

2008

# THE MIND'S EYE

A Liberal Arts Journal

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

A Night in the Life of a College Student *or*  
What's Sleep Got to Do with College Life?

By Peggy R. Brooks

Genocide and Cultures of the Body in Nazi Germany  
and Rwanda, 1994: Implications for Anthropology and  
Disability Studies

By Sumi Colligan

Turning to English

By Adriana Millenaar Brown

Expanding the Circle

By Ben Jacques

Poetry

By Ted Gilley

By Mindy Dow

The People, Places and Stories Behind Emily Dickinson's  
Poetry: Three Short Essays

By Lea Bertani Vozar Newman

A Humanistic Approach to Teaching Writing

By Jenifer Augur

*Sentience and Sensibility*: "A Conversation about Moral  
Philosophy"

Book Review by Lea Newman



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## *Editor's File*

Do college students get enough sleep? Peggy Brooks organized a team of MCLA students to investigate their classmates' bedtime habits with some surprising results. In keeping with popular stereotypes, many students do indeed burn the midnight oil, but on average they sleep a reasonable seven and a half hours a night. However, quality may be as important as quantity. Brooks turned up a number of specific sleep behaviors that contribute to health and mental alertness, behaviors that may benefit the old as well as the young. This essay won the faculty lecture award in 2006.

Sumi Colligan shifts our focus to a more somber topic: the history of Nazi eugenic measures against disabled people. Colligan, who attended a conference on the topic at Potsdam, Germany, finds it particularly disturbing that German anthropologists, members of her own profession, contributed to the campaign to eliminate individuals deemed unfit. She also reports on a second meeting in San Francisco that compared Nazi atrocities with the equally appalling events that took place in Rwanda. Although Germany and Rwanda are widely separated in historical experience, scholars have uncovered unpleasant similarities between traditional Tutsi attitudes toward the body and Nazi eugenic beliefs. Adriana Brown recounts her memories of the Nazi era from the perspective of the child of a Dutch diplomat and a German mother in the German capital during World War II. Brown attended German schools, spoke the German language and observed the patriotic gestures expected of German children. She was also exposed to the bombing campaign loosed against German civilians by the American and British air forces. After a period of refuge in Sweden and Holland, she returned to Berlin, this time to attend an English-language school for the children of occupation officials. From a greater distance, Ben Jacques considers the consequences of European politics and ethnicity for members of his own family, ethnic Germans who had lived for centuries in Russia. Deported to Siberia during World War II, they were never fully trusted in the Soviet Union and were finally allowed to emigrate to Germany at the end of the Cold War.

Ted Gilley has given us three poems about possessions, relatives and identity. Each evokes an acute sense of loss and each details a struggle in the

mind. Together they comment powerfully on the limits and possibilities of memory. Mindy Dow's poems take us to two places, Sleah Head in County Kerry, Ireland, and the North Adams fishpond. She finds a poetic resonance in both sites, and you will want to join her on those visits. Lea Newman introduces us to three famous poems by Emily Dickinson and relates them to the events of her life. One touches on Dickinson's love life, one on her attitude toward religion and one on her fear of death. In every case, they contradict any easy claims about who she was or how she wished to be remembered.

Jenifer Augur considers the needs of writing students and eloquently defends the teaching methods of her former mentor, Peter Elbow, who urged students to explore their personal feelings in their work. Augur is not necessarily thinking about the needs of poets; she simply wants her students to connect with their readers. To this end, she advocates a humanistic approach that looks beyond the impersonal models so often favored in the academic world. Connecting with readers is the main point of Matt Silliman's philosophical dialogue *Sentience and Sensibility*, which is reviewed by Lea Newman at the conclusion of our issue. Silliman sets out to construct a moral theory that makes a place for animals, and Newman declares his fictional dialogue a success.

