etc.). Probst describes the process of capturing first reactions as similar to catching a glimpse of one's bare, unadulterated response:

The second point is that the reader sees herself in the poem she has made. Other readings are possible, as the divergence within any group will demonstrate. The fact that the reader has read the poem one way rather than another reveals something about her. The reading is a reflection of the self, enabling the reader to stand back and observe aspects of her own mind, in much the same way as a writer might read his drafts, to discover what it is that he has thought or imagined. It objectifies those elusive elements of the self -- attitudes, values, beliefs --in the form of feelings or thoughts that may then be examined. The student reads the poem, responds, and then looks at that response as a clue to what

is happening within the poem and within herself. Intelligent reading is thus a process or revision. (51)

Emotion figures prominently in this description of the reading process, offering readers a marker of their views of and positions in the world. Response is the first experience in the sequence of reading, almost a dump of reactions to study. Though first responses can be a valuable way to invite all readers to value their “readings” and begin conversation, to crystallize the category of “first response” as the location for emotion is to vastly limit emotion’s relevance to more animated engagements with texts. Analysis tends to come in as students look at the differences in their first responses (certainly a powerful recognition for high school students), yet rereading and thus continuing to respond through and to emotion are deprioritized activities, further separated from emotion’s relevance to analytical thinking. In fact, Wilner seems to find this exact model one of the problems in her students’ reading. In Wilner’s classroom narrative, first responses are unreflective reactions, yet valued, even privileged by students as markers of their true reading and selves.

Using Scholes, Wilner reminds us that this is a problem with listening to the other, building beyond that which we know, believe, or have experienced. Wilner blames cognitive psychology for propagating the belief that what we read must fit into what we already know, but Probst’s textbook for teachers reminds us that Reader Response theory also values past experience as the preeminent mode of responding to a text with emotion. Rosenblatt explains this process of response:

The reader’s attention to the text activates certain elements in his past experience – external reference, internal response – that have become linked with the verbal symbols. Meaning will emerge from a network of relationships among the things symbolized *as he senses them*. The symbols point to these sensations, images, objects, ideas, relationships, with the particular associations or feeling-tones

created by his past experiences with them in actual life or in literature. (*The Reader* 11)

Reading a text becomes a restimulation of the past (as inspired by language) instead of a creation of and entry into a new situation. Probst reiterates for classroom teachers that readers can only make of a text what they know. "Because a reader is not the character, he must call upon his own resources to image what the character is like; he cannot call upon resources and experiences he has not had," perhaps leading teachers to rely more on activating students' pasts than their sympathetic imaginations (51). Wilner's discussion points out the danger in a simplified form of this perspective. In order to encourage her students to read Leavitt's "Territory," Wilner began by reminding them that reading is an act of imagination, not an act of knowing or even believing. If we take Probst's emphasis on the self towards its suggested conclusions, then it does seem as if Wilner's readers have it "right"; they cannot face anything new, cannot acknowledge or recognize difference as grounds for sympathetic imagination, and are altogether too focused on recognizing themselves.

Though the reading practices I will theorize in the subsequent chapters might fit under the general heading of Response Theories, Rosenblatt's theory doesn't make use of emotion for a classroom situation. Rosenblatt is after an experience of reading pleasure that could lead too far towards the readers of Chapter 1, lost in the individualized pleasure of reading alone, experiencing emotion but not articulating it. In the hands of Probst in the classroom, "first reactions" become the locus of emotion and a frozen list of and for the self; emotion itself isn't theorized here. Moving students through the nuanced connections between thinking and feeling, though I grant not a simple or always productive task, isn't realized.

Wondering about “the unfulfilled promise of reader-response theory, ” why it still has not revolutionized the secondary school English classroom (especially in light of how many teachers— myself included—believe in its theoretical bases, yet aren’t sure how to carry it out in their classrooms), Faust argues that Reader Response is inherently problematic, bound to a dualistic philosophy of object and subject that renders its motivating power impotent (“Reconstructing” 10). In the classroom, this translates to a trap between the overly subjective, willy-nilly anything goes acceptance of response and the New Critical teacher-led analysis of the text-object. Caught between the dominance of the reader vs. the dominance of the object, teachers can't make good on the possibility that reading is truly a transaction. Instead, Faust argues, “experience” needs to become the dominant word of the English class, including our definition of texts, which Faust frames as “a specialized way of using language to work on experience” (29). The instructive nature of reading experience is indeed the motivating impetus for Rosenblatt and for many who write about her transactional theory, but Faust, too, does not attempt to sketch what a primarily individualized theory might look like in the classroom: how students could enact, learn, and think through how language has “worked on” experience.

Ultimately, transactional theory produces a hierarchy of what reading should be like, pleasurable experience brought from maintaining a “plane of aesthetic awareness” (159). Rosenblatt’s idealized reader does not reject the text or lose awareness. Instead, she confronts unfamiliarity and takes into account language, breaks, and oppositions. But as the undergraduate instructors I’ve quoted describe, most student readers lack a way to initiate these experiences with texts. Though both Rosenblatt and I are imagining a reader who nurtures the possibility definitive of academic reading through awareness of self, text, and context, we do not share the same starting place. I am beginning with difficulties, gaps, and frustrations in order to build to

emotion's necessary place in the teaching of reading. Rosenblatt is positing an ideal reader, "actively involved in building up a poem for himself out of his responses to the text," "paying attention to what the words pointed to in the external world, to their referents . . . [and] paying attention to the images, feelings, attitudes, associations, and ideas that the words and their referents evoked in him," moving between outside referents and inside feelings (10).

2.2.5 Metacognitive Strategies and Feeling: The Missing Guide

I have sketched several student reading problems, all defined by qualities of emotion. Most of the student readers being described are first year college students, just launching into the many definitions of college reading found within any institution of higher learning. Because this study is directed towards teachers of reading and writing on the high school level as well as the cusp between the two, I have also turned my attention towards understandings of emotion and reading within K-12 education. Rosenblatt's theory, as translated and used by teacher textbooks, is one answer to the questions: What frameworks impact the shape of reading instruction on the secondary level? At the same time, how have high school teachers identified emotion's significance in student reading?

Most reading research within K-12 is devoted to the early grades where educators teach reading itself – decoding, recognizing basic story structure, reading fluency, comprehension. This research has reached the high school level precisely because many (many) high school students struggle to decode, read fluently, comprehend, and make meaning. It is more than appropriate that secondary teachers are aware of research in teaching comprehension and reading fluency; in fact, it is necessary. This attention to comprehension is needed on the undergraduate

level as well (if we listen to the previous descriptions from undergraduate instructors, that is), particularly when we recognize the significant shift in textual difficulty and reader independence expected in a college-level class. (As Scholes and others write, high school and undergraduate instructors are typically defined as teaching literature, not reading, a questionable division that prevents crossover discussions that may reveal useful knowledge or differences in definitions of reading success).

The most dominant influence on teaching reading comes from cognitive psychology; indeed, as I cited previously, Wilner pushes against what she calls the limiting frames of the cognitivist perspective. Though I will briefly explore and critique the field's shaping of reading, I also fully acknowledge that this dissertation is made possible by cognitive psychology's valuing of reading complexity. As a teacher who has emphasized to students that reading is composed of simultaneous processes fueled by multiple reader concerns, I have cognitive psychology to thank in even being able to imagine this dissertation. On some level, I am simply attempting to expand our understanding of these processes and concerns.

Cognitive psychology has devoted much research to what happens when people read, at times even using the same language as Reader Response, most notably Rosenblatt herself. Interested in what the mind does during the event of reading, cognitive psychology asks, what are the processes and sub-processes that occur while the mind attempts to deal with the information it is receiving? How does the mind construct meaning? Along with efforts to understand the reading process, educators, led by Dolores Durkin's 1979 study, began recognizing that teachers did not teach students how to comprehend, but rather assessed comprehension with basal reader questions. To determine how to instruct students how to comprehend what they were reading, educators needed to determine how readers made meaning.

Now teachers are encouraged to think about the activity of reading; instead of simply receiving a text, we know that readers must do something, many somethings in fact, in order to read meaningfully. In terms of emergent literacy, we now know how phonemic awareness and phonological awareness impact reading success. We know that environmental factors, such as the type of a text, for example, can make a difference in the reading process. Teachers of older students have benefitted from the knowledge only early literacy teachers seemed to realize; with the many different sub-processes that make reading possible, readers need explicit instruction in how readers make texts meaningful. In order to make meaning (“meaning,” compared with RR’s “experience,” for example, is the key word here), readers need to learn the many ways thoughtful readers engage with texts.

Thus, researchers have endeavored to name the active reading strategies, or metacognitive moves, that capture the invisible actions of readers moving through texts; visualizing, asking questions, making inferences, predicting, connecting, and synthesizing are some of the most common reading skills anthologized in this literature. Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis’s much-used instructional text for teachers titled *Strategies that Work* includes countless examples of how to model, teach, and assess metacognitive strategies. Using Perkins and Swartz’s work on metacognitive knowledge, Harvey and Goudvis describe their four levels of readers, which I quote fully:

- Tacit learners/readers: These are readers who lack awareness of how they think when they read.
- Aware learners/readers: These are readers who realize when meaning has broken down or confusion has set in but who may not have sufficient strategies for fixing the problem.
- Strategic learners/readers: These are the readers who use the thinking and comprehension strategies we describe in this book to enhance understanding and acquire knowledge. They are able to monitor and repair when it is disrupted.

- Reflective learners/readers: These are the readers who are strategic about their thinking and are able to apply strategies flexibly depending on their goals or purposes for reading. According to Perkins and Swartz, they also ‘reflect on their thinking and ponder and revise their use of strategies.’ (17)

These levels are designed around metacognition, which gets defined as a special type of awareness, a key word in Rosenblatt’s transactional theory. Awareness here is represented as knowledge of problems, or an ability to monitor and recognize “disruption,” noticing when nothing has been learned or understanding is “breaking down.” The ideal experience is posited as uninterrupted movement, a suspended tension of “strategized” thinking and smooth progress. The ultimate reader, Perkins and Swartz tell us, “revise[s] their use of strategies,” reflecting on how best to move through a text. It is easy to be fond of such a purposeful reader, always thinking about how she is progressing and how that progress could improve or change.

As Harvey and Goudvis put it, “Proficient readers – adults and children alike – proceed on automatic pilot most of the time, until something doesn’t make sense or a problem arises and understanding screeches to a halt. At that point, experienced readers slow down and reread, clarifying confusions before they continue” (17). In their brief explanation, awareness itself is heightened when readers have difficulty understanding. When “something doesn’t make sense or a problem arises,” we “slow down and reread” in order to “clarify confusions.” Proficient reading, smooth reading, seems to be smooth precisely because it’s not interrupted. In fact, it is almost qualified by a reader’s lack of awareness, her progression on “automatic pilot.” All readers, Harvey reminds us, have break-downs in automation, however, and thus all readers apply strategies as they move along, some weaving fix-it solutions into their reading with ease and flexibility, others moving forward without realizing they needed to clarify in the first place (these are the readers around which *Strategies* is designed).

Embedded within this model are two cited purposes for reading: to enhance understanding and to acquire knowledge. These are purposes that lend themselves to a cognitivist perspective where reading is a mentalist activity -- requiring steps, break-downs, and strategic solutions. If knowledge isn't being acquired, if something doesn't make sense, the machine stops, the gears shift backwards, and readers fix things up. Readers must notice and respond, as the authors argue, but the overly cognitive view that shapes their perception of reading ignores the richness of reading literary narratives.

Indeed, cognitive models of reading, such as Perkins and Swartz's, rely on metaphors of computing that can only reach so far. The mechanical language describing readers ("meaning has broken down," "monitor and repair," and "fixing the problem") highlights an implicit value for smoothness that represents exactly what McGann, Wilner, Scholes, and Schneider critique in their students: moving through fiction with too much ease, ignoring passages that do not fit, passing over language that seems odd or provocative, identifying the aspects of a character that are known or understood while skipping over what is different or ambiguous. Of course, the authors of *Strategies* would respond that if these student readers were more able to recognize when to apply these strategies (when to question, for example), they would have fewer of the problems above, but pinpointing the moment to pause is often the missing core of the metacognitive model, especially as texts increase in difficulty and sophistication and our goals for reading shift. How do readers determine when to pause and question, pause and connect, if nothing ever seems to be breaking down? The undergraduate instructors above identified misunderstandings and gaps in their students' reading, but had trouble convincing students that something indeed was missing or misunderstood, that something had broken down. The trouble

here is the dismissal of the break-down, our view of such moments as impediments, not break-throughs (which often they are).

In many ways, metacognitive strategies do the opposite of what they propose. The countless student models Harvey and Goudvis provide are designed to show readers pausing in order to construct meaning, and most of these pauses do not occur because something has broken down, but rather because there has been some kind of change, either in the passage or in the reader. Instead of simply reacting to break-downs, the text's model readers use cognitive strategies to pause, dig in, and respond to provocative moments in the text. There is a tension between these examples of students' active construction and the description that the reading model ultimately suggests: controlled, purposeful, smooth.

All good readers of fiction and non-fiction make meaning through these various actions, and teaching them to readers through "think alouds" (teaching occasions when one models one's responses and decisions while reading, thus demonstrating why and how readers question, predict, connect, etc.) has become standard instruction in elementary, middle, and secondary school. In my experience teaching both middle school and high school, students who were used to becoming involved in narrative reading on their own did well splitting up and naming these actions, actions I guessed had been folded into their reading process already. For students who did not become involved in narrative, and thus, we could argue, were probably not moving through a text through approaches like questioning and connecting, these explicitly named actions often did not, even with creative practice and independent use, make a student care about narratives. I realize this is a chicken/egg issue. Perhaps they do not care about the narrative because they are still not asking enough questions, filling in gaps, and connecting situations to life. In other words, perhaps the cognitive skills are the way to jumpstart emotion reading, and

these students simply haven't arrived there yet. I want to put pressure on this assumption, however. Emotional involvement, I argue, is often the ground for metacognitive actions when literary texts are concerned. This statement is particularly true after readers have made it past the defamiliarizing aspects of beginning a text for the first time. At some point, involvement is felt, and the reading strategies readers employ are occasioned more from their feelings than their cognizance of breaks or gaps. For example, I ask fewer and more superficial questions when I do not care about a text, and I often struggle to use these questions or provisional answers unless I recognize their emotional import. They won't propel me anywhere, that is, if they don't offer me something to feel.¹²

Though the authors do not explicitly work emotion into their model of metacognition, they do subtly acknowledge that emotions are an important part of students' responses. In a description of teaching theme to a fifth grade class, for example, we hear that "themes represented the bigger ideas in the story and that most of them evoked strong feelings." The authors go on to say that "kids are more likely to remember important themes when they derive the ideas themselves and feel them deeply" (111).

In fact, the oldest model readers of the book (fifth-eighth grade students) apply these strategies often as imaginative response ("I wonder if . . . could I . . .") in a manner less controlled and dictated than these strategies and the undergirding theory imply. One student named Cassie is quoted at length describing how reading comprehension strategies helped her during fifth grade.

¹² Of course, Reader Response as envisioned by Probst would help here, exposing students to the many different responses of other readers of the same text and perhaps suggesting the kinds of responses readers value.

When we write our questions, we ‘think’ – the reason why I say think in ‘ ’ is you’re teaching us how we really are supposed to ‘think’ about – and when we ask questions we are going beyond and we are really expressing what we wonder. Most of us had those thoughts in us, but we were never given the opportunity to express those trapped-in feelings we had. We had them in us all along, and you let them out. (19)

Though I appreciate how much Cassie is trying to work with the word “think” (and how difficult that word is when put in the realm of her own reading experiences), “think” doesn’t seem quite right, and I can only guess that is because it does not take into account how much feeling had to do with the way she was reading. “Thinking about” moves closer to “feeling towards,” a phrase with direction, wrapping around a subject. Cassie even changes nouns mid-way, from “had those thoughts in us” to “never given the opportunity to express those trapped-in feelings.” What is interesting about Cassie’s appreciation for reading strategies instruction is her emphasis on expression, making visible the invisible movements of readers, and giving students some frameworks for doing so. Not surprisingly, as Cassie’s quotation is a rich student affirmation of the book’s work with students, it ends the final chapter. I can’t help but wonder, though, if these authors might have paused at her understanding of metacognitive strategies. It goes beyond metacognition, beyond monitoring breakdowns, and instead enters into the realm of emotional response.¹³

¹³ Though Cassie’s reflection adopts clichés of teaching and learning, her inclusion of gratefulness and ownership speaks to how much more student-driven constructive reading instruction is. Instead of ending a reading with questions to answer, students are creating questions as they go. Despite their rationale for reading (gaining knowledge and enhancing understanding), in this aspect, Harvey and Goudvis get closer to reading as an experience (a Reader Response focus), not simply a means to an end.

2.2.6 Metacognition and Reader Response

In her article, “Does Feeling Come First? How Poetry Can Help Readers Broaden Their Understanding of Metacognition,” Amy Eva-Wood argues that “readers’ emotional responses can enhance their metacognitive experiences and inform their literary analyses” (564). By modeling “thinking and feeling aloud” when teaching poetry along with a high school teacher to a high school class, Eva-Wood takes the pedagogical staple of metacognitive research, the “think-aloud,” and enacts its necessary counterpart. Instead of simply modeling how a reader uses metacognitive strategies to read a poem, Eva-Wood exposes how metacognitive strategies are made up of decisions about feelings. Along with students, Eva-Wood and the collaborative teacher articulated several “affective strategies,” which, like the metacognitive strategies Harvey and Goudvis describe, help name how readers build and reflect on experiences of texts (568).

Eva-Wood identifies an important overlap between response theories (Reader Response criticism) and cognitive psychology’s work on metacognition: both are primarily concerned with readers’ experiences of texts. With this shared value, Eva-Wood remarks, it seems that both should have something to say to the other. In her research, these positions take on opposing frameworks, Reader Response providing the emotional instructional focus, metacognition the cognitive. “If teachers could foreground the relationship between their emotional and cognitive responses through their own verbal modeling, could student readers feel free to engage in the same interchange?” Eva-Wood asks (566). Sorting through the relationship between cognition and emotion doesn’t seem to be the goal of Eva-Wood’s teaching experiments, however, nor does it seem a particular focus for her students. Instead, cognition and feeling are mixed together, woven through each response, as they are in Harvey’s and Goudvis’s students’ responses, though

this goes unnamed by them. I doubt Eva-Wood actually wants students to tug the two apart in order to reflect on their mutual influence. Instead, she uses her work with students to try to isolate specific reasons why readers of poetry should attend to their own emotional response.

Despite Eva-Wood's direct research in the classroom, she hesitates to claim that emotional response is an integral part of reading literary texts; instead, she simply insists that it will help students in their metacognitive development. Though I agree, I wonder at Eva Wood's reluctance to answer the titular suggestive question – does feeling come first?; perhaps it stems from her minimal treatment of emotion itself.

2.3 MOVING TO ANSWERS: WHAT IS EMOTION

To engage Eva-Wood's question, I turn to Sara Ahmed and Daniel Gross, both of whom rely on various philosophers, in particular, David Hume, to define emotions. In *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, Hume distinguishes between Thoughts/Ideas and Impressions, both of which he identifies as perceptions of the mind. (I will go on to define emotion as both a cognitive and bodily experience.) Hume's division does not follow an expected hierarchy, privileging thought over sensation. Instead, he writes, "all our ideas or more feeble perceptions are copies of our impressions or more lively ones" (10). Hume is grouping both thoughts and feelings (impressions) under the umbrella of perceptions, what we consciously experience. Hume calls impressions, the stronger of the two, "all our more lively perceptions, when we hear, or see, or feel, or love, or hate, or desire, or will" (10). Impressions are that which we gain from "sense and experience," and they *inspire* our thoughts and ideas. Hume reminds us that our impressions are

what we experience and sense, what we live through. Hume doesn't quite articulate why impressions are stronger (rather illustrating the strength of impression through example – the perception of being in love, for instance), yet the bodily component of sensation and placement seem to account for the difference. For example, when we desire or hate, it is not only our mind that knows, but our bodies that sense these feelings. At the same time, that recognition of bodily sensation places us and prompts us to recognize that placement. The possibility to move towards another again reminds us of our physical placement and how it could change for good or for bad.

In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Ahmed is most interested in how we are touched through sense and experience: “forming an impression depends on how objects impress upon us” (6). To determine how we are impressed is to read how something affects us, to ascribe some kind of significance to our meeting. Indeed, Ahmed uses the term “impression” precisely to describe contact between objects; when we read our contact with objects, we are recognizing an impression. It is the contact that Ahmed is most interested in rejuvenating in her discussion of emotion. Instead of characterizing people as having emotions that need to be expressed (the psychological, inside/out model) or society as giving emotions over to individuals (the social-constructivist, outside/in model), Ahmed is interested in looking at how emotion is created. It isn't simply possessed, aching to be expressed or to spread to others. It is made through contact, and it is precisely that contact, Ahmed argues, that realizes the psychic and the social. When I am impressed by a person's tone, for example, I recognize myself as an individual within a social situation, and I am “reading” the nature of that contact, how it has “pressed” me. Ahmed explains:

We need to remember the ‘press’ in an impression. It allows us to associate the experience of having an emotion with the very affect of one surface upon another, an affect that leaves its mark or trace. So not only do I have an impression of

others, but they also leave me with an impression; they impress me, and impress upon me. (17)

As an alternative to setting up emotion in terms of biological determinism and social constructionism (the typical binary that I describe in Chapter One), Ahmed argues that the binary limits how we view emotion, as the structure of the biological vs. the social rests on false oppositions. Instead, Ahmed frames her study of “emotions and objects” by naming two opposing views: the bodily view of emotion, represented in Ahmed’s description by Descartes, Hume, and James (the feeling of bodily change) – and the cognitivist view of emotion, represented by Aristotle and Nussbaum (judgments, appraisals, attitudes) (5-6). Ahmed relies on both traditions, pointing out that contact with an object “generates feeling” and thus “emotion and sensation cannot be easily separated” (6).¹⁴ With “impression,” Ahmed can “avoid making analytical distinctions between bodily sensation, emotion and thought as if they could be ‘experienced’ as distinct realms of human ‘experience’” (6). I, too, will refer to emotion and feeling interchangeably, feeling bringing us closer to the tradition of sensation and the body, emotion bringing us closer to attitudes and judgments.

Ahmed’s insistence that we move away from talking about emotion like property, something a person or a text has, gets fuzzy when we talk about human experience precisely because we experience emotions as our own, something we possess. Her point is to refocus our gaze; instead of zoning in on the emotions I have and the emotions in another, we look at their origins in situations, the emotions produced when the two bodies meet. Similarly, Ahmed warns

¹⁴ Ahmed seems to preserve some space for “emotion” as unconscious affective response, particularly when we think about the words and images we associate as “glued together.” This “stickiness,” the ways words or ideas adhere to certain groups of people, places, or experiences, is one example of how naming emotion has effects, Ahmed argues. How do certain images/ideas come to mind when we think of ‘disgust’ or ‘hate’ for example? Ahmed is most interested in reading how texts group ideas and bodies together and what effects such stickiness might have.

against trying to name the feeling someone has, as if there exists a feeling pre-contact with others, pre-situational. I am less concerned about the verb “have”, especially when I consider how students talk about emotion in the classroom, which is almost always in terms of “I” and “am,” *having* an implicit in the self-identification. Instead, I want to put reading within Ahmed’s theory of contact to consider the “pressing” that emotion indicates as it highlights the reader as one party meeting many others. The more we think about all the aspects of a text and the world with which a reader comes into contact in her own recreation, the more possibilities for recognizing impressions and their implications. As Ahmed reminds us, impressions work on multiple levels. We are left with impressions, we create them, we make them, and we are under them. The term emphasizes both the verb and the noun of affect, drawing attention to both active and receptive elements of reading and emotion. Impressions we both form and are left with; we both make and take. Though we carry them with us, impressions are made at moments of meeting, formed by and through contact. When we read, we confront the physical text, language, organization, characters, situations, imagined feelings, tellings of stories and events, imagined worlds, geographies, contexts, cultures, voices, etc. The list we choose depends on the text, the situation, and who we are as readers.

Readers are not just impressed; readers impress as well. Rebecca McClanahan’s autobiographical essay, “Book Marks,” pivots off of an anonymous reader’s marks on a text, her literal impressions on the pages. In the New York City Public Library’s copy of Denise Levertov’s *Evening Train*, McClanahan encounters the notes, frantic and confessional, of a previous reader. As she constructs the book’s past reader, noting the pages’ lipstick smudges as well as their underlines, she retraces her own steps as a reader and a woman, noting what and whom had marked her own pages, leaving impressions. McClanahan is clear that impressions are

not simply caused by objects, but by their meeting. After acknowledging hairs, underlines, smears, she admits that “the rest is dream, conjecture, the making of *my* story” (103). Impressions beget impressions, and the essay itself is exactly that, moving from an unknown presence (constructed through left impressions on the text) to the powerful impressions of memory, still to change in her articulation of them.

Tracing her young adulthood, McClanahan returns to the books that impressed her and the people who delivered them. Eventually this becomes what we could call an abbreviated review of a dissolving first marriage and a subsequent loss of self-direction. In describing her first marriage, she details how her first husband confessed that he had impregnated another woman, all the while asking for money to fly the other woman down to Mexico City for an abortion. Confessing to her role in the situation -- McClanahan immediately worries her husband might leave her for the other woman -- she plainly describes her offer to pay the bulk of the flight and operation, which she proceeds to do. There is no direct description of current guilt or discomfort; there is no outright naming of complicity. Instead, dreamlike, she ends the scene by offering an imaginative recreation:

The girl's name is Barbara. She had blue eyes and long brown hair, and she lived in Garden Grove with her parents. She had a lisp. That's all he ever told me. The rest had been written in daylight imaginings and in dreams: Barbara and I are sitting beneath a beach umbrella reading books and sipping tall, cool drinks. The ocean is crashing in the distance, and the child crawling the space between our knees is a girl. She is a harlequin, seamed down the center. Not only eyelash, one fingernail, one cell of the child is his. She is the two best halves of Barbara and me, sewn with perfectly spaced stitches: this is the story that I write. (110)

I taught this essay in a Seminar in Composition course at the University of Pittsburgh during the first semester I began writing about emotion and reading. While discussing the essay as a whole, I remember one student asking, "What's up with the weird sewn baby?" Though it's probable

other students shared other initial thoughts, this comment is the one I remember sparking a turn in conversation. His comment reveals both a potential mix of bodily sensation and judgment: *it felt weird to read about the sewn baby and the sewn baby doesn't fit – it doesn't make sense.*

To answer his question, we returned to the passage. "Why do you remember that image?" I asked.

"It's just really weird," he replied, offering nothing further. After rereading this scene, the class was quiet; they seemed unsure how to approach the moment or uninterested. I wonder, too, at the class's discomfort with admissions of actual abortions, the cross-sections between literature and life here making verbal recognition difficult, undesired. Ahmed reminds us that all emotions have "aboutness," always directed towards something and revealing, in some way, "a stance on the world" (7). To reveal a feeling about this scene was to reveal a stance on a very controversial world.

In my reading, the image of the baby represented a larger textual situation. More specifically, it encapsulated the speaker's lived impression of a memory. Impressions are not only sensed markers of perceptions; they are also often vague, loosely colored, marked by feeling but not articulated or defined. In living life and in reading texts, we often investigate impressions that bother us; what is really going on? Why does so and so make us feel a certain way, or why do we sense a certain motivation? To detail the contours of the situation, to say what we thought was up with the weird sewn baby, I met the silence with situational questions.

Remind me: Who is Barbara? How does McClanahan know her? How does her husband know her? Eventually, we retraced the situational components, drawing a messy triangle on the board. McClanahan was 19 and married, her husband got Barbara pregnant and wanted her to abort her baby, McClanahan paid for Barbara's abortion, and now, remembering the situation,

she's imagining herself with Barbara, the woman she has never met who slept with her first husband. She never found out what happened to Barbara or the trip to Mexico. In this daydream, McClanahan and Barbara share the baby, however, and the baby is perfectly sewn, stitches and all. This reiteration further confirmed what the first student voice suggested: the baby is weird, unreal.

After determining the situation in the text, we could note again our impressions of it – what did this scenario feel like? As Bogdan might say, what are the judgments we have of it as people in the world? Students again were quiet; I remember beginning with questions again of situation, but this time bringing it closer to life. It didn't seem as if students were yet "feeling" the scene's significance. I asked them to pretend depending on the role easiest for them to imagine. You are a woman being told that your boyfriend cheated on you, got a girl pregnant, and now needs your help for the abortion, or you are a guy who has cheated on your girlfriend, got a girl pregnant, and now you decide to ask her to help you pay for it. Or, I added, this happened to your friend, and she/he comes to ask you for advice. These hypotheticals finally triggered some strong opinions (*No way should she give him the money!*) and some laughing at the incredulity of the situation itself.

Finally *feeling* the situation we had drawn -- one student was able to talk more about the baby. He compared the doll to Chucky, a sewn up freak from the horror movies. "Imagine what it would really look like to take the halves of two people and put them together," I offered, keeping us going with situation. "Who does McClanahan seem closest to when she remembers what happened?" I asked. Noticing that Barbara is the one who appears next to her in her imagination -- *like THEY are the parents*, one student suggested -- we thought about why Barbara, the other woman she never met, is next to her in this imagined scene. Students offered

several theories: *McClanahan wants to be closer to Barbara, now in her life she understands Barbara, she identifies with her, she wants to apologize, she wants to imagine she was on Barbara's side and not her sleazy husband's, she can't picture a real baby but she knows she kept someone else from having one, she wants to put that baby back together, she knows she can't fix what she did.* These answers circle around. The emotional possibility in this brief scene illuminates how difficult, how supremely complicated emotional perspectives are. *Looking back, I feel guilty and pathetic* doesn't cover McClanahan in this moment, nor could it. To wrap up this situation in this way would be to flatten human depth, to render the multi-dimensionality of life as single-paned, easy to look through and see beyond.

My students had been troubled and/or even bored by the obliqueness of this scene; instead of an opportunity, an impression worth making clearer, it was an ambiguity to avoid. This was not a simple first reaction share out, though we couldn't have had a conversation without that beginning offered by the student's comment. Impressions, then, allowed us to reread and resituate. This required attention to our speaker's own impressions – what she was coming up against in this scene, what she was facing and feeling towards. But as readers continually build situation, they move within the hermeneutic circle, needing to continually notice new impressions of a parts and of a whole. Emotional impressions, then, are not just part of a first reading. In a classroom setting, they are part of our continued engagement with a text, our rereading and discussing, our situating a text together. Reader Response has so focused on “first reactions” as the emotional responses that typify responsive reading, we have lost the ongoingness of feeling, especially as we put together situations to feel about. As we situate and listen, we are in contact with more and more, we have more and more opportunities to be impressed and to imagine what we're reading.

This anecdote affirms Hume's framework – all our thoughts and ideas begin with impressions, “our more lively perceptions.” Indeed, Gross identifies this line of thinking in Heidegger's famous summer Marburg lectures during which he explored Aristotle. Like Augustine after him, Aristotle (in Heidegger's reading) prioritizes “pathos” as “the very condition for the possibility of rational discourse, or logos” (*Heidegger 4*). Instead of an addition to corrupt or beautify, pathos is our starting place. Without it, “we would have no grounds for concern, no time and place for judging, no motivation to discourse at all” (*Heidegger 4*). Without sensing, there would be no making sense, no judgment. Heidegger goes on to argue that logos matters because of the social context of our pathos. “The passions are actually phenomena constitutive of social life,” Gross explains (*Heidegger 4*). In Heidegger's reading, the passions give social life its communicative activity. Without the *move* to speak (pathos), discourse would not exist, our sociality reduced to that of “nonhuman life” (*Heidegger 4*).

Ahmed, too, identifies emotion as the phenomena that creates social life, causing us to recognize outsides and insides, borders and connections. “It is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the “I” and the “we” are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others” (10). In this essay, McClanahan's “we” shifts as we watch her “I” change. Part of what made the “harlequin doll” imagining so strange is the “we” she offers us, as if it should be an expected daydream; she and Barbara are never a “we” within the folds of her life, far from it, but in the image of the child she forces a constructed “we” upon us; such a construction emerges from feelings towards Barbara and a supposedly aborted baby, her past self, her imagined self. What are these feelings? What does she want us to feel in recognizing the startling union, “as if THEY were the parents”? What

effects do those feelings have, Ahmed would ask, on our reading of the text, and on the way we think/feel about the issues the text raises?

As this anecdote reveals, putting together textual situations (relationships, proximities, distances, motivations, directions) -- not to mention identifying ourselves within our reading situation (what is the nature of my contact as a reader with all of these textual realities, both the world of the text and its construction) -- requires feeling and attention to it. The reader's original impression -- a judgment of weirdness -- called us to deepen our conception of a textual situation, one that I imagine readers in the room had complicated relationships with, though I never heard them articulated.

Finally, this scene suggests a textual location worth attending to when we are concerned with how emotion is made through contact: the image or metaphor that reveals complex relations. Here, literal meanings are contorted in some way, passive understandings disrupted, and emotion is made through pressing limits of articulation. The harlequin doll, sewn up with both halves, is not something we can recognize and pass over, but something we must sense in order to appreciate its significance. Figures of speech do the same, asking us to perceive in multiple ways. What are we being asked to imagine? How do we imagine it, and what does it feel like to do so? Here we are both impressing (shaping the text) and being impressed (being shaped by what we imagine). And what kinds of demands are placed on us in such an object? How does the speaker feel about Barbara, about the child? What might she want us to feel? What kind of contact is she asking us to have? An image I remember whenever I think of this essay, it has become in my reading what Dilthey called a piece's "point of impression," its dominant point, leading to my own inclusions and exclusions, clarifying where I look and what I ignore.

Keith Opdahl, in his efforts to extend cognitive reading theories to include emotion, would identify this image as part of my affective coding of the essay. Drawing primarily from cognitive science, neuroscience, literary studies, and philosophy, Opdahl argues that along with image and language, emotion is a primary way of coding meaning, what he dubs the affective code. Instead of remembering Elizabeth Bennett through Jane Austen's exact words, we remember her through the feeling we created of Elizabeth Bennett. Making his case for the affective code, Opdahl lays out emotion's function as both compressing knowledge and also indicating significance. ("Only emotion is comprehensive enough to embody a complete, concrete whole" (233).) Emotion is a synthesizing process, one that operates as soon as we are involved. Emotions compress into an "impression" that lingers, erasing details into a feeling. Opdahl offers an immediate counter to the supposed completion of cognitive theories; how can we ignore reader feeling if that is how readers compress meaning and take it with them?

In coding McLanhan's "Bookmarks," I've compressed the essay into the feeling of this image, an image that feels like a mix between regret and desire, between disgust and compassion, between grandiose confession and imagination. That is what the harlequin baby's weirdness now holds for me, along with my valuing of like/dislike, of not liking McClanahan, for example – I never "got over" her willingness to pay for Barbara's abortion, nor for presenting herself as a victim while describing her complicity – yet I admire the essay, perhaps because it makes multiple demands on two readers: Levertov's reader, whom she hopes to stop before it's too late, a situational guise that really allows her to address the second reader -- me, whom she hopes to be accepted by, forgiven by perhaps, now that she's "finally decided, after nearly thirty

years, to tell,” (114), the reader she’s given permission to be “selfish” to “answer [my] own needs” (103).¹⁵

This moment illuminates how our own sensing of a literary text is often hinged to our sensing of character or narrator emotion. As we construct these textual feelings, we are coming into contact with a fuller and fuller situation, and living through “all our livelier perceptions,” our sensations (hearing, visualizing, touching, feeling bodily) and our perspectives (appraisals, judgments, proximities) changing, alerting us of impressions to articulate and pursue. We sense as we go along, the feeling of being impressed halting us, but giving us what Opdahl calls a route to investigation.

My purpose is to make readers as aware of as much as possible, to broaden what impressions they are conscious of, what they value, and what they attempt to articulate. Being impressed, however, assumes having touched, having met. Instead of asking our students, “What does this mean?” Or, “What is your interpretation?” perhaps we need to provide more time and space to “meet” a text in class, to build towards situation through impressions.