This is a time of transitions. Last summer, Amy Stevens took over the job of posting *The Mind's Eye* online ([www.mcla.edu/MindsEye](http://www.mcla.edu/MindsEye)). In January, Terrie Pratt succeeded Karen DeOrdio as office manager. In August, Frances Jones-Sneed will succeed me as managing editor. Readers of *The Mind's Eye* will recall her contribution as guest editor of the outstanding 2007 issue. Three stalwarts remain: Arlene Bouras will continue as copy editor, Leon Peters as layout designer and Amy as Webmaster. *The Mind's Eye* owes a major debt to the able professionals who make it a reality. After five years, I will miss working with every one of them. With Karen and Terrie, I always knew where the money was; with Arlene, I always knew our prose would be articulate and precise; with Leon I always knew that we would look our very best in print; and with Amy, I now know that we are available to readers internationally. It is a good feeling, and I wish more of the same to Frances as she sets out to continue the journal and its traditions. Something tells me that she is going to do very well, indeed.

Bill Montgomery, *Managing Editor*

# A Night in the Life of a College Student *or* What's Sleep Got to Do with College Life?

BY PEGGY R. BROOKS

**F**or many of us, sleep seems like a pretty mundane subject. No doubt about it, however; the study of sleep is a hot topic. Media reports on sleep studies appear daily in newspapers and on television. We might wonder if our attraction to the topic has to do with a perceived level of sleep deprivation in our 24-hour society.

Although sleep is a fundamental biological process that we often take for granted, there are many questions we might ask about its value and function, especially for college students. Is sleep related to grade point average (GPA)? How are sleep habits related to depression in college students? Will sleep help college athletes perform better? Can sleep enhance cognitive performance (learning) and creativity? Would a daytime nap provide some of the same benefits? Current research has begun to address these and other fascinating aspects of sleep.

College students are believed to be among the most sleep-deprived populations. Late nights of studying or partying and early mornings for classes or sports practice are considered the norm for college students, leading to the perception that they don't get enough sleep, or that their sleep is disturbed.

When, exactly, *do* college students sleep? Do they get enough? Is there a weekly pattern of sleep; i.e., do students sleep more on Monday night than

on Saturday night? I will attempt to point to some possible answers to these questions, drawing on data my research assistants and I (Girgenti, Mills and Brooks; Brooks, Garrison et al.) collected from 257 MCLA students.<sup>1</sup>

We had a number of wide-ranging goals for the early studies, including obtaining normative data on the sleep life of college students, making comparisons of first-year and upper-division students (e.g., do first-year students get less sleep in the first few weeks of college life as they orient themselves to new surroundings?), looking for correlations among stressors, depression and sleep, and assessing the potential value of afternoon naps for enhancing memory.

Most sleep research uses questionnaires given at a single point in time as a measure of sleep habits. Such surveys ask questions such as “How many hours of sleep, on average, do you get each night?” One can see that these single-point measures might be useful for getting general estimates but cannot show us the day-to-day variations so typical of college students: the all-nighter or the extended catch-up sleep binge, for example. My earliest research group at MCLA was among the first, if not the first, in the field to utilize take-home sleep diaries, completed each day for 14 days (turned in every two days), with a college-student population, thus offering a more ecologically valid and potentially more accurate picture of the sleep patterns of college students. The National Sleep Foundation gave us permission to use its diary format, which I modified, in our research. The diary asked students to note the time they had gone to bed the previous night, the time they got out of bed each morning, how long it took them to fall asleep, how many times they woke up in the night, whether they felt refreshed or fatigued when they woke up, how many total hours they slept and what kinds of things disturbed their sleep. We also used the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) as a onetime measure of sleep quality, on which students reported a general sense of their sleep habits. This allowed single-point and multiple-point comparisons. Other measures included the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II) and the Student Life-Stress Inventory (SLSI).

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<sup>1</sup> In summarizing our research at MCLA, I will use data from four studies undertaken with the help of the following students over the course of the past four years. I would like to thank Alicia Girgenti, Maura Mills, Aubrey DeMarsico, Heather DeMarsico, Adam Garrison, Jamie LaLonde, Tim Quiñones, Samantha Bathija, Danielle Durand, Brandi Gillen, Scott Greenberg, Kim Harris, Robert Huberdeau, Julia Kowalski and Katherine Maloney for their contributions. All of them have been able to present their work at conferences, including Eastern Psychological Association, Mount Holyoke Undergraduate Research Conference, University of Massachusetts Undergraduate Research Conference and the MCLA Undergraduate Research Conferences held annually on campus.

## MCLA Students and Sleep

How sleep-deprived *are* our students? The numbers from our research belie the stereotype. In the two-week sleep diaries, MCLA students reported sleeping from four and a half to ten hours per night (Figure 1).

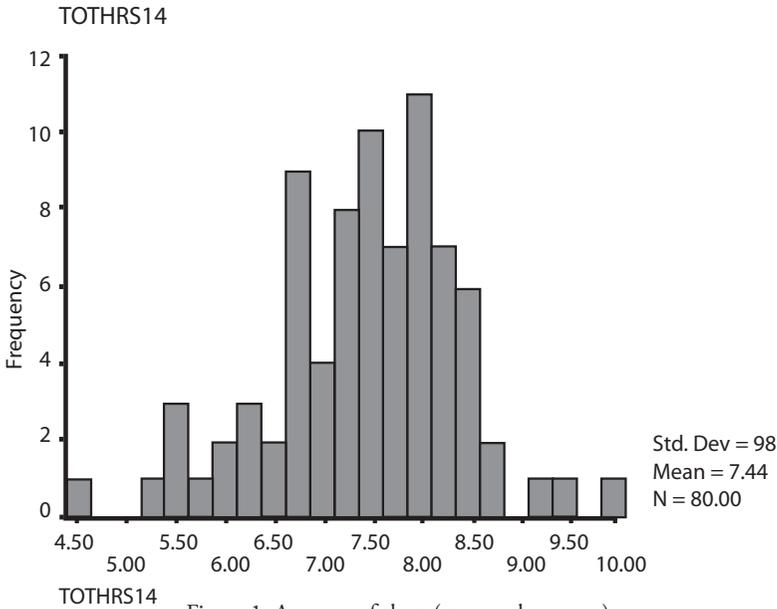


Figure 1. Amount of sleep (two-week average)

Figure 2 compares the single-point measure (PSQI) with the 14-day (sleep-diary) measure. Our students reported a single-point average of 6.8 hours and a 14-day average of 7.44 hours.

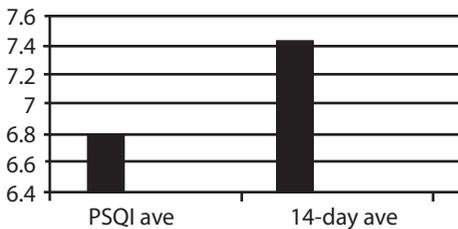


Figure 2. Comparison of single-point and 14-day averages

The difference between the two measures represents about 40 minutes (per night/day?!). It is significant and it suggests two important points: First,

students may buy into the popular view of themselves as sleep-deprived when they answer the single-point survey question, thus reporting less sleep than they actually get when they more accurately keep track of their sleep over two weeks' time. Second, assuming the sleep-diary hours are more accurate, our students are actually getting an average amount of sleep, almost seven and a half hours. While this represents an average over two weeks' time and not an individual night's variation, it should be reassuring to both parents and college health-service staff.

So if our students get close to an average amount of sleep, *when*, exactly, do they sleep? I titled this paper "A Night in the Life of a College Student," but, in fact, most of our students do not even go to bed until the clock has been showing "a.m." for well over an hour. As teaching faculty, we tend to take a dim view of the student who nods off in an 11-a.m. class, but most of us don't consider that said student might not have gotten to bed until five a.m.! The average weekday bedtime in our most recent sample was 1:15 a.m. and the average weekend bedtime was 2:14 a.m., about an hour's difference between weekdays and weekends. Figure 3 shows how average bedtime varied throughout the week.

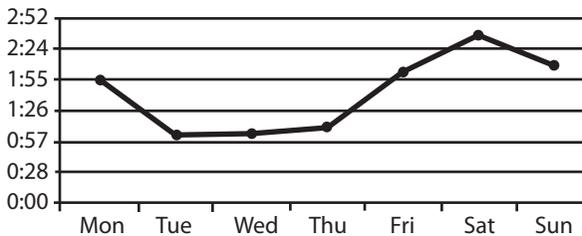


Figure 3. Average bedtime by day of week

It's important to note that there was tremendous variability in our student sample, with bedtimes ranging from around nine p.m. to five a.m. In addition, there were three students in the sample who reported nights with no sleep at all! Sleep is one of those personal habits that exhibit a wide range of individual variation. A range of six to ten hours a night is considered within the norm, but a few (very few, really) appear to function well on less than six hours of sleep a night.