Reader feeling is important not only because it opens up avenues for awareness of our own synthesis, but also because it emphasizes specificity between readers and events of reading. Every reading of a text, Dennis Sumara describes, produces a different synthesizing feeling, precisely because we find ourselves in different circumstances each time we read even a familiar text. Our feelings qualify one reader in one time and place from another; they chart different

¹⁵ Opdahl is not sure about the difference between multiple readers’ affective codes, and would postulate, I imagine, that readers would feel Rebecca McClanahan’s “Bookmarks” fairly similarly. Biological minds form a universal basis for Opdahl, as they do for cognitive science. Content, social situation, gender, time and place (to name only a few of the ways we and texts are already situated in the world before an encounter), are not theorized possibilities. Opdahl operates too staunchly within a cognitive framework to see beyond it, concerned with process but not content or actual readers.

distances, affinities, and impression points. They isolate experiences from one another, and they present new possibilities for contact. The meaning we construct always changes, as does the experience we have.

In other words, we do not simply construct meaning, and then respond as situated people. To construct meaning is to construct feeling as a person already situated. One end of this construction is the character/speaker feelings we create as we read. As Wilner and Schneider point out, readers often assume these “feelings” to be in their own terms, “inferring” (a major cognitive strategy) what makes sense to them immediately, what matches their expectations, instead of engaging what is represented in the text. I can recall several moments in classes when a student has claimed that a character felt a certain way, and when I have inquired why they think so, they have responded with the comment that “it was just the feeling they got.” These moments illuminate the problem with “feeling”; uninvestigated “feelings,” unreflective reactions, become synthesized understandings of texts if we don’t teach readers how to speak to and about feelings with precision, using them as prompts to reread.

This chapter seeks to reframe conversations within undergraduate education and secondary school. Following Eva-Wood’s lead, I am trying to expand/revise assumptions about meaning construction and mental process to involve whole readers, thinking and *feeling* their way through texts in bodies within particular situations. Within a conversation about reading invested in making meaning, I’m asking instead how we *feel* meaning, how we create situations, how we situate ourselves, how sensing and making sense are intertwined, how emotion makes and reveals significance. Points of contact and impressions are the major metaphors I’m using to explore articulations and experiences of emotion both within texts and readers, phrases that not only direct us towards process (cognitive framework’s principal concern) but also towards

locations, *where* to look in texts and in ourselves. Along with others concerned with freshmen reading within university English courses and student reading in high school classrooms, I hope to provide a provocative echo and push: as Wilner says, we need to explore with our students “connections between thinking and feeling.” The break-downs these teachers observe are not simply cognitive collapses of comprehension in need of greater monitoring. They reveal a lack of perception and reflection and the complicated business of reading, actions and a reality we mean to model and teach; they reveal a dismissal of types of sensations (voicing in McGann, for example) and a rejection of the unfamiliar. Comprehension (which I hope I have shown is dictated by feeling as much as thinking) is at stake, as is the breadth of our view (taking all of the text into account, including what does not make sense and what challenges our senses). When we ignore direct engagement of these reading complications, we can’t understand and address the nature of our students’ difficulties and confrontations with texts.

3.0 INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

I knew this research required me to teach, to try things out with real students in real classrooms and see where they went, to ask practically Ann Berthoff's question, "What difference would it make if" In the spirit of Berthoff's model of inquiry, I began searching for a high school English teacher who would be willing to let me engage my thought experiment with tangible support: giving over classroom time to my own teaching, allowing me a voice in the room, helping me work with individual students, and crafting a schedule that met both of our needs. Given the schedule of state exams, this flexibility was quite a bit to ask. Having taught English II full time in this relatively large Texan city the previous year, I knew how squeezed teachers felt for time, how demands for proof and product only increased while space for thinking, sorting, imagining, and considering seemed harder to find and harder to justify to powerful stakeholders (in the case of this urban public school, the school administration, the district administration, and the state legislators).

I finally found an interested teacher through a colleague involved in the National Writing Project. The participating teacher who graciously opened her classroom to me has been teaching for over twenty years, working throughout her entire career "with at-risk kids." The southern urban school where she worked had 2600 students in 2009, 69% Hispanic, 17% White, 11% Black, and 2% Asian/Pacific Islander. In 2009, 62% of students were eligible for free or reduced lunch programs. Though the school as a whole passed the state accountability standards which

take into account state test scores as well as graduation and attendance rates, it did not make AYP (the federal government's Annual Yearly Progress) in 2010, which measures the state test scores of sophomore students only. In the particular sophomore class with which I worked, the racial makeup was slightly different. 8 out of the 21 students were African American (38%), 10 out of the 21 were Hispanic (48%), and three were White Hispanic (14%). Two of the African American students were recent arrivals to Texas. One student was a New Orleans native but had left with his entire extended family during Katrina. Another student had moved from Detroit for better jobs and schools.

Due to both logistics and approval policies, this single class became the place where my thinking and reading took pedagogical root. Though this qualitative research study addresses a single group of fifteen students, it does offer up insights, practices, and practice-based theories worth, I argue, extending to other classroom situations, both similar and dissimilar. During the 2011 spring semester with the participating teacher, I designed four different teaching experiments, each centered around a different text, all narratives, including three short stories and a longer memoir. Each class period lasted about ninety minutes, and each teaching experiment ranged from two to five ninety minute sessions in duration. During these sessions, I functioned as the primary teacher while the participating teacher added thoughts and reminders for students, connecting new material back to what they had previously learned and addressing student behavior. During several sessions, I worked with the class in small groups (five-six students). Whether teaching the whole group or a small group, I approached each session as if the class were my own, negotiating who they were as a student group with my overarching research question – *how do we foreground emotion in the literature classroom and what difference does it make?* In many ways, then, this research could be considered “action

research,” where the teacher-researcher seeks to address concerns in her own area and context of expertise by focusing on and inquiring about practice. As Stephen Waters-Adams describes it on the University of Plymouth’s online report on action research, teachers become researchers in their own professional spaces when they “want to change [their] practice” and seek solutions that emerge “from the specific circumstances of [their] practice.” Though the teacher’s classroom was not my own, it was very similar to my classroom the previous year, and as a location for teaching literature it offered me problems and potentials analogous to what I had experienced in various educational contexts (I speak here of middle school, high school, and undergraduate classes). Waters-Adams reminds us that “finding your own solution makes you understand your practice better.” Indeed, in my endeavors to find answers to the question, “What difference does it make to foreground emotion in the teaching of literature?” I have come to understand “my practice better,” that is, the practice of teaching the reading of literary narratives in ways that engage students in texts and contexts, in their lives as readers and in the imagined (and created) lives of others. As I taught in her classroom, I noticed students’ successes and difficulties as individuals and a group, continually adjusting my ongoing expectations, questions, and lessons in response. I have chosen to structure chapters in chronological order, moving from the first teaching experiment to the last so that I can describe and analyze the adjustments I made as I worked with this group of students. I am highlighting these shifts to emphasize not only the “specific circumstances” of this research but also to model the kind of continuing pedagogical awareness that produces practices and theories.

I separate these words, practice and theory, not to suggest that they were clearly separated throughout this research process. On the contrary, practice and theory were often impossible to pull apart, mutually specifying each other in and outside of the classroom. Describing the model

of research enacted in National Writing Project communities around the country, Sheridan Blau argues that practice-based theories often begin in classroom practice; through various reflective practices, they become articulated theory. Blau reminds us that though National Writing Project's founder, Jim Gray, privileged teachers as expert practitioners who could disseminate their expertise, he and others concluded that "in order for them to demonstrate and share their best practices with one another in a usable and credible form, they had to be able to articulate the principles that informed their practices" (14). As Blau characterizes it, the research of the National Writing Project community "looks for the tacit theory behind the practice" in a variety of locations: "in the experience and intellectual history of the practitioner, in the learning needs and lives of the students in the practitioner's classroom, in the practitioner's own values and goals, as well as in the research and theory available in our professional literature" (15). This movement, from reflecting on developed practice to uncovering theoretical directions and statements, shaped much of the following chapter. At the same time, as the previous chapters have shown, my research project is directly influenced by published scholarship. I have not designed lessons throughout this research in a vacuum, my pedagogical experience removed from the concerns of others. On the contrary, throughout these teaching experiments I explicitly use published work to imagine and produce classroom practice. At times, however, theories – not necessarily articulated out of pedagogical concern or with the intention of pedagogical translation – did not mobilize classroom practice or student development, at least in my form of imagining their realization. Thus, theory led to, emerged from, and was retheorized by practice. This chapter seeks to define practice and theory in their interconnected form.

While teaching with the participating teacher in her classroom, I collected a variety of data. I recorded class discussions and transcribed them, collected all types of students' written

responses from single words to semantic maps to paragraphs, transcribed conversations with students during independent work time, included two student surveys, designed lesson plans in response to each new class, and conducted two interviews with the teacher, one at the beginning of the project and the other at the end. At the same time, I kept a daily research journal in which I described my anticipations for each class session and my reflections afterwards. This journal became a place to articulate the theoretical underpinnings of a successful practice I could not quite pull apart, to express concerns on how to move forward, to reframe how to respond to student needs through the lens of my research interests (as the students' literacy was significantly below grade level, their needs/gaps could be overwhelming), to express frustration or surprise, and to look forward. At times, I will quote directly from these pages in order to capture the mood of an immediate observation or the development of an initial analysis. In my analysis, I approached all of the work I had collected, including my field notes and lesson plans, in two ways. First, I began by "openly coding" in order to "move beyond the particular event or situation . . . to capture some more general theoretical dimension or issue" (Emerson, Fretz, Shaw, 151). These codes helped me begin organizing my analytical focus for each unit of instruction. I also marked what Judith Newman calls "critical incidents," brief moments that caught my attention and required reflection. In Newman's own teaching of teachers, she found that these moments tended to "offer. . . a way of exploring our assumptions about language, about learning, and about teaching" (727). I read these incidents, whether they were moments of classroom conversation or my own observations, with increased attention to what Newman calls "our invitations" to students. Concerned with process, with the kinds of experiences I was inviting students to have, I looked at how emotional awareness was being presented to students

and adopted by them in these cases as well as how students were being asked to approach narrative.

In my analysis of student writing and class discussion, I identified moments of academic reading in order to trace the pedagogical method that invited these particular responses. I coded according to three broad features of academic reading: attending to the text, noticing what does not fit, and suspending declarations of meaning. “Attending to the text” translates to moments when students reference, question, or cite the text itself either through quotation or remembered example. “Noticing what does not fit” translates to moments when students ask questions about a text (its situation or composition), remark on a text’s strangeness, pick out ambiguous textual moments for interpretation, comment on a textual world’s difference from their own, and make predictions or fill in gaps. “Suspending declarations of meaning” looks similar to the first moment, but this feature translates primarily to questions or comments that affirm interpretive possibility (conditional language, reconsidering, offering more than one possibility, acknowledging doubt or confusion in interpretation). For both the final two, this meant picking out moments of complexity and/or contradiction in student writing or discussion. When do students simplify their reading? What contradictions are present? What potential for further development? Once I identified these moments, my primary interest was how emotional awareness of self and text was implicated.

3.1 THE CLASS

The participating teacher described her class as being “more about the social connections than they are about learning,” a description I’m sure many other teachers recognize in snapshots of past classes. She saw the social dimension of this class as a serious problem, however, an impediment to developing a shared value for learning. “They’re not mature enough to work in groups successfully. When we stick them in a group,” she admitted, “it is with great trepidation.” I include these evaluations before I describe the class as readers partly because I too found that this class’s social priorities – which played out both playfully and antagonistically depending on the day – were their defining feature as a group. There were moments when their relationships with each other and their desires to have fun were a benefit, and other moments when they made any kind of focused participation difficult, if not impossible. Though I hadn’t sought to research classroom management, thinking about how to read literature with this group ensured that I did. Thus, part of my narrative accounts of class time and my definition of success will involve student engagement. Being on task and responsive simply wasn’t a given for these students, so when it happened, both the teacher and I noted it.

In an initial interview, the participating teacher said that most of the students read at a seventh grade reading level. A few were close to on level, but not quite there. She added that even in her Pre-AP class, which was not included in this research, there were students who could not read at a 10th grade level, let alone the expected above grade level. “This probably overall is the lowest class I’ve had in a while,” she said, referring to all of her 10th grade classes, not only the one included in this study. In our interview, I asked the participating teacher about our group

of students' knowledge of literary conventions and difficulties reading. To capture the academic circumstances of her teaching and my own research, I quote her at length.

E: How would you say their knowledge of literary conventions is, like text structure, voice, narrator, imagery –

T: Oh rudimentary –

E: Right.

T: I mean, rudimentary.

E: Okay, that's what I thought.

T: Now they're a little bit better because we did do the connotation. I can set a piece in front of them and they can circle those connotative words, tell me if this tone is positive, negative, or neutral, but even then they'd be able to discern that but then when I ask the question, "So, what is the subject matter?" You know if you're going to know tone, it's about his attitude towards the subject matter, so his attitude is one of what towards what? And you just get deer in the headlights.

E: Right.

T: What is this about? What is he talking about? Does he like it, not like it? Does he think it stinks? Is he sarcastic? Is he critical of it? What, what?

E: So then, that goes perfectly into the next one. What kinds of difficulties would you say they encounter while reading?

T: Just processing in general, just making inferences, just um, being able to use context clues to figure out what a word means. Even sequencing sometimes, something as simple as that, what happened first, what happened next, is something not all of them can do. Just rudimentary kinds of things – especially inferences, and even like I said, the main idea, so the theme of this is – you know – they might be able to string together the surface, literal part, but if I ask them to go any deeper, then you can hang it up. It's not going to happen. . . . Some of them don't understand the concept of theme. . . .

Getting them to write stuff down when they read is really difficult. When I tell them, take these think aloud notes, process as you read, this is called a think aloud – think aloud and put it on paper for me, make connections, ask questions, make a movie in your head . . . keep a train of thought in your brain, do something to

connect to the story line, it's just not something they can conceive of doing. . . . Even the juniors I have are that low. There are only about ten of thirty-five who can process while they read. If they have to push to think, if there is an effort involved – I think they are so used to being spoon fed, they just don't want to think.

As the above conversation demonstrates, the participating teacher was predominantly concerned with her students' reading comprehension. Alarmed that her students could not (or would not) engage with literature beyond literal understanding – and often struggled to even do that, she wondered how some of them made it to high school with their minimal skills as readers. Metacognitive strategies – the kind described and advanced by *Strategies That Work*, the textbook I discuss in Chapter Three – were crucial to the development she was hoping to achieve. She worried that students expected, as she put it, for understanding to come from simply mouthing words or running their eyes over them. They knew the physical actions of reading, but didn't understand the mental processes that made it happen. During the semester I worked with the participating teacher, she was modeling “think aloud” notes for all of her classes, using the metacognitive strategies of “asking questions,” “making connections,” and “visualizing.” Processing – filling in gaps with active construction – was at the forefront of her pedagogical practice. “Thinking” was a key word of hers, as was the quintessential “think aloud,” and she often connected our work narrating our reading through activities on emotion with the “think aloud.”

I should add that the participating teacher taught in a specific academy within her large public school. This academy was a New Technology school, participating in the New Technology Network, a network that provides schools with a project-based, digital-based collaborative style of teaching and learning. In describing her class for this research, I have

emphasized their low literacy skills and their difficulty taking school or class seriously. Both aspects run counter to the expectations of a New Technology environment, where the key feature is students' independence: their ability to find information themselves, to move through texts on their own, to synthesize materials, to negotiate roles and steps with peers in their group, and to determine what they need in order to complete their work. Needless to say, this particular class of hers struggled to work within the model successfully. Though I taught in a New Technology school myself and have participated in professional development both as a presenter and audience member, I decided not to follow a project-based learning model for these classroom experiments. I simply didn't have enough consecutive visits with the class to create a full-scale project. Furthermore, I was less interested in spending the time to create a final product than I was in providing students multiple opportunities and multiple ways to use emotion to engage literary texts. This required modeling by me, and it required our establishment of certain practices together.

The teacher's focus on metacognitive strategies with her sophomore class was a coincidence, but a telling one. Like many secondary school teachers, she found students who were not capable of making meaning as readers. The participating teacher knew her students couldn't follow a narrative – and knew her students didn't know that they couldn't follow a narrative, so she turned to the most viable option for showing her students what readers do. As many theorists complain (see Sheridan Blau), our students have been learning for years that writing is a process, yet many think reading is automatic, simple reception. If it doesn't come together, it's a problem with the text. Metacognitive strategy instruction makes reading an effortful process, a composite of many actions, and it remains the best alternative we have for teachers in the participating teacher's position facing passive, below grade level readers.

Though I support metacognitive strategy instruction and have relied on it as a teacher, it misses crucial aspects of literary experience. As I argued previously, how do we teach readers when to pause their reading if the “breakdown” is the primary monitor and they do not recognize breakdowns? As I commented in Chapter Three, instead of noticing and following through strangeness, student readers smooth out potential breaks, avoiding the unfamiliar. This is certainly the comfortable thing to do; for readers who struggle, there is even more reason to avoid admitting break-downs or confusion, as many of these students are used to trying to pretend understanding. Similarly, if we are reading narrative, how do we teach students what and where to value? Rabinowitz’s rules of significance could help supplement the metacognitive model here by providing some generic focus, but I think there are even more basic ways of understanding narrative that could help students (struggling and otherwise) direct their attention and identify reasons to pause. Finally, how do we reform the breakdown to a breakthrough, a moment of confusion signaling an opportunity to resituate and go deeper, as the definition of academic reading would suggest?

One of my biggest critiques of the metacognitive model is that it doesn’t create a sustained practice, an underlying motivation. I call this, in Chapter Two, “emotioned reading.” Typically, whether we are reading or not, we don’t pause to ask questions unless we care about the potential answers; we don’t pause to make connections if we are not already experiencing the feeling of what Felski calls (a name that allows for more nuance, I think, than “connection”) “recognition.” If we are not asking students to create, form, and reflect on relationships, then “answers” to questions (the consequences) hold little value.

In working with this class, I wanted to supplement the metacognitive strategy instruction in the classroom by addressing some of these gaps. By foregrounding emotion, particularly

emotion as impressions between two or more parties, could I give students ways to direct their attention to important moments in narrative? Could they create the relationships between characters and their objects, pausing to continue to situate the feelings that bind characters to circumstances? Could they create relationships between themselves and these characters? Could they determine and value moments of contact within a text, all the while situating themselves in terms of those moments? By cocreating situations, how might a focus on emotion help students do the rudimentary things their teacher knew they weren't doing – processing, making inferences, asking questions, and filling in gaps in general?

Thus, though the low skill set of the students was difficult, I saw their need and their teacher's responsive focus on metacognitive strategies as a challenging positive for my own research. One of the major benefits of my complementing their strategy instruction was that it already set up an important format: pausing while reading, taking notes on a text itself, coding different types of reactions or textual features, and making experience audible and visible. Though students needed many reminders and lots of encouragement to follow through with this set-up (and to read independently), I was not the only person establishing these practices with them.

3.2 STUDENTS' CONCEPTIONS OF READING

Given that I have described various readers in previous chapters – myself included – it is important I provide some space to capture, in whatever minimal way I can, how this class of Texan public school sophomores understood reading and the role it played in their lives. Though

I did not approach this project as an ethnographer, but rather as an involved and implicated teacher (thus my characterization of my work as most resembling action research), I did provide for moments of observation of and inquiry into my students' conceptions of reading. Through surveys and moments in class, I came to several conclusions about how these students talked about, characterized, and understood reading.

During my first visit with students, I asked them to complete a survey about reading practices and conceptions. The questions included:

Do you read voluntarily? If so, how often?

Do you prefer to read at home or at school? Why?

How is reading different at school than it is at home?

Why do you think people like to read?

Describe a book you've read that you can't forget. Where did you read the book, in class or at home? Why do you think this experience is unforgettable?

What kinds of feelings do you think people have when they read literature?

What could make reading literature in school more interesting for you?

Of course, there are several assumptions at play in these questions. First of all, I tried to call for a variety of perspectives in these questions: students' perceptions of their behaviors and the behaviors of others, students' memories of reading events, and students' opinions about reading conditions. I did not assume, as the literary voices in my first chapter might have suggested, that students would necessarily prefer reading at home. On the contrary, I assumed there would be a mix of responses, some students preferring to read at school (perhaps because it is the only place in which they have read). I also assumed that many of the students did not read voluntarily. Along those lines, I did not want to ask students about a favorite book because the word "favorite" connotes a certain amount of commitment, one I could see students dismissing with a simple, "I don't have one." Instead, I wanted students to untangle why a reading event, any reading event, still lingers in their memory. Implicit in this question is a central argument to this

chapter: as Louise Rosenblatt states, reading a text – and thus making a text – is an event placed in time. In asking students about where they read this book, I am asking them to begin reconstructing the *event* of reading. I wanted them to begin recalling the conditions of this reading event, because, as I argue throughout this dissertation, conditions can make texts meaningful or unremarkable, unforgettable or forgettable, pleasurable or unpleasant. Finally, the final question betrays my assumption that students would have at least some complaints about reading literature in school, though other questions reveal my desire to push students to imagine reading as a voluntary and positive activity (“Why do people like to read?” for example), despite my expectation that many students would not answer positively if I had asked, “Do you like to read?” (note that question’s absence).

I want to mine these survey answers a bit, as they reveal a variety of shared perspectives on reading and emotion, perspectives that the voices I have read thus far (literary critics remembering, scholars theorizing the classroom, undergraduate instructors narrating, and middle/secondary school teachers describing successful pedagogy) do not necessarily share or highlight. In many ways, these answers better introduce the class as readers than any other introduction could.¹⁶

Most students admitted that reading voluntarily rarely happened, if at all. One third of the students answered affirmatively, yet most of that third offered caveats to their affirmations: *if I find a good book, once in a while, only my favorite author, if I have time*, etc. Only two students of the fifteen who participated in the study (and thus whose work was available to me) wholeheartedly identified themselves as readers. Students’ answers to questions about

¹⁶ Because I am presenting only the necessary words and phrases from their answers, I have modified spelling mistakes to make the group voice more consistent. When I quote individuals throughout the chapter, I will maintain their spelling, phrasing, and punctuation.

differences between reading at home and at school perhaps reveal the most about their academic expertise and confidence. Six out of fifteen students preferred to read at home, four preferred to read at school, and five said they had no preference. Their reasons for reading at home include *don't like reading in front of others, can read whatever I want, can't focus at school, more peace at home, I like the quietness when I'm alone, too many distractions at school*. Other students' reasons for preferring school are strikingly similar: *at school I can ask questions and read with other people, don't have to do it at home because at home I won't, more alone time -- only way I will read, and there is a lot of distraction at my house*. Both groups identify distractions as a deterrent to reading, yet other people are cast as both a problem (a distraction, a limiting authority figure, or an anxiety-producing audience) and a help (answering questions, enriching reading, making sure you read). Students who said it didn't matter included the two self-identified consistent readers (they liked to read so much the place didn't bother them), while the other students cast themselves as not particularly motivated by reading (and the conditions didn't seem to change this).

Students further qualified the distinctions between reading at home and school (what I referred to in Chapter One as private and public reading), which I've split these into two categories:

Qualities of School Reading:

Positives: people can help you learn new things, at school I am concentrated, you read for a reason, teacher is there, I pay attention more.

Negatives: more distracting, get off track, too loud, can't put myself in their shoes, can only read during free time, can feel like you're behind.

Neutral (offered without clear commentary): it's what the teacher wants, I'm forced to read so I will.

Qualities of Home Reading:

Positives: more comfortable; your own pace; won't have any of your friends distracting you of your reading; I can read anything I want which include comics, anime, science fiction and anything that seems interesting; at home I can read as much as I want; I like the quietness when I'm alone so I can understand what I'm reading more.

Negatives: more distractions, don't have people to help, can't focus and get into it, at home you are disturbed.

Some descriptions of school reading imply that reading at home offers choice without any oversight. Of course, for some this lack of oversight has negative consequences for reading development. As several students explain, they simply won't read at home.

Despite the fact that more than half of the students did not describe themselves as readers, as a whole they offered meaningful reasons for why people read. I've divided these into four categories: Self-Improvement, Imagination, Interest, and Experience.

Self-Improvement: just to get better, they understand and learn more, want to know stuff they don't know, like to learn.

Imagination: they have a creative imagination, use their imagination because that's what a book makes you do, broaden imagination, it opens the world up for them.

Interest in Content: they're interested in what they're reading, like to read interesting books, because of the story, keeps them interested and occupied.

Experience: have something to do, takes their mind off things, get excitement out of a story, calms them down, gives them peace, it entertains the reader, makes them calm and they like it.

Reading as “self-improvement,” despite students’ resistance to it, was a continual theme with this group. Though students were not consistently on task during classroom activities and though several pronounced texts or reading itself as “boring,” students expressed on a variety of occasions that reading was “good for you.” The implication that reading will teach you something you don’t know first suggested to me that these students were thinking about informational texts, yet that seemed strange given that several students use the word “story,” and the example texts students wrote on their surveys were all narratives (fiction and memoirs) as well as the Bible. There are certainly students in this class who might refer to a non-fiction article as a “story,” but I think it’s very possible that the students writing about what readers learn from reading were indeed speaking of narrative. The idea that reading a “story” could help a reader “learn more,” could lead readers to “know stuff they don’t know,” reveals two assumptions: we read narratives to gain new perspectives, and we value that difference in perspective (between ours and a narrator’s, for example) so much so that it may motivate us to read in the first place. These assumptions are a sharp counter, I think, to the kinds of problems the undergraduate instructors described – students resisting reading what was on the page, collapsing differences, and familiarizing the unfamiliar. In practice, the students I worked with, of course, struggled with the same problems as Wilner’s or Schneider’s (not attending to the full situation offered by a text) but their thoughts on purposes for reading suggest that they recognize narratives’ potential to involve us in something we have not experienced. This recognition suggests that they could be encouraged to listen to, value, and “learn from” newness. The students who wrote that readers were motivated by using their imagination (“that’s what a book makes you do”) contributed to the group’s sense, as suggested by the surveys, that reading stories gives you the opportunity to traverse distance.

The “experience” category exposed an interesting tension in these answers: on the one hand, reading, according to some students, “calms” a reader down. It’s a quiet, typically solitary activity. As evidenced by their previous answers, noisy distractions more often than not interrupt reading, disturbing its stillness. For a group of students who were most engaged when class involved hands-on activities or multi-modal media, reading a hard copy of a text could seem narrow, motionless. For most students according to their surveys, this was a positive, bringing them out of some kind of chaos (whether at home or school) and providing “calm” or “peace.” Though I purposely highlighted reading as a physically situated activity through the questions on the survey about school and home (never out of one’s body or out of a place), students continually reminded me of this fact whether by their own reading practices or their responses to questions like these, where the existence of a broader situation (something to gain calm from) lingers in the background. At the same time, some students characterized reading as “exciting” or “entertaining,” providing adventure or a fun encounter, interrupting perhaps the tedium of home and school. Reading, this group of answers suggests, is an experience, and people are motivated to read by the potential of those experiences alone.

What struck me as most interesting in these surveys were the reasons students didn’t include as answers to “why people read,” yet then relied on in answering a later question about why a particular reading experience was unforgettable. To that question, students’ answers seemed to fall into the following categories: Emotions, Recognitions, Moral Realizations, Realness, Pride, and Shared Experience.

Emotions: it touches you – you feel bad, first book I wanted to keep reading, it really touched me.

Recognitions: it just put yourself in that position, you related to it, I've known people who have dealt with that stuff (drugs, sex, money); reminds me of me and my sister, I'm a goalie too and so I like to read about soccer, because I had a lot in common with that book.

Moral Realizations: it made me serious about the Holocaust, taught me lessons I never forgot.

Realness: based on a true story, the stuff in that book was unforgettable and true, because of what it talked about and what they went through.

Pride: one of the first books I completed, felt like an accomplishment.

Shared Experience: teacher and I read it together.

That day I had introduced my topic (reading and emotions) and students had begun sorting through a whole list of emotions to make their own categories of feeling, “touched” one of the many feelings included on that list (and thus, I think, one of the reasons for its occurrence on this survey). I didn't preface this survey with any reference to the work we had done that day or with a reminder of my research interests. Instead I had simply asked students to be honest about who they were as readers and what their reading experiences had been like. Of course the preceding hour provided an associative context for students, but I find it interesting that only a few students named emotions as reasons for why people read, yet in describing actual reading experiences, most students named emotions or categories defined by feeling (recognition, moral realization, pride) for why that experience was unforgettable. As Keith Opdahl argues, memories are often encapsulated in emotion, which is one probable reason for students' overwhelming reference to emotional qualities of experience.

This group of answers became my jumping off point with these students. If experiencing recognition, feeling “touched,” realizing moral realities, being amazed by realness, and finishing a text were sources of motivation to read (not to mention powerful compressions of an experience) and might resonate as involvement with texts, then I wanted to find ways to reconnect students with these edges of reading narratives and push on them. As a researcher, I wondered about the kind of reading these experiences evoked. These terms (**Emotions, Recognitions, Moral Realizations, Realness, Pride, or Shared Experiences**) are not key components of most articulations of academic literary reading. In the previous chapter, I defined academic reading as qualified by “attending to the text, noticing what does not seem to fit, slowing down, and suspending declarations of meaning,” yet both Wilner’s and Schneider’s experiences teaching developmental writing students revealed that academic reading required more than the typical intellectualized features associated with literary reading. For Wilner, there were necessary acts of “sympathetic imagination” that her students missed, leaving them unable to imagine, at times even decode, what they were reading. Unable to cultivate the capacity of being open (so that one is “touched” in some way), Wilner’s students could not cocreate the narrative. In other moments her students “mastered the story” with declarations of meaning and unreflective feeling, yet she realized they hadn’t followed the most important emotional turns of the text, instead falling back on sweeping cultural narratives (“just say no”) that fulfill familiar expectations. For Schneider, students were so accustomed to acts of identification (what I call recognition above), they couldn’t simultaneously recognize moments of difference (the moments when you might “understand and learn more” about others, not yourself). At the same time, Wilners’ students’ immediate emotional responses (what she calls their “unreflective reactions”) did not lead to interpretive accounts or returns to the text. Wilner’s and Schneider’s experiences

suggest that “emotions and recognitions” are both necessary and problematic aspects of a literary encounter. According to these student surveys, recognition (some version of identifying or relating) was the biggest reason why people read, and thus, I extrapolate, the most convincing reason (in their purview) to read. It is perhaps worth noting that 40% of students answered the question about how to make reading in school more interesting with some version of choosing texts that related more to their own lives: reading about stuff I care about, stuff that relates to me, topics I talk about makes reading more enticing, more interesting, and perhaps, it seems, more purposeful. The contrast between many students’ answers for why people like to read (to open yourself up and use your imagination) and why an experience of reading was unforgettable (relating to it) suggests a powerful and attractive tension between reading to experience difference and reading to recognize sameness.

The aims of this study are to consider how theories of emotion could help teachers address the emotional and intellectual complexity of reading narratives that Wilner, Schneider, McGann, Scholes, and others describe. With this focus, my analysis also seeks to provide some answers to Wilner’s question, “How do you teach an experience?,” a question that stems from I.A. Richards’ first teaching experiment in *Practical Criticism*. Both Richards and Rosenblatt set the stage for Bogdan’s book-length reply to Northrop Frye and my own investigation into the pedagogical implications of emotional awareness: the experiences of life are made of the same stuff as the experiences of reading narratives.

4.0 LITERATURE AND LIFE

Neither are there a collection of things that constitute the act of reading – reader, text, meaning – but only one: the experience of reading as it becomes part of our remembered, lived, and projected lives. So, although we act as though there are disparate parts to reading and curriculum that can be separated out, examined, and then put back in place, this is an illusion created in order to help us to believe that we can actually subtract ourselves from our own lives.

- *Dennis J. Sumara, Private Readings in Public*

Following Scholes's lead in *The Crafty Reader*, I recently came across a funny post on a popular literature student question/answer website: "I need to make a personal connection to the book *To Kill A Mockingbird*. help!" The single response explained to the writer that it would be hard for anyone to make the personal connection for her, but offered a couple of questions to get her going and a good quotation from Sparks Notes about the plot – maybe it would remind her of someone she knew. In the literature classroom, "personal connections" and "relating" are popular forms of the language of identification. As Samantha's post indicates, teachers and textbooks encourage students to make personal connections to advanced texts, though clearly not all students understand how (or why) readers do so.

As I describe in Chapter Two, Cynthia Lewis complains that in elementary and middle school classrooms, "identification" has become the principal means of asking students for emotional responses (*what does this remind you of in your own life?*). The *OED* describes this form of identification as "the state of being or feeling oneself to be closely associated with a person, group, etc., in emotions, interests, or actions; the process of becoming associated in this way." Not surprisingly, several of the examples of this definition include references to audiences, characters, readers, and literary experience in general. Felski dismisses "identification" as a

misleading term, one that suggests both a “structural alignment” with a character (focalization, for example) and “allegiance” with a character’s beliefs, as if a reader should willingly ingest a protagonist’s take on the world. On the other hand, Kenneth Burke’s development of identification in *A Rhetoric of Motives* emphasizes the relational (and emotional) components of the process of becoming persuaded. Though his analysis of the term directs attention to human relations (a feature sympathetic to my project), Felski and Lewis both capture the misleading attributes of the term in its colloquial use for readers in classrooms. This “process of becoming associated,” Lewis worries, is the defining way readers in schools understand the experience of reading with feeling. Felski’s explanation suggests that the contemporary reader’s sense of identification tends to imply a loss of self-awareness or reflection, an ongoing acceptance or passivity. The word expresses continued agreement, and a reason, perhaps, to avoid taking stock of one’s evolving perspective. Furthermore, as Samantha’s comment suggests above, an expectation for immediate identification may make it difficult for students to engage the “process of becoming associated” itself, leading instead to pleas for help. “Help me connect! Help me make this familiar!”

For Sumara, privileging identification too often means ignoring imagination. Rosenblatt distinguishes between efferent reading, derived from the Latin “effere,” to carry away and defined as reading to take away information, and aesthetic reading, reading to experience, to go through the unfolding of a text. Rosenblatt acknowledges that though one category is primary, we typically read both ways in order to understand fully what we are reading. Though identification has long been associated with aesthetic reading, Sumara argues that in practice it is an efferent act. Readers carry away facts from characters’ lives and apply them to their own lives. Though an important pragmatic facet of reading fiction, identification is not, Sumara

explains, imaginative. Rosenblatt's aesthetic reading is the imaginative, the formulative acts of filling in gaps, playfully interacting with indeterminacy, and creating a full situation. Howell Chickering echoes Sumara's worry over the loss of imagination: "I fully believe that students can imaginatively add to their life experience through careful and engaged reading, but not through 'identifying with' either the imagined speaker or the actual writer. To do that simply erases all sense of the difference between the reader and the sensibility of the writer; at that point, as Scholes (2002: 168–69) observes, there is nothing left to imagine" (272). By placing identification in the realm of the efferent or pragmatic, Sumara wonders how we are educating the literary imagination: "Could it be that reading a novel in a school setting that emphasized the importance of the truthful and verifiable response created a reader who resisted the possibilities of a text announced as literary?" (23). In other words, by focusing on acts of identification (and perhaps tacitly and mistakenly assuming such acts are primarily imaginative and quintessentially emotional), do teachers fail to engage students with the unique imaginative practices of literary engagement?

Thus, collapsing "emotional response" into "identification" has closed off, as Lewis worries, other very important reasons to read. Chickering worries about the language of identification superseding the language of imagination, while Sumara wonders about the state of classroom reading with so much emphasis on identification and realness. Yet research has devoted much attention to the importance of adolescent identity (and thus acts of identification) during reading events. Wanda Brooks, in her research with an eighth grade inner-city class of African-American students, wants to see African American students reading literature about themselves and thus has a stake in revealing acts of identification as powerful and productive. Similarly, in her research encouraging and tracking the voluntary reading of a group of white

working-class fourth grade girls, Deborah Hicks's primary pedagogical scenes consist of asking students about connections between literature and their lives. For both researchers, showing students that connections between self and texts exist is one of their major goals, even if feelings of disidentification cause students to dismiss or reject a text (a problem echoed in Wilner's undergraduate students as well). Brooks and Hicks want their students to see themselves in literature because they are under-represented groups in literature, TV, and film. Their projects are driven by ethical concerns that all cultural groups deserve and benefit from recognizing themselves through multiple representations, the implication being that these representations set something(s) in motion – the increased relevance of reading, the desire to write, the possibilities for choice in determining one's future, the worth of education, the chance to be something other than possible roles available at home. In this vein, I agree with assumptions behind Brooks's and Hicks's projects. As Rita Felski says, "we all seek in various ways to have our particularity recognized, to find echoes of ourselves in the world around us," and no doubt these echoes of our particularities make arguments to us about what we can and should be, about what kinds of selves may be possible (43).