The tendency to push bedtime later and later is known as "delayed sleep phase syndrome" ("night owl" is the familiar term) and is common in adolescents. The question is whether the delay is extrinsic, caused by social

norms of late nights, or intrinsic, caused by an individual's internal circadian clock. There is some evidence that those with intrinsic delayed sleep are more prone to depression. The pendulum may swing the other way as we age, when we tend to fall asleep much earlier in the evening (advanced sleep phase syndrome).

Interestingly, college students may fare better than high school students with regard to total amount of sleep, mostly because they have the freedom to sleep later. A 2006 National Sleep Foundation poll of 1,602 households across the country found that only one-fifth of 11–17-year-olds reported getting enough sleep on school nights, and more than one-fourth said they fell asleep during school at least once a week. By comparison, the student nodding off in a college class is rare.

If the average bedtime of our students is 1:40 a.m., then when do they get out of bed? Again, there was individual variability in wake-up time; however, the average MCLA student wakes up earlier than we might have guessed. Our data indicate the average wake-up time was 8:51 a.m., a lot better than the statistical outliers who reported getting up at 5:30 or 6:30 a.m., or at the other, stereotypical extreme, 2 p.m., 3 p.m. and, in one case, 5 p.m.! When we look at the weekly pattern, however, we see an interesting trend. Figure 4 shows a graph of wake-up times of our students by day of week.

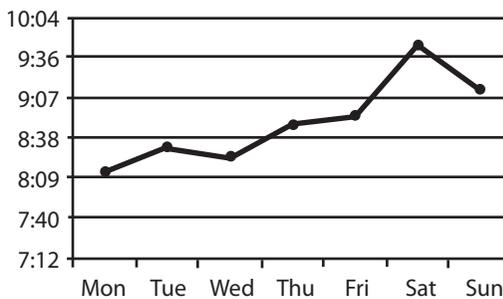


Figure 4. Wake-up time by day of week

We can see a real effort to start the week out “right” by getting up early on Monday at 8:15. This trend continues until Thursday, when students sleep more than 30 minutes longer, arising at 8:49 on average. And by Saturday, they sleep an hour and a half longer (mean = 9:45 a.m.). Interestingly, Sundays are not the latest “sleep-in” days for our students in general, with an average about half an hour earlier than Saturdays, at 9:14. I should point out that

students often wrote in the sleep diaries the various reasons for their sleeping habits, and it was clear from reading them that these reasons ranged from caring for a young child to recovery from an overnight job to getting up early for work or a sports workout.

The general adult population tends to follow a weekly pattern as well, with nonworking days preceded by nights when we stay up later (Zerubavel), but the pattern is slightly different: Saturday night tends to show the latest bedtimes and Sunday morning yields the latest sleep-in times. Our students follow this general cultural pattern of an earlier wake-up on the weekdays and later wake-ups on the weekends, but with a twist: MCLA students stay up latest on Saturday nights but also sleep latest on Saturday mornings. The reasons for a later sleep-in on Saturday mornings than on Sunday mornings are unclear; it may be that students feel the accumulation of “sleep debt” most acutely on Saturday after a full week of classes and other activities or, as some mentioned in their diaries, they had to get up early for work on Sunday. Whatever the reasons, the patterns observed clearly argue for an environmental effect on a biological rhythm. They also show us that college students don’t tend to sleep as late as the stereotypical adolescent who typically sleeps until noon on the weekends.

### **How Do First-Year Students Fare?**

For the question about our incoming students, we tested both first-year and upper-division students during the first two to three weeks of the fall semester. We wanted to know how the adjustment to college life might relate to sleep quantity and quality. We hypothesized that first-year students would get less sleep, report more sleep disturbances and experience more stress than upper-division students. To our surprise, we found the reverse; i.e., first-year students slept an average of 20 minutes *more* than upper-division students, and also reported fewer sleep disturbances and less overall stress. First-year students reported significantly more agitation than upper-division students, but this difference did not impair sleep enough to overtake upper-division student levels.

### **The Early Bird Gets the GPA**

*Is there a relationship between bedtime and wake-up time and GPA?* Previous studies of both high school students (Wolfson and Carskadon) and college students (Trochel, Barnes and Egget) have found that “the early bird gets the GPA,” so to speak: Students who go to bed earlier and rise earlier

tend to have higher GPAs. Our studies confirmed this, with one exception: A significant correlation was found between MCLA students' reported GPA and reported time of waking in the morning ( $r = -.384, p = .01$ ; Figure 5) but not their bedtimes. We also found that sleep quality, rated by students in the diaries as having awakened "refreshed, somewhat refreshed or fatigued"

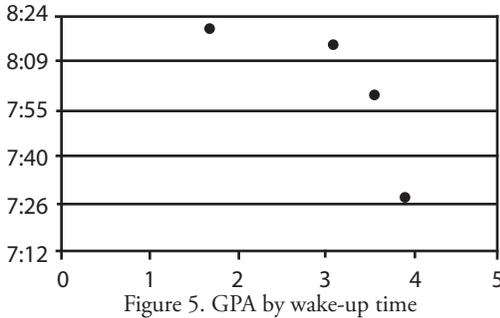


Figure 5. GPA by wake-up time

or on the onetime questionnaire as a rating of overall sleep quality on a four-point scale of "very good" to "very bad," was a significant predictor of GPA; i.e., students with better overall sleep quality had significantly higher GPAs.

### Sleep, Learning, Memory and Creativity

Grade point average isn't the only measure of academic success or, more important, what students actually learn while in college. How might sleep affect learning, memory and problem-solving abilities (creativity)?

Learning is typically defined as a relatively permanent change in behavior that results from experience. At a behavioral level, change is seen in improved performance. At a cognitive level, the change is related to memory. At the neuroscience level, changes can be observed electrically, neurochemically and structurally in the brain. Putting these together, we get the "cognitive neuroscience" of sleep, an especially hot field these days.

Robert Stickgold of Harvard has created a hierarchy of questions (Table 1) related to the overarching question "How does sleep affect learning and memory? (2003)" He points out that each of these headings is independent with a total yield of about 900 unique questions, still without addressing whether sleep is necessary, sufficient or both, for each! I've boldfaced two questions to focus the current discussion.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Sleep occurring when, relative to training?<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.1 Prior to training</li><li>1.2 After training</li></ol></li><li>2. Which aspects of learning or memory?<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2.1 Encoding</li><li>2.2 Stabilization</li><li>2.3 Strengthening</li><li>2.4 Integration</li></ol></li><li>3. <b>What stages of sleep?</b><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3.1 Stage 1 sleep (sleep onset)</li><li>3.2 Stage 2 sleep (light NREM sleep)</li><li>3.3 Stage 3 and 4 sleep (SWS)</li><li>3.4 REM sleep</li></ol></li><li>4. Over what time period?<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4.1 Same-day naps</li><li>4.2 First night<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4.2.1 Early night</li><li>4.2.2 Late night</li></ol></li><li>4.3 More distant nights</li></ol></li><li>5. <b>What types of memory are affected?</b><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5.1 <b>Declarative</b><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5.1.1 Episodic<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5.1.1.1 Simple</li><li>5.1.1.2 Emotional</li></ol></li><li>5.1.2 Semantic<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5.1.2.1 Simple</li><li>5.1.2.2 Complex</li></ol></li></ol></li><li>5.2 <b>Procedural</b><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5.2.1 Perceptual</li><li>5.2.2 Motor</li><li>5.2.3 Complex cognitive</li></ol></li></ol></li></ol>
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Table 1. Questions about sleep and learning (Stickgold 42)

Based on electroencephalography (EEG) and neurochemical brain activity, sleep can be roughly divided into rapid eye movement (REM) and non-REM (NREM) periods. While dreaming can occur at other stages of

sleep, most dreaming occurs during the REM stage. Non-REM sleep can be further divided, based on EEG waveforms, into four stages of increasing depth. The typical pattern of a night's sleep stages is shown in Figure 6, with stages 1–4 representing NREM sleep (stages 3 and 4 are often labeled slow wave sleep [SWS]).