Indeed, in my experience teaching, readers often become more involved and more aware when there is something they know, something they recognize, in a text. Similarly, many of the high school students I have taught ask for literature that relates to their lives and complain of literature being too removed from their realities. It's not just students who desire identification, either. As Felski points out, literary narratives have repeated examples of readers seeing themselves in literary representations. In the previous chapter, I quote Rebecca McClanahan's "Book Marks" in which she admits to being a "selfish reader," continually finding a way to see herself in literary works, to believe they might be speaking to her. "But aren't we all?" she asks.

Telling teachers of high school students to forget about identification – that’s not, after all, a consistent part of the list of academic reading moves researchers discussed in the essays I’ve polled – would be asking teachers to ignore the needs and difficulties of real students. Many readers will continue to respond on the level of identification and disidentification, and without directly addressing those responses, we ignore what happens when people read. Furthermore, we don’t push students to move through identification, to use it as a more complex response than the passive agreement or satisfaction it’s often made out to be. Instead, we need to refigure acts of identification, to make the category more supple, driving us to a more careful consideration of the text, for example, or pushing us to imagine.

Felski dismisses the term “identification” because of its confusing properties, instead opting for “recognition,” a term I will use throughout this chapter. Recognition – or knowing again – implies something new, some kind of difference realized in the awareness of similarity. “I see something I did not see before,” Felski writes, something is “laid bare” (23). The moments of recognition she describes involve readers experiencing a surprising jolt; “something that exists outside. . . inspires a revised or altered sense of who I am” (25). As I show through conversations with students, recognition can also push us to re-cognize a *text*, not just ourselves, our own experiences “inspiring a revised or altered sense” of what is at stake in a narrative, or how a character is positioned. Recognitions can put surprising objects in contact with each other, can build new associations that perhaps call on us to feel differently about something we thought we knew. As Felski writes, “we cannot help linking what we read to what we know” (37). The question is how this linking changes our literary engagement. Does it increase our deliberateness, our self-awareness? Does it enhance imaginative possibility? Does it move us closer to a textual situation?

4.1 RESEARCH RATIONALE

Part One of Chapter Four narrates the first textual encounter I led during my research study. My analysis deals with emotion and recognition, as realized through the following questions: How did student readers experience recognition and how would I characterize them? What role did emotion play and how did recognition affect students' development of academic reading? Did recognition change student interactions around texts? To pursue these questions, I describe the recursive process of teaching and researching always with an eye towards students' engagement in literature. As a teacher, I aimed to increase students' involvement in literary narratives through the deliberate foregrounding of recognition, knowing again. Could it enhance imaginative possibility? Could it move us closer to a textual situation? Could it make us more aware of the reading situation in which we find ourselves?

4.2 RECOGNITION

The first full text we read, a short story titled "Mr. Z," is the opening short story for a collection titled *Brownsville* written by Oscar Casares. In its entirety, the collection captures the complexity of the Texas border town caught in our contemporary moment. Its initial story has one of the few child protagonists of the collection, eleven year old Diego, a boy thrilled to work his first job selling fireworks for two weeks at Mr. Z's fireworks stand. As the story begins, we hear Diego's father's instructions on working hard and being respectful. From the outset, the simplicity of the narration underlines the apparent simplicity of the textual world's philosophy of manhood:

The boy rode in the car with his father. It was late afternoon and they were on their way to buy fireworks. The father had worked a full day and was tired, but he had promised to drive his son to the stands. This was the Fourth of July. They had made the short trip to the edge of town for as long as the boy could remember in his eleven years. He had two older sisters, but they had never enjoyed doing this with their father. When the boy was little, his father lit the fireworks on the sidewalk as the boy watched from the porch with his mother. He would let go of his mother's hand and clap at each small explosion as if he had forgotten the one that had gone off only a minute earlier. Now that he was older, he lit the fireworks with the other boys from the neighborhood and sometimes his father stood on the porch to watch. (4)

The familiarity, the “rightness” of the father being tired after a long day of work (men work hard for their families) yet still willing to spend time with his son – a kind of time that women do not seem to enjoy (women are not characters in this story, but referenced), and the immediate acknowledgement that Diego has “let go of his mother's hand” while his father has “stood on the porch to watch” sets us on a path for Diego's continued coming of age. It also makes this story easy to begin, smooth and affirming. One student described the fireworks stand owner, Mr. Z, as someone who “takes you in,” an apt description, I think, for this story. Eleven year old Diego is likeable to most, wanting to please his father and his new boss, Mr. Z. Several students noted that soon into the story they felt proud of him because he was only eleven and he could do math in his head. It's easy to start rooting for Diego, to appreciate his father, and to understand this world where boys work hard to become men who work hard and guide their children with tough love. When Mr. Z hires Diego, he reasserts these values:

“Are you still interested, son?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And you're willing to work hard?”

“Oh yes, sir.”

“That's good, because the boys I hired last summer were lazy. They started off okay, but they got lazy on me.”

“I'll work hard. I'm not lazy.”

“I didn't think you were. Your father doesn't look like a lazy man.”

“No, sir.” (6)

His father, too, does the same.

“You need to pay attention to Mr. Zamarripa,” his father said. “Don’t be playing around with the other boys. I want you to be serious. ¿Me entiendes?”

“Yes sir.”

These were the only words they exchanged on the way to the stand, but Diego knew what his father meant. He wanted Diego to behave and not do anything to embarrass him in front of Mr. Z. The tone of his father’s voice was serious. It was the same tone he used right before he got angry. (7-8)

These opening scenes, focalized through an eleven year old’s understanding of responsibility, would be familiar, I assumed, to many students, particularly given many were either already working or close to getting their first jobs. This was my second day teaching the class, and I wanted to address several concerns at once while building on the motivation and vocabulary we had developed during our first meeting. During the first lesson, students had spent part of their time in partners, sorting through about forty “reading emotion words.” Some were names of feelings students seemed to expect readers to have (understanding, sorry for, uncomfortable, angry, touched, to name a few), and others were words students were either not familiar with or had not connected to acts of reading (troubled, ambivalent, wary, exasperated, reassured, repelled, empathetic, amused, to name a few more). Each partnership created their own categories of feeling from the words (a difficult task), and subsequently each student was provided with his/her own list of words, which had already grown based on our discussion during that first class. Students seemed poised to begin using the words in the context of reading and I wanted to capitalize on that with a rich opportunity to do so. Though I never expected students to learn the definition of emotion informing my work with them (I was not researching how students worked with theories of emotion, after all, but rather how a direct focus on emotion could deepen literary engagement), I did explain an important feature of emotion to them that

day. “Emotions are always about things or others,” I said. “When you love, you love someone. When you are annoyed, you are annoyed at something. When you are unsure, you are unsure about a situation. Emotions are always going somewhere. They always have direction, even if there is a whole mix of directions at once. You don’t just have feelings inside of you because you are a person. You have feelings because you are interacting with the world.” I highly doubt any student really understood or listened to or remembers this mini speech. What matters is how I made emotion’s directionality, its revelation of situatedness, known to students through our work.

Aware of the teacher’s concern that students didn’t seem to think while they read (or write anything down to help them do so), I designed a reading log that would emphasize emotion as well as ask students to pause to capture the unfolding of their reading, offering them places in the text to which they could return. The log contained repeated lines like the one below, the columns of “Feeling,” “Directed Towards,” and “Quotation” emphasizing the aboutness of emotion (always situated, directed towards someone or something, and always revealing the subject’s perception). Would students be more willing/able to track their thinking if it involved their feelings? Could a log designed around directed emotion offer students more immediate insights for discussion, provide them with opinions they did not know they had, and involve them in textual moments worth returning to – all results that would motivate sensing and making sense of the story with others?

Feeling	Directed Towards:	Quotation	Pg. #
I am			

Figure 1. Emotion Log

The teacher was dubious they would fill them out as they read, and most needed individual reminders to do so, but by the end of our two days of reading (everything took longer than expected), students had used our bank of emotions to describe the experience of reading “Mr. Z.” I had asked students to find at least four moments to write on their log as they read, but most did more than four. For some who had six or more, reading their log felt like reading a narration of their reading, having captured the vast changes in experience a single text can produce.

Though I hoped the story would prove somewhat familiar (reading it on their own along with the log was a challenge, and I wanted to build a mood of success around our first text together), I hadn’t anticipated how loudly “recognition” would announce itself as a category during our experience with this text. At the beginning of the lesson, we read two paragraphs and filled out the first log entry together. Being so early in the story, most students didn’t have much to say. When we returned to our bank of emotions, a student suggested the word “interested” as the most accurate description of her beginning feeling. Another student thought the word “like” could work, as in “I like Diego,” since that was the feeling she had at the beginning of the story. Most students wrote something like “I am interested in Diego,” or “I like Diego,” for their initial entry. One student crossed out the “am” and wrote instead, “I feel like Diego because I have

experience that.” His quotation from the text read: “I work hard. I’m not lazy.” This student even adopted Diego’s words to appear like his own; instead of “I’ll work hard,” the future tense that the situation demands in the story, he used present tense as if describing himself: “I work hard. I’m not lazy.” I didn’t follow up with this student about the “that,” the thing he had experienced and thus seemed to be directing his “like” towards, but based on the quotation I would guess it refers to the moment of convincing someone (An elder? An authority figure of some sort?) of his work ethic.

Some students used the logs to narrate more than my example included. One student noted seven different feelings from our emotions bank in this order: interested, irritated, suspicious, disturbed, annoyed, saddened, and amused. For the “Directed Towards” column, she included a brief situation instead of just a person’s name, as some other students did. “Diego’s father for telling him over and over to do good. I tell him its not a big deal,” or “Mr. Z tells the boys to stay while he gets food, orders that hes giving a ride home. It makes me feel like something is going to happen to the boys.” For certain students, the log coupled with an emphasis on emotion seemed to ask for increased expression, for an instinctual accounting for their reactions. Notice this student’s explanation of why she is annoyed with Diego’s father (“telling him over and over to do good”); if it were her, she would say “it’s not a big deal.”

In her book *Feeling Power*, which offers a history of the American education system's attitudes towards emotion and an argument against classifying emotion as private, Megan Boler defines emotion as a site of either social control or political resistance. In other words, emotion either holds us in place or moves us to act. Though I find Boler’s definition of emotion – and consequently her model of reading – far too narrow to mobilize a full account of literary engagement, her emphasis on emotion as always culturally mediated (*whose* social control, for

example) helps put students' reading in context. The social values that Diego responds to and negotiates throughout the story (respecting your elders, working hard at your job, taking work seriously) were values most openly recognized by Hispanic students during class discussions. In a class from almost entirely low socio-economic levels, most students recognized values for hard work at a young age in their own lives. One student noted "empathy" on her log "because that little kid Diego is like me. His mom and dad can relate to my parents," a response to the father's insistence that eleven year old Diego is old enough to work. When beginning the story, the teacher paused to express to the group that she felt worried: "What kind of father lets his eleven year old work at a fireworks stand?" she announced. Two students noted the exact opposite feelings in their log: they were proud of the dad for letting Diego work. It was the right thing to do, one noted. So the teacher's worry was their pride. Similarly, though the teacher thought Diego's father was clearly under-protective, in the previously mentioned student's opinion, he was overly so. Emotion, even in an unarticulated form, offers us our reading of a situation, a reading that always speaks to the social orders that hold us.

Sara Ahmed's theory of contacts provided me with a way of thinking about social placement and readers that was more expansive than the more obvious view that emotion is simply culturally mediated. According to Ahmed, our emotions are shaped by our reading of the contacts we have, and these readings are continually shaped by personal and cultural histories. Ahmed describes a child who sees a bear and runs away out of fright. The evolutionary perspective would be that the child's emotion, the fear, is instinctual, necessary for survival. In Ahmed's formulation, other histories are at play – the child's own history with bears (her knowledge of bears, the stories she has heard, for example), and her inheritance of cultural histories, histories she may only be aware of through the way the word is used in metaphors, the

image created by layers of references. Ahmed is interested in those layers of references and how they build up affect. Certain children will read their contacts with certain objects as fearful, even if it is a first-time encounter, because of how they are situated. “Another child, another bear, and we might have another story,” Ahmed reminds us (7). Feeling like Diego may not include an attribution of good or bad, but it does include an attribution of sameness, and to that extent, perceived understanding. It isn’t that Diego as a character causes a feeling of recognition; it is the student’s reading of her contact with that character in that precise situation. If a subject’s personal and cultural history of work and manhood matches the perspective offered thus far by the story, she will more likely read her contact with Diego as one of understanding, sympathy, agreement. What I like about Ahmed’s theory is its continual emphasis on contacts, on subjects and objects impressing each other, not simply subjects continually reacting to causes, or simply possessing feelings. When we think about contacts in the reading of narratives, the multitude of possible objects reveals readers’ differences even further. Our past histories change what we notice, the contacts that we perceive we have.

Following Ahmed’s theory, I wanted the log to capture more than singular objects with whom students found themselves in contact (in this case, Diego, the protagonist), but rather the situatedness of these objects. Having students identify quotations helped reveal the complicated specificity of recognition, particularly as moments in time. Though the previously mentioned students responded to work-related aspects of Diego’s situation, the textual moments they isolated suggest different objects altogether. One identifies Diego’s parents’ different relationships with his working, while another picks out Diego’s own defense of his work ethic. What Ahmed doesn’t theorize for us – and what I will discuss in multiple points in this chapter – is the selection of objects themselves. In this case, it isn’t a bear approaching a child, but rather a

student determining objects from an extensive presentation of them. That simple act of selection – identifying the quotation (representative of a textual situation) – is one of the first steps of reading. It is the apprehension of a stance on a situation – with its hint of evaluation, it reveals readers to be participants.

With these initial descriptions, we are reminded about why emotion is difficult, thorny to deal with in a diverse classroom. Shouldn't readers simply pay attention to the social controls at work in the textual world instead of bringing their own to bear on their reading? To do so would be to ignore emotion, which is one reason why many teachers do ignore it. Emotion bursts into judgment instead of leading towards literary understanding. It is divisive. I can only think of Wilner's class refusing to read an essay with a gay protagonist, their initial emotions – Boler's sites of social control ringing true here – closing off reading. Asking for reader emotion is asking for embodied reading, for the specificity of each reader's perception of the world he/she experiences; what we see here is students' confrontation with a textual world, mandating adjustments of perception (for Wilner's students, refusal to read). Though I will go on to argue that readers' stances on the world, which is part of emotion's continual "aboutness," can help them construct their perceptions of a textual world, I want to re-hash a few arguments for creating opportunities for students to use directed emotional response to consider textual worlds. Bogdan calls this kind of reading, reading with our bodies and all they say about us (gender, sexuality, ethnicity, scars, muscles, living through the world, etc.) is living through reading. It's reading that is actually closer to what gets called "critical reading," what I would call "deliberate, aware" reading, in that students are alert, involved in a text, and positioning themselves. The "lost in a book" notion of private reading leaves confrontations between students and textual worlds behind, as well as the gradual building up of openings to explore, of reasons to speak

(privacy, in the case of being “lost in a book,” continues even after reading, leaving readers with no drive to communicate). With this communicative end in mind, the student readers in this study seemed to recognize themselves as worthy of reading, of people with things to say. I attribute this initial success to our work developing a vocabulary of emotional responses and the log’s rather simple and continual prompts to monitor self-awareness.

During our reading of “Mr. Z,” students reminded me that “recognition” is far different from the sweeping generalizations of identification or the corresponding satisfaction of a perceived one on one correspondence. On the contrary, recognition can be uncomfortable, hard to admit, frustrating to realize, and a reminder of reader embodiment, not a passive self-loss. More than that, it seemed that many of the recognition comments students made voluntarily involved something other than a one on one match-up. Many students felt like Diego while he defended his work ethic or right to work, yet many students also shared during discussion that they would have made different decisions than Diego because their familial relationships just aren’t the same. Some students had a particularly hard time understanding Diego’s relationship with his father. One student wrote that she understood Diego’s father, but that his comments made her “irritated,” even though Diego seemed only to expect and respect them.

4.3 ASKING FOR RECOGNITION AS WAY INTO THE TEXT

By pinpointing emotional responses and their directionality, students were also creating metacognitive momentum, reasons to pause and consider based on their sensations of reading. Their reading appeared assertive, metacognitive moves driven by sensory experience.

Recognition, in particular, seemed to show students the objects that mattered to them both as people and readers, whether these objects were the role of a father, becoming a worker, or facing challenges to self-expressions. Felksi describes how recognizing oneself in literature provides a new way to know the self, but I noticed this was also working the other way around; we could use recognition moments to deepen our understanding of textual situations, not just our own. It seemed that uncovering recognitions gave students deeper understandings of the textual situation; their recognitions connected them to feelings potentially animating the contacts characters and narrators had with the textual world. Students didn't know how to use these recognitions, though, and needed prompts to flesh out how they could deepen or extend their understanding.¹⁷

During the first day we read "Mr. Z," the teacher and I went around the room, speaking with students about what they had recorded on their logs and encouraging them to continue to do so. When I sat with one student, she had discovered Mr. Z's disturbing pleasure for harassing Diego, breaking the key cultural norms that he, Diego, and his father supposedly share (and that the reader has been introduced to): respect for authority and a professional work ethic. Knowing Diego will be trapped – how could he repeat Mr. Z's accusation that his father was a "bullshitter"– Mr. Z shows how ineffectual Diego's father's lessons are. If he must respect Mr. Z and do as he says, then that means passively accepting voiced disrespect of his father, which is

¹⁷ Robert Probst, in his pedagogical adaptation of Rosenblatt's transactional theory, encourages teachers to ask students about personal associations: "What memory does the text call to mind – of people, places, events, sights, smells, or even of something more ambiguous, perhaps feelings or attitudes?" (83). Reader Response theories want readers to explore these associations and memories, Probst pointing out that beginning with personal feelings can bring readers closer to the text, a meaningful direction I want to elucidate here with increased attention. However, Reader Response typically focuses on memories and past experiences, what in metacognitive strategy work often gets labeled as "text to self connections." I did not name recognition so specifically for students, and thus their use of it goes beyond the exactitude of past moments.

unacceptable (as Mr. Z knows). At first Diego tries to reconcile his dilemma without breaking any rules – maybe his dad didn't lie but just didn't know what he was talking about. This student was in the middle of constructing this first difficulty when she read a short passage to me. Here Diego sits with his father after a day of work and tries to sort it all out without mentioning Mr. Z's direct words:

They watched the weather report for a few minutes. His father wanted to see if there was going to be a cold front.
“Dad, remember last year when we drove by the King Ranch?”
His father nodded.
“And remember how you told me there were rattlesnakes all over the ranch?”
“Yeah.”
“Have you seen them?”
“No, mi'jo, but I can imagine there are lots of them. Why?”
“Mr. Z goes hunting there and he's never seen one.”
“Pues, maybe he's right. I'm not a hunter.” (18-19)

I quote a selection of my conversation with this student:

Emily: Let's stop here for a minute. Okay, let me ask you if you can recognize anything about this scene from your own life.

Student: (pause) It's kinda like when you're little, and your parents will tell you something, and then you go ask your teacher maybe and you're like, “is that true,” and then you go back and tell your parents you know whatever response your teacher gave you. (pause)

Emily: And they don't quite – they don't quite match?

Student: Yeah. You like question them.

Emily: What does that feel like?

Student: It's kind of disappointing. Like it's what you believed and then like you're brought down to a whole nother level. You're disappointed.

Emily: That's a really good word for this. It's interesting, I think “disappointment” is where Diego's at in this moment, just hearing you use that recognition story.

I realized a couple of things during this conversation. One, this student's recognition was more subtle than those I have described thus far. What she recognized, though it took her a moment to determine this, was an emotion, or what I could call a very specific kind of contact between a child and her expectations for her parents. She took her time to determine the root of this scene with Diego and his father. By creating her own analogy to the textual situation, she also determines the significance of Diego's conversation with his father: this disappointment, the loss that initiates Diego's eventual decision to solve his problem on his own evolving terms. Recognition universalizes here, as opposed to the recognition moments of earlier students, which spoke to specific shared cultural understandings (and were described in the first person, not the universalizing second).

The students who were most able to engage in literature and most motivated to do so, I noticed, were the students who used recognition both ways. They identified moments of specificity that they either shared or did not share, yet they also recognized what we could call "types of situations," even "genres of feeling." Rereading these conversations again I am struck by these two categories of recognition, one moving towards universals, typically complex feelings, the other moving towards specific placements in the world. I am also struck by this student's method here, sketching a story (a competing situation) and then, with the prompt of my question, trying to compress the story into a feeling, the significance of which can be carried over (as I try to do in my final comment) to the text. Reading this conversation I want more. What is Diego disappointed about here? What is the object of his feeling, in other words? And what are the consequences of that situation?

Another student offered a recognition story without my asking. She, too, read aloud the passage she was currently working through. She had reached the climax of the story (which, I

pointed out to students throughout this research project, is often a climax of feeling). Diego is imagining what he would like to do to Mr. Z, as his anger and humiliation have reached an intolerable level.

Maybe he could set the stand on fire and ruin his business. Diego could see himself going to jail for this, and he thought it would be worth it. If he were bigger, he would've fought him and knocked him to the ground. He'd hit the old man hard, maybe knock out a tooth. There would be tears in his eyes and blood dripping from his mouth. Diego would keep kicking him in the stomach until he begged him to stop. People passing by in cars would laugh. And he'd slap him with the back of his hand one more time, just to make sure the old man knew he had done wrong. (20)

Before I quote our conversation, I might add a few comments about how this story, and this scene, have made me feel in the past. I will talk about compression feelings, the feelings we use to remember experiences, including those of reading literary texts. I think of "Mr. Z" as both a disturbing and satisfying story. It offers a very convincing portrayal of mundane cruelty, and the simplicity of Mr. Z's treatment of Diego, his trap, is upsetting, scary, very real. The story is satisfying, however, because Diego retaliates while small details from the text's beginning and end make for an affirming symmetry, the feeling, I might say, of the saying, "what goes around comes around." The supposedly "right" lessons offered by authority figures are too removed from life's grey areas for use. In Diego's situation, the lessons that get learned are inadvertent ones, the ones authority figures teach without realizing, the ones we learn without knowing we are. I preface this conversation with a brief reading of the story because my work with students challenged any sense I might have had that I understood the situation fully, that my compression feelings (disturbed and satisfied) indicate the fullest reading.

When I began talking with this student, she was smiling. I was surprised by this (most of the intended humor in the story disappears by the middle of the story), yet it shaped, I think, how I approached my questions over the previous passage (notice the diminutive “little” in my first question).

Emily: So what’s your response to little Diego here?

Student: (laughing) It kind of reminds me of my little sister.

Emily: How so?

Student: When she gets mad she like hits things. She’s nine and I know how frustrated she gets and then she over-exaggerates everything (laughing).

Emily: Do you think Diego’s, kind of, over-exaggerating here?

Student: Oh yeah, I think so, he’s like thinking he needs to be in a movie.

Emily: Do you think he’d really do it?

Student: Probably not. He seems kind of scared, like he can’t even talk to his dad about it, so I don’t think he’d be brave enough to do this.

Emily: When you, when you read this part, it seems to me (tell me if I’m wrong) that part of you is a little amused by Diego.

Student: Well yeah! (laughing)

Emily: Because I hear you picking out this really disturbing part but it’s also kind of funny to you.

Student: I think it’s because of his age. I think if he was an older boy that might take it a lot more serious, like more serious, because he’s so young, and I guess just relating it to my sister, like you really don’t have any control, like you have instinct to do stuff but you’re not, like they’re just, you realize your actions after -- instead of when you’re older and you really think about it before and the consequences before.

Emily: I can kind of see why you’re starting to laugh imagining an eleven year old taking the crazy stuff he imagines so seriously. It’s good for me to hear this because this is the first time I’ve heard someone be so amused, but I can see, I can see where you’re coming from.

Recognition changes what we come into contact with as readers. For this student, Diego reminds her of her little sister so much that his existence as an eleven year old becomes the privileged feature of his character. As I moved around the room talking to different fifteen and sixteen year olds, that feature became more and more potent. Most of the students I spoke with approached Diego with an air of authority; they were older, and they would have done things differently. The major way students accounted for this difference, though it took some a while to determine it, was age. What I appreciate from students in this moment was the specificity of “eleven” that, given their own age, they were more aware of than I was. They could recognize the significance of Diego not being a teenager. He still sees his parent as the ultimate authorities (never mistaken), and he has yet, it seems, to have broken any substantial rules.

Students’ recognition of what eleven feels like shaped their reading of their contact with him. The above student demonstrated this most when she said, “he’s like thinking he needs to be in a movie.”¹⁸ Her metaphor universalizes. It recognizes a genre of feeling, pre-adolescent over-frustration, over-exaggeration, an imaginative or physical loss of control. Suggestive of the impossible visions of hurting Mr. Z, the student’s metaphor captures the imaginative self-aggrandizement of Diego, the minutia of details (“maybe knock out a tooth,” “tears in his eyes,” “people in cars would laugh,” “slap him with the back of his hand one more time”) creating the feeling of Diego narrating a movie, stage directions and all. She recognizes, then, the romance of Diego’s imagination, her appreciation for its humor adding new depth for me, and a reminder of

¹⁸ Throughout my analysis of student writing and speaking I have paid particular attention to the use of metaphor, coding these moments as “Metaphor Student Response.” Metaphors typically indicated moments when students were recognizing genres of feeling or a type of situation. At the same time, they were examples of inventive language use, often what the emotional complexity of a situation demands.

one student's suggestion for making literary study more interesting in school, "if we could laugh more."

This student's metaphor invites a series of potential questions. *What language/detail creates Diego's "needing to be in a movie" feeling that these lines suggest? What is that feeling? When have you felt that way? Does your experience help us think about why this scene is significant? How is Diego imagining himself? How does he feel about himself?* In retrospect, I wish I had returned to that passage with her to think through some of these questions, questions that use her own experience with this "genre of feeling" to think about the particularity of Diego's.

4.4 CALIBRATING

As evidenced in these conversations, I found myself asking for students to refer textual situations back to their own lives. When I first began talking to this student, for example, I couldn't tell if she understood the impropriety and meanness of Mr. Z's treatment of Diego.

Emily: Okay, tell me what's going on so far before we read so that I can try to catch up to what you're thinking about.

Student: Um, okay, well, he worked at the stand, well he started working. To me, like the first incident that came up was when, was –uh – the drinking, when he was drinking um . . . (silence)

Emily: Seems like alcohol.

Student: Yeah. And then the second one was the boy's mom, the old man was making a lot of jokes about his mom. And then –

Emily: Why did that seem like an incident?

Student: Cause – it just seemed like it was where the boy started to become like irritated. And uh –

Emily: What did you think of the jokes yourself? How did you respond to them?

Student: I thought they were pretty bad myself, like I wrote that down on my paper, and then the one where he said – well another one that I wrote down was where he talked about the boy’s dad and how he was a bullshitter and that was just one I wrote down because I couldn’t imagine someone telling me that about my parents.

Emily: What would happen if someone told you that?

Student: I would probably have said something. (laughs) I’m not one to bite my tongue. But, that was just – he’s only eleven, so I think if someone told my little sister, my mom or my dad would flip out.

It turns out this student was aware of the significance of Mr. Z’s behavior, but that is because she had already done some of the situating I was asking her to do. At first it seemed as if she had only realized the irritation of Diego, but hadn’t actually put together the greater situation (what was the object of his “irritation”). What kind of contact did she have with Mr. Z’s sexual jokes about Ricky’s mother as offered in the text? These moments of calibration – *How would I respond? Would I be offended by those jokes?* – can both move us closer to our lives and closer to the text. Imagining hearing the jokes being voiced, for example, or voicing them oneself, helps a reader imagine them spoken as a direct inquiry between Mr. Z and Diego. When we imagine these words being exchanged in life, we sense their damaging import. To imagine, we inhabit some aspect of the textual situation.

Imagining is just the first step. Students made the most of these calibrating questions when they tried to account for the difference or sameness between their own reading of a contact and a narrator/character’s. One student commented that she would have done things differently

from Diego; she was confused by his difficulties. After a brief check-in, she determined that Diego's age could partly account for their change in perspective.

Emily: Okay, since we're talking about characters, you're amused by Mr. Z and the kinds of stuff he said. Did you have other feelings towards Mr. Z, too?

Student: Yes, I was irritated and I was mad because I thought he didn't need to say that about Diego's dad.

Emily: What would you be like if someone said that to you?

Student: I'd be like really mad, like I would try not to disrespect him, but I'd still want to pull him off to the side and be like, you know you really disrespected me.

Emily: Well that's a very adult way to have handled it. That never crosses Diego's mind.

Student: No. He just like wants to fight him and do stuff.

Emily: Why don't you think it crosses his mind? I mean, it's just interesting how you'd respond. I agree, that would be the best way to probably handle it.

Student: I think mainly, I don't know. (pause)
I guess it's because a kid, so he just doesn't really have that sort of – (silence)

Emily: skills?

Student: yeah, that mind of we should talk it out before I do anything more.

Pushing this student further might have helped frame the options Diego's authority figures have given to him. It isn't simply a matter of Diego not having a more mature mindset, but also a matter of the possibilities and expectations for communication that Diego's world affords him. This student defines an important aspect of Diego's character, however, which deepens her appreciation for the harsh terms of his employment – and the manner in which he responds.

With these "calibrating questions," readers can make decisions about characters' own readings of the world around them. For example, if a student decided that Mr. Z's questions were appropriate based on her understanding of the relationship, she would be confused about Diego's

reading of them as “irritating.” Indeed, as we have discussed, some students do exactly this kind of calibration when they determine, amused, that Diego is “over-exaggerating” and romanticizing the possibility of his actions towards Mr. Z. If we aren’t calibrating as we go (sensing the feeling of a situation, noting our own reading of contacts – our emotions, in other words questioning whether feelings make sense), we probably aren’t very aware of the telling of narrative, whether we are reassured of a narrator’s interpretations, whether we passively accept a protagonist’s actions as simply that way things would go, or whether a narrative has a reason (and whose reason) to be told.

4.5 RECOGNIZING TEXTUALITY

By engaging students through their connections between literature and life, I wanted to move them to consider particular literary realities (characters, tone, and themes). Students had begun to co-create the textual situation through their own emotional responses, acts that often took them – as I hope to have demonstrated through discussions of recognition – to character emotion. Indeed, as I worked with students reading “Mr. Z,” it became more and more clear to me that the emotions animating the textual situation, the emotions motivating the narrator and characters, propelled my own reading and most often students’ moments of recognition. In group conversations with students, I wanted them to think about how, in this coming of age story, the characters and narrator continually referred to what it means to be a man, either through outright declarations or descriptions of expectations and behavior. Through Diego’s decision-making and negotiation of the situation in which he finds himself, how does he question the terms of

manhood at play in the story itself? Though I am reading this with a particular focus on gender and adulthood, I am doing so because both are such prominent objects for the narrator (and the characters we meet), treated as an established rule, a constant. Diego's situation calls these definitions into question.

At the beginning, Diego, like the narrator, sees things simply and in order: sentences begin with their subjects, he looks forward and up, and rules are there to follow. In fact, one student expressed unrecognition at Diego's seriousness. "Why doesn't he smile, like Mr. Z tells him to? He's TOO serious," he complained. One of Mr. Z's major lessons is one of affect – smiling more, laughing at jokes (his, of course) – which Diego struggles to follow. Used to accepting rules, instructions, or directions without question, Diego no longer can integrate the rules of Mr. Z and his father, as each one contradicts another. Verbal expression is an object of fear for Diego and out of the question. We rarely hear him speak out loud if not agreeing with authority figures, and his mental sorting out of the situation is kept to himself. He cannot speak up to his boss (that would be disrespectful to both Mr. Z and his father), and he cannot describe Mr. Z's comments to his father, not "straight to his face," because that "was still an insult." He wants speaking up to be "easy," and it isn't, a fact Mr. Z knows and exploits (19). Diego's overwhelming reticence makes me even more impressed at his final actions. When Diego does act, giving away free fireworks when Mr. Z isn't looking, Diego finally begins to smile (the most satisfying smile of the story, and the only one not required on demand) – at Mr. Z, "as if he'd just made the biggest sale of the night" (22); at customers; at his co-worker Ricky; and at "the bright lights" (23).

Together we discussed Diego's revenge plan, as several didn't understand he was "basically stealing from Mr. Z." One student characterized the plan with Diego's imaginative

terms: it's "how he's burning down the stand!" I asked them to describe how Diego looks while he enacted his plan, and students soon recognized he was smiling. "He's happy because he's seeing his work of giving the fireworks away," one student offered, a comment that caught my attention precisely because it was beginning to account for emotion's directionality, both as formed by past histories and as indicative of one's embeddedness in a situation. I include my comments from my research journal below:

This was a great moment, and I wished I could have stretched it out more, because it's exactly what Diego's father would have desired from Diego's experience working, but these feelings aren't stemming from the situation his father imagines to be the case. So Diego has learned to smile, I pointed out, reminding students of how a student mentioned earlier that Diego couldn't relax, couldn't smile and be like Mr. Z. Then a student jumped in and added, along with another student, that Diego was happy like that with his dad at the end of the story, too. Somehow in being attentive to their own emotions, students seemed to be more attentive to the emotions of characters. "You're right," I confirmed, pleased because I had intended to reread this scene together. We went to the last page to reread Diego being happy with his dad.

I asked students if they knew the word "irony." No one did. I explained that sometimes scenes in literature are ironic because the reality of the situation isn't shared by all the characters, and as readers we can tell. Reading this scene again, several students were smiling and seemed to be on the brink of an understanding they couldn't express. One student, who seemed like the most insecure reader of the group, tried to say something: "It's like . . . it's like when . . . No, I don't know . . . I don't know how to say it." He tried one more time, and then another student said, "What are you trying to say?" He shook his head. The other student continued: "It's like a secret that people have, it's like a substitute for what is happening." People agreed there was something really funny about this scene because Diego's dad was so proud, and Diego was smiling, but it didn't match up. They were smiling for different reasons, a different student said, and Diego knew it (and we knew it, too). And this knowledge made US smile.

As I commented here, students' attention to their own emotions seemed to heighten their awareness of shifts in character feeling and the complexity those feelings revealed. The activity of recognition works on a textual level here, students recognizing Diego's happiness, his

“smiling,” in two different important scenes. At the same time, I interpreted students’ own smiles as a recognition of dramatic irony. It’s new, but it’s somehow familiar, leading to students’ formulations of “It’s like—.” The “it’s like” sentence stem became the stock expression of recognition, its relational grammar emphasizing student readers’ efforts to familiarize, to build relationships between what they know and what they are experiencing in a text, but with room for inventiveness, for knowing something again – but differently. Often, as illustrated in the comment above, acts of recognition require imagination, the predicate nominative of “it’s like” an imagined event, a hypothetical scenario that we can sense, maybe even as part of our experience, but not as an exact memory or fact. I argue that these imaginative acts of recognition require increased sophistication in thinking and are prompted by attention to reader – and in this case, textual -- emotion.

4.6 MORAL JUDGMENT

As students shared recognitions with me, they also shared moral judgments, what they thought was right and wrong. In fact, just by noting their emotional responses on their logs, students expressed value judgments. Remember that emotions themselves are our readings of what we think we’re faced with. Our emotions, then, will always reveal some level of approval/disapproval. One student noted how proud she was of Diego “because he is a hard-working kid” and then later how “disgusted” she was with Mr. Z “because he is hitting on Ricky’s mom.” Another student shared that he was “disappointed in Diego” because he “should

have told his father no matter the consequence.”¹⁹ This student also called Mr. Z “a big bully,” and “someone who gets me mad,” while a different student said that he felt “sorrow because of the way that the old man talks about his father and wishes he could woop his ass.” All of these emotional responses contain judgments: the first student values hard work and thinks making comments about the attractiveness of a young employee’s mother is inappropriate. The second student thinks people need to stick up for themselves and be honest when they need help, and the third student believes people shouldn’t speak negatively about other people’s family members. Other students are quick to use recognition moments to offer judgments based on their own experiences, such as the earlier student who recognizes Diego’s father as similar to her own and thus concludes he is irritating and over-protective. Similarly, the second student knew someone like Mr. Z who just likes to bully people and get them angry; he “hated” him as well as Mr. Z because they were bullies.