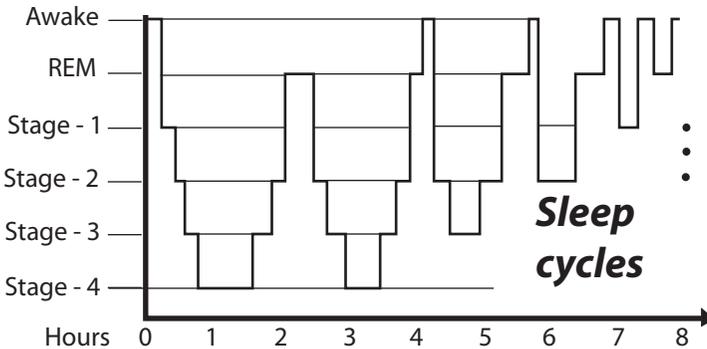


Figure 6. Sleep stages. From ThinkQuest, [www.thinkquest.org](http://www.thinkquest.org).

Commonly, we record EEG, EOG (electrooculography—eye movements) and EMG (electromyography—muscle movements) during sleep, allowing us to track changes throughout the night. The typical EEG, EOG and EMG patterns for each sleep stage are shown in Figure 7.

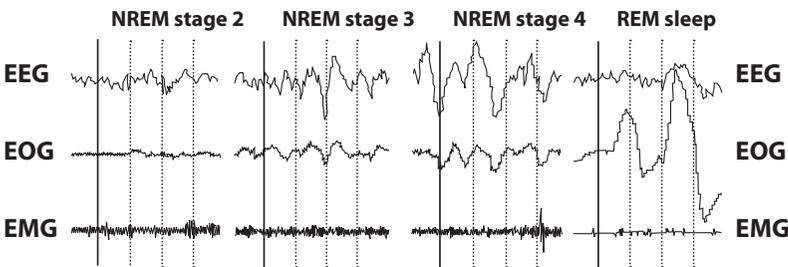


Figure 7. Stages of sleep and their psychophysiological correlates

From ThinkQuest, [www.thinkquest.org](http://www.thinkquest.org)

Our deepest sleep is not when we're dreaming but during stages 3 and 4 (SWS). Notice the EEG waveform changes as sleep becomes deeper, increasing in amplitude and decreasing in frequency, representing a slowing of neural firing in the brain.

Two types of memory have been most frequently studied for their potential enhancement and consolidation during sleep: semantic declarative memory, which addresses memory for words and facts, and procedural memory, which primarily addresses perceptual and motor-skills learning.

Keeping stages and types of memory in mind, let's look at two studies for their particular relevance to learning. The strongest evidence comes from studies of procedural learning. Stickgold and his colleagues have cleverly designed several experiments to test memory for activities such as visual discrimination, playing scales on the piano and playing computer games such as Tetris. In one of the most impressive studies (Stickgold, Whidbee et al.), subjects were trained on a visual discrimination task and retested either later that day or the next day. Those who were trained and retested on the same day (without sleep) showed no significant improvement, while those who were trained and retested after a night's sleep showed significant improvement. When EEG analyses were done, almost 90 percent of the variance in improvement was attributable to the amount of early-night SWS *and* late-night REM sleep obtained by the subjects. This is a dramatic result, demonstrating a two-stage process of memory consolidation, requiring both deep sleep and REM sleep for the best results. For this type of learning, you'd need enough sleep to cover both periods. In fact, Stickgold et al. found no improvement with less than six hours of sleep, but a more recent study (Mednick, Nakayama and Stickgold) found that an afternoon nap with both SWS and REM yielded as much improvement as a night of sleep.

Mednick et al.'s finding triggered great interest in a new line of research focused exclusively on the benefits of napping. Our most recent study (Brooks, DeMarsico and DeMarsico) has added to this literature by focusing on memory and problem-solving with habitual nappers. The most robust finding is a significant improvement in procedural memory, as measured by auditory reaction time, following a 90-minute nap in students who were habitual nappers. This result has clear implications for athletes in situations where improved reaction time might make critical differences in competition outcomes.