Recognition that universalizes, recognition that specifies, and unrecognition are all at play when readers discuss literature in classrooms.²⁰ In small group conversations with the

¹⁹ Of course, emotions also reveal fault lines in our own ethical systems. One student also includes that he is “unsure of Diego’s father” when he says, “Are you going to college so you can study to be a businessman?” The same student then explains that “the father is a hard worker who disciplines Diego right,” the “right” indicating tension in his opinion of Diego’s father’s role as a father. In other words, the student himself, I would guess, is unsure about “disciplining right” in literature and in life.

²⁰ I can’t talk about recognition and judgment without mentioning what we can simply call unrecognition, the other side of asking readers to acknowledge what they recognize from life in a text. The play between recognition and unrecognition is a much explored topic in multiculturalism. Laurie Grobman describes approaches to multicultural literature as a pendulum swinging between a politics of equality and a politics of difference. Readers interested in a politics of equality “focus on individual merit and achievement” and emphasize all people as equal, where attributes such as race, gender, or class should not affect one’s opportunities to succeed. Thus, those who read with a politics of equality value the universalizing aspects of recognition, what I have called “genres of feelings” as well as types of situations and relationships. Those who advocate a politics of difference (what she also calls critical multiculturalism) recognize specific needs and concerns of different groups of people and advocate for the needs to be addressed and maintained. When it comes to the reading model I am describing, a politics of difference invites readers to acknowledge what they do not recognize (noting unrecognition) and to define moments of recognition based primarily on specific shared group understandings.

students all three readerly actions revealed the collision between the moral terms of students and the moral terms of characters in texts. All of the anecdotes reveal how close life and literature are when recognitions are privileged and reader emotions primary. Moral judgment is an inescapable component of recognition and reader response, sometimes going directly against the expectations for academic reading (delaying closure and judgment) I discussed in the previous chapter. Though Wilner's students show how debilitating moral judgments can be in the literature class (culminating in their rejection, or censorship, of the class literature²¹), moral judgment is an inevitable component of reading literary narratives with feeling, and a potentially powerful component of learning how to make literary judgments.

During a discussion with five students I asked a number of calibrating questions, such as *how would you respond to Mr. Z if you worked for him now*. Their provisional answers brought a student to ask why Diego doesn't tell his father, the one person who could help him.

“So that's confusing to people. Would you have told your parents at 11?”

One student immediately clarified: “With my parents or with Diego's parents?”

As I wrote in my journal, this was a “great question,” as it revealed a developed appreciation for specificity, and perhaps helped lead to a different student's comment later in the conversation. “Your parents,” I responded.

As I presented it to students, the recognition continuum begins with “no understanding, I cannot imagine this” to “total understanding, I have also experienced this,” with the majority of our reading experiences positioning us somewhere between either end. I wanted students to use recognition moments to bring them closer to the text, but I also wanted them to know that as readers they could move closer to texts – that is, feel involved and aware of the textual situation and themselves – without already being familiar with the types of lives within the text. I also wanted to present students with unrecognition because it works against a documented tendency for student readers to over-identify, it encourages students to wonder and imagine, and it helps readers isolate important features of a text's stance on the world. Ultimately, though, we need acts of recognition to build understanding and to make moments of unrecognition meaningful and worth our reflection.

²¹ Ultimately, as Bogdan carefully discusses, inviting moral judgment is allowing for the possibility of censorship.

“I would definitely tell my dad,” she explained with additional details about her father. “He wants to support me, we’re really close, and he would flip out.” Another student also said he would tell his parents, who would be “furious.”²²

“So [] pointed out to us that we’re talking about YOUR parents, not Diego’s.” I reminded students that in Diego’s family, as we had read about and talked about earlier, the rules were perhaps different from the cultural rules their families followed.

A new student then spoke up. “I would tell my parents, too, but you have to understand the culture. I mean, I would tell my dad because of how my parents are, but my parents, growing up in Mexico, if they disrespected their parents they were beaten. It’s just really traditional. You just don’t disrespect your parents in any way.”

One student nodded. “Yeah, you’re right. The culture thing is a really good point. My mom would have felt that way, too. My grandparents are really traditional, and their culture is just different from mine.” Walking by our conversation in the front of the room, the teacher overheard the last few comments and stopped by to explain that she, too, could never have told her father about someone disrespecting him. “In my generation, it just couldn’t have been said,” she emphasized. This led a few students to point out then that his dad’s expectations for respect created difficult circumstances for him, too, that it wasn’t just a matter of good cop and bad cop, Diego’s dad the right authority and Mr. Z the classic villain, or as one student put it, “an average bad guy who you could find in any book or movie.”

²² It’s worth noting that though this group overwhelmingly expressed that they would tell their parents about Mr. Z’s insulting comments, only half of the students in the next group of six felt that way. The other half recognized Diego’s dilemma with comments like, “I’d have to take care of this myself,” or “I couldn’t tell my dad about what he was saying.”

This is one of the first moments I witnessed with this class when multiple students engaged in active thinking around literature (and one of the first exchanges that changed students' minds), and it doesn't surprise me that life itself was deeply involved in their considerations. Up until this point, this group of students saw the story as a rather simple presentation of right parenting and wrong parenting. Diego's dad was the good parent, trying to teach him important lessons about work and respect, how to "eat his dirt" one student explained, while Mr. Z was trying to teach Diego that men "can talk bad to anyone" and like "to hit on women and drink alcohol." Though certainly the dad and Mr. Z are a foil to each other, what's interesting, as one student pointed out, is how Diego handles it.

Students struggled to understand Diego, though, and expressed confusion or frustration with his decisions. Hearing other students' unrecognition statements (*I would have told my dad because my dad and I are close*) perhaps put pressure on certain students to acknowledge their own recognition of Diego's dilemma. Implicit in each of these student's statements, of course, is a judgment, an evaluation of behavior. *I don't recognize that relationship because mine is x* implies that Diego's is *not x*, even if, as a student tries to explain, closeness, or *x*, can be defined differently. Students attempted here to make sense of another's terms, trying to imagine how those terms would change one's impressions. The student who spoke about his grandparents, understanding Diego's terms better than others, moved students away from a black and white reading of Diego's father and Mr. Z. He recognized the impossibility of adult help in Diego's situation (within the terms of Diego's world). Sensing and making sense of one's own and

others' moral terms and logic is part of the push and pull of complex recognition, of using what readers know of the world to imagine and understand the world of a text.²³

4.7 MORAL READING AND IMAGINATION

Students had a chance to demonstrate their developing ability to imagine and explicate emotion when I asked them to write a letter from Diego to either his father or Mr. Z. The assignment is below:

“There was nothing he wanted more than to be older and to be able to talk back to the old man. He didn’t know what he would say, but he wanted to hurt him.”
(20)

You are Diego, and you are finally writing a letter to either your father or Mr. Z. It is up to you.

Whomever you address, you decide what to say. Though we have suggestions if you're stuck, we'd like you to try to determine what, given some time, Diego could say to the authority figures in his life.

Though you don't need to pull in full quotations from the story, you'll want the story close by to help you with thinking about what has happened to Diego. In your letter, be sure to include what you have learned about being a man. Remember, this might not match what Mr. Z or Diego's father want you to have learned.

This assignment is harder than it may first appear. First of all, if students understood the story, they understood that it was impossible for Diego, given his understanding of his position, to

²³ And, as this brief scene illustrates, the familiarizing and defamiliarizing activity of reading is best done with others. As I will explore in a chapter on classroom space, the classroom as an ideal location for using possibilities of recognition to universalize or specify both a reader's world and the world of the text. Interlocutors push students to remake textual situations, to familiarize and defamiliarize again and again.

speak to the two possible interlocutors presented in the text: his father and Mr. Z. Now here I am asking students to imagine that for Diego that impossibility has changed, a reality that would certainly require a change in circumstances (a change students themselves would need to imagine). At the same time, though our narrator is focalized through Diego and expresses ideas simply with straightforward description, we rarely hear Diego speak beyond “Yes, Sir,” so his voice also must be created. Finally, this assignment called for building off of emotional knowledge of the characters. What would Diego need to communicate to these interlocutors? What is Diego’s reading of his contact with this interlocutor? What impression has each made, and how would that change his tone and purpose in speaking to them?

Of course, in making all of these decisions, students’ own terms, their moral values regarding the objects of our story, would alter the shape of their imaginative and analytical creations. Students had between fifteen-thirty minutes to write their letters in class, and I’d like to look at two different interpretations of the assignment. I will call the student of the first letter Student One.

Dear Father,

I am writing this to tell you than im quitting my job at Mr. Z’s firework stand. I hope you respect my decision. There are many reasons im quitting one of them is because he is disrespectful to me and to you. He talks about you behind your back. You have to understand that this is very hard for me to tell you. But if I want to be a man I must learn how to tell people what I think and what I feel. I know you might be angry at me but I can’t take it anymore. I tried being respectfull and serious like you told me. Mr. Z is constantly taking about you. I will look for another job.

Sincerely your loving son,
Diego

Of all the students who wrote letters, Student One came the closest to mimicking the sentence style of the narrator. He captures Diego’s impression of his father – trepidation towards breaking

his codes of respect and hard-work (“respect” is mentioned three times, including the second sentence) as well as Diego’s feelings towards speaking to him, a major object of Diego’s feeling throughout the text (“you have to understand that this is very hard for me to tell you”). What Student One does quite successfully is fill in the new terms that Diego has come to – that we are never told – in imagining manhood (“But if I want to be a man I must learn how to tell people what I think and what I feel”). These provide the change in circumstances that would occasion such a letter, and they also perhaps reveal Student One’s own moral judgment. What I see in Student One’s letter and in others’ is the performance of literary reading and imagination conditioned by one’s moral judgment. Student One’s writing brings him closer to the text’s suggestiveness (what is laid out for us to use as we imagine continuations) as well as his own discomfort with the terms of manhood and respect that Diego works within. Writing his letter, Student One moves both closer to Diego’s textual reality and his own contact with it in.

Another student, another reading, another letter. Student Two made a mistake two other students made, writing directly to Mr. Z from himself, not Diego. Interestingly, during several other in-class writing prompts throughout my research other students made the same mistake, even when I hadn’t set up their writing to possess an interlocutor.

Mr. Z, you don’t now what your saying about diegos dad because he still gets his life in tact and you doun’t got nothing but a picture of your child with your wife and a stinking firework stand you never try to go further in life Deigo’s Father had a family with a home your wife left you because you probably just Drank got Drunk and beat her and she didn’t want nothing to do with you Some times you talk about people behind their back but that’s not going to change the fact that people who go buy fire works from you got better lifes than you and didn’t mess up their lifes like you. I mean you doun’t know or have any Idea about where you family is at. your treating one of your employers mother without respect and talking bad about Diego’s father and saying the oposit about his father.

I pull out Student Two's letter for a number of reasons, the first being that it fails to meet the requirements of the assignment. Despite that, the teacher was thrilled with the student's writing. As she expressed it, this was more "voice" than she had heard from him all year.²⁴ "You" begins the letter and appears repeatedly, each sentence building an attack on Mr. Z's worth. Clearly, Student Two's major object of feeling is a cohesive family which, for him, is evidence of "going further in life." Student Two works with particular details from the text here. For example, Mr. Z does offer the boys whisky on the drives home each night, and the narrator tells us that Diego notices Mr. Z's swerving at times. Furthermore, Mr. Z describes a picture of his twin baby boys who he then says were taken by their mother not long after their birth. A couple of students wondered aloud about these details, postulating the theory of alcoholism and abuse that Student Two shares in his letter.

Though it is easy to see Student Two's focus on "family" as an indication of how his own moral judgments have distracted him from an assignment and the rest of the text, Student Two's letter reframes my reading of the story, emphasizing Mr. Z and his missing family ties. Mr. Z attacks others' familial relationships (Ricky's relationship with his mother, Diego's with his father) through eleven year olds. Paying attention to Mr. Z's brief family story, Student Two reminds me that Mr. Z's lone possessions seem to be his truck and his firework stand, a lonely reality that colors Mr. Z's "fatherly" actions, buying both boys dinner or taking the boys home. He wants Ricky's mother, assures her he's taking care of Ricky, and tries to break Diego's trust in his father. As Student Two's letter suggests, the boys' parents have something Mr. Z doesn't

²⁴ The Texas state standards exam in place at the time of this research, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, or TAKS, required students to write a personal narrative, with "voice" as one of the grading criteria.

have, and he knows it. What better way to have sons you can control than to hire eleven year old boys to work at your “stinking firework stand”?

4.8 GAINING LITERARY GROUND

As I conclude this chapter, I’d like to note briefly how students began making the academic reading moves I discussed in the previous chapter. By beginning with reader emotion, what aspects of academic reading emerged?

1) Attending to the Text: This is a feature of academic reading that I will comment on throughout my discussion of this research, as I paid attention to every time a student voluntarily brought up elements from the text (quotations, details, language) either in writing or in discussion. Students were more likely to bring up details during discussion if they had responded to them on their logs. Indeed, those details became impression points to return to either through their direct mention in conversation or through indirect reference in letters. During the conversations I described, students also paid particular attention to characters’ emotions, those textual moments proving to be powerful indicators of feeling for them as well, even if their emotions offered a stark difference to those of the characters. Reading with attention to reader emotion highlights shifts and triggers for readers; these shifts and triggers have textual components that allow for reinvestigation and deepening attention, something to hold on to. I noticed students used the language of the text to describe events, Diego’s desire to “burn down the stand” one student’s metaphor for his retaliatory action and the text’s key words (“respect,” “serious,” “manhood” and “smile”) making their way into most letters. Similarly, students’

overall interest and attention to Diego as an eleven year old and Mr. Z's behavior as an adult employer led them to mention and hold on to particular textual details on their logs and in our discussions.

2) *Noticing what Does Not Fit*: In general, students did not approach the text with questions. This story is also particularly straightforward, each detail building symmetry and coherence. Students certainly hung on to different details, such as the student who found the detail of Mr. Z's long lost sons particularly illuminating. A few students asked questions about character behaviors (for example, *Why did Diego refuse to tell his dad? Was Mr. Z getting drunk? Did he do that around his own children when he had them?*), questions that certainly helped us fill in important gaps and that sprang from details that did not quite fit for students, revealing moments of collision between the moral logic of their textual world and their own. This experience highlighted for me, though, a need to work with students on how feeling could lead us to questions, particularly questions about the telling of a tale and the "madness" of texts.

3) *Slowing Down*: Students were slower readers than I anticipated, some taking two class periods to read the story and note responses on their logs, so things seemed slow even without the "slowing down" English teachers are talking about. Students were willing to reread when I directed us to do so, and thus I reread scenes with both small groups and individuals, each rereading prompting a new consideration.²⁵ Students would not initiate these rereading efforts on their own, but these were powerful instructional moments that seemed to give students what I would call literary pleasure, a satisfaction in engaging in literary texts with others and with focus. In small groups, students joked and smiled, tried to articulate difficult responses, and

²⁵ I should add that a host of students read out loud during these rereadings, which is always an important part of my pedagogy but particularly with students who are below grade level, as many are not fluent readers.

listened. To create an atmosphere of academic enjoyment was key to this project's success, especially given the fact that students already needed some cajoling to begin and continue doing independent or group work. At this point, it seemed as if "slowing down" with literary texts was only going to happen with a teacher, and only if students found their efforts of slowing down satisfying.

4) *Suspending Declarations of Meaning*: Students weren't aware enough of literary conventions, or frankly as motivated by school/grades to have learned academically approved ways of "mastering the story," the biggest difficulty "suspending declarations of meaning" works against, but students were used to "right answers" being end points and often asked me for the final answer at the end of a lesson. As I wrote in the previous chapter, "mastering the story" through symbol or a decided interpretation can be a problem of feeling as well, student readers desiring the "answer" in a way that precludes them from "being alive to the text" as McGann describes. Instead, some students tried to make the text accord to their ideas of what should have been. For example, two students wrote in their letters to Mr. Z that Diego was even "closer" to his father, a conclusion that would be very difficult to draw and imagine Diego drawing himself, particularly after we spent time on the ending scene's divergent "smiles." In trying to state more clichéd narrative summaries or morals (*Diego and his dad became closer, Diego learned to work hard*), some students declared meaning and closed down further considerations. I knew I would need continually to model openness to literary narratives – as well as flexibility in feeling. The desire for "an answer," however, continued to prove a difficult stopping place for students.

4.8.1 What Is Missing?

Bogdan's 1992 book, *Re-Educating the Imagination: Towards a Poetics, Politics, and Pedagogy of Literary Engagement*, asks what place "ordinary existence" can have in traditional conceptions of literary reading, or New Critical and/or structuralist accounts of "critical reading." As we train students to "suspend declarations of meaning," Bogdan argues, we are asking them to delay their judgments, to ignore "lived-in" responses, jolts of recognition, moral discomfort – in other words, to turn off what they know of the world during the rest of their lives. Her "re-educated imagination" includes "embodied" judgment as a necessary component of an attuned, authentic reader.

The re-educated imagination challenges three major principles underlying the educated imagination: the logical priority of criticism over the direct or participating literary response, the sharp distinction between the literary and the political, and the separation of the worlds of ordinary existence and imaginative experience. . . . I maintain that these principles, when played out in the world of real classrooms, posit a disembodied reader who, in adhering to the tenets of the educated imagination, is conditioned ultimately to split off actual feelings from the experience of reading. I argue that the effect of the infinite regress of delayed gratification, the continual suspension of value judgments on the way to a 'full literary response,' in the regular course of most readers reading most of the time, contributes to the very perpetuation of dissociation of sensibility, the fissure between intellect and emotion that the educated imagination is dedicated to overcoming. (xxxiii)

Bogdan's key term, "ordinary existence," speaks to the achievements of students in reading "Mr. Z." Ordinary existence enhances our students' reading of narratives, even though their engagement with literary texts provided us with the important differences: the possibility of feeling in situations without being called upon to act or suffer, the time to reflect and reread, the

flexibility to reinterpret again and again, the potential to negotiate multiple vantage points, the possibility to imagine “madness,” and the space to look at parts and a whole.

To take advantage of all these aspects of academic reading of narrative, I am reminded of Wilner’s conclusion that critical reading is missing something, and that something has to do with the mix between thought and feeling. Though she needed students to get beyond “unreflective responses,” she also needed them to cultivate a back and forth movement between “sympathetic imagination” and “critical distance.” Ignoring student emotion altogether won’t make them better readers, she concludes, but moving past “unreflective responses,” which Bogdan wants to find a way to value, is necessary.

I recognized aspects of Wilner’s dilemma in the students’ reading of “Mr. Z”; it reminded me that my goal was to move them beyond unreflective responses, to render ordinary existence powerful precisely because imagining it could lead to reflective opportunities, not close them off. I’m interested in how emotion mediates the movement of reflection, the literary usefulness of flinching judgment or unreflective response. Here is a list of mediating moves students began to make while reading “Mr. Z”:

5) *Reading Our Contacts and Determining Our Objects*: One student described the importance of feeling while reading this way: “Because it helps you understand who you are and how you feel towards things. It shows you your emotions.” This student captures a first look at Ahmed’s theory of impressions. When we read and we feel, we discover our own objects, the pieces of a given narrative that we recognize as impressing us, touching us somehow. Determining our own moral judgments as we read is part of this process. Students’ judgments alerted them to being present as readers, revealed involvement, and isolated contacts that mattered to them, as well as intriguing differences or similarities with the textual world.

Several students stated throughout this research that they felt as if they were learning about themselves, realizing the aspects of particular narratives (and of life) that mattered to them in different ways. I'd like to suggest here that self-awareness is a crucial component of academic/critical reading. Emotional response provided students one powerful inroad to self-awareness.

6) *Recognition*: Building through "it's like" sentences, students connected textual situations to situations they knew or imagined. As they did this work, students used what they knew from "ordinary existence" to familiarize themselves with the unfamiliar (dramatic irony, for example) or to move closer to the textual world, often arriving at the complex feelings of a character. Recognition could universalize (build relationships across wide differences) and also specify (reveal particular placements and cultural understanding or lack thereof).

7) *Calibration*: By asking students how they would have reacted or what they felt about behaviors or decisions, I invited students to sense and make sense of the textual world. Through calibrating questions, students could sense the import of situations (building towards the sympathetic imagination Wilner identifies as a vital part of moving through literary narratives). At the same time, they noticed gaps between their own response and those offered within the text. Accounting for the difference led students to pinpoint defining aspects of a character or his situation.

8) *Cocreating the Terms of a Textual World*: In the moves above, students came to better understandings of the moral guidelines and histories of experience structuring the world of the characters. When confused about Diego's decisions, conversation helped students build the terms defining Diego's world, which helped them understand what Diego chose to do and how Diego imagined. At the same time, understanding these terms helped set up Diego's actions as significant. When students noticed a major difference between their codes of understanding and those of the narrative, they could try to account for the difference, an action that brought them closer to understanding their own contacts with the world as well as those of the characters. Writing in the voice of a character in order to fill in gaps required students to try to imagine through another's terms.

4.8.2 "It tugs at them"

One of my survey questions asked students about what kinds of feelings people have when they read literature. One student wrote, "bored, not into it, or real emotional and into it because it tugs at them." "Mr. Z" did not tug at all the students in the class, but it tugged at far more than half of them, and most of those students demonstrated ways of tugging back. The moves I've outlined thus far echo the purpose of metacognitive strategies, designed to lay bare the multitudinous acts that make up reading literary narratives. For most readers, like Cassie who I quoted from *Strategies that Work*, we are more likely to have metacognitive purpose when literary works tug at us.

I wanted students' terms of ordinary existence to confront those of the text. That way we could account for differences and sameness, construct new relational sentences that revealed genres of feeling and called on our imaginations, and find ourselves in the particular positions of literary readers. I view narrative as a telling driven by what and how speakers and characters feel. The contacts they have are what make narratives interesting, what causes a narrator to tell a story in the first place. As students tracked their own narratives of reading, they familiarized and defamiliarized the world of the text, simultaneous movements readers of literary narratives must make.

The more students shared recognition moments, the more I found myself wanting to talk about the emotions of narrators and characters, such as Diego. What were their objects? What kind of contact did they have with them? What past histories were shaping those impressions? I began to think about the many situations inherent in a narrative, all built into the overall situation of its telling, each fraught with subjects and objects in contact, contact shaped by past histories and by the supposed nature of textual relationships. It was this set of questions that guided my next research visits, and my belief that we can tug in different directions, making many distinct aspects of reading narratives "close."

5.0 SITUATING SPEAKERS AND READERS

In his 1985 book *Textual Power*, Scholes breaks up the activity of literary reading with the English classroom into three tiers:

Reading, interpretation, and criticism. Each of these can be defined by the textual activity it engenders. In *reading* we produce *text within text*; in *interpreting* we produce *text upon text*; and in *criticizing* we produce *text against text*. As teachers of literary texts we have two major responsibilities. One is to devise ways for our students to perform these productive activities as fruitfully as possible: to produce oral and written texts themselves in all three of these modes of textualization: *within, upon, and against*. Our other responsibility is to assist students in perceiving the potent aura of codification that surrounds every verbal text. Our job is not to produce “readings” for our students but to give them the tools for producing their own. (24)

Scholes’s tiers have been oft-quoted in the training of teachers, the simple naming of activities and the careful alteration in prepositions making it easy to remember and explore. I use Scholes’s tiers here for similar reasons. *Reading, Interpretation, and Criticism* name the major acts English teachers, particularly on the undergraduate level, endeavor for their students to perform; indeed, they are the acts many academics perform themselves with the heaviest value placed on interpretation and criticism.

It may seem surprising then that the undergraduate instructors I explored in previous chapters were most concerned with their students’ performance of the first tier, reading. What each of these voices expressed through their different accounts of teaching was the dissonance between their conception of reading and their students’. Though all of the writers gathered

around the term “critical reading,” its significance for students and instructors sharply diverged. Listen to how McGann describes his observations of his students, for example. Frustrated with their desire to possess “understanding” of the text, he presents a competing definition of reading.

“Understanding” a scene like this one, I argued, was less important than being alive to its presence and its difficulties. I told them that an aptitude for such awareness (which necessarily also involved self-awareness) was, in my view, the ground on which the reading of fictions was based. And I said, finally, that the course would only be successful if they were able to develop these kinds of aptitudes. (152)

Awareness of self and scene describe the aptitude of McGann’s academic reader. The greater their awareness, the more “text” students recognized (instead of ignoring), and the more “text” they produced through talking and journaling.

McGann, like Wilner, determines that undergraduates need guided experience *reading*, not just offering interpretations or criticism (the two are more often than not conflated today, Scholes remarks). As they show, “reading” itself needs to be redefined for students. When “understanding” (what I call “mastering the story” when describing student difficulties) is primary, readers’ willingness to entertain what could call that understanding into question narrows.

While I was reading this group of pedagogical accounts, I was also beginning my research study with the sophomore class. As I taught, I considered the problem of changing what “reading” means for students, an eventuality that can only happen, I believe, through repetitive and meaningful experience (the work of the classroom). Scholes’s definition of reading, producing text within text, emphasizes the slow “making” of reading, as opposed to the more immediate, passive view many secondary (and undergraduate) students bring with them: “understanding,” “figuring out the answer,” or “getting it.” McGann’s interest in literary

narrative in particular (shared by Scholes in *Textual Power*) was also mine for this study. How might we characterize the particularities of producing text within text when reading literary narratives in school?

Scholes frames his answer in terms of a “base story” that readers discern and then flesh out, creating “new text,” text implied, intoned, or referenced through careful attention. McGann identifies making “meaning” (his quotations) as “something they themselves construct on the basis of certain determinate ideas and materials” (156). Scholes’s “base story” works with McGann’s description of constructing, his “determinate ideas and materials” providing the “base.” Though I doubt McGann would see those “determinate ideas and materials” as a “base story” (“story” itself is a word McGann suggests is distracting to students, as “events are viewed not as a structure for exposing (for example) more and more complex features of the characters, but as a sequence of connected happenings meant to interest the reader in the outcome of the fictional events (the story))” (145). What I am interested in here, however, is both writers’ metaphors of building: McGann’s “construct” and Scholes’s “base.”

The metaphor of construction in reading literary narratives seems to emerge from both structuralism, which distinguishes between the “base story” and how the story is narrated (or constructed), and constructivism, a theory of learning stemming from Vygotsky and Piaget. In its simple form, constructivism poses an alternative to traditional transmission theories of learning where a learner receives knowledge from an instructor (or text). In contrast, constructivism poses the individual learner as one who builds her own knowledge through experience. As Nancy Nelson Spivey puts it, “what distinguishes constructivists from people with other orientations is an emphasis on the generative, organizational, and selective nature of human perception, understanding, and memory – the theoretical building metaphor guiding thoughts and inquiries”

(3). Reader Response theories and metacognitive strategy theories are constructivist in this sense; both posit the reader as actively undergoing an experience and making “text” through their transaction, not simply receiving textual information. For literary reading in particular, a constructivist orientation emphasizes individual perception and synthesis, readers putting together pieces, adding one block to the next as they go.

I situate my orientation within response theories and align it closely with metacognitive strategies; thus, I, too, approach the learner – and as I describe in my chapter on classroom space, a group learning in the classroom – from a socio-constructivist standpoint. At the same time, I question the usefulness of the “building” metaphor when we talk about what readers do with literary narratives. It is easy to let metaphors of “building” and “construction” affirm desires to make *the story* by adding pieces together and adding up to a totality. I have already introduced my alternative main verb for readers of literary narratives in previous chapters – to “situate” – but in this chapter I want to delve into what this word can mean in a classroom of readers and why a teacher might reorient herself to teach students to “situate” while reading literary narratives. I will note that metaphors of construction are an indelible part of our talking about learning as a complex, meaningful process. As researchers over the past fifty years have uncovered the complexity of reading and turned attention to the reader, metaphors of construction (“making meaning,” “constructing a narrative,” “envisonment building” to name a few) have become increasingly part of being a reader. Though I adopt a socio-constructivist approach to the work of the literature classroom, I want to explore other ways of characterizing reading and learning that still rely on key tenets of constructionism: *coming to knowledge through experience*.

Metaphors of construction have much in common with the dominant view of teaching literary narratives, typically examined through state and national standardized tests. In this view, every narrative is made up of a set of pieces or elements: character, conflict, point of view, plot, setting, and theme or central idea. English teachers teach narratives according to these divisions so that students can put each piece together and build a totality. Literary elements are vital terms; they quite practically answer who, what, when, where, and why, questions that do create a “base story.” They name concrete terms, establishing disciplinary content, and they allow readers to approach stories from multiple vantage points. It is possible, though, to identify these elements and not have done much with a literary narrative. In Sumara’s view, the instruction of literary elements so emphasizes “efferent” reading, reading in order to take away the “elemental” building blocks, that it negates literary experience and imagination. In fact, this is one of the foundational worries that has fueled his research with secondary school teachers:

What implications does this have for the school curriculum, particularly situations where the aesthetic rather than efferent experience with the literary fiction is meant to contribute to the path of curriculum? This is an important question, for although we understand that the literary fiction is meant to invoke the literary imagination, conventional school practices suggest that it is the efferent rather than the aesthetic reading that is valued in the secondary English classroom. That is why it is not really necessary that Ingrid’s students leave their reading experience with anything other than an ability to know what happened, be able to name particularly literary conventions in the text, and be able to discuss these in relation to their own opinions. None of these require that they have ‘felt’ or ‘experienced’ what it was like to be hated through their reading of the book. Essentially, nothing of what is typically asked a secondary English student, including journal response, really requires that they have any deep and enduring relationships with the text. (199)

It is, of course, much easier to teach and assess literary elements than it is “enduring relationships with the text,” but Sumara’s question should give English teachers pause. What makes our reading of literary narratives different from reading an account of factual events?

What changes about our activities and our motives? How might emotion as a category of analysis within texts and ourselves mediate our answers, particularly when we situate these activities within a classroom?

5.1 EMOTION AND LANGUAGE

Ahmed's definition of emotion as our reading of our contacts brings together the three dominant approaches to emotion: the physiological, the cognitive, and the social. In her focus on contact with others, Ahmed places emotion as produced by social spheres and histories (contacts shaped by individual and collective pasts). Emotion is social, yet at the same time she acknowledges the physicality of meetings. In her own terms, she is speaking of "bodies meeting bodies," and to that end, bodies experiencing emotion. Furthermore, Ahmed understands a subject's objects to be things of importance to a subject, that which the subject has ascribed some kind of value or influence. Hence, the cognitive. All these approaches bring something important to the study of emotion as a category of analysis, but the social-cultural approach, the overarching approach of Ahmed's representation, is crucial to analysis of texts and what I concentrated on in the second phase of my research with students.

Anthropologists Catherine Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod privilege the social-cultural approach to emotion, at times almost to the exclusion of the physiological. Their approach emphasizes a crucial aspect of using emotion in the English classroom: language. Emotion, they write, is communicated, made known to others and ourselves, through semiotic systems. It is "discursive," "created by rather than shaped in speech" (12). In other words, emotion, always

revelatory of sociality, is made known through recognizable sign systems. We characterize emotion through language, we understand it through language, and we recognize it through language. Thus, within language, Lutz and Abu-Lughod argue, views on emotion and behavior are embedded. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's work on conceptual metaphors undergirds their argument. Similarly, historian Barbara Rosenwein has described how the "hydraulic" view of emotion (a sense that emotion is problematically interior and physiological, separated from cognition) is part of modern English expressions. " 'He was bursting with anger' is a common phrase, suggesting that anger is like a gas under pressure, ready to burst out," she offers. Or, she goes on, "'She was shaking with fear' suggests that fear takes over the body and agitates it" (251). Lutz and Abu-Lughod are interested in this attention to the linguistic record; it reveals beliefs, understandings, and possibilities for emotion itself.

For the literature classroom, language, of course, is primary. Also writing from a socio-constructivist perspective, David Bloome and Ann Egan-Robertson describe human actions and reactions as linguistic:

By linguistic we mean that they involve language (verbal and nonverbal, human or other) and related semiotic systems (e.g., architecture), inclusive of words, prosodics, gestures, grouping configurations (e.g., proximics and relationships of postural configurations), utterances, and discourses, across modes of communication (e.g., oral, written, electronic). By characterizing people's actions and reactions as linguistic processes, we are emphasizing that their actions and reactions derive from language systems, systems for making meaning and taking social action through the use of language. From this perspective, language is always social, inseparable from the social contexts (social actions and reactions) of which it is part (Labov, 1972). (310)

So, in this socio-constructivist approach, emotion is always negotiated, understood, and communicated through language. At the same time, language itself is "always social," embedded within contexts, derivative of those contexts, and inseparable from those contexts. To make sense

of language, we must recognize its social context, which is made up of various speakers, listeners, objects of attention, and readings of these contacts (emotions). Ahmed's approach lends support to their idea that "reactions" (what inevitably involves feeling) rely on semiotic systems. We can only react to what we *attempt to read*. When we think of social situations in life, then, we think of subjects using language to read, to feel, to communicate, and to realize themselves within a social situation.

Bloome and Egan-Robertston, Lutz and Abu-Lughod, and other social constructivists approach language as the principal means for how people construct their perceptions of a shared reality – a reality that in the literature classroom includes the reading of a text. In the remainder of this dissertation, I'd like to use this lens to guide my thinking about narratives and the textualizing of narratives that takes place within classrooms.

5.2 SITUATING

Narrative is told through language. As readers of narrative, we textualize, what Bloome and Egan-Robertston call something we do to experience (312). As they point out, we can textualize events, the "stars in the sky," an arrangement of rocks, if we choose to "make those phenomena part of a language system" (312). So to read, or to textualize, is to sense, makes sense of, and organize through language. When we textualize narrative, we are making an already complex layer of contexts part of a language system – we can talk, write, think, and feel about what we come to call the narrative itself.

Writing about narrative theory in 1980, Barbara Herrnstein Smith suggested social-constructivist approaches held much potential for our future thinking about story. Herrnstein Smith wants narrative to be closer to life, our understanding emerging from how the narrative functions for the teller, not from a commitment to recreating events, or Scholes's "base story." She writes that "accounts of narrative, literary and other, will be richer, sturdier, and more coherent when they are developed as part of a *comprehensive* theory of narrative which reflects a better appreciation of the nature of verbal transactions and the dynamics of social behavior generally" (236). Herrnstein Smith was encouraging theorists to return to language, and in doing so, to social situations, their "verbal transactions" and "dynamics of social behavior."²⁶

There is a rich social constructivist tradition for talking about narrative and language through Russian formalists Voloshinov and Bakhtin. Writing about language as utterances emerging from situations, Voloshinov argues that once "divorced from life," discourse "lose[s] its import" (98). Walking into a room mid-conversation or opening a book halfway through, we know this rule to be true. Though Voloshinov does not mention emotion, his theory of language is undergirded by emotion's constancy. The same is true for Bloome and Egan-Robertson who rely on action and "reaction" to name how people come into contact with the world and respond to it through language. Voloshinov's terms of emotion are "value" and "evaluation," terms that point to Ahmed's characterization of emotion. When we read our contacts with objects, we

²⁶ The tension between attending to how a narrator tells and determining narrated events is always a provocative one, both in life and in art. To press on that tension, to work with it, seems more profitable to me than dismissing our impulse to order events and arrive at a "base story." The desire for the "base story" is part of our imaginative faculty, part of our desire to believe these events could have transpired, could have been materially significant. Yet to forget about these events as told is to forget about their narrated-ness, their spoken purpose. This "back and forth, as McGann puts it, is one way academic readers situate themselves, one way we adjust our experience.

evaluate what we find. Those evaluations – whether understood by speakers as such – are qualitatively emotional.²⁷ Voloshinov takes this concept a step further. As emotions (and evaluations) are made and known through language, evaluations are not simply expressed, or “incorporated into the content of discourse.” Instead, these evaluations “determine the very selection of the verbal material and the form of the verbal whole” (102). For Voloshinov, the key here is intonation (or tone), what “establishes a firm link between the verbal discourse and the extraverbal content” (102). For my purposes, what is important is the all-encompassing nature of contacts. Emotion, in other words, determines the objects of speakers’ attention and their verbal content.

Voloshinov, writing several generations before Herrnstein Smith, wants to bring the linguistic realities of life to our studies of art, which he argues determine the formal features of the text. His focus on intonation predicates an approach for readers. To cocreate the extraverbal situation, we must put together the situation’s constituents: in Voloshinov, a speaker, a listener, and a hero (Ahmed’s objects), and the relations that mediate them. Working within this social-constructivist framework, I am most concerned with how emotions animate these relations and set up a linguistic system of value. The crux of any situation is the feelings that circumscribe contacts between participants and what’s around them, especially when those feelings are not predictable, not entirely coded by a type of situation or a stated relationship. When this is the case, there is often a story worth telling. McGann reminds us that when we want to build the story, it is difficult to remember that it (the story) is built through a narrator’s offerings. To read,

²⁷ Thinking of emotions as evaluations emphasizes the cognitive definition of emotion, though Voloshinov never ventures to claim whether tonal evaluations are conscious and intentional on the part of speakers. I would suggest that tone encompasses both conscious and unconscious evaluations; indeed, language may realize emotions for speakers.

McGann says, we need to “negotiate, back and forth, the relation between the textualities of fiction and its sublime imaginary constructions” (145).

5.2.1 Defining the Act

After reading “Mr. Z” with this sophomore class, I wanted to move students closer to these negotiations between textuality and imagined situation. In this section of my study, I invited students to recognize narrative as a layer of situations. The situation of a narrative’s telling – more pronounced in some narratives than others – shapes each situation that unfolds. Literary elements are one way of defining the narrative situation, but pedagogically they often become facts to identify. Within the situation of the telling are scenes, situations fueled by characters. Like people in the world, narrators and characters feel towards and around them, making contacts that reveal their boundaries and positions within situations both big and small. Throughout this research, I approached each narrative with the following questions in mind:

- 1) Who are the narrator and characters? (principally, those who speak and act)
- 2) What do they come into contact with? In other words, what are their objects – the people, places, things, situations and ideas they have feelings towards?
- 3) What are those feelings? How do they read those contacts? How do these feelings towards objects place a narrator/character?
- 4) How does the narrator reveal these contacts? And to what purpose?
- 5) What are the important objects for me in this story? Which contacts am I most aware of?
How am I reading those myself?

As I indicated earlier, this section of my work with students focused on the text as our jumping off site, the place where we initiated investigations of emotion. This produced new insights for me and new ways to conceive of emotion and narrative. If you ask a student to locate a moment in the text where she thinks there is a valuable expression of feeling, direct or indirect, I guarantee it will be a rich textual moment, one where a character or speaker sets himself in relation to something or someone else.

I am calling the processes of reading that I describe in this classroom research “situating.” This term draws on Voloshinov’s sensitivity to the situations of literary texts as well as Ahmed’s social/rhetorical definition of emotion as always made by meetings between two bodies, by situations. Though I think Voloshinov’s theory of a sociological poetics has much to offer a conversation about the materiality of language as realized in narratives and in classrooms, I understand the word “situate” more expansively than his work might suggest. There is no sure method, no exact order, no prescribed way to situate as we read, nor is the goal to uncover an “underlying pattern,” be it “sociological” or “linguistic” (Rosenblatt *The Reader* 169).²⁸ Though this chapter names readerly actions and fields of awareness through my analysis of classroom reading, I don’t offer a predetermined method, an order of operations. Instead, I propose “situating” as a spacious verb that defines a powerful way to textualize that allows room for reconsideration, changes in feeling, and attention to detail.

²⁸ “The reader, it is true, is free to bring anything that he wishes to the reading; he is not limited by past interpretations. But his responsibility seems to be primarily toward the application of one or another code—linguistic, semantic, Marxian, psychoanalytic or psychological, or sociological. The basic model is the linguist’s uncovering of an underlying pattern.” (Rosenblatt *The Reader* 169)

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “situate” as to place or locate, though the modern figurative use of the term expands its relevance: “to put in a context, to bring into defined relations.” “To bring into defined relations” best captures the process of situating I describe in this chapter, though “placing” or “locating” in precise spots or circumstances is one aspect of “bringing into defined relations.” “Bringing into” highlights the provisional, even slow work of “situating.” It isn’t immediate, and it always allows for further definition, even relocation.

As I write, the artist hanging up work on the walls is situating. She has to change where things are, how things fit, simply because of what’s close by and how each painting works with its surroundings. She is moving around, adjusting objects and creating new relationships. With each shift, she has an opportunity to change perspectives, to reconsider the significance of her experience gazing at her art in this place. With the artist, we see how a reader situates a textual world. She tries to determine relationships and placements. While reading a narrative, she considers relationships between characters, trying on different possibilities suggested by various elements of the text and life. She considers where a character directs his attention and why. *What kinds of relationships does he have with those objects?* She wonders why a narrator is telling this story. *What relationship does he have with this telling and with the people he writes to?* At the same time, a reader must always situate herself. She learns the terms of a textual world, which may be far different from her own. Noticing what feels close to her and what feels far, she wonders about her own proximities. As she shifts her understanding of others’ relationships, she is both sensing and making sense.

When Mr. Z first teases Diego in Casares’s story “Mr. Z,” many students thought he was funny. They liked him, they said; his sense of humor was familiar. Different students sensed something was amiss at different times. As they sensed, they made sense, too, determining what

gave them a bad feeling and how that was changing the relationships they perceived. At other moments during our reading, students first *made* sense of Diego's actions. "He is stealing from Mr. Z!" As they made sense of events, they felt their significance. "Readers are not just sense-makers but read for sensations," Karin Littau writes (58), arguing that the oppositions of mind/body within theories of reading should be horizontally aligned, not vertically hierarchized (58).²⁹ A reader's sensing and sense-making mutually specify each other, often one leading to and molding the other, each one part of the process of situating others and oneself. Both help us determine relationships, and both help us feel/understand the significance of those relationships. A reader's situating isn't full, I would argue, without both perceptive lenses qualifying the experience of reading. The word "situate" implies mental and bodily shifts, as I refer to metaphorically above. Littau brings us back to the physical sensation, the bodily/emotional shifting that occurs while a reader experiences a literary narrative.

²⁹ Karin Littau's book, *Theories of Reading: Books, Bodies, and Bibliomania*, argues for the lost materialist perspective of reading, the physical situation of a reader and a text. Littau refers to where a person reads, how she is physically situated, how long she reads in one sitting, whether or not she moves her lips or makes a sound, the bodily responses she has (quickenings of heartbeat, tears, audible laughter), etc. Every reader, Littau points out, is a historically situated reader and a physically whole reader, not an "idealized or universal reader" perusing an "ideal or transcendent work" (2). Thus, Littau wants matter to matter, as opposed to the dominant "mentalist" views of reading. Even in twentieth century critiques of New Criticism and over mentalist theories of reading, critics have operated within mentalist perspectives, searching for interpretive possibilities and ways to make sense (NOT ways to sense). Ancient formulations provide a counterpoint to modern emphasis on interpretation; thus Littau emphasizes *movere* both through Aristotle, tragedy stirring the emotions and providing catharsis, and through Longinus, emotional response leading the reader to ecstasy, arguing that "once the purpose of art is associated not with the awakening of the senses, but with the powers of reflection, *movere* goes underground," a "'downgrading' of the category" (156).

5.2.2 Pedagogical Approach

During my second set of visits with students, I changed my emphasis. Instead of focusing on readers' emotional responses through particular heuristics (recognition acts, for example) and then analyzing how such invitations laid a pathway for student reading, I came into this set of inquiries with certain academic reading moves, or processes, in mind. I wanted this portion of my work with students to focus on emotion as represented in texts, and ideally, to lead them to recognize, appreciate, and analyze more features of textuality and the practice of textualizing. I anticipated (correctly) that this work with students would prove more difficult for all of us.

In previous chapters, I attempted to define the principal moves that various iterations of academic reading share. During this set of lessons, I hoped to involve students in these previously defined acts of academic reading:

- Noticing what doesn't fit
- Slowing down and suspending declarations of meaning
- Attending to the text itself
- Involving oneself in the fictional world
- Wondering about its madeness

However, through my work in the classroom, I broke these down into specific actions related to emotion. I would group all of the following actions under the umbrella term, "situating."

- Noticing and acting on reader desires to situate
- Determining subjects and their objects
- Determining the feelings that saturate their meeting places
- Attending to narration

- Attending to expressions of feeling
- Wondering about missing feelings (or, anticipating an evaluation or reaction)
- Describing, in writing, the emotional content of texts
- Determining significance
- Choosing important quotations from the text
- Moving from specificity to purpose or pattern (synthesis)

As I will describe, enacting these moves together expands students' consciousness of how we textualize, thus increasing the ways they attend to narratives. In this work, I used constructivist views of language to emphasize what we do with language – through it we feel, we organize feeling, and we find ourselves establishing (or resisting, or affirming – the list goes on) placements within situations.

The teacher had begun reading Ishmael Beah's memoir *A Long Way Gone* with students before I came into the classroom with "Mr. Z," and she was eager to return to it. I thought memoir might be a helpful genre of narrative to use with these students. Memoir makes certain features of texts more obvious. Narrator and author are conducted by one directing consciousness. To expand students' awareness of narratives – and what we can experience when we read them – memoir could offer various entrances.

Beah's recounting of his experience during the Sierra Leone Civil War, including his eventual participation as a child soldier, is, on the one hand, a shocking series of events. The sheer list and severity of happenings, though, could keep students from involving themselves in his act of narration, or in the grave issues of personhood that the narrator asks us to recognize. In my research journal, I wrote the following in anticipation of teaching several chapters of the memoir:

I want to zero in on the kinds of contacts a character has, and how emotions come from our meeting things, situations, people, etc. Ishmael's story is one of events, but the most powerful part is his changes in feeling, his highs and lows, his shifts and responses. This is where we see a changing person, a person bound by situation and struggling inside of it, differently and similarly to others.

Beah's narration can be confusing. It is simple and lyrical, its ease perhaps a conscious mitigation of the very difficult content within the book. At times Beah is inclusive of his readers, detailing his emotional landscape like a confidante. At other times, though, he is noticeably removed, absent from his narrative's plain facts. I thought this dual-approach could provide a rich opportunity for students to notice both presence and absence of feeling as well as language's capacity to create multi-faceted situations.

I spent seven 90 minute class periods with the teacher and students reading and writing about five chapters of the memoir. At the beginning of one of the first few classes, I asked students why it was so important to pay attention to Ishmael's feelings, and I got a few basic answers – so we understand what's going on, so we can imagine what is happening to him. I reminded them that these are the feelings Ishmael Beah chose to tell us. He had to select which moments and feelings were the most important, and he had to determine how he wanted to share them with us. A student amazingly burst out, "This is real?" The teacher had emphasized the text as memoir when she began it with them, and I had already talked about it being a memoir at least twice, so this comment was a bit surprising.

"It's real!" I answered, putting the book under the document camera while pushing the lens close to its ISBN label. There it says in capital letters, MEMOIR. I reminded them what this word meant, about how people have to make choices about what to include and how to tell about it when they write memoirs. This led into a digression about people not telling the truth, including my mentioning that in recent years a few memoirs had been proven to be almost

completely fabricated. Finally one student said, “Why is real so important? Why do they want the real stories?” I would have liked to linger in this question. The class was now beginning to get squirmish, but it struck me as a question to which they could develop answers as they made their way through *A Long Way Gone*. Someone said that real “is more exciting.” There is much to be explored in regards to “realness” and secondary school readers (consider David Shields’s manifesto *Reality Hunger* about our contemporary moment and “realness”), but I begin with this brief anecdote to highlight how even when dealing with and calling attention to the obvious bounds of memoir, students struggled to maintain an awareness of narration.

5.2.3 Subjects and Objects

We attended to narration first by focusing on subjects. I shared theory on emotion when I explained that “emotions are made in the world. We don’t just have them. When two things come into contact, new feelings are created.” To model how emotions are created through meetings of subjects and objects, I walked students through a brief clip of the film *Blood Diamond*, which takes place in Sierra Leone. Solomon, a black African whose son has been captured and forced to become a child soldier, is hired by Archer, a white African from Zimbabwe, to find a tremendously valuable diamond. When they come close to the location where Solomon believes his son to be, he begins walking in that direction. Archer orders him to return to the path of the diamond, and the two proceed to fight verbally and physically – a meeting with words and blows.

To discuss the clip, I had everyone focus on Solomon as our subject. “Solomon is coming into contact with people, places, and ideas here. We’re going to think about what they are and

how he feels about them.” Students decided the “rebel village” was the first major contact for Solomon. All of us made our own webs to represent Solomon’s perspective. Different voices contributed to Solomon’s feelings about this first contact, the rebel village. Students said that he was angry about it, but determined to go there. He had focus, one student said. Another offered that he felt love when he realized it was there and then hope because he might get his son back. I asked students to include at least one quotation from the clip that captured one of these feelings. Most put down Solomon’s explanation to Archer: “I have to know.” The other major contact we included on our web was Archer. Solomon was angry at him, students said. Maybe he hated him, someone offered. When I asked why he was angry, a student explained that he was mad that Archer acted superior. I reminded students that there was a long history of racial oppression that affected the contact between Archer and Solomon, in particular the “superior” feeling Archer displayed towards Solomon. A student referenced Solomon’s important line, “You are not my master,” which spoke to the collective histories that shape this scene. Our webs used arrows to show the directionality of feelings (towards what and whom). To note Archer’s subjecthood, some students noted an arrow from Archer to Solomon and included notes like “thinks he’s the master” or “thinks he’s superior.”

This beginning exercise was exciting as students had a lot to say when using this relational format. It was also guided. I asked questions about relationships and perspectives, and students were poised to think and talk. I knew once they selected a chapter from *A Long Way Gone* and began working on their own web about Ishmael, they would struggle, not only because this kind of work, situating work, requires independence, but because it is difficult. This first conversation alerted me to just how difficult it was to determine subjects and their objects. For example, students were right to pick out the “rebel village” as a major object for Solomon.

Indeed, once he saw it, his behavior changed. But what other objects are called into being by his cognizance of the village's proximity? When I studied my web later, it occurred to me that in seeing the rebel village Solomon was also coming into contact with the idea of his son, the reality of his son's entrapment. He doesn't feel hope or love towards the village itself, but towards his son in the village. He doesn't feel focused towards the village but towards his goal of getting his son out of it. Literal objects, often proper nouns, would easily take the place of situational ones (these often contain dependent clauses, a fact of their situatedness). I was encouraged that students were on their way to recognizing complexity of feeling, but realized that the complexity of objects themselves would be an enriching difficulty for all of us.

Once students began working independently, I realized how difficult it was for them to recognize emotions at work without corresponding sensory information: eyes glaring, volume rising, fists throwing. These semiotic systems provided much that students would need to realize through discourse. Reading the emotional nuances in discursive situations is a matter of sensitivity to language and feeling, of broadening students' consciousness of what language does. I tried to begin simply with students, encouraging them to notice Ishmael's objects as they reread independently chapters they had already read once with their teacher. What does Ishmael talk about? What does he notice? What seems to be occupying his time, his observations? What does he guide us to see? What does he evaluate? With whom does he communicate? How does he direct himself towards them? The answers to these questions were often surprising. Imagining a child in war, we can anticipate certain objects (scenes of violence, guns, land, soldiers, etc.), but we cannot fully predict how those realities are perceived by a singular consciousness, particularly one looking back in time. What students found to be major objects after laborious rereading (and much one on one rereading with either me or the teacher) were often intangibles:

thoughts, the images in his head, the everyday routines of cooking, his mental efforts to forget. Once students started to identify the major objects of his attention, they tried to determine his feelings towards them, his evaluations. Voloshinov reminds us that any act of selection is already emotional, already evaluative. The students who used these questions most consistently (What does he notice? What is he asking me to see?) seemed to understand the importance of these acts of selection.

Creating subject/object webs gave students space to explore a single object in multiple ways. I want to look at a few portions of sample webs to think through this approach and product as well as the habits of mind they reinforce.

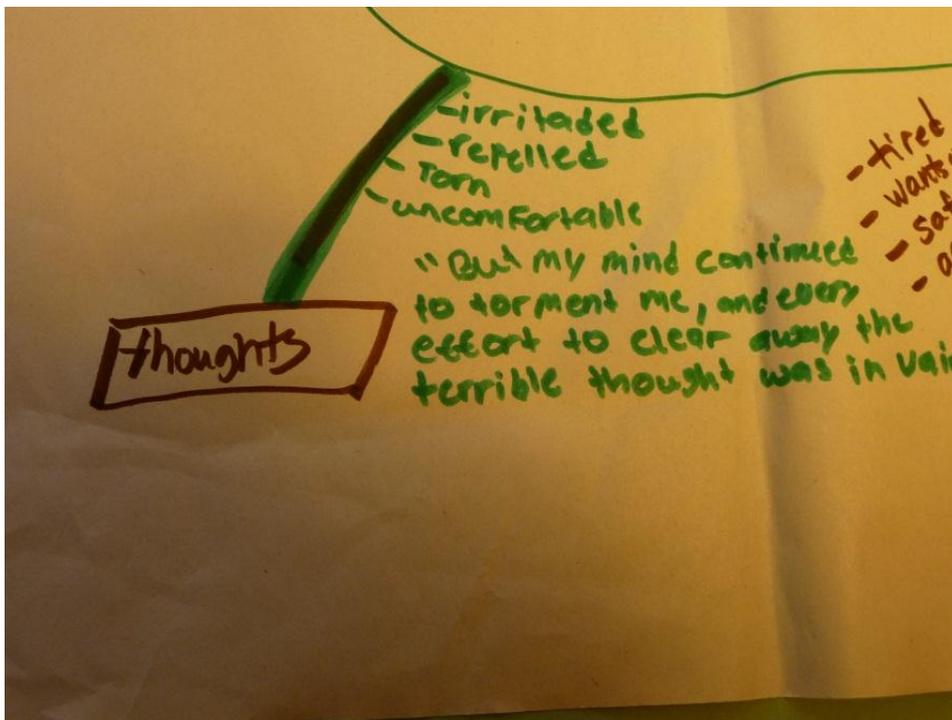


Figure 2. Sample Web 1

Figure 2 displays a particular assumption all webs shared. Situated feelings cannot be represented in a single word. Because students are essentially capturing a situation in these notes, they needed more language than “mad, sad, glad,” the three terms the teacher and I joked were most available, most widely used, and most recognized as feeling options by our students. After attempting to build a larger emotional vocabulary, after recognizing “genres of feeling,” and after creating model webs through collective discussion, students did not need reminders that Ishmael’s feelings would always be a mix, requiring multiple descriptions, including narration samples from Beah himself.³⁰

After this initial day of working, the teacher commented, amazed that students were “actually rereading.” Indeed, they were, on their own. The messiness that sometimes occurred in these webs was interesting to see. On the one hand, you could say we lost a precise focus. Instead of including Ishmael’s emotions towards an object, many students included descriptions about the object and its emotional effects. See Figure 3, for example. The reader includes Ishmael’s feelings towards thoughts: “didn’t like it,” “fighting,” “fear, and “resistance,” yet some of her notes are effects of the thoughts themselves: “sadness” and “head becoming heavier.” One note is a description of the content of his thoughts: “thinking about where his life was going, family and friends were going!” Another includes an effect, I think, of his labors to fight his own thoughts: “restless.” Now breaking up objects in this way would be far too precise and too laborious for students to maneuver and rely on while rereading. I realized this as I helped students work on webs, but I wondered about the messiness of identifying subject and objects. Figure 3 as well as others shows how once the subject-object relationship is explored, new

³⁰ Students needed help choosing quotations (indeed, this is a major component of “determining significance,” one of the moves I describe in this chapter), but more often than not they had already recognized a powerful sentence to use. They simply needed assurance to use it.

relationships emerge. More complex objects appear, causes and effects sneak up, and past and collective histories lurk in the background.

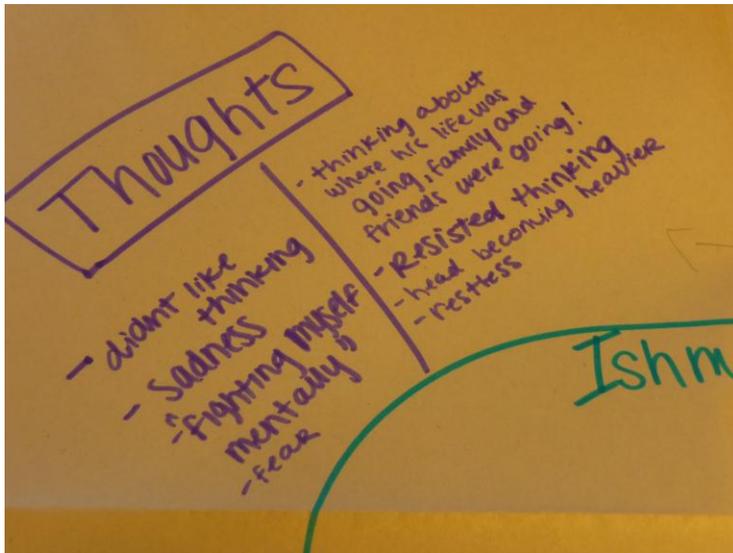


Figure 3: Student Web 2

Emotions and their objects are not terms exclusive to Ahmed’s theorizing of rhetorical texts. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* includes an entry by Ronald de Sousa titled, “Emotions and Intentional Objects,” which explores philosophical stances on exactly this problem: do emotions always have objects, and are those objects their causes? De Sousa notes that a major philosophical concern is to what extent “emotions are to be identified with their causes.” “This identification seems plausible;” he writes,

yet it is easy to construct examples in which being the cause of an emotion is intuitively neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for its being its object: if A gets annoyed at B for some entirely trivial matter, drunkenness may have caused A’s annoyance, yet it is in no sense its object. Its object may be some innocent remark of B’s, which occasioned the annoyance but which it would be misleading to regard as its cause. In fact the object of the annoyance may be a

certain insulting quality in B's remark which is, as a matter of fact, entirely imaginary and therefore could not possibly be its true cause.

The webs illustrate this very issue. For example, Beah's "thoughts" were not what caused the fear or anxiety he feels towards them; rather, it was the experience of seeing death and losing his family – the life experience provoking his thoughts, then, and, one could argue, the way fear and loss had compounded thus far. Living with types of emotions could even be considered a cause – not only of his feelings towards thoughts, but of the emergence of "thoughts" as such a primary object. Once we begin theorizing causes and effects, subjecthood (certainly in the case of literary works) rises to importance. We can call these attentional objects or discursive objects. They answer the question, which objects receive attention from which subject – and how? As I will demonstrate later with short fiction, this question is complicated when a narrator is not the same as our dialogizing speakers. In that case, we have multiple subjects and attentional objects. Some objects are causes of effects, others are simply talked about or described, some are characters participating in conversation or spoken to or about, and still others are entire situations.

I was aware that many students consistently chose objects that were clear causes, only to list Ishmael's reactions. There was nothing wrong with this; indeed, this is one way to theorize the "meeting place," Ishmael meeting a certain event. However, these moments of cause and effect tended to be pointed moments of feeling where linearity was obvious. I was more interested in objects that were occupiers of attention because they invited more interpretive work. Both kinds of situations, both kinds of objects, helped build our understanding of Ishmael's situation as a told story and as an unfolding of events, but with the former, the sole questions seemed to be, "What is his reaction? What do you think will happen next?" whereas with the

latter, I could ask students, “What might be some reasons this is an object of attention? What surprises you about this as an object of attention? How does he see it? How does he feel about it? And how does this change the situation he’s in?”

By the time students had finished webs, a new world of descriptive analysis had opened up -- the webs themselves were messy but rich holding tanks, evidence of students’ textualizing. Students were not used to acts of textualizing -- to writing, talking, and thinking through texts, let alone the independent rereading involved in this kind of act of attention. In many ways, finished webs were a kind of reader’s snapshot of a protagonist, each stem a different moment attached to key quotations of narrator evaluation. In other words, we had a record of what seemed to matter to Beah (and what seemed to matter to different students). In the webs, I saw students trying to organize their experience – and Ishmael Beah’s – through language. You’ll notice that the webs do not demand students to determine significance on a broader level. They are indeed, what Scholes names as reading, though instead of constructing individual literary elements (character, setting, conflict and plot), they built situations that involved all elements. Look at a sample web, and each element is represented. Each is significant because of its implication in a whole.

De Sousa argues that “we need a taxonomy of the different sorts of possible emotional objects. We might then distinguish different types of emotions, not on the basis of their qualitative feel, but—at least in part—according to the different complex structures of their object relations.” As a philosopher, De Sousa theorizes emotion through the words themselves. For example, in arguing for an object-based categorization, De Sousa muses on the difference between “love” and “sadness,” the former necessitating a target. In narratives, however – in life and in art – sadness and love are always experienced by subjects in various situations being

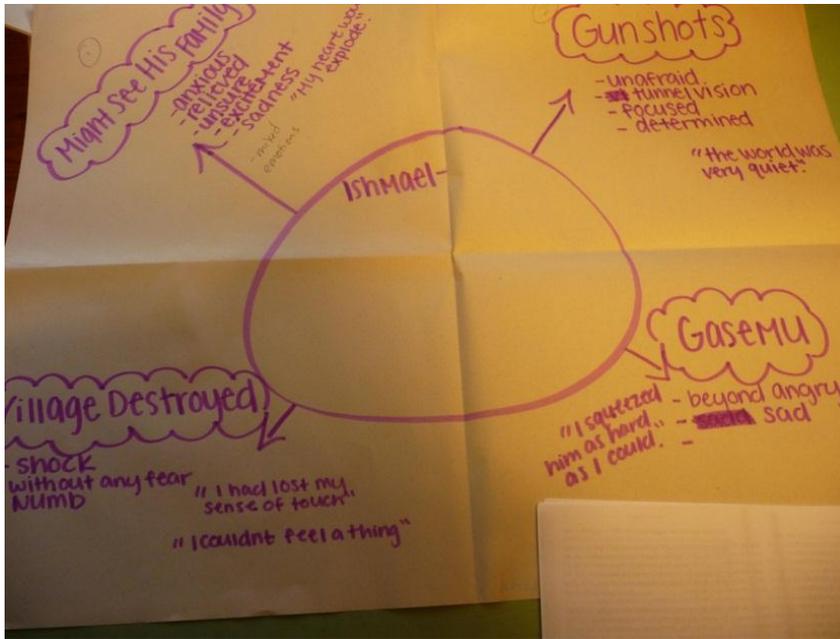


Figure 5. Sample Web 4

5.2.4 Description

Part of this work needed to include writing about Beah's memoir, which I knew would be very difficult. Students would need models, sentence stems, and one on one help to compose coherent paragraphs about the narrator. I formed my desires to write about Beah's memoir this way in my research journal:

I want them to think about Ishmael as someone who MADE this text, who had feelings to determine and represent. I also want them to reckon with what these feelings are doing; what is their "net worth" in some way? How do we synthesize these moments of contact? On one level, how is Ishmael changing? What are those feelings doing to him? As a told story, what could be his purpose in emphasizing what he emphasizes? This will be difficult, moving from details to synthesis; we talk about character development all the time as teachers of literary texts, and I wonder about how much of this is difficult for students because they aren't paying attention to a character's valuing, to their opinions, cares, worries, attitudes, minute changes.

Students had already determined significance by choosing moments and quotations on their webs, but now I was asking them to reread those moments together as a unit. What did they show about Ishmael's experience? What patterns emerged? How did these moments, as a whole, speak to the importance of the chapter they had selected? How was Beah being affected? And why would Ishmael have shared these changes with his readers?

I didn't want to frame these questions primarily in terms of persuasion. With the repeated emphasis on the text as a memoir as well as the disturbing nature of its content, it was clear Beah wanted us, his American audience, to know about child soldiers in Sierra Leone. That answer was too easy. At the same time, I didn't want to generate an interiorizing view of emotion – the idea, for example, that Ishmael needed to “let it all out,” which is such a prevalent idea of expression it was already a popular way of understanding his book (and, I would venture to say, memoir in general).

I knew students were not very familiar with essay organization, but I decided to use a simple essay form, four paragraphs. A straightforward iteration I used with students while reading through their essays follows:

Intro – How is Ishmael being shaped by the war?

Moment Paragraph 1 - Describe the moment. How does he react? How is he changing?

Moment Paragraph 2 - Describe the moment. How does he react? How is he changing?

Conclusion - Tell us why these scenes are important. Why did Ishmael show us these scenes?

Much went into essay writing before students received this organizational summary. In class, we read a mentor text (my own version of the essay), compared my essay to my web to

identify what language my web already provided me, brainstormed collections of synonyms for topical words like “shaped” and “overwhelmed,” collectively created sentences from key words and sentence stems designed to help students show simultaneous actions or narrative significance, and collectively wrote the beginnings of two different paragraphs from a sample student web. I don’t doubt that this was a productive writing assignment for students to do, but if I were to do it again, I would stress “description” and let go of organization. What the process most emphasized for me was a need to teach students how to listen and describe, and that this is indeed a reading skill as much as a writing skill, one – based on Wilner, McGann, and Schneider’s concerns – student readers at various levels need to develop.

Description is a major part of situating, or putting subjects and objects in relation to each other. It’s also one way we determine increased significance, one way we dig deeper. Partly because the Texas state exam requires students to write a personal essay about a moment in their pasts, students had spent the majority of their time that year describing themselves, not others or texts. Indeed, description is a pattern of writing we tend to teach through first person narration, yet one we expect in finished products of literary analysis.

We teach the difference between summary and analysis, “description” typically subsumed under summary in this division. I know many teachers who value summary, pointing out what it does for a reader and a writer in an analytical essay. At the same time, our job is always to push students towards analysis, to get them to recognize a difference between telling the key points and explaining their significance. What is the difference between summary and description then? To summarize is to pare down, a powerful reduction that requires a writer to determine importance and sequence. To describe a textual situation, on the other hand, allows room for the act of situating through writing/talking. A writer can re-vision through description.

It is a beginning of inductive analysis, its own rereading. To determine importance, we have to sense the situation as fully as we can; description gives us the space to do so.

Clifford Geertz describes all ethnographic description as “interpretive . . . of the flow of social discourse,” a simple qualification that could serve us well in explicating what we aim to do as classroom readers of narratives (20). Narratives offer a unique world of social discourse, one with which we must continually familiarize ourselves as we cocreate the relationships of various speakers and listeners. Geertz wants anthropologists to commit to specificity, “trying to rescue the ‘said’ of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms,” which includes the kind of listening and seeing (the sensing) that their subjecthood asserts (20). As readers of narrative, we, too, attend to moments of discourse. In describing those moments, we describe our listening and imagining. We interpret, grasping “occasions” in new ways.

Description provided an important layer of inductive analysis, an opportunity to reread, and a way to situate. Students had to begin to acknowledge subjecthood, noting a subject’s relationships with objects and their effect. I’m interested in exploring a number of selections from those attempts to look at how students grasped “occasions” and moved to synthesis. In reading student essays, I read for contradiction. When we read a moment of contradiction, we see a moment of interest, evidence of thinking and possibilities for more. When thinking about subjects and objects, when trying to describe discursive occasions, readers are dealing with the complicatedness of human situations. Contradiction can reveal the cluttered lines of attachment and resistance on invisible webs, and it suggests there is more to describe, to read, to consider. Though students didn’t recognize these contradictions themselves, and though we did not have the time to revise these drafts further, I highlight several examples to point to what description involves and invites. I will call these students Student One, Student Two, and Student Three.

Student One's essay, which is one of the weakest in the group, begins with the following:

As the war surrounds Ishmael he being to break down. As Ishmael become closer to his family he begins to show his feeling but then they are changed. When Ishmael was imaging seeing his family he said first he would give his mama a tight hug he also have a feeling he would see them or hear of them again. He feels happy, surprise, disbelief and Excitement also sadness. This sentence is making Ishmael's feelings show. He's expressing his emotions more than ever.

I am interested in Student One's description because it highlights how complicated narrative (and life) are. Beah is not the only one traveling to see his parents at this point. In fact, it is his two dear friends, Alhaji and Kanei, who Student One confuses with Beah. Alhaji says, "I will give my mother a very tight hug," while Kanei responds with, "I have a feeling we will find our families" (89). Beah seems to be in agreement and does go on to narrate his emotions in great detail. Within two paragraphs, he tells us he feels "light-headed," "excitement and sadness," and "angry" in anticipation of seeing his family, but as far as we can tell, these feelings are not vocalized. When Student One writes that Beah is "expressing his emotions more than ever," he's right – it's simply that Beah is narrating these feelings, not saying them in the past. Why would Beah express more for us here? By narrating each emotion, Beah builds to a climax, foreshadowing the loss of his family. He also, though, indicates the mix of feelings that does seem liable to "break down," as Student One writes. So many overwhelming contacts at once feels unsustainable, even in writing. Student One, whose web contained a long list of emotions, struggles to synthesize this mix, listing instead: "happy, surprise, disbelief and Excitement also sadness."

Student Two included the following paragraph in her final essay:

Ishmael's hope is taken away when he hears gunshots; he's in tunnel vision, unafraid, focused and determined. "The world was very quiet." This is one of those moments when you block out in your head and don't hear anything, and it makes you feel like something bad is going to happen. It's like Ishmael knew about his family.

In this paragraph, Student Two relied on her web for the list of feelings and her chosen quotation, but her initial conclusion – "Ishmael's hope is taken away" – is new. This is a difficult moment to describe, to "grasp," which the contradictions in her paragraph suggest. Someone who is "unafraid, focused, and determined" doesn't seem to be hopeless. Student Two is on to something here, though; his tunnel vision, his blocking out of any other sensory information, suggests that he realizes he could be hopeless if he doesn't act immediately. Similarly, Student Two struggles with her "you" in her explanation. I appreciate her "recognition moment" here, a connection to a way humans experience urgency. But is the experiencing Ishmael the "you" who feels like something bad is going to happen, or is it Student Two, the reader? Student Two also struggles with composition here. The Ishmael who narrates *does* know about his family as he has lived through their loss; how do we square that knowledge with the kind of foreshadowing his narration includes?

I don't point out Student Two's contradictions to suggest that she failed at descriptive writing, or that this was not a meaningful writing experience for her. On the contrary, her paragraph is a descriptive beginning that opens up issues of memoir writing and recognition, suggesting that as readers attend to powerful moments of textual emotion, they are pushed to think in terms of situations – placement and relationships. Thus, metaphor and simile, relational statements, and multiple words for related feelings are key features of description. The next step

would be for Student Two to expand the paragraph to take these interesting contradictions into account.

Contradiction also appeared in Student Three's descriptions.

Ishmael begins to get lost and he's determined to find a way out. He tries to walk around but always ends up being in the same place. "I walk around to familiarize myself" he writes to make himself comfortable and feel "safe for the time being." He tried to fill his head with irrelevant things so he couldn't think. He was afraid of thinking. He thought it was better being lost and lonely because it was safer! He just tried to remember everything about his surroundings so no thoughts of family and home could come up.

These scenes show how he feels about being alone. Even being by himself, he learns he's only "safe for the time being." Ishmael wants us to see how he withdraws himself from the world.

In describing Beah's experience, Student Three also confronts the trickiness of the genre. Her second line makes it sound as if Beah is lost in the forest, writing to make himself feel better, as opposed to him writing years later to explain what he did to familiarize himself. I am fairly certain students understood this difference, but in writing Student Three couldn't quite determine how to integrate the quotation without losing the distinction. At the same time, she misquoted Beah by using present tense, "I walk" instead of "I walked," which further clouded the difference. Though this is more obviously a writing problem, it is one that also reveals the difficulty of reading and describing narration, something students continued to encounter while trying to grasp narrative in general.

The contradiction I am most interested in is revealed in her last line, her major synthesis of the moments she selected to describe. Her concluding sentence – "Ishmael wants us to see how he withdraws himself from the world" – seems to reverse the detailed descriptions she offers. According to Student Three, Beah is forcing himself to be involved with the world around him, walking around, attempting to commit his surroundings to memory, focusing on the

immediacy of his needs, so that his thoughts would not wander to the echoing of the past and the imagining of the future. Instead of “withdrawing” from the world, it seems he is immersing himself in it. Student Three would do well to continue specificity here; which world is Beah withdrawing from? Which world is he engaging? As he tells it, how successful is he?

Written description is one way we reread. It is also one way we situate, putting subjects and objects in relation and thinking about the consequences of that situation, whether it be writerly purpose, character change, or readerly experience. To describe is to work out and through objects. Most writers arrived at new ones in trying to name the significance of descriptions, such as Student Three’s “how he feels about being alone.” “Being alone” becomes an overarching object here, one that Student Three didn’t name on her web but came to decide through the act of describing.