The results for declarative memory are less clear, but this is the type of memory our students are hoping to have when it comes time for an exam—remembering those names, dates and details. Philal and Born used a verbal paired-associate task (pairing words such as “house—elephant”) to show that early-night SWS significantly enhanced declarative memory. Philal and Born set up their method as follows:

Group 1: Trained at 10 p.m., slept for three hours, then tested (SWS-dependent).

Group 2: Slept three hours, trained, then slept three more hours, then tested.

Group 1 improved their recall score of the paired words more than three times that of Group 2. An obvious (but still tentative, as science must rely on an accumulation of studies to make reliable inferences) conclusion is that if you want to perform best on a test, get some good deep sleep beforehand.

### **Dreams and Creativity**

Scientists are understandably uncomfortable trying to interpret dreams. Interestingly, though, many scientists, as well as artists, credit their insights to dreaming.

Why might dreaming help solve creative problems? During REM sleep, the time we're most likely to dream, the neurochemistry of the brain changes dramatically, allowing for an increase in cholinergic modulation. It appears that this change, along with an increased level of brain activity during REM, supports changes in associative memory. Those of us who remember dreams may recall vivid or bizarre images, some of them novel solutions to a concern or problem we've had. Not all of them turn out to be practical, but some of them do. In another study conducted by Stickgold and colleagues (Stickgold, Scott et al.), subjects were tested throughout the night on their association of words and their meanings (semantic priming). Weaker, or "looser," more creative associations were much stronger when subjects were awakened during REM sleep, indicating a type of cognitive flexibility not found in other stages of sleep. Similar results have been found using anagram solving as a measure of cognitive flexibility (Walker, Liston, Hobson and Stickgold), though our own results did not reach significance, possibly because the difficulty level of our anagrams was too high. Nonetheless, it doesn't hurt to suggest that if you have a problem to solve or a creative assignment to do, you might want to get enough sleep to allow for dreaming, which occurs more often during the latter half of the night.

### **Sleep and Athletics**

Many athletes are beginning to recognize the importance of sleep to athletic performance. Olympic speed skater Apolo Ohno reports, "I try to get more than eight [hours of sleep]. Between eight and ten. . . . It's crucial,

it is everything. I mean, I can only recover if I am sleeping well. . . . It doesn't matter how hard I am training; if I don't get enough sleep, it is wasted" (qtd. in Rosekind). In the Olympic Village in Torino, Italy, one of the sponsors of the 2006 Winter Olympics, Hilton Hotels, hired NASA scientist Mark Rosekind to help remodel athletes' rooms in Olympic Village in order to promote better sleeping conditions. These included plush-top mattresses to reduce tossing and turning and to increase circulation; down comforters, extra-thick mattress pads, down pillows, high-thread-count cotton sheets and black-out drapes for naps during the day. Sounds nice, huh? During the renovations, some of the details were kept secret, because it was seen as a competitive edge not to let the other countries' athletes know about them. Rosekind says, "It's just like a training technique. I don't think we should be rushing out to tell the world, "This is what we're doing to get better." Rosekind maintains that getting optimal sleep can boost athletic performance by 30 percent. He also says, "Taking a 20-to-25-minute nap can boost an athlete's performance by as much as 34 percent and his or her alertness up to 54 percent."

Anyone who has traveled recently knows that the big hotel chains have capitalized on our sleep-deprivation culture by providing "sleep kits" complete with soothing music, lavender-scented linen spray and plush-top mattresses. I know of no data on whether or not these investments have made any differences in all those early-morning business meetings.

### **The Secrets of Sleep Revealed in Fairy Tales?**

What do Sleeping Beauty and Rumpelstiltskin have in common? Answer: a spinning wheel with a spindle. Both Sleeping Beauty and the miller's daughter had adventures in spinning. In Sleeping Beauty's case, her finger was pricked and she fell into a deep sleep. The miller's daughter, with the help of Rumpelstiltskin, spun straw into gold.