Description is an inductive act, a thinking through discourse and about discourse. It starts with specifics, building on details. Thus, it may seem repetitive in its early stages. It is best if it reckons with discourse itself – how something is named or told – so that it is most engaged with the occasions it seeks to describe. It should try to name significance, what could matter about a situation or a discursive moment, but it need not build to a greater argument. Its point is to enact and illuminate acts of textualizing and thus to include more than summary would allow.

5.2.5 Missing Feelings

As a narrator, Beah is often silent, reporting details in detached observance despite his proximity. It was important that students learned to recognize these moments of absence as the provocations that they were. Each moment of absence is a purposeful act of selection and omission on the part

of the narrator, and I wanted students to consider the many ways Ishamel *could* feel, given how they had situated him thus far. To do so was to involve themselves in the textual world, wonder about the feelings that connect a subject to a situation. Furthermore, to note these moments and ask about them would require determining significance, potentially through one's own emotional responses and the emotional terms set up by the text.

In focusing on this reading move, I was asking students to look for causes and their missing effects. When are there moments when an object is obvious – he **MUST** have a feeling towards a comment, a realization, an action – and it isn't shared? Are there any hints of feeling here, through tone or replaced objects of attention? Students started to determine that moments when they could discern Beah's feelings were often moments when they also wanted more from him. Perhaps the object of his feelings was unclear, perhaps the cause unstated. Other times students wondered about more complex reactions, the other feelings at play, or his perspective—“Is he reconsidering the whole situation?” one student wrote when asking questions about missing feelings. Students also wondered about next steps, making predictions as they imagined their own reactions.

Because of her concerns with their metacognitive awareness, the teacher wondered if coding, a typical metacognitive annotation strategy, could be part of my instruction. Together we came up with simple codes for absence and presence of feeling, a star and corresponding arrows for moments when Ishmael somehow communicated feeling and a question mark for the moments when we wanted evaluations. Using Eva-Wood's revision of the think-aloud, the “think and feel aloud,” I modeled my own reading of presence/absence for students, followed with collective coding.

As I noted in my research journal, I made the description of presence/absence simple yet capacious. I wanted them to be able to grab onto it easily in order to build independence, so I explained it through the following questions: Where can I tell how he feels? Where am I confused and want to know more about his feelings? Students were particularly silent at the beginning of each collective reading, a reticence that drove home how getting involved in a written world, enacting the most basic emotional capacity we have as readers of narratives, was not a given. As I argue in previous chapters, without that involvement in literary narratives, readers are not motivated to pause and inquire. The break-down can't be a break-through without a fundamental desire to see a story through. As a response to this observation, I heightened the "feel aloud" portion of my own narration of my reading, emphasizing details that felt odd, disturbed me, made me wonder. I wanted students to see reading as a process of making sense of what I sensed, feeling itself the key to my annotations.

After a few days of joint reading, students read out loud in partners, stopping to star and add question marks as they went. Many students actually did read out loud, which I encouraged, as all of the students benefited from voicing text. I watched several groups talk together about where to stop, or about Beah's feelings. The teacher and I tucked ourselves next to students who were reading but not marking and modeled for them how I would mark the section they were reading. After about twenty minutes I paused and introduced the product I wanted them to make together:

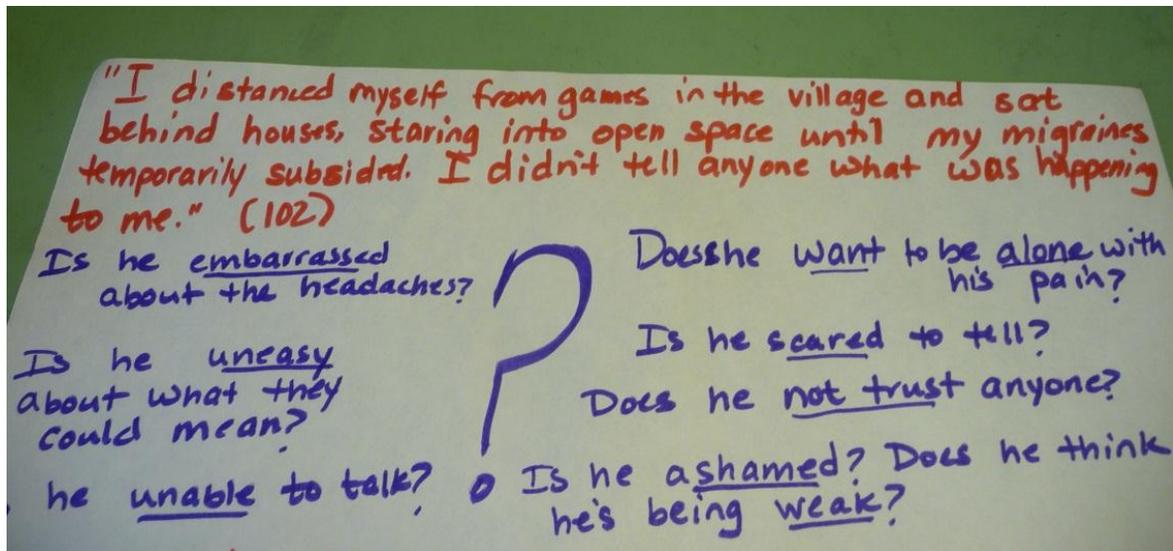


Figure 6. Teacher Poster

Like many of the products I had students produce, my thinking model used a trigger moment to initiate acts of situating. I had selected a moment we had identified while reading together in which Beah included an interesting confession: “I distanced myself from games in the village and sat behind the houses, staring into open space until my migraines temporarily subsided. I didn’t tell anyone what was happening to me” (102). Descriptions of plaguing thoughts had now morphed into descriptions of headaches, just one way in which Beah’s narrative is a narrative of the body. At this point, Student Three’s description would be apt – Beah describes himself as withdrawing from the world, leaving behind soccer games with his friends (something he loves) to wait for the pain to ebb. What intrigued me here is his admission that he “didn’t tell anyone what was happening.” The headaches, now a major object for Beah, were his secret, but I wondered why. What feelings, and towards what, made Beah treat them that way? This desire to situate fueled the situational questions I included on my poster for students: “Is he embarrassed about the headaches? Is he uneasy about what they could mean? Is

he unable to talk? Does he want to be alone with his pain? Is he scared to tell? Does he not trust anyone? Is he ashamed? Does he think he's being weak?"

As I noticed students' difficulty involving themselves in the narrative, I wanted to isolate, even freeze, measures of what involvement, samples of what it feels like/sounds like/looks like to care about a world created through reading. This was, of course, why the teacher wanted to instruct students in metacognitive strategies. Students struggled to start their posters, but all groups were motivated to finish and did so. Students passed my model poster around as they had questions about making their own. Choosing the quotation, the trigger, seemed to make students the most hesitant. Most groups wanted a seal of approval from the teacher or me before they finalized their selection, but no groups chose the same line. In my visits with students, I tried to push them to ask questions that included situational theories, like mine above, instead of vague questions that didn't display knowledge of the situation (for example, *how is he really feeling here?*). I wanted students to make hypotheses about relationships. What aspects of situations might be missing?

In analyzing these posters, I looked both at the quotations chosen and the types of questioning moves students made. To name the discursive features of quotations, I returned to Voloshinov's essay, "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art" where he names features of discourse that reveal tone and thus "the vibrations of the social atmosphere surrounding the speaker" (102). Evaluations are held in "epithets," Voloshinov explains, descriptive phrases that somehow name, and in that naming, evaluate an object. Descriptors and qualifications are also tonal, which include adjectives and adverbs, and, I would add, even precise verbs, particularly those that speak to a type of contact. Finally, of particular interest to me both in texts and in student writing, were metaphors, what Voloshinov calls a "regrouping of values" (116). I did not

formally present these textual features to students, but many of the textual moments that had occupied our attention throughout my time with them included these features.

In addition to Voloshinov's features, I also analyzed students' quotations for several other features. Voloshinov is concerned primarily with tone, but because I am focused on emotion as always defining relationships, I also picked out features of relation-making itself. One, I noticed if quotations included dialogue, as dialogue immediately suggests two dialogic situations and thus many points of contact between speakers. With dialogue, we have Beah's narration (he has included this dialogue to share; it is his act of selection) and then the quoted speaker's contacts, of which Ishmael is typically primary. I also added controlled narration of relationships to my list. My own quotation displays what I mean here. Though the verb "distanced" includes an evaluative edge, the quotation lacks the richness in tone that would flesh out Beah's feeling about his migraines and situation in the army village. Without other nuances, "distanced" becomes the centerpoint, a key description for his narration as well as his actions. Admitting that he doesn't report the migraines to his friends is an indication of a certain kind of *relation being made*, both with his bodily experience (a major part of his story) and with his peers. Thirdly, I was interested in the times students chose quotations with named emotions, words that we would actually consider emotions themselves (sadness, anger, suspicion, etc.). Since a major part of my work with students included expanding language for emotions,³¹ these words were pronounced in our studies and for some students, reminders that feelings were around.

³¹ I do not doubt that students had many ways to talk and think complicated emotions, even if they did not include the terms I introduced to our first discussion.

More than half of the quotations chosen included at least one of the following three features: epithets (pronouns used to reveal relations in some way), descriptors and qualifications (adjectives, adverbs, precise verbs), and controlled narration (limited narration juxtaposed with a significant event). Posters included literal questions of reaction, as in Figure 7 (*Is he scared? Is he making a plan?*), while some broadened to consider the situation itself, as well as Beah's interpretation of it (*Does he really have no choice?*). Several attempted to pin down objects, acknowledging that these were unclear (*What is he really scared of? Is he scared of doing what the soldiers do?*). Others focused on specific emotions, exploring related words (*Does he feel weird? Does he feel tense?*). A couple considered figures of speech that were unclear but evocative (*What does he mean by he felt 'light'?*).

Students were most commonly trying to determine events (in the form of reactions and predictions), trying to determine feelings about contacts (evaluations), and trying to determine motivations. All of these bear some crossover, though they tended to direct students to different places in the text – looking forward, looking at the immediate moment, or looking back. These situating moves helped students comprehend the textual situation, the goal of the teacher's metacognitive strategy instruction.

I categorized their acts of questioning based on definitions of academic reading (discussed in previous chapters) and situating moves. As I am endeavoring to show throughout this chapter, these situating moves led students to accomplish key features of academic reading.

Academic Reading

- Noticing what doesn't fit
- Slowing down, suspending declarations of meaning
- Attending to the text

- Getting involved in a presented world
- Wondering about its construction

Situating Moves

- Trying to determine contacts (subjects and objects)
- Trying to determine the feelings between them
- Trying to determine events themselves

In my model poster, my questions emerged from a variety of these moves. I noticed what didn't fit (Beah admitting he did not tell his friends about the now physical pain of his headaches), I suspended declarations of meaning by considering various possibilities for this omission, I considered contacts and feelings – there were several potential objects here, and I considered motivations.

As I show with my reading of one student example, these acts of situating open up possibilities for further ones.

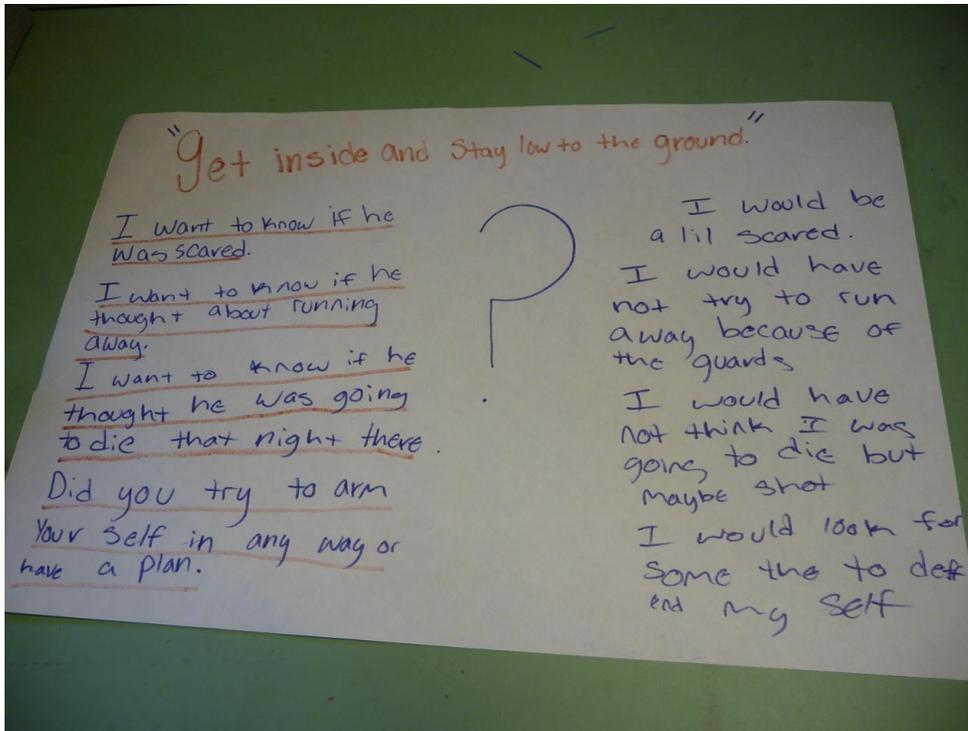


Figure 7. Student Poster

This student chose dialogue for his quotation, one of the first instructions Beah hears from the army soldiers which betrays the close proximity of violence. “Get inside and stay low to the ground” (105). Beah doesn’t narrate his response to this direction. Like my own quotation, this moment spoke to Beah’s collected manner as a narrator and, we can assume, as a child caught in war. The student wants more from Beah’s undisclosed reaction:

I want to know if he was scared.
 I want to know if he thought about running away.
 I want to know if he thought he was going to die that night there.
 Did you try to arm yourself in any way or have a plan?

His questions are the most consistently literal of the group’s posters. In his desire to gain access to Beah’s consciousness, the student tries to determine motivations and events, anticipating

reactions that seem probable but aren't narrated. Yet in his loss of narrative control (he suddenly addresses Beah instead of speaking about him), made all the more clear because of his repetitive "I want to know" phrases, I am reminded of how slippery things can be when we are involved in texts. One of our major contacts is typically our protagonist. The student's apostrophizing or direct questioning of Beah (something several students did in writing about short fiction as well) suggests his belief in Beah and his involvement in the world he has cocreated.³² It is a testament to how pleasurable and difficult it can be to involve oneself in textual worlds, building felt relationships with what we imagine. His narrative slippage suggests that attending to the emotions of textual situations prompts us to situate ourselves. He calibrates without prompting, trying to adjust his imagination of himself as he responds to Beah's narration.

What he doesn't do is move on to the question that seems to hang in the air as I read all of these posters: *now that we have imagined what we want to know, let's imagine why Beah, as a writer, chose not to include those answers.* His moment provides a rich and difficult example for these questions, his own questions offering an initial answer: Beah was terrified, and the situation so warranted the feeling, it is almost unnecessary to narrate it. The other questions seem to be answered in the text's silence. He doesn't try to take into consideration the surrounding lines, however. Beah goes on to write:

That night Musa told no stories and Moriba didn't play marbles with the other boys. We quietly sat against the wall listening to the rapid bursts of gunfire in the distance. Just before the last hours of night, the moon sailed through the clouds, showing its face through the open window of the building before it was driven away by a cockcrow. (105)

³² This moment strengthened my belief in such narrative turns. Remember students wrote as the protagonist in writing about "Mr. Z," and I often have often had students write directly to characters because it does exactly what this student's line suggests: cements an involvement in and belief in a textual world while strengthening the role of a reader as one who can imagine, ask, pause, direct, care.

The juxtaposition of Beah's cognizance of the situation and his observance of the moon still rising, the moon that had fascinated him as a child and continues to fascinate him after the war, is striking. It is a moment to be felt in order to be understood – the awful relentlessness of the earth, going to bed and waking up again when children sit in rooms listening to gunfire; the amazing knowledge of the moon, the same one staring down at people after their lives have been wrenched away so drastically; the frustration at the moon's own silence and distance; and the helplessness people face as narrators of their own stories.

It is easy to mark the difference between my reading and this student's questions. However, Beah's description provokes a powerful tension precisely because of the student's questions. The noticeable absence of answers heightens the inclusion of these ordinary details; as this student recognizes, ordinary details aren't appropriate to the extreme situation. This student was on his way to a more sophisticated reading.

It may seem odd that the text that would be sure to cause emotional reactions in students, *A Long Way Gone*, ended up being the text that we used to focus on the emotional content of narratives, but as I hope this foray into students' meaning making has shown, to attend to emotion within the text often led students to value emotion within themselves. As they situated Beah, they also recognized genres of feeling, imagined themselves, described feelings (and thus, situations), and built a desire to sense and make sense. When readers are involved in narratives of feeling, they listen to absence and presence, always putting people and objects in relation, always one in terms of another, acts that require the relational structures of language. Readers' relations might be felt, the way Beah's narration moved me to feel and interpret. They might be conceived through questions or careful description. They might be realized through recognizing genres of feeling or specific difference.

What students still struggled to do, however, was pay attention to acts of selection and narration, the telling. Creating involvement in the textual world dominated so much of our efforts that the madeness I had hoped to bring to their attention remained at a distance. Despite that, the classroom space itself seemed to be changing, as was students' sense of how to read and textualize with others. What happens to a classroom space when students situate as they read literary texts? That question animates the following chapter.

6.0 CLASSROOM SPACE

And hence this Tale, while I was yet a boy
Careless of books, yet having felt the power
Of Nature, by the gentle agency
Of natural objects led me on to feel
For passions that were not my own, and think
At random and imperfectly indeed
On man; the heart of man and human life.

-- William Wordsworth, "Michael"

Louise Rosenblatt coined the phrase, "poem as event," first explored in her 1938 treatise *Literature as Exploration* and further developed in her 1978 book *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*. Through this phrase, she laid out her theory of transactional reading:

A poem, then, must be thought of as an event in time. It is not an object or an ideal entity. It is an occurrence, a coming-together, a compenetration, of a reader and a text. The reader brings to the text his past experience; the encounter gives rise to a new experience, a poem. This becomes part of the ongoing stream of his life, to be reflected on from any angle important to him as a human being – aesthetic, ethical, or metaphysical. (*The Reader* 126)

For Rosenblatt, the text "as an event in time" emphasizes the unfolding of textualizing. Above all, reading is an experience, part of what Sumara describes as our embodied experience. Bogdan's own focus on "ordinary existence" echoes Rosenblatt's desire to push the living of life and the reading of texts closer together. To do so, however, puts particular pressure on a classroom where students read literary works. It means the classroom – and the work done within

it and in service of it – must be considered by students to be integrated into the fabric of their lives.

So how do we define the space of the classroom? What do we know of it, and what do we wish for it to be? Is the classroom public space? Private space? Something else? I want to consider various conceptions of classroom space, articulate how the binaries of private vs. public as well as the group vs. the individual animate these possibilities, and name an orientation towards classroom space that moves through these tensions.

Considering these definitions will return me to Rosenblatt’s phrase, “poem as event.” In what way was our classroom reading eventful, and how did those events redefine classroom space? In other words, I’d like to consider what classroom space became when emotion was a privileged category of analysis, as realized throughout the course of this study.

6.1 CLASSROOM SPACE AS PRIVATE SPACE

Private and public are important words for my work because of their deep and definitive associations with emotion, yet both terms inflect discussions of classroom space. Jess Enoch has explored how the Common Schools movement initiated a major shift in schooling through rhetorics of emotion and gendered space. Leading up to the Civil War, the school, once “a public, exposed, masculine space” became “an enclosed, private, and feminine space” (276). Prominent figures in the making of the public school, such as William Alcott (cousin to Amos Bronson Alcott) argued that schools should be more like houses, less like prisons, and that

women, those most proficient at creating the atmosphere of the home, should be brought into the undomesticated sphere of school to clean it up, make it safe, and instruct students to become moral individuals. Several key elements to my discussion weave through Enoch's history. First of all, women, understood to be the authors of the private sphere – the home – are the people to change the work of the school and of educators. Instead of operating institutions of “dirt, mess, and chaos,” these female teachers can instead instate an ethic of care and concern, of sympathy and cleanliness, the *private feelings and actions* of the home (5). To infuse what Catherine Beecher described as “affections” or “moral feelings” – to offer emotional instruction – the school itself had to move inside to the “parlor,” imitating the physical spaces of the private sphere. Thus, as emotional acts and products are included in the stated work of educators, the language of the private sphere takes over. In their outrage over the chaos of school and their desire for a nurturing space, these commentators recognized that our conceptions of emotional relevance determine our understandings of space. Moving to private spaces allows for new considerations; similarly, in my discussion of reading, scholars seeking to value reading's emotional qualities seek individual examples, often placed within the comfort of home's private spaces.

Of course, even before “moral feelings” and “affections” were valorized, school separated youth from public spaces; once thought of as “jails,” schools trapped students in what Enoch quotes a teacher describing as “a gloomy, dilapidated prison, designed for the detention and punishment of some desperate culprit” (6). Defined by their forced separation from society, these “prisons” pulled students from their homes and from labor. Indeed, schools' proximities to highways and the various passer-bys was a grave problem, identified by Enoch in various

testimonies. Students were too close to the outside world's corrupting powers and needed to be further removed from the public.

As champions of the Common Schools movement professed, school needed to offer a protective environment – shielding students, at least for a period of time each day, from the chaos of the streets or the adult responsibility of a full day's work. Not only that, school's separation offered students the space to think and grow; in its isolation, school had the chance to foster a dedication to becoming someone else, to class mobility. School continues to separate our students from labor and economy, from the state, from truly public places where anyone can enter (a park, for example, or a public library).

School's fences from the world have been interpreted in different ways. Western education stems from the life of the monastery (in the Greek, to live alone), as Siva Vaidhyathan points out, a historical fact that lends places of learning a sacred quality. In Vaidhyathan's assessment, different from public space, private space, commercial space, and authoritative space, the unique and hallowed space of the classroom needs to be preserved, protected from the increasing exposures of a digitized world. Prompted by requests for university lectures to be recorded and made available via Youtube, Vaidhyathan argues that publishing classroom lectures or exchanges negates the revisionary possibilities defined by classroom space; suddenly, upon digitized record, a lingering consideration becomes an announced and publicized belief. Without boundaries, thought and belief are definite, students and teachers' voices publically recorded. If the classroom is available to all, then its primary purpose shifts, a change, Vaidhyathan warns, not to be taken lightly.

Tompkins's overarching metaphor for school, the cloister, also draws from school's historical charge. "There was a use for the cloister," Tompkins writes. "For the growth of human

beings an environment set apart and protected from the world is essential. But the cloister needs to be used for the purposes for which it was originally intended: quiet reflection, self-observation, meditative awareness. These are the gifts of the cloister that allow the heart to open without fear” (220). If school has closed out emotion, as Tompkins argues it has, then it has shut out the purpose of its private definition. I do not share Tompkins’s proclamation that school absolutely precludes emotion; indeed, her own narrative suggests that school is charged with negative emotions: fear, competitiveness, insecurity, etc. My experiences as both a student and teacher have shown me how schools engage and reveal emotion; along with Tompkins’s work, this dissertation seeks to intervene by identifying a blind spot. As Tompkins and Vaidyanathan suggest, school’s separation from the world is required partly because of the feeling of learning.

6.2 CLASSROOM SPACE AS PUBLIC SPACE

If "opening" is the operative word in the definition of school as the meditative cloister, then it seems like such a space ought to put students in touch with the world, opening up possibilities. When we consider the classroom as part of the public sphere, we appreciate its movements towards the outside as well as the ways in which the outside world holds it in place.

The classroom, though distinct from the authority of the state, is still a stem of the government. In his 1848 annual report, Horace Mann directly links a reformed public education system to both the market and the nation:

For the creation of wealth, then,—for the existence of a wealthy people and a wealthy nation,—intelligence is the grand condition. The number of improvers will increase as the intellectual constituency, if I may so call it, increases. . . . Let this development proceed, and contributions . . . of inestimable value, will be sure

to follow. . . . The greatest of all the arts in political economy is to change a consumer into a producer; and the next greatest is to increase the producing power,—and this to be directly obtained by increasing his intelligence.

Classroom space provides means for students to become “producers” not “consumers” so that they can contribute to the “producing power” of the nation. School is considered preparation for the world (and thus the increased capital of a nation), an introduction to the public sphere students will fully engage upon leaving. School pushes students beyond the boundaries of the home to new uses of language, new notions, new skills, all of which can lead students to reimagine themselves, inventing stories that may conflict with what the private sphere offers them.

New uses of language may run counter to Mann’s espousal of producers and consumers, however. In other words, to engage the public sphere students must be able to participate, and capitalist enterprise is not the only means of public participation. In Habermas’s definition, the public sphere subsists on what Craig Calhoun calls “critical public discourse” (21). With active discursive exchange – a facet of Habermas’s public sphere that relies on an equally literate public -- societal consensus is reached and brought to the state. For Habermas, literary activity (reading and writing) is key to democratic dealings and evidence of a motivated discursive body. In this light, we can recognize the aspects of the public sphere at play in the classroom. In each classroom space a group of apparent strangers meet together – not to work and earn their pay, but to interact and to learn. Even when these strangers are a homogenous group, difference is present, and there is an immediate expectation for interaction. Whether students are primarily reading, writing, speaking, or listening, promoting discourse is one of the primary functions of classroom space and one of the primary ways we imagine schools can change students’ futures.

Former speech professor Robert Weiss, presenting at the 1989 Annual Joint Conference of the Speech Communication Association and the American Forensics Association, argued that the classroom represents public space because of the discursive power of the setting. When he asked his students whether the classroom is “a place where real public opinion can be formed,” students overwhelmingly responded that it was (4). Based on these reactions, he concluded that the classroom space was definitively “real” and thus a “public space.” Operating under Gerald Hauser’s definition, Weiss stresses that the “public sphere” occurs when students “transcend their private concerns to interact freely in ways conducive to forming a common sense of reality” (4).

To assume, however, that the classroom holds or produces an equally literate public, and to that end a public who might share a common sense of reality, is to ignore the social reality of the classroom and the public sphere. Theorizing the contact zone, Mary Louise Pratt critiques the notion of the modern nation as “imagined community.” Our understanding of the modern nation, she writes, is a community propagated through language, which operates as a unifying and homogenizing force, leading us to a “universally shared literacy” (38). Instead of echoing these notions of the modern nation, Pratt offers the contact zone, or a social space where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (34). Meeting, clashing, and grappling amidst “highly asymmetrical relations of power” doesn’t pose a “common sense of reality” as expected or anticipated, yet this reality need not impede learning (in fact, I would argue, it often enhances it). As Pratt’s critique suggests, community has its darker sides, covering up resistance, ignoring doubt or questions, evening out unwanted dissonances.

I am pausing on the word community because it is so often used to describe the classroom. It is a powerful term, as evidenced by a simple online search for classroom community. Foundational aspects of community are necessary for a classroom to work, for any group to meet five hours a week for a year, for example. There has to be common understandings about what kinds of behaviors are acceptable and productive, about what to bring and what to use, about what to expect from other students and the teacher, about what to do upon entry and exit, etc. Explicit directions, even instruction, are an important facet of creating these understandings, and the term “community” has made an impact for teachers because it underlines the necessity of such attention.

Although I find it a powerful and useful term, “community” is also a myopic term. Community chooses to see a group as one, chooses to recognize and understand via the concept of allegiance and representation, despite the fact that many students, particularly in high school English or entry level composition courses, are conscripted to be in class in order to receive a degree or to obey the law, and their language use is situated under these constraints. Finally, learning ultimately occurs within the individual. No teacher really knows how each student feels about a classroom space.

Though education ultimately introduces and standardizes discourses, it also – in the meeting of voices – provides a meeting place for divergent discourses. In a classroom where students’ voices are heard, where we empower students to make (and recognize) discursive decisions, we cannot treat language as simply unifying. Moreover, in public school classrooms in much of the United States today, many of our students, though they can use their voices within the public sphere to influence public opinion, have not mastered English. Similarly, many teachers face students who are not recognized public citizens, who experience themselves on the

fringe of society. In these American classrooms, the public sphere takes on a new quality; school is defined partly because of its safety from the authoritarian matters of the state. As Pratt questions, “Are teachers supposed to feel that their teaching has been most successful when they have . . . unified the social world, probably in their own image? Who wins when we do that? Who loses?” (38). As a teacher and student, the classroom has made me continually aware of the discourses I do not know and cannot know. Education, in other words, has repeatedly disrupted any assumptions I have had of a common reality; though we may believe we foster our own values in our students so that they feel the same way we do, “community” is always an assumption on the part of the teacher and sometimes an imposition on the student.

6.3 CLASSROOM SPACE AS HINGE

The classroom borrows much from both worlds; our foundational metaphors for classroom space can lead us outwards to the activity of public life and inwards to the home, yet classroom space is neither public nor private. Despite its push towards the world outside of school – the market, the state, the public sphere – the classroom is irrevocably separate. Yet even in its separation, the classroom reveals new uses of language and new situations. It opens and it closes. It moves us forward and holds us still. Ideally, the classroom is the hinge where facets of the public and

private spheres meet, a pivot that creates its own spatial quality.³³ This pivot, this hinge between worlds, is partly what makes the school classroom such a significant place.

Elizabeth Ellsworth thinks about the classroom as “transitional space,” borrowing the concept from Donald Winnicott, a major psychoanalytic theorist and pediatrician of the mid-twentieth century. His theories of transition include our now colloquial understandings of the child’s transitional object, a naming born out of his interest in the hinges between inner and outer worlds. He identified transitions between ourselves and what lies outside of us as the prompts for play and creativity. Ellsworth seizes on Winnicott’s theory because it seeks to define precise moments of learning, which is the primary action we desire, of course, in the classroom. As Ellsworth reads Winnicott, learning is itself a transitional event, “made possible only when we dare to move into relation with the outside world of things, other people, environments, and events” (30). In other words, to learn is to transition into relationships with what exists outside of us. To shift from what Winnicott calls a “natural feeling” and what Ellsworth calls “habitual compliance” with the outside world, its “expectations, traditions, structures, and knowledges,” is to enter “a state of creatively putting those expectations, traditions, and structures to new uses” (30). She goes on to describe what psychoanalyst Jane Flax has illustrated as a continual movement between outside and inside, each specifying the other as it shifts.

Winnicott called this movement the never-ending work and play of keeping inside and outside both interrelated and separate. In order to learn things and in ways not given in advance, Winnicott believed, we need opportunities and capacities that allow us to be interrelated and separated at the same time. Thus, according to

³³ Consider the ways in which private lives of students are a required part of K-12 teachers’ concerns, where Individualized Education Programs and other documents trace students’ difficulties learning throughout the years, where contact with students’ past teachers provides access to students’ former years, and where students’ long relationships with their peers reveals private knowledge and familiarity, each classroom space is always imprinted by the home.

Winnicott, learning, changing, or becoming each requires opportunities and capacities for being (radically) in relation. (30)

In Ellsworth's hands, Winnicott's theory illuminates several key aspects of classroom space: 1) the primary purpose of classroom activity is to encourage learning 2) learning can only take place when an individual confronts outside voices and puts herself in relation to them, and 3) forming these relationships requires both prompts to engage these voices and prompts to separate. We need our classroom spaces to provide opportunities for undergoing transition; we need them to be "relational spaces."

The classroom offers us transitional events, events that are part of our lived experience. Though learning is an individual transition, we often undergo it surrounded by others. In turn, others push us towards new relationships, towards learning. Robert Weiss recognized that to be a real space – a meaningful space– the classroom must prompt interactions that allow for opinions to be formed. In other words, classroom space must allow for discursive activity that can elicit types of movement. If there is not enough room to move or enough cause to consider doing so, then students and teachers cannot resituate themselves; cannot change their minds, hearts, or both; cannot look at pieces of the world from new vantage points; and cannot hear pieces of language with new sets of background noise, new histories and associations. Weiss recognizes, in other words, that classroom space must offer powerful prompts to resituate, reimagine, and reconsider what we think we know and don't know, what we think is important, why certain situations elicit certain responses, and how we fit into the midst of these deliberations. All of those actions result in refeeling, a word – despite our many words for thinking through something again – we unfortunately do not possess.

Though I adopt Ellsworth's definition of learning, one unfortunate consequence of describing the classroom as transitional is that the classroom gets positioned as less important, less real than the "public sphere" or the "home," (hence Weiss's insistence that the classroom space is a "real space"). If the classroom is only a transition, a conveyance to the private or public sphere, we lose the value of classroom events themselves. Admittedly, classroom learning has its limits, but understanding the activity of the classroom as only in service of other spaces (home, labor, market, for example), denies the classroom its particular worth as a space and denies the student the possibility of experiencing it fully. Already, much of our culture speaks of the classroom in this light, as solely a machine of preparation. Part of the work of this project is to value the classroom experience for what it uniquely offers. Instead, I will use Winnicott's term "relational" to emphasize the classroom as a removed space that invites us to be in relation - with voices, ideas, knowledge bases, concerns, and the rest of our lives.

6.4 READING IN RELATIONAL SPACE

Emily: Now that you've written on your surveys, we wanted to talk as a large group about what you remember, what stuck out to you, and I thought maybe we could share those in the large group and see if anything new comes up that didn't get on these. To start you can just say what you wrote on here – what you remember, what stood out to you.

Student 1: Well, whenever we're talking as a group and giving our opinion, what we believe, like what we think would happen in the story in our discussion.

Emily: Okay, so I've got talking as a group, giving opinions and beliefs.

Student 2: I like when we came up and we were up here and we acted out.

Student 3: When we did those charts on our feelings.

Emily: Oh yeah, the very first thing when we cut out the feelings and split them up.

Teacher: Student 4, how about you?

Student 4: When we were reading in the small groups. When we went upstairs.

Me: The small groups.

Student 2: Ms., are you talking about the story that we read? That was a good story, I liked that story.

Teacher: I heard a lot of buzz about that story.

Student 3: Because it was kind of a mystery but not even.

Student 5: The best story was the one with the tree.

Student 2: No, that was good, though.

Student 6: The best one to me was the fireworks. That was live. That was crazy.

- *Classroom reflection on research process*

As Dennis Sumara describes it, the English classroom catches us in its hinge, asking for "private readings in public" (title), for students to bring their knowledge of being in the world to classroom reading events, while preserving the distinct nature of that reading. How did collective reading of narratives produce "poems as events"? And how were these events experienced in the relational space of the classroom?

6.4.1 Meaning as a Social Phenomenon

Let's first begin with an anecdote of "event-less" classroom reading, what Russell Hunt calls "teaching without meaning" in his 1993 description. I quote Hunt's anecdote in full:

A few years ago I asked an introductory literature class to read Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" and write their own responses to it. This was late in the course, so they'd had time to learn, if they were ever going to, that this was not a test, and that individual and peculiar responses would be valued -- or at least would not be "marked down." Covertly, I was hoping to find out how many students knew, before we discussed the story in class, that the "operation" that's the implicit subject of the whole conversation between the two Americans waiting at a railway station in Spain is an abortion. More overtly, I was trying to help the students use their writing to explore and extend their own understanding of the story before we discussed it in class.

The writing they handed in to me was appalling, of course (not more appalling than usual, naturally, but still of a kind that you'd only ever expect to see in a freshman

literature class). What I saw at the time were the disastrous handwriting; the incomplete and ungrammatical sentences, the complete lack of transitions, the absence of any sense of direction (or, indeed, of the existence of a reader out there beyond the page), and the highly skilled evasion of the story's central issue. Based on those papers -- virtually all of which amounted to highly general summaries of the discussion between the two characters, and elaborately phrased and entirely abstract value judgments about the artistic merit of the text -- I absolutely could not tell whether any of them had constructed a point for the story that was even remotely related to mine. My own had to do with the impact of the sudden discovery of pregnancy on this carefree, adolescent, Hemingway-style relationship. (In research since then, by the way, I've discovered, based on samples of similar students, that it is extremely unlikely that, in that situation, more than one or two of them realized that the story was about an abortion.) (119)

Hunt's anecdote fits into the same genre of teaching anecdotes I have offered throughout this dissertation (describing the failures of student reading), though Hunt determines (unlike McGann and Schneider) that his teaching, his "invitation" to students (to use Judith Newman's word), was the problem, the reason students couldn't become "readers out there."

So what was the problem with his invitation? Why such detached, avoidant reading in response to a straightforward assignment supported by Reader Response theory? Reading under these conditions had not become a meaningful event, Hunt explains. To be meaningful, he argues, the event must involve a reader, a text, and a situation, a situation where reading and writing have "*social* occasion or motive." Hunt declares that his assignment was meaningless. For students, the purpose of the assignment was to show that they could "read, decode, store and remember." The text, then, doesn't become an utterance, Russell claims, doesn't become socially significant. The text is simply "offered . . . as an 'example' of something, a pretext for a test" (120). Hunt, like the literary scholars seeking the comforts of private reading, blames this on school: "if we are looking for examples of language transactions which are of that peculiar, sterile, meaningless kind, the best possible place to find them is in school and university" (118).

School can be salvaged, Hunt insists, if we use the sociological underpinnings of Bakhtin and Voloshinov to move the "making of social meaning" to the "center" of classrooms and assignments, to the center of institutions. He uses "event" not to theorize the individual transaction of the reading event, but to consider the collective work of students within the composition or literature classroom. "It is powerful and useful," he writes, "to think of meaning as a social event," including "the reader, the text, and the situation" (118). When we view meaning as a social event, Hunt argues, we view the "written language event as either having, or not having, the pragmatic potential to establish, maintain, and deepen the social relations between people which are what make up a culture" (117).

I agree that Hunt's invitation was not likely to lead to meaningful individual readings from students, but students' misunderstandings of reading itself are undeniably part of Hunt's anecdote.³⁴ Hunt's students don't know a way to read Hemingway's story that helps them explore the central issue, its central ambiguity. Students, in other words, do not know how to make their reading eventful.

Like Hunt and other socio-constructivist educators, I argue that the collaborative investigation of the classroom creates meaningful, eventful reading. Unlike Hunt, I argue that the collaborative investigation of the literature classroom can and should build from the many difficulties we associate with individual reading experiences: situating and interpreting. In fact, I

³⁴ Hunt decides to remedy his invitations to student reading and writing. Instead of individual reading transactions demonstrated to the teacher, "collaborative investigation" fuels the curriculum in Hunt's remodeled socio-constructivist approach. We don't see situating or interpretation privileged here. Instead, students' questions rewrote curricular goals. For example, in Hunt's examples of teaching with meaning, students produced a class playgoer's guide to Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes* with students' questions and entries focused on "Lillian Hellman's life, the composition of the play, its historical background, its previous productions, and so forth" (124). This sounds like a great project, but it also sounds like a different class with a whole different set of curricular goals. It doesn't solve the problem of students learning how to read "Hills Like White Elephants" or how to work through a reading in writing, how to portray, and become, a "reader out there."

argue that those actions become deeper, richer, more expansive when we enact them with others. I don't mean to suggest that this is simply an issue of learning, as if students only practice these areas of literary competence with a group so that they can be a fully formed individual, academic reader. Instead, I am suggesting that the collective reading of the literature classroom is part of the disciplinary knowledge of English studies. In other words, though it is not easily tested, though it doesn't show up on standards, to experience literary texts through talking, writing, and sharing with others should be part of the English curriculum and the knowledge base we intend students to accrue.

Sheridan Blau would name this type of "textual and instructional event" a "literature workshop," an unfolding of literary practice that makes collective meaning and involves a group in the act of textualizing. I mention Blau here because he, too, uses "event" to define the model of literature teaching he advocates. For Blau, who reads Rosenblatt's body of work as inspiring his own, the term probably has origins in her transactional theory. In differentiating her term "transaction" from "interaction," Rosenblatt uses Dewey and Bentley's 1949 use of "transaction," their definition of a new scientific paradigm in which the human "observer, the observing, and the observed were to be seen as aspects of a total situation" ("Transaction" 98), as opposed to the scientist "breaking the subject matter into fragments in advance of inquiry" ("Transaction" 98). Rosenblatt's "transaction" is her definition of the "reading event," just as Blau's "event" is, I think, a name for the total situation of these readers reading together. To create "reading events" in the classroom is to be a practice-based classroom where a "transaction" between reader, text, and *other readers* comprises the total situation.

Like Blau, I am reframing the Rosenblatt transaction to be the total situation encompassed by a class of readers. A major difference between this approach and a more

traditional Reader Response approach is that “response” and the reading of the text are integrated, two events that maintain clear distinctions in Rosenblatt’s theory and Reader Response pedagogy. For example, Bleich, Probst, and Rosenblatt typically treat the activity of response as a single event offered immediately after reading. From here, a discussion can develop, but the distinction between the reading and the instantaneous response remains. Similarly, that written response itself becomes the theory’s hallmark, the marker of the “event.”

In the classroom, though, particularly when reading short texts out loud with others, readers situate and interpret within what I would call an extended event: reading, writing, talking, rereading, selecting, responding again, etc. In the version of situation I describe (and in Blau’s literature workshop), reading is not clearly distinguished for the readers and teacher from the immediate response unadulterated from other voices. Thus, in the pedagogical scenes I offer in this dissertation, the individual response occurs throughout various opportunities to discourse and becomes important in the way it is mobilized in the classroom. The classroom “poem as event” is disjointed, allowing for tangents and divergent voices. Furthermore, in a practice-based classroom, students’ responses aren’t compared simply to show the diversity of readings in a classroom (Probst’s interpretation of Rosenblatt offers this approach), but as part of students’ ongoing situating speakers, characters, and themselves. These various responses lead to practices of academic reading—pursuing ambiguities, for example, slowing down, and attending to the text.

Let me return to this section’s epigraph, a brief snippet of a conversation I had with students upon conclusion of this research study. As I mulled over how distinctly students remembered our reading of texts, how our reading seemed to have felt like “events” to them, I returned to this flippant conversation. In this beginning reflection, students name group actions

(*talking as a group, giving our opinion, coming up here and acting out, doing charts on our feelings*), they name specific times and places (*when we were reading in the small groups, when we went upstairs*), and they name specific texts (*that was a good story, the best story was the one with the tree, the best one to me was the fireworks*). Our reading of texts, the situating work we did in a variety of scenarios – small groups, pairs, individually, and as a class – had become events that students remembered, events that were referenced repeatedly during this conversation and in surveys. Why?

6.4.2 Practice-Based Classroom

In the previous chapter, I wrote, “As I taught, I considered the problem of changing what ‘reading’ means for students, an eventuality that can only happen, I believe, through repetitive and meaningful experience (the work of the classroom).” With a focus on creating meaningful experiences with others around texts, the teacher and I were creating a practice-based classroom. Sheridan Blau defines practice-based classrooms as “process-oriented, collaborative, and learning-centered,” descriptions typically more linked to writing instruction. These classrooms make “students rather than teachers the responsible agents for learning in classrooms” (5). Richard Beach, et al. describes teachers and students of practice-based classroom as joined through inquiry, a label that typifies the work students and I did while reading texts (*Teaching Literature*). These descriptions of practice-based classrooms are distinct from student-centered. In a student-centered classroom, individual students determine the path of the curriculum, with student choice directing curricular decisions. In a practice-based classroom, students are typically working with the same texts as other students, but their developing practices of reading

and interpretation drive the curriculum. Oppose this, for example, to transmission theories of learning, where in a more traditional English class interpretations are given, the teacher the carrier of knowledge and the student the receptacle.

Hunt's eventual classroom typifies a practice-based approach. Elementary school reading classes, often driven by metacognitive strategy instruction, also tend to be practice-based. Instruction is not typically on "texts" but on moves readers make with texts, ways readers can experience texts meaningfully. As I have approached the act of textualizing by breaking it down into various actions or moves (called strategies in the context of metacognitive instruction), I also supplement this description with how those moves became folded into classroom practices. What were student practices, and how did our time become practice-based? To answer these questions, I use the example of my reading Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants," the same story Hunt used with his class twenty years ago, with the sophomore group who participated in the qualitative study grounding this research.³⁵ Though our work was in small groups – and thus every student in each group spoke multiple times – the classroom practices I used were simply continuations of the same practices already established in my teaching of "Mr. Z" and *A Long Way Gone*. At this point, in fact, students were primed to use the social possibility of the small groups to engage a difficult text. To establish what these practices are, I will describe an hour and a half workshop on Hemingway's story. I draw primarily from my field notes of two small group discussions.

³⁵ As I describe in the Chapter Three, these students were in a regular English class at a large urban high school in an urban Texan city.

6.4.3 “Hills Like White Elephants”

When I first sat down with students, I reviewed objects and feelings by looking at previously made student webs. Students talked about difficulties, one saying that it was like “reading between the lines.” Remembering the reading practices we had been establishing got us ready to situate as a group. One student offered to read the first half page of Hemingway’s story, after which we stopped for a beginning bit of situating. Students listed, using the narrator’s language, our two major characters: the “American man” and the “girl.” We wondered about the language (“Are they father and daughter?” “Maybe he’s just a lot older.”) and I reminded students that these two characters would be subjects with feelings about objects, including each other. Another student read to the end of the page, and we stopped to check in again.

“So far any objects for them, any people or things they have feelings about?” I asked. Student one said, “Well they keep asking each other about drinks and what they want.” Another student said, “Drinks! They have been talking about it for a page.” We decided to put up that they’re “showing interest” in each other and their drinks. Then I asked them if there were any other places where the reader could hear feelings.

After some silence, Student Two quoted the girl’s line, “I was having a fine time,” while Student One pointed out the beginning of the line, “You started it.” I asked how the girl was feeling towards him in this line – positive or negative. They couldn’t agree.

“When do you typically hear these words [‘you started it’]?” They all agreed in a fight, and we put that line up on the chart and added a negative between the man and the girl. Student One pointed out that the girl was trying to have fun, quoting the words, “trying to have a fine time.”

“What about him? What did he start?” I asked. “If she’s trying to be positive, how is he bringing things down?”

Student Three responded, “When he says, ‘That’s the way with everything.’” We added it to our chart.

“So what’s he talking about here?” I asked.

Several students at once responded with the conversation’s topic, “Liquor.”

“Good, and I’m going to add everything’ because that’s what he compares it to. So how does he feel about this object box, the ‘liquor’ and ‘everything’?”

“Depressed,” Student Four said.

“Sick of it,” Student Five said.

“Just *whatever*,” Student Three said.

“Okay, so let’s remember these feelings: depressed, sick of something, just *whatever*, and she’s trying to bring things up.”

Student One offered, “Yeah, she’s trying to give him positive energy.”

After this brief conversation, two students read the part of the “man” and the “girl” with me as narrator. When we finished, we each wrote our questions and/or theories about the situation in silence. We began our conversation by sharing bits of these responses. The first major question we cleared up together was the nature of the speakers’ relationship, students throwing out confusing details, such as “Man and girl seems like father and daughter,” “he says he loves her,” “they argue like boyfriend and girlfriend,” “they’re having drinks together,” “they’re traveling together,” and “they don’t talk like they’re married.” We eventually agreed the two were boyfriend and girlfriend, and from there students began sharing theories of and questions about their situation. “She’s turning him down,” “He wants something more serious,

maybe a baby,” “He’s trying to get with her,” and “What’s going through her thoughts?” At this point we established together that there was something the man wanted from the girl, and that was the something she was pushing back on. Students were used to thinking/representing in terms of objects and feelings, so I represented these relationships in visual form on poster charts:

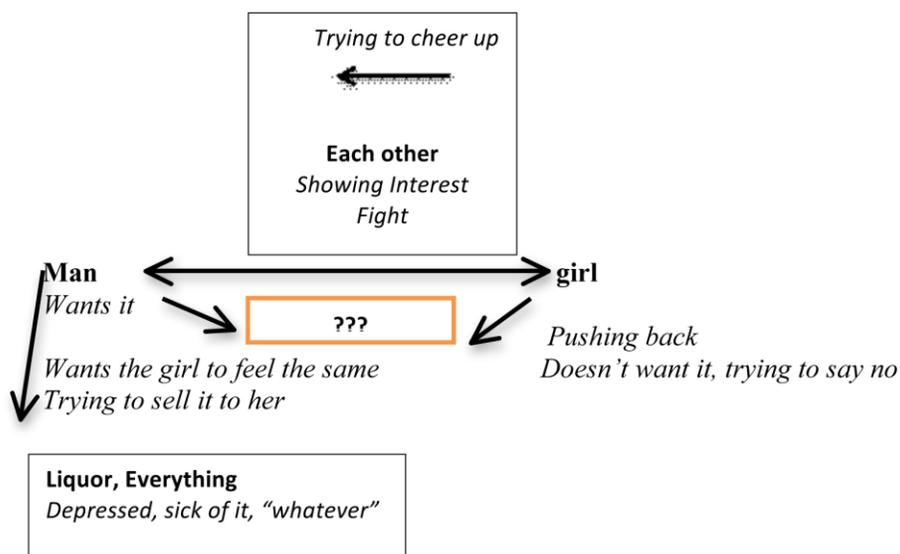


Figure 8. Hemingway Relationship Map

I describe these beginning practices in detail to highlight features of instructor and students’ roles in initial acts of joint situating. During these first thirty minutes, I am prompting students to determine subjects and objects and giving them particular guidelines for ways to do so (silent writing of questions and theories, sharing of ideas, question/answer discussion). At the same time, I am summarizing and representing their observations so that we can engage them as a collection, as a represented situation we are creating and responding to within the greater situation of reading together. Students are providing the bulk of the material we use to situate:

answers to my questions, questions of their own, observations, and quotations from the text. Their conclusions are pushing the class forward, though my prompts point them towards features of academic reading: attending to the text and embracing ambiguities, the two major reading moves Hunt's students ignored in their individual responses. I want to offer this example of students as those who were already trained in a kind of classroom reading practice – situating speakers, characters, and readers. Students were already aware that emotion (and thus relationships and situations) was a major topic of investigation. This set us on a particular path.

Let me briefly describe the remainder of these practices during our reading of “Hills like White Elephants.” Looking at our visual reminded us that the was an important missing object for the man and the girl. Everyone returned to their text to try to find lines that could suggest what the object could be. By sharing each line, students uncovered textual features that helped them learn more about the potential object and the subjects' divergent feelings. This led to several student theories, as well as conversation over the term “operation,” found in a key line one student had suggested. When students decided they thought it was an abortion, we returned to the text to find new lines that could support this reading and would be changed by this interpretation. The selected lines spoke to the girl's feelings as much as the man's. We discussed ways we knew the girl's feelings (narrator descriptions of her physicality, her emphasis of particular words), which was now easier to conclude with knowledge of the object and of the situation (the man “trying to sell it to her”).

Once students were decided on the abortion reading, they were visibly bothered, so I asked them to situate themselves in relation to new meanings: what new meaning places arose? They all agreed they were angry with the man, but feelings towards the girl diverged. Some were very angry with her (one student calling her “his naïve poodle”), while others felt empathy

towards her. From here, we listed “real life issues” that this story made us think about: *abortion, relationships, safe sex, drama, being careful with a person, everything is just right until something negative*, and, similarly, *life is all happy and then something happens and it’s over*. This question is a version, actually, of a recognition assignment, as students are naming, generally, what they recognize from life in a narrative. I was particularly taken with the last two recognitions, especially the final one, because they come closest to capturing what Hunt calls the “carefree, adolescent, Hemingway-style relationship” the story presents. Indeed, my adolescent students were better at recognizing the “everything is all happy and then something happens and it’s over” quality of the conversation than I was (several students continually brought up the line, “We can have the whole world”).

We returned to write. Now that we had done much to situate characters within the textual world, I asked students to find interesting moments where they needed to consider the girl’s feelings through her words. In their writing, they included their selected lines and described their understanding of and responses to these lines. Everyone was in unanimous agreement that the girl was much “harder to figure out,” as the man’s dialogue was more explicit, his desires and disappointments more clearly stated. After we read our responses out loud, students shared a feeling by which they would remember the story: *sorry, anger, crushed, amazed, sad, irritated, disappointed*. In conclusion, we returned to the strange naming, which had caused us so much trouble in the first place. “Why would our narrator call them the ‘man’ and the ‘girl’?” I asked. Students had various theories: “Maybe because he’s not actually being a man and she’s actually more of a grown-up”; “Maybe the author is trying to make him seem more important than her”; “Maybe the man just thinks he’s a man and we’re supposed to laugh at that”; “The author might be trying to make a point about how men used to have control over women.”

As this brief classroom description shows, our reading involved students in relationships, relationships dictated by the total situation. To read this way, we were continually aware of relationships which emerged with and between others (narrators, characters, concepts, and situations). Students were most concerned with how characters and they were in relation; these practices create the “poem as event.” But what is significant about these practices? How are they distinctive? In what ways, to use Ellsworth’s language, were students asked to make transitions in understanding and interpretation?

6.5 LANGUAGE USE

Richard Beach and Jamie Myers points out that to engage in social practices is to engage in a type of language use. We can only learn new discourses through social interaction.

As writers, drawers, readers, viewers, speakers, listeners, or photographers, we participate in social practices that use systems of signs such as language, music, or media to represent and communicate lived experience in a social world. Our skill in this participation is a consequence of our extended involvement over time in the particular textual activity or literacy practice. Although we would like to believe that we can be instructed in the skillful manipulation of symbols, we can learn to use the symbol system only through social interaction with other participants who value the activity. (22)

It wasn’t only that students were learning a kind of language use that defined literary practice. They were also engaging in a practice that motivated language use and experimentation. This practice was intentional. During my first visit, students sorted and created their own categories for emotion words to be used later during their writing and talking about reading. Figures 9 and 10 display two student examples. As the teacher noted again and again, this project immediately

brought students' attention to language and their experiences in the world. "When do you use this word, ex-as-per-a-ted?" several students asked while sorting words. Other students had similar questions. The teacher and I found ourselves offering situation after situation to help supplement the dictionary definitions students found. "It's like when" was the signal phrase. After creating their posters, students used the words to name relationships. "Those posters gave them something to stand on," the teacher commented later on.

It seemed to me that as students situated through language, they needed more from it. The posters introduced students to new concepts of feeling as well as the idea that language could offer those concepts in the first place. It also cued students to reach for words. Some students suggested new words to include on our posters, while some students added them to individual lists. At the same time, I began noticing students' use of metaphor and relational sentences ("it's like . . ." or "she's like . . .") in describing their reading of characters' feelings.

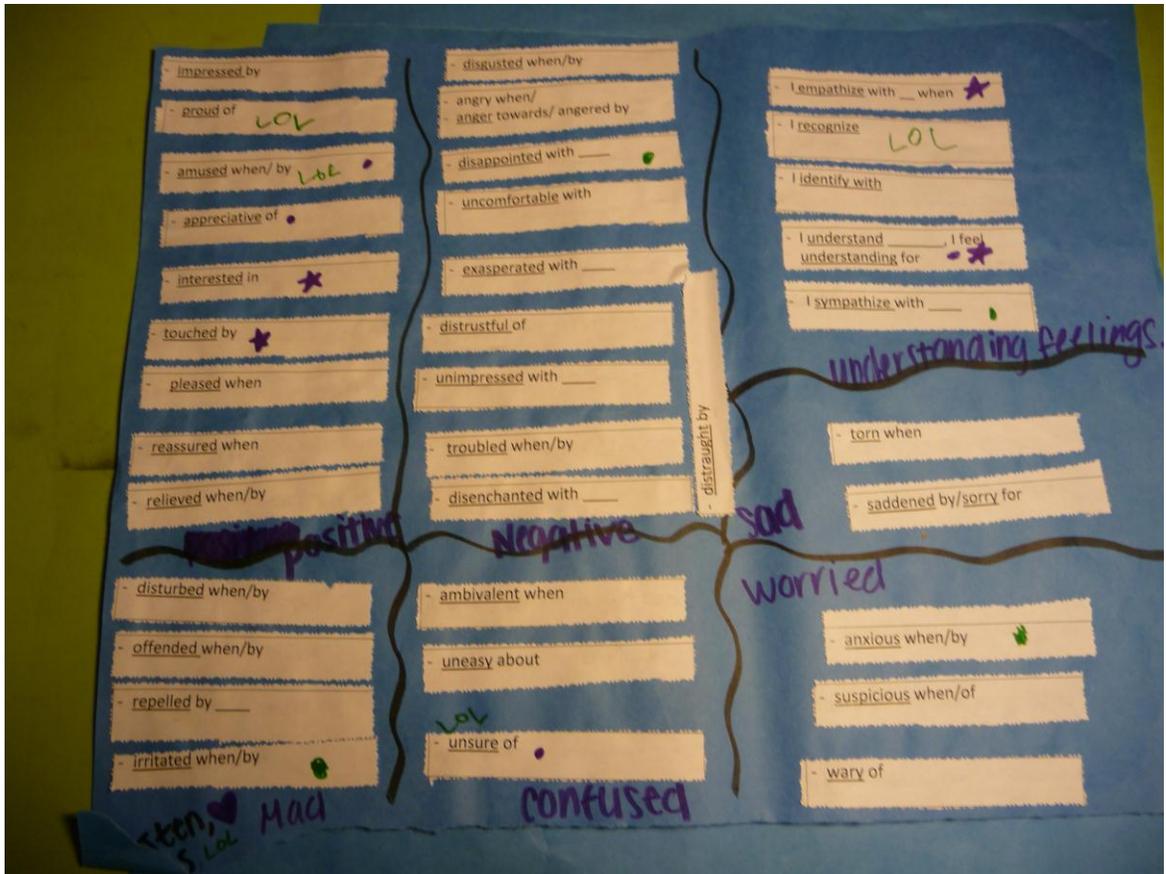


Figure 9. Emotion Sort 1

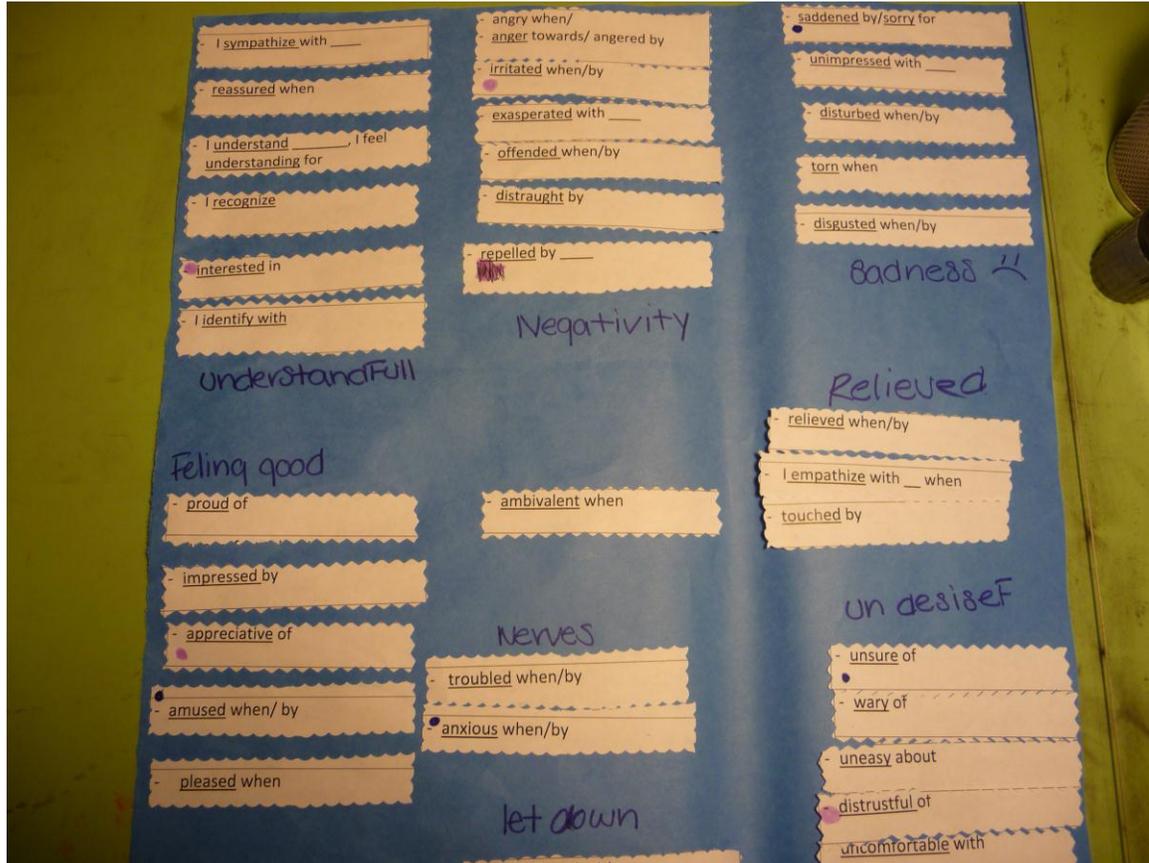


Figure 10. Emotion Sort 2

Beach and Myers present the traditional focus on language in the English classroom as a focus on “reproduction of convention,” both in terms of grammatical forms and correct structures as well as in terms of reading. “Reading,” they write, “consists of figuring out, with the expert guidance of the teacher, the authorized, official meaning held within canonical texts.” The belief that language is “capable of precision” supports the common impulse to master the story, “to make texts have exact and single meanings” (97), a frame of mind that tends to deter student thought, experience, and awareness. To move students towards what I have called situating (experiencing and determining relations between the subjects and objects implicated in a reading

transaction) is to move students away from language as fixed or static, but rather towards situated use.

Using Jim Seitz's discussion of metaphor, Beach and Myers emphasize how language use and conventions are constructed through these particular circumstances. As we occupy certain spaces with others, we establish conventions of shared usage.

Within a metaphoric approach, language meanings are invented in social interaction instead of simply shuttled between minds. . . . But every utterance of language is open for negotiation, allowing participants to explore how the values, expectations, roles, relationships, or desires of their many overlapping social worlds can shape layers of meaning possible for any word, gesture, image, or sound. . . . This suggests the need to move language study into the center of this dialectic between convention and invention. (8)

In their exploration of what they call a social worlds curriculum, Beach and Myers argue that a metaphoric approach to language should be a privileged classroom focus. While students read literature in this social worlds curriculum (social worlds such as family, peers, school, work, sports, etc.), they identify represented social worlds and investigate them in literature and life, collecting and analyzing the "actions, language, and symbols involved in creating that social world" (27).

Though I did not approach language through the study of social worlds, our use and discussion of language became a key way classroom space was defined and changed, a key way we created then, our own social world of the classroom.³⁶ Language became as much as means of invention as it had been one of convention. Students expanded their vocabulary for feeling

³⁶ Beach and Myers are clear that the classroom space itself is the most important social world at play in any English curriculum. "It is vitally important for the teacher to think about the classroom itself as the construction of a social world, separate from the larger social world of school and from other social worlds 'outside' of school" (26).

while relying on metaphor to name feelings, relationships, and situations. At the same time, they recognized more of language's metaphoric possibility in our reading.

A major component of my reading with students involved attending to word choice. In reflective surveys and conversations, word choice appeared several times,³⁷ and the participating teacher shared that she continued this emphasis when I was not engaged in my research. As I wrote in my introduction to this research, the participating teacher had begun the semester with a unit on connotation and denotation, an area of study that involved students in word choice before I arrived. Connotation and denotation, however, as Don Bialostosky describes, divorce words from their social use, a problematic separation that doesn't help students read discursive situations. He explains:

Our talk of connotations leaves us and our students trying without hope of success to find in (or around) words what does not inhere in them or drives us and our students into our individual associations with those words and the feelings they prompt in us. We look for a linguistic objectivity that isn't there or fall back on completely subjective associations. Where we need to go instead is from the words or phrases or sentences in the poems we are reanimating to the kinds of situations and the kinds of utterances in which they are typically used, the kinds of speakers who use them, the kinds of hearers who hear them, and the kinds of emotional-evaluational tones with which they are used in those situations. (8)

Indeed, the student who said he would advise readers "to look for words that help you understand what the reader is thinking or talking about"³⁸ is not looking at words in isolation, but rather as spoken by someone conveying a stake with a situation. For an example, let's look at a

³⁷ In the quoted conversation, one student explained, "And it was better because it showed us how to express, like more than happy and sad, we learned other words." On surveys, one student wrote as his response to what advice he would now give to other readers, "To look for words that help you understand what the reader is thinking or talking about," and one student wrote that his memories of thinking included "coming up with our own words for things."

³⁸ I believe the second student intended to write "author," "character," or "speaker."

small sample of a teacher and student conversation during our reading of “Hills Like White Elephants.”

Emily: What other lines help us think about the situation?

Student 1: “It’s the only thing bothering us.”

S1 explains that the line showed the object bothered the man, who is the speaker of the line. We added “bothering him” next to the ? in our visual.

Emily: Okay, now S2’s line.

S2: “ ‘It’s really an awfully simple operation, Jig,’ the man said.”

Emily: What’s the word that sticks out to you here?

Several students: Operation.

Emily: It’s a strong word here. *We put it on the chart.*

Emily: So he’s talking about an operation. And how does he feel about it again?

S2: He wants it.

S1: He thinks it’s simple.

Emily: Okay, let’s go back to S2’s earlier theory. Would we talk about having a baby as an ‘operation’?”

Students share various opinions, “hospital” being a confusing commonality, but eventually agree that no, people don’t use the word that way.

S3: What about having sex?

S1: No, I think it’s marriage.

S4: Then what about ‘operation’? You can’t call marriage an operation.

S2: Well it makes me think of surgery.

In this brief snippet, students display several practices of language that are definitive of the reading process they are engaging. First of all, students and I attend to word choice and word

usage. Not only are we paying attention to words' significance in the situation, we are also paying attention to how we know words to be used in the world, recognizing the situations that warrant their use. As S4 points out, "operation" just isn't a word we would use for "marriage," but a word that gets used in certain "kinds of situations," to borrow Bialostosky's emphasis on speech genres and Beach's emphasis on social worlds.

Students are also paying attention to descriptive names that modify or replace objects (or Voloshinov's epithets). They selected these lines on their own, lines which are crucial to our situating of the characters. S1 immediately notices "simple," while her own line includes the evaluation "bothering." Students are suggesting, wondering, and trying to fit ideas in terms of the overall situation they are creating together. To do that, they see language as indicative of relationships situated within particular circumstances. Language, then, as anthropologists Lutz and Abu-Lughod would say, both makes and captures the emotions we know ourselves and others to have.

I also approached language as the means through which worlds get made. Texts were worlds that set up norms of feeling and language use that might differ from our own. For example, "Hills Like White Elephants" is an extended single social interaction in a particular place. Each utterance begets another, and the greater extraverbal situation is never explicitly stated. Thus, it is impossible to read the story without engaging in its ambiguities (a great reason to read it with students; it is referenced by both Hunt and Scholes as an ideal text for challenging students to read meaningfully). While reading "Hills Like White Elephants," we stopped to write twice, both situating exercises. In our first writing exercise, we had finished reading the story and determining some basic observations as a group (see the earlier visual model). I asked students to write what they thought was happening in this scene. I mentioned that if they had questions, this

would be a good place to include them. We wrote for about seven minutes. I include one small group of five's responses:

What's going through the girls mind while her and the man are talking? The man might seem like a stranger to me but to the girl is like a friend. Do they really connect to each other about their feelings? The man might be trying to get with her and the girl might not realize it.

She doesn't like him talking, he keeps going on and on about something he thinks she doesn't want to do and I think she's getting annoyed by him and she's ready to leave. What were they arguing about? Why she was getting frustrated?

Are they together? But how can they be if it says a man and a Girl so is it like they are father and daughter? Why are they fighting in the first place? What do they mean by the whole world? What are they wanting to do, to where the man is saying that they will be all happy?

Why didn't the girl want to drink with the man. Did she like him or was trying to dump. Why is she telling him to stop talking.

My question for the man girl why didn't the story give names and what were these man and the girl to each other where yall girlfriend and boy friend or what?

With the text in hand, the major way we have to address the gaps between our language use and that of the text is to notice words and phrases that strike us as odd, vague, or "open for negotiation." Three out of these six responses include questions about language, and five out of the six use the narrator's language of "man" and "girl." Most of the students immediately recognized the naming as odd given the seemingly intimate conversation between these two characters. The third student also seizes on phrases "open for negotiation" and key to the man and girl's sense of themselves: "the whole world," which is used in a series of exchanges ('We can have everything.' 'No, we can't.' 'We can have the whole world.' 'No, we can't.' 'We can go everywhere'), and "happy," which is used three times in this brief story ("unhappy" is used

once). One other student notices missing language use (“why didn’t the story give names”). These questions suggest certain approaches towards language that I later realized were implicitly built into my reading invitations to students. The approach I adopted towards literary texts emphasized the subjectivity of language use, the basic idea that what you mean with a phrase might not be the same as what I mean. As simple as this sounds (particularly with an audience familiar with the fundamentals of semiotics), this disavowal of one to one correspondence is potentially significant for student readers. Related to this realization is the idea that language both invents and is invented by between spaces. By between spaces I refer to any kind of space where participants are present – where there is someone to hear utterances, which includes the reading of a narrative. For Beach and Myers, this is the two-sided significance of language: its role in both convention and invention. If utterances are always responses to previous utterances, they are bounded by convention and situation, yet the possibility of language allows for and promotes inventive uses. “We can have everything,” Hemingway’s “man” tells the girl. “We can have the whole world,” he says, getting closer, maybe, to what he means. “We can go everywhere,” he finally insists. Student three recognizes the possibility in “whole world,” the inventiveness, familiarity, and ambiguity of the phrase, produced within a between space, in dialogue with the girl. His reiterations, “everything,” “whole world,” and “everywhere” are provoked by her responses: “No we can’t.”

Language is made possible by these spaces, by the recognition of interlocuters, as is emotion. With our focus on emotion as meeting places, students tended to ask about the nature of these meetings (“What were they arguing about?” “What are they wanting to do, to where the man is saying that they will be all happy?” “Why is she telling him to stop talking?” “What were these man and girl to each other?”).

By the time we read “Hills Like White Elephants” in groups, students had had practice focusing on emotion in many different reading experiences. Though students would not necessarily have articulated their understanding this way, we were approaching emotion always as markers of situatedness. Students, then, noticed tone, evaluations, and wondered about objects of feeling, clear and unclear (*operation, the whole world, happiness*). Students were aware of, to use Voloshinov’s term, “an extraverbal situation,” and were interested in verbalizing it. That, in fact, was our job while reading together. Students’ understanding of that task, and perhaps their belief by this point that as a group of readers they could make inroads together, could account for how engaged students were during our final two stories. By the time I finished this study, students *wanted* to verbalize subjects and objects; their complicated relationships became important.

6.6 TONE AND JUDGMENT

Throughout this project, I considered how students were noticing and responding to tone. Tone was far too bound up in social significance, in meaning, to be a “coloring” or even a separate, “emotional meaning.”³⁹ I will define tone instead as a speaker’s articulated stake in a situation.

One student wrote the following when I asked them to choose an unclear line and think about it:

³⁹ Tone as an added emotional layer, a finishing touch, is one of Laura Micciche’s critiques of composition’s treatment of emotion as the last but not least pathetic appeal, an “extra” that improves communication.

“You don’t have to be afraid. I’ve known lots of people that have done it.” [man]
“And afterwards they were all so happy.” [girl]

I think when the girl says and afterwards they were all so happy I think she is starting to get a lil mad almost thinking in her mind you selfish or you not got the picture here you don’t care about other peoples feeling just how you turn out?

When this student shared his response, I asked if he could name a word or group of words that helped him pinpoint her feelings, and he immediately pointed to the “so.” The student is trying to fill in the “extraverbal situation” with his own expansion of the girl’s voice, what she is “thinking in her mind.” Up to this point, “happy” has been the man’s key persuasive term (though ineffectual, as the girl’s comment points out). As this student notes, her sense of the “picture” is in direct contrast to the man’s. Happiness, which the man has thrown out repeatedly as within their grasp, is called into question, the girl’s version of “afterwards” made opposite through “so.”

As this brief example shows, tone matters to readers when they are interested in where speakers place themselves in a situation, or how or what they reveal to be at stake. Interestingly, students’ tone also changed as they wrote at different points throughout our reading experience. One student’s response to the invitation to write briefly about her own feelings (who or what are you thinking/feeling about right now?) offered a tonal twist to “happy,” seemingly modeled on the quote the above student selected:

I think that the girl is Dumb because she’s gonna let “The Man” get the idea of having an abortion in her head. He suggested it and she’s gonna go along with it to make him happy. She’s being selfish. She just wants things to go back to the way they were (just him and her living very happy lives). He just wants things to be about him.

By the time we neared the end of our discussion, some students, I noticed, had extended the events of the story in their heads, deciding whether the girl was convinced or not by the man’s

words (and thus having an abortion) and directing their judgment against the man, the girl, or both. (The best counter to students' assumption that the story has continued and ended -- as if it were real, which is similar to McGann's critique of students' focus on "what happened" in the story, seemed to be finding new reasons to reread and reconsider.) When this student refers to "just him and her living very happy lives," she uses her own intensifier, "very," mimicking the girl's doubt of the happiness the man was selling ("so happy"). This reader is not convinced by the characters' "happiness" (or perhaps what she deems their inappropriate desire for it) or by the narrator's naming, "the man" referenced with quotation marks. However, this reader seems to have missed the girl's tone throughout this story, as she has concluded the girl *is* convinced by the man's portrayal of happiness. Paradoxically, she is mimicking the girl's sarcastic tone.

There are reasons to be displeased with this paragraph. As I mentioned, though she's mimicking the girl's tonal evaluations, this student seems unaware of the girl's subtle expressions of displeasure. She has also decided the story continues, concluding with the girl deciding to get an abortion. In many ways, then, this reader seems to only be half-listening, though she is full of judgment, offering plenty of evaluations: *Dumb, very happy, selfish*, to name just a few adjectives.

Judgment, as I argue in previous chapters, is an important aspect of reading narratives with others. Readers' judgments are typically made in articulations of feeling; they are a method of response, made possible through a mix of closeness/distance. Judgment pulls readers in two directions. In one direction, they look down at a whole --sometimes prematurely, sometimes after a good deal of situating -- a vantage point that allows readers to articulate the significance of a narrative (an extended situation). At the same time, judgment within the reading event has a

descriptive side; it can point us towards specifics that lead us towards an overarching significance.

Of course, judgment can lead to rejection or unwillingness. I am reminded of Bogdan's first graduate feminist literature class, whose students, eager to finally have a class explicitly name "feminism," rejected Updike's story "A&P," forcing it off the syllabus. There are obviously issues of programmatic representation here that alter the particular meeting of those students in that place with that story, but Bogdan, despite her insistence on including the stuff of ordinary existence, expresses concern over the closure judgment can provoke. Judgment can also lead to unhelpful generalizations. I.A. Richards, in *Practical Criticism*, reminds us that judgments may help us attend to precise similarities and differences, but they can also cloud specific circumstances and reproduce clichés, what Richards calls "stock feelings."

Though judgment is often a reductive way to declare understanding of a whole, I'd like to suggest here that judgment is also a sign of presentness, of being *here with these people and this narrative*. This student's committed judgments of the girl and the man reveal a confidence in her assessment of the narrative situation. Work has been done to get to this point, in other words. *Here is MY take on this*, this brief paragraph suggests.⁴⁰ Students need opportunities to judge, to close off, and opportunities to reopen what those closures may bring to light. In this way, articulating judgment can increase students' motivation to return to the text and their ability to

⁴⁰ In his discussion of how emotion becomes its own code, compressing and representing our perceptions, Opdahl reminds us how judgments, though they may go unarticulated, are part of our feelings of objects. The affective code's (Opdahl's term) "capacity to distill the whole in a flash of consciousness makes it an almost ideal form of representation" (232). Surely this student's memory of this story will include a flash of her disapproval for the girl and the "Man" and their "very happy lives."

reissue provisional language. It is our job, as I have endeavored to show, to guide students to use their judgments to investigate precise circumstances.⁴¹

For example, in the writing above, this student's writing suggests that perceived happiness is a major object for her in this story. I could use her writing to offer this response to students:⁴²

This student brought up some language that is important to her and important to the story. In fact, we could even say this is a key word in Hemingway's story, one he'd like us to consider in the situation. When this student wrote, "very happy lives," I wondered about her tone. How does she seem to feel about the way the characters talk about their happy lives? How do you feel about how they talk about their happiness?

Let's look back at this story and think about how "happiness" gets presented. What are all the words used to present happiness? Do both speakers use them the same way? Does happiness play a role for our narrator? Does he reference it in any way?

Some of you said on the first day that this story is about how happiness can suddenly disappear. What else does this story suggest about happiness?

Some students, such as the one who wrote the next sample, chose to write about the man, not the girl.

The man acts like his everything and wants to boss around the girl and tell her what to do. He acts like a dork and irritates me in the way that he is talking to the girl to make her do things that she doesn't want to do. The girl is acting more like an adult than the man, the man acts like an ignorant child at the store.

Expressing judgment leads this student to inventive language use – and a potentially inventive reading. He declares the man a “dork,” someone who acts like he’s “everything,” and someone

⁴¹ As we engaged in study of situation and language use, students moved from questions to judgment. Timing is important – ending each classroom reading event with articulations of judgment leads students to close off readings, not re-open. The opportunity to write, here, is key – it allows students to develop more precisely what their feelings and objects are.

⁴² Because of its potential to offer readers new places and reasons to open (produced through emotive narrowing), opportunities to judge ought to be presented through writing.

who “acts like an ignorant child at the store.” I was surprised by the comparison to eager, persistent children cajoling their parents into buying them one more thing. But the idea of a child persisting, whining and convincing until he achieves his goal is ironically apt for Hemingway’s “man.” Bothered by the narrator’s naming, this student’s simile assigns childhood characteristics to the man, not the girl. Not only that, the simile recognizes, I think, the grabby, entitled attitude of the man towards the world, his repetitive “we can have everything” or “we can have the whole world” assertions of his belief that all of it, each toy on each aisle, could be theirs. This student took an opportunity to express feeling in both directions: declaring judgment and describing qualities. Doing so provided him a new reading, a new stake in the situation. Figuring out how to unpack his simile, as I have just done, is a next big step for this student.

6.7 LANGUAGE USE AND TRANSACTIONS

In a final conversation, the students, the teacher, and I reflected on being part of this research. Several voices captured the way inventive language use defined our classroom space. I offer relevant snippets of a lengthier conversation:

Emily: So I wanted to hear your opinions about you as a class, and the positives and negatives for doing the research. I just want you to be honest, because I’ve tried to look at it honestly, too.

Student One: I think it really helped us, like people who never really, never really, I don’t know how to explain it, interacted with class, like I think it brought everybody in to working more. More people were outspoken instead of like keeping to themselves.

Student Two: We got more comfortable around each other.

Participating teacher: So you were really good about letting each other say what they thought. You were good about accepting other people's points of view, you let each other share, there wasn't anybody there who was going to say oh that's really stupid. You just shared what you felt. And that may be because as Ms. Wender led you through all these exercises, you did begin to feel comfortable and to open up and say, I really think this.

...

Student One: I think it gave us positive ones [relationships] because instead of just being like oh that's so stupid like no in my opinion I would want to say that at first but now I'm sort of like well I understand where you're coming from I got that from the story, too, but this is what I thought of it.

Participating teacher: Because you got to hear all those different opinions and they were all shared and were all valid. Anybody else want to share anything else that you liked, anything in particular?

Student Four: Uh yeah, I liked that you was helping us, like, I liked that she was helping us to know the way to write, the correct way, and also we were helping you with your book and showing you how people feel and how different readers see different stuff.

Emily: I appreciate that, too. This was different for me. When I'm usually teaching, I'm not looking for my students to teach me things, but with you all, the whole time I would go back and write about what you said, what you thought, so I was getting something from it in a different way.

Student One: There was never a right or wrong. It was just an opinion, like, you were never like, oh that's not the right answer, this is the answer.

Student Two: And it was better because it showed us how to express, like more than happy and sad, we learned other words.

Emily: Yeah you guys actually did that really well, bringing in other words.

...

Student Five: Sometimes we all wanted to say something about it.

Student Three: And then we started arguing. Then we got really loud.

Emily: Yeah. I would say that one of the things that stuck out to me that was hard for this group was just like being able to all be on the same place at the same time.

Participating teacher: You found all the discussion productive or not productive?

Multiple students: Productive

Student One: It made it easier.

Student Two: It was better.

Participating teacher: So the discussions were actually helpful and helped you think about your own thinking, which is by the way, what school is all about. How do I know what I know? Looking at evidence, taking things apart, dissecting things, so if discussion is helping you think about your thinking, that is wonderful because that is the point of school.

Student One: Yeah, I wrote down that it helped you learn things that you never knew you never knew, like I don't know how to explain that.

I see a variety of understandings about language here, some of which contradict each other. Students connected the idea that readings or feelings were not right or wrong, with language itself offering more than simple labels of happiness or sadness. Expression itself took on greater proportions, several of its meanings at play. Students expressed feelings, as in “got them off their chests,” but they also expressed those feelings through various expressions, or ways of speaking. These, of course, mutually specify each other through language. What students could say changed what they recognized. This expansion expanded class discussions – more students had more to say. Thus, a desire to speak about reading itself grew. Listening even started to become fun; with each new expression, the reading event became more layered, inviting more responses from different readers.

On the one hand, this description models a key component of Probst's popularized understanding of Reader Response pedagogy – the interpretive diversity of a classroom, or as the student above puts it, the idea that there weren't any right or wrong answers. Similarly, another student comments on how the class showed me “how different readers see stuff,” yet at the same time that student mentions how I emphasized the “correct” way of writing. Beach and Myers

would call this evidence of the tension between language as convention and language as invention. Though this student was referring to writing as correct (not reading), the other student's comment that "there was never a right or wrong," and that she started not to label others' comments as "stupid" highlights her impression that searching for a clear answer (while recognizing the "stupid" ones) is also the norm in reading. This tension has played out in our literary pedagogical trends: objective New Criticism (which now, in some ways, has been reduced further through standards and standardized testing's influence on the teaching of English) pivoted against subjective Reader Response criticism. On the one side, objective texts hold meaning, and on the other, subjective readers make meaning. This is exactly the untenable opposition most teachers reproduce in their own teaching, Mark Faust argues. Writing in 2000, he explains:

Teachers entering the profession today inherit a legacy of profound uncertainty about what literary experience is and how they should talk about it. Many would agree in principle . . . that appropriating reader-response theory for purposes of classroom instruction requires a shift of emphasis from "analysis" to "experience," which in turn requires "a balanced, harmonious pedagogy" wherein neither readers nor texts are predominant (Clifford, 39). Nonetheless, when it comes down to making curricular decisions, many are conflicted about their ultimate responsibility in relation to students' personal responses to literature and thus continue to perpetuate practices aligned with New Critical approaches to literary reading (Applebee, 1993). (11)

As Faust points out, this tension calls into question what it means to experience literary texts, particularly with others in classrooms. At the core of the tension, according to Faust, is our objective and subjective understandings of experience. Quoting Raymond Williams's key words analysis, Faust identifies "experience's" objective definition as "knowledge gathered from past events," with its competing subjective definition as "a particular kind of consciousness, which can in some contexts be distinguished from reason or knowledge" (11). Through Dewey – and

Rosenblatt – Faust argues that these divergent conceptions of “experience” need not be conceived in contradiction. In Rosenblatt’s interpretation of Dewey’s “art as experience,” literary experience is a production of knowledge *through* “a particular kind of consciousness,” and that “consciousness” itself, is the “experiential activity,” i.e. knowledge, that we gain through contemplation of literature (13). In this non-dualistic model, the reader, the text, and the circumstances themselves create the *event of reading*: the experience in Dewey’s terms, or the “poem” in Rosenblatt’s. Only through these “complex patterns of reciprocity” do we undergo a literary experience (12). Most critics and teachers have misidentified Rosenblatt’s transactional model as interactional (Probst, in fact, uses both words), which nullifies Rosenblatt’s attempt to undo dualistic understandings of experience.

6.8 CREATING CLASSROOM READING EVENTS

What difference could this make to teachers who feel forced inside this opposition, as I often have? Though Faust doesn’t imagine practice-based differences in his article, I present this dissertation as an answer. First, we ought to approach reading texts in our classrooms as reading events. What do we want to happen during those events? What kinds of experiences do we want students to have? This goes against most curricular thinking, which often asks us to begin at the end: what will students have produced in a paper or what will they need to know for a test? Blau would encourage us to understand experiential knowledge as its own knowledge base, its own endpoint.

Second, we need to imagine the reading event as a meeting place: readers, speakers, types of language, and situations are all meeting when we read literary narratives with others. As Ahmed reminds us, meeting places are by definition producers of emotion. Each time a reader identifies her contact with an object, there is a feeling to be integrated into a whole experience. We need to give readers time to identify the various meetings they are creating and encountering.

Third, listening is a key component of the reading event. We do not listen so that we all hear the exact same resonances, but because it is the fundamental way we meet and develop, in Heidegger's terms, "concern," a necessary component of having an "experience." By listening, we increase the potential for various reciprocities within a transaction: with more to listen to and more to be concerned with, there is more to say, to feel, to experience.

Fourth, we model provisional thinking; an active experience is something undergone, not something worked out and "answered." Making space for thoughtful consideration works against the messages most students (and teachers) hear about education, most obviously against final assessments, such as standardized tests, that offer right or wrong answers as a means of valuing reading. Slowing down also minimizes curricular lists, emphasizing depth over breadth. This is a major reason I suggest (along with Blau and Probst) using short texts in the classroom. As a student in this study put it, "I think the short stories – like, I like reading novels, too – but I think short stories are more intriguing because they leave you, they're not exactly clear at the end, and you're just sort of like, 'whoa, what happened.'" Granted, I used ambiguous short stories throughout this study on purpose, but this student has a generic point English teachers ought to consider: the short story does leave us wanting, whether due to our confusion or desire for more, and that wanting, itself a marker of literary experience, can generate a reason to remain and consider, to reread and listen carefully.

6.9 BECOMING A CLASS

What do you remember most about these research visits?
That we had to read & that we got recorded but when I read I always had an image in my head & it made me think.
Group descoision and having fun talking about topics and trying to find answers.
Read a lot of storys they most about making you into a better person or having you relize things around you.
I Remember Reading A Long way gonethe most because I enjoyed Reading it and having activity about it.
The thing I remember most is how too feel what the author is feeling. It was a real interesting experience.
That we would always have great class discustions
How we got to see another side of each other when we read to each other I'm happy I felt that way when I read.
We Read alot of storys and did a lot of group work.
The time we read Hills like Whtie Elephants (small groups) b/c it was the story grabbed ALL of my attention & the discussions were great.
How simple questions helped me learned about myself and the way I read. It showed me how I feel towards my reading.
We did lots of reading and a lot of time in groups.
I have to say that the most memorable thing is the way that the whole class would actually stop talking and actualy listen for about five minutes.
The fact that we could all talk about the stories and have discussions as a group.
Figuring things out from stories and working in groups and Ms. Wender giving us advise about what we should do.
The stories I loved the stories. They were very interesting.

Figure 11. Final Survey Question

I include the fifteen participants' responses to this question to consider the "eventfulness" of our reading. There are many possible reasons for students' engagement in reading events – not least of which is simply their participation in the study, what is typically labeled the "Hawthorne Effect," when "subjects in behavioral studies change their performance in response to being observed" (HBS Library). In other words, simply being part of a research study can alter students' engagement. That is, a researcher being in the classroom and impacting the curriculum could be in and of itself "eventful," as could the simple realization that that day the class would stray from its typical plan. Therefore, I cannot help but conclude that students benefit from participating in studies that put their literary engagements front and center.

It is worth noting, however, how students identified experiences. Of the fifteen responses to this question, nine mention "discussions," "groups" or "each other"; clearly, *others* were an integral part of how participants remembered the type of reading we did. Seven of these responses mention these others with a clear positive evaluation, such as "how we got to see another side of each other when we read to each other I'm happy I felt that way when I read."

One student made this evaluation clear during a full class conversation about short stories: "I kind of like short stories better because then we can have all kinds of discussions because if it ends up the way the tree story did, with the little girl, we get into big discussions about it, and then it makes us feel like we're actually like a class." I returned to this insight several times while drafting this chapter. I knew this class did not share a "universally shared literacy," but a joint language use had emerged: language was inventive, something that changed with use amongst people. It was also crucial to an understanding of emotion. I was deliberately altering shared usage, throwing new words into the mix, pushing students towards new areas of focus, and placing new pressures on language use by asking for emotional responses. Language

made and illustrated feeling; thus, students reached for new kinds of words and phrases when emotion became an analytic category. Interestingly, our language use often highlighted the diversity of students' social worlds, as opposed to smoothing them out through collective speaking. When language was used to voice and analyze feeling, students often differentiated themselves, highlighting that despite our shared focus on language, the classroom was indeed a "contact zone." At the same time, a collective use of language catalyzed and focused students' desire to speak and to listen, intimated in this student's observation.

I didn't read this student's observation as a testament to a classroom community, but rather a sense that "class" itself is a significant term, one that highlights reading together as productive and eventful. The idea that a desire to speak with others about literature could be revolutionary seems strange to me, as this is how I – and my professors, teachers, and colleagues – have understood the English class. But this idea was novel to these students, and I would suggest, novel to many students in American high school classrooms. I will venture that there are a variety of reasons for this disconnect, one being teachers' understanding of their purpose, another being education's general trend towards isolating transparent skills, highlighted by questions/tasks with right answers.

Of course, implied in her definition of an "actual class" is a definition of an "actual student." Listening, one student responded, was the most "memorable thing": "the whole class would actually stop talking and actually listen for about five minutes." Another student remarking on what it was like to be part of this research study shared that "it felt like you can say more and people would listen." As students began to see themselves as subjects with objects of attention, there was more for others to listen to. Ultimately, emotion as a category of analysis contributed to a classroom where reading is a meaningful, social event. While paying attention to

characters' key words and feelings, students are challenged to listen to others within texts, not only in the classroom. In Scholes's terms, that is the act of college reading that so confounds our students, readers who stop listening when they think they hear a familiar lesson or an expected conclusion.

6.10 "LOOKING AROUND" AND CHANGING RELATIONS

Classes build up memories of events, and as English teachers, we want the reading of texts to be high on those lists. Though the classroom is not a place Rosenblatt illustrates for us, she gestures to it in describing reading's social possibilities: "The reader is engaged in a creative process at once intensely personal, since the poem is something lived-through, and intensely social, since the text, as a 'control,' can be shared with others" (126).

How do we make reading in the classroom an event? Sumara would answer through the structure of the curriculum, through what we do and in what sequence. Using the verb form of "occasion," or what the Oxford English Dictionary defines as "an opportunity arising from a 'falling of things towards each other'" (200), Sumara describes occasioning as a moment "when aspects of curriculum have 'fallen together' in unexpected, but interesting ways," when a teacher "is able to lay a path of understanding that was previously unknown" (201). We could think of occasioning as events of learning. Sumara's examples of occasioning include students making unexpected connections, realizing a new significance, and forming deeper relationships with texts (and at times, other students or ideas). Learners and teachers occasion when they recognize new relationships. Sumara's occasioning gives us another way to understand Ellsworth's "being

in relation.” Ellsworth begins her own description of “being in relation” by describing a sudden glint in a student’s eyes, the evidence of a newfound awareness. Sumara, too, describes a student who reconsiders the novel *The Chrysalids* after hearing a guest speaker describe his experience as a gay man. “It was weird,” the student admitted, “like, I was able to understand what the book was saying after listening to him talk to us about what it was like to be gay. When I think of the book now, I think of some of the things that Tony said and how, all of a sudden, I understood what life was like for him—how difficult it was” (202). Ellsworth and Sumara’s students feel something in these moments. We could call it the quality of eventfulness, of things falling together and new relations made. But for classroom reading to be eventful students must recognize events happening and identify themselves as event-makers.

“When occasioning is in process,” Sumara writes, “the usually confining boundaries of the curriculum become transformed into boundaries that gather up the students, the texts, and the teacher into a set of relations that unfold into new understandings and new possibilities” (217). These layers of relation are made possible by determining situations and attending to the play between inside and out. As I have sought to establish here, the classroom can be a powerfully relational space, asking students to stand in relation to subject matter, to other voices, and to textual situations.

What does emotion have to do with this understanding of the classroom? Recognizing the classroom as a social place – full of others’ words – I start by reminding us of Aristotle’s passions. In Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, emotions are social phenomena, born out of social situations. They are also the things that change our opinions and potentially our actions. Always directed towards others, emotions lead us to “deliberation”; hence the reason, Aristotle argues, rhetoricians must be masters of instilling them in others. For Aristotle, pointed emotions are the

rhetorician's concern; static emotions, what we might call states or dispositions (such as feeling content), are not momentous enough. They don't carry sufficient weight to roll us towards deliberation.

The sociality of the classroom immediately puts readers in situations and roles. Aristotle emphasizes emotion as that which causes movement to deliberation, what Kenneth Burke might call "incipient actions." Emotions are rarely dormant, rarely still. In Heidegger's Marburg lectures on Aristotle, he explains how our social placement makes emotion, and speech, possible. "The being of human beings is *being-in-a-world*," Heidegger explains, adding that this being-in-a-world is characterized by speaking, which "is itself the mode of fulfillment of a *concern*, of a concerned mode of *involving oneself* in the world" (47). He goes on to qualify concern as "*looking around*." Our "concern," or our awareness of the world around us, of in between spaces and potential contacts, is created by our social placements. As readers, it is the fact that we are socially placed that creates emotions, and emotion that creates our drives to speak. Emotion is a "looking outward," reminiscent of Ahmed's reading of contacts. By the OED's definition, "concern" is a "relation objective or subjective." It is in respect to, in relation to, the effect of "looking around" at where we find ourselves.

I have described readers looking around, *concerning* themselves, actions that define our being in the world through language. As readers, our various emotions give us opportunities to create new relationships with situations, voices, characters, texts, others, language, etc., particularly when we are placed within the already social setting of the classroom. Emotional responses then, following Ellsworth's theory, led us to transition, to learn. The classroom became a place defined by this shared looking around, and I felt as if I were watching students learn how to concern themselves with the act of reading literary narratives. Inviting emotion to

be our major area of concern – in texts, in ourselves, in language -- made the classroom a uniquely relational space where reading became eventful.

Dennis Sumara argues that as every reading experience is part of our lived experience, we are continually imprinted by the reading experiences we undergo. In turn, we imprint the texts we read for others, “inscribing” them “in the collective experience we bring to new situations” (113). Furthermore, Sumara points out, as one person’s lived experience is changed by their reading, then “her or his relations with others in the world will be affected” (114). As emotional readers, we look around, and we learn.

CODA

This project is first and foremost pedagogical. Though I argue that emotion is a productive category of attention in the reading of literature, I do so in the service of readers in classrooms, particularly those readers who may not read literature on their own. Ultimately, this project illuminates what emotion as a privileged focus can make possible: active interpretation, use of language as invention (a key way these classroom experiences straddle both reading and writing instruction), and collective desire to speak and to listen. I began this project with an interest in the transition from high school to college and thus paid special attention to scholars writing about first year students' reading. That transition, most often cited as "college readiness" in the realm of secondary school, frequently makes its way into state standards and national discussions of public education and literacy. Having been a high school teacher in a Title I secondary school, I understand the many institutional requirements that can limit what happens in classrooms. This project, however, is not offered in the name of college readiness or even an increase in college attendance. Indeed, a good number of the students participating in this study will probably not become college readers at four-year institutions.

Rather than operating under the premise of preparing all students for college, this work follows the democratic principle that all students ought to have the opportunity to read literary

texts with others in a way that produces a desire to use language, to textualize. I hope that students in middle and high schools experience the reading of literary texts with others as a meaningful social event. In this study, I construct this eventfulness through attention to emotion, and indeed that is the grounding argument throughout. As students suspend assertions of meaning, consider and construct relationships, attend to and describe emotions as meeting places, identify what speakers/characters care about, and notice the details that do not fit, they create a collective transaction with readers, teacher, text, and context. By inviting students to situate themselves and textual others, students grasp the richness of discursive situation, which I present as the key to narrative.

Language makes all aspects of this eventfulness possible. Primarily, language makes and illustrates feeling. In this study, students reached for new kinds of words and phrases when emotion became an analytic category. Interestingly, our language use often highlighted the diversity of students' "social worlds," as opposed to smoothing them out. When language was used to analyze feeling, students often differentiated themselves. Despite our shared focus on language then, the classroom was indeed a contact zone. At the same time, a collective use of language catalyzed and focused students' desire to speak and to listen.

Sheridan Blau defines this contextualized, practice-based literacy as "performative literacy," which is not the knowledge of how to make meaning from a text or the knowledge of textual features, but the "dispositions" that "enabl[e] knowledge" (208). These teaching scenes fundamentally link the teaching of performative literacy with the teaching of textual literacy (Blau separates performative literacy from Scholes's reading and interpretation), but Blau's distinction allows us to imagine readers who are literate, yet struggle to extend that experience beyond initial conclusions (204). For Blau, performative literacy includes the "capacity for

sustained, focused attention; willingness to suspend closure; willingness to take risks; tolerance for ambiguity, paradox, and uncertainty; intellectual generosity and fallibilism; and metacognitive awareness,” a list that mimics the academic reading moves I gather from college instructors writing about their students’ reading: attending to the text, noticing what does not fit, suspending declarations of meaning, and slowing down (211). Though performative literacy is “foundational to the cognitive processes that most teachers identify with literate behavior” (and as my research suggests, the aspects of college level reading that most elude new students), it is also what “literary instruction and the culture of school may seem more intent on nullifying rather than nourishing” (208). “Nullifying” may seem harsh, but it helps explain why performative literacy might be so lamented in college level students. The culture of school, most specifically the culture of schooling created through standards and standardized curriculum, invalidates acts of complication, of suspending conclusions, attending to the strange or out of place, and exploring ambiguities. How could schools test such dispositions, if testing is the ultimate assessment? How could they measure what a student has gained without clear objectives of knowledge?⁴³

In this coda, I’d like to mark this study as occurring at a moment in time within American literary instruction and national education policy. Taking Blau’s critique seriously – that the culture of school often nullifies the very attributes of literary reading that enable students’ knowledge of texts, that create meaningful experiences with texts and others, and that the transition to college reading demands – means taking seriously the culture of school and the policies that create that culture. I take the American public high school, its students, and its

⁴³ Teachers must face genuine versions of these questions in their own classrooms, and these are questions I seek to answer through pedagogical description: how do we teach a practice of valuing language? Or, to return to Wilner, *how do we teach and measure an experience?*

teachers seriously, as evidenced by the placement and direction of this study. To do this contextualizing – and to stress the urgency of my argument right now – I will explore the descriptions of reading currently being offered by The Common Core State Standards Initiative. The Common Core State Standards Initiative is an organization that has composed and advocated for the adoption of standards of learning to be shared by all states, as opposed to the individual standards composed and ratified by state bodies. Through this common adoption, the Common Core intends to simplify and unify American education with a concerted push for all students to be college-ready. With a straightforward list of content and skill-based standards, the Common Core hopes to clarify educational goals for all constituents: parents, teachers, students, and policy makers.

The English Language Arts and Literacy standards, composed by David Coleman and Susan Pimentel, have now been adopted by forty-five states. Their sheer geographic spread illustrates the influence of the Common Core, ultimately composed by two authors alone. These are the standards that will determine the curriculum, the textbooks, the training of teachers, and the texts produced to train those teachers for the vast majority of the country. The Common Core's current documents regarding the teaching of reading in grades 6-12 sketch the future of literacy instruction, a future that will be felt by university English departments who receive students raised on the theories of reading offered by the Common Core.

What theories of reading are offered by the Common Core, and what kinds of literacy are valued? What aspects of performative literacy are mentioned, and how are they emphasized? Finally, what kinds of pedagogical invitations do the standards inspire, and what culture of literary instruction might they create? I will represent the standards through the authors' publishing criteria, which was released to the public in August of 2011 as a revision of an earlier

draft. This copy contains an introduction to the standards and an explanation of how these standards might shape curriculum and instruction, obviously intended for textbook creators.

Perhaps what is most clear from this document is that Pimental and Coleman are invested in the text itself. They want to see students exhibit “careful examination” (1) and “careful reading” (7) as they “encounter[r] text on its own terms,” not their own (8). “Close reading” is one of their most important terms. In their discussion, to read closely means to “follow details of what is explicitly stated” (15). The authors envision instruction that focuses only on “what lies within the four corners of the text” (4). Students who benefit from this instruction ought to “make valid claims that square with all the evidence in the text” (6). Indeed, “good questions will often linger over specific phrases and sentences to ensure careful comprehension” (7) so that students “follow details and logic of an argument” (9).

The authors give us a sense of what kinds of texts will best fit these reading acts. Their definition of close reading “requires compact, short, self-contained texts that students can read and re-read deliberately and slowly to probe and ponder the meanings of individual words, the order in which sentences unfold, and the development of ideas over the course of the text. Reading in this manner allows students to fully understand informational texts as well as analyze works of literature effectively” (4). They explicitly favor thesis-driven texts and are most interested in the promotion of “in-depth engagement with the informational and argumentative aspects of these texts” with an unequivocal move away from texts organized by narrative (8). “The standards emphasize arguments (such as those in the U.S. foundational documents),” they explain, “and other literary nonfiction that is built on informational text structures rather than narrative literary nonfiction that are structured as stories (such as memoirs or biographies)” (5).

There is much in these criteria that seems to take into account the concerns of instructors of first-year college students, which I have explored throughout this dissertation. The standards as a whole continually return to the idea of college readiness and a current lack of opportunity for 9-12 students to engage complex texts slowly and deliberately. The authors capture the current situation of literacy instruction by reminding us that students do not read complex texts in high school, nor are they asked to engage the texts they do read with complexity. Almost as if a rejoinder to the concerns of Scholes and Wilner, the authors are clear that students are not to be reading the clichéd themes they think they recognize, but engaging the text itself – however unfamiliar or difficult. Similarly, as my work in this dissertation shows, short complex texts *can* provide students with the space and reason to reread, deliberate, and interpret. Pimental and Coleman share my recommendation to use short texts that exhibit different kinds of complexity and provide students space to reread.

However, these authors' definition of close reading stands in stark contrast to the definitions offered in the scholarly work of teachers cited throughout this project. The Common Core's description of close reading undergirds their theory of reading in general, which asserts that reading texts directly leads to the attainment of knowledge. Here they describe their overall theoretical approach:

The standards focus on students reading closely to draw evidence and knowledge from the text and require students to read texts of adequate range and complexity. . . . The standards and these criteria sharpen the focus on the close connection between comprehension of text and acquisition of knowledge. While the link between comprehension and knowledge in reading science and history texts is clear, the same principle applies to all reading. The criteria make plain that developing students' prowess at drawing knowledge from the text itself is the point of reading. Reading well means gaining the maximum insight of knowledge possible from each source. (1)

It is not surprising perhaps that narrative is dismissed with this understanding of reading. Narrative doesn't fit this positivistic approach, where careful reading leads us to increased knowledge, just as scientific and historical texts lead us to new information. The authors mean to clarify and simplify the purpose of teaching English with this connection. In this formulation, college readiness refers to the ability to build knowledge through reading, and in the case of English, this means an increase in informational texts and knowledge as defined by thesis statements.

Who might read like Coleman and Pimentel imagine students should, working with what is "explicitly" in the text in order to gain knowledge? Mark Faust critiques what critical reading often looks like in 6-12 literacy instruction due to our reliance on the legal metaphor of "evidence": any statement supported by a line in a text is reading critically, he notes, questioning whether that is indeed what we mean by "critical reading." Our reliance on the simplicity of "evidence," Faust maintains, has simplified instruction of reading and interpretation. It is not a surprise perhaps that Pimentel has her J.D., given the criteria's focus on observation, evidence, and knowledge. Though Faust does not question students' returning to the text as they read, the focus on evidence carries with it underlying suppositions: readers read to investigate and prove, verbs that run counter to the attributes of performative literacy that Blau names and I describe as crucial features of academic reading.

The authors, Blau would counter, are concerned with meaning and knowledge of textual features, but not with how to enable that knowledge. Standards in general point to future behaviors, and thus for teachers, one of their greatest limits is their ignorance of process, of *coming to* end points. Yet in these criteria, the end point – the acquisition of knowledge – is so precise, so absolute, the process of reading itself is limited. This is Rosenblatt's efferent reading,

and though she reminds us that literary reading requires the efferent stance at times, her aesthetic stance, where the focus is on the going through, the experience, is lost.

I can't, with my experience teaching middle and high school students, imagine real readers in these criteria, perhaps because life seems awfully far away from literature in this list. The messiness of undergoing is missing, as is the emotional involvement McGann and Wilner see as central to reading narrative, along with the complicated task of ongoing reflection on initial reactions. In fact, the criteria are clear that the messiness of real people reading ought to be smoothed out through instruction:

The Common Core State Standards call for students to demonstrate a careful understanding of what they read before engaging their opinions, appraisals, or interpretations. Aligned materials should therefore require students to demonstrate that they have followed the details and logic of an author's argument before they are asked to evaluate the thesis or compare the thesis to others. (9)

This call for unadulterated reading is similar to Norman Frye's "educated imagination," what Bogdan responds to as separating literature from life to the detriment of student reading and writing. Logic trumps aesthetic experience, and any resources from life that might deepen students' reading and analysis are ignored.

What I have endeavored to show throughout this project is how that unfolding can take place and be extended in the classroom, how literary reading is an event with multiple acts of textualizing (writing, talking, rereading, writing again, etc.). For readers represented by the Common Core's standards, these multiple acts are products that *follow* students' careful reading, not create or deepen it. For example, academic discussion is a product of individual careful examination of the text. "Speaking and listening prompts and questions should offer opportunities for students to share preparation, evidence, and research" (12). This is a discussion of readers who have already under-gone, not readers who are going through. This is a

performance of knowledge, not a discussion motivated by ambiguity, concern, or suspensions of meaning.

My study reveals, if anything, that students gain from teachers studying their students. This project is interested not in end points, but beginning and through points, in how reading in classrooms can become eventful. Throughout my representations of teaching, I identify those beginning and through points in the work of actual students. Emotion can be both that beginning and through point – pointing students towards relationships, language, situations, and the richness that life brings to our acts of textualizing. Ahmed’s theory of emotions bridges a gap between text-based and reader-based theories of response, students moving from noticing their own responses to building the world of the text, from noticing a speaker’s objects to building their feeling about a situation. Ultimately, we can afford students multiple ways of reading closely – and we ought to afford *all* students, regardless of whether they arrive to an undergraduate English class, the enlivening experiences of those options. In this project, I imagine a kind of close that does not end in New Critical examinations of paradox or symbol or the reduced positivism of the Common Core. Instead, this project imagines a type of close reading that grows from concern, care, and attentiveness towards the text; the situation of reading; and one’s experience of it. These multiple directions only deepen an awareness of a text, oneself, and how/why our reading matters.

Instead of the future textbooks that will be produced by these publishing guidelines, we need curricular investment in making emotion an analytic category for student readers, such as assignments that allow teachers to establish a focus on language as inventing, on mapping relationships and describing situations, on capturing feelings at different points in our situating of speakers and their objects. We need a redefinition of “close reading” that makes its way into

schools. “Close reading” as “reading for relations” (as opposed to reading for knowledge) gives students a fuller sense of how to approach narrative texts, themselves, and the situation in which they are reading. In future work, I hope to redefine close reading through emotional concepts like “concern” or “having a stake in,” both of which suggest readers build relationships with and among textual elements and a reading situation as a whole.

The value of narrative is being questioned in these standards, and that includes the experience of reading narratives with others. As narrative is being challenged in the English classroom, we also need to re-evaluate what narratives offer students as thinkers, readers, and writers. It is difficult to make the reading of narrative boil down to extraction of knowledge, particularly when narrative necessitates a view of situated language. For readers, it is far more challenging to be aware of the textuality of narrative, a difficulty all of the college instructors I read wonder about, and a challenge from which these criteria seem to shy away. What experiences and literacies does the reading of narratives create?

Readers in classrooms deserve to experience and cultivate the live responsiveness of literary transactions. As this project has argued again and again, students’ concern, and their guided ideas about how to direct it, will expand their abilities to read complicated texts. Not only that, it will give them *reason* to do so.

APPENDIX

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH IRB APPROVAL

University of Pittsburgh *Institutional Review Board*

3500 Fifth
Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
[\(412\) 383-1480](tel:(412)383-1480)
[\(412\) 383-1508](tel:(412)383-1508) (fax)
<http://www.irb.pitt.edu>

Memorandum

To: Emily Wender, MEd, MA
From: Christopher Ryan, PhD, Vice Chair
Date: 8/10/2011
IRB#: [PRO11080162](#)
Subject: Foregrounding Emotion in the Classroom

The above-referenced project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board. Based on the information provided, this project meets all the necessary criteria for an exemption, and is hereby designated as "exempt" under section

45 CFR 46.101(b)(4).

Please note the following information:

- If any modifications are made to this project, use the "**Send Comments to IRB Staff**" process from the project workspace to request a review to ensure it continues to meet the exempt category.
- Upon completion of your project, be sure to finalize the project by submitting a "**Study Completed**" report from the project workspace.

Please be advised that your research study may be audited periodically by the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office.

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