It's unlikely that the Brothers Grimm knew about electroencephalography, but spindles turn out to be important for sleep, too. As a person is falling asleep, EEG waveforms become slower and higher in amplitude. Like Sleeping Beauty's sleep-inducing spindle, the occurrence of a spindlelike waveform on the EEG is considered to be the cardinal sign that a person is really asleep, an indicator of Stage 2 sleep. Figure 8 shows an EEG spindle, so named a "spindle" since its shape is fusiform. What does this spindle have to do with being an athlete? To be more precise, what does "spindling"

## Sleep Spindle

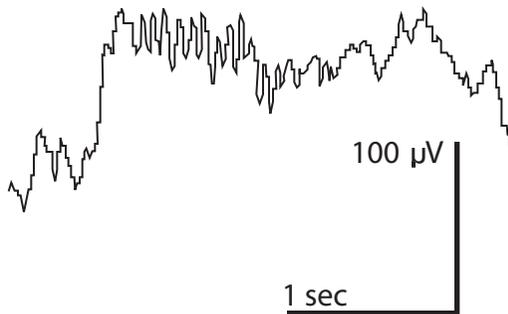


Figure 8. Sleep spindle on the EEG. From ThinkQuest, [www.thinkquest.com](http://www.thinkquest.com)

have to do with motor performance in general? What is happening in the brain when we see spindles on the EEG?

Current speculation in neuroscience is that spindles, found in EEGs of all mammals, represent strong excitation of the brain's cortex by the thalamus, which is further inhibited from firing, giving an opportunity for calcium ions to prime neuronal synapses for permanent changes (memory). Motor memory is likely consolidated during Stage 2 spindling, because without it, motor performance is impaired.

Several researchers (Smith and MacNeill, 1992, 1994; Fogel, Jacob and Smith; Walker, Brakefield et al.) have found that after training subjects on a task requiring quick fine-motor coordination, such as finger-tapping or playing the game *Operation*, their individual scores are highly positively correlated with the amount of Stage 2 sleep on the posttraining night. No Stage 2 sleep, impaired performance. Lots of Stage 2 sleep, improved performance.

Sleep can affect performance, but performance can also affect sleep. Athletes who overtrain or overreach, as it's sometimes called, are those who train too hard or too often in an effort to increase fitness or performance. Such overreaching appears to affect both sleep and performance. A study by Wall, Mattacola, Swanik and Levenstein collected sleep efficiency data on competitive high school and university swimmers and found that overreached swimmers showed both less sleep and significantly slower reaction times by the fourth swim trial. More studies will be needed to confirm these results, but college coaches might want to keep informed.

## Sleep, Health and Depression

“Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.” We can’t make the claim for the aphorism’s implicated *causal relationships*, since our data are *correlational*, but so far, we can say we have support for the “wise” part, since earlier bedtimes predicted higher GPAs and naps are associated with improved memory. For the “healthy” part, we collected data on both physical and mental health. We can’t speak to the wealth, unfortunately.

In our sample of 257 MCLA students, we found a strong significant relationship between overall estimates of physical health and sleep quality. We also found a marginally significant relationship between bedtime and depression. Those who went to bed earlier had, on average, lower scores on the depression inventory. But one of the most intriguing findings in our most recent study has to do with the relationship of sleep to depression and gender. It is widely reported that women are at least twice as likely as men to be diagnosed with depression. Since sleep difficulties are actually a symptom of depression, we removed the sleep question from correlational analyses with depression so as not to confound these two variables. When we did this, however, we found something astonishing: The gender differences in depression disappeared! Could it be that sleep difficulty is the symptom that makes women more vulnerable to depression? We think the gender, depression and sleep finding is an important contribution to the literature.

Indeed, the National Sleep Foundation, in one of its newsletters, states, “What Really Makes Women Happy? Sleep!” The National Sleep Foundation reported a study conducted by Norbert Schwarz of the University of Michigan, in which he analyzed how 909 women experienced their various daily activities. Schwarz found that getting an extra hour of sleep had more of an impact on how the participants felt throughout the day than marital status or earning more money.

The implication for college counseling centers and our students is that good-quality sleep may be critical in preventing depression’s first occurrence or, as found in some studies, preventing a relapse, and especially so for women.

## Conclusion

We might end by just telling you that your parents gave you good advice when they told you to get enough sleep. I might have titled this lecture simply “Sleep—It Does a Brain and a Body Good.” I hope you can see from the research presented here that while we’re sleeping, a great deal is going on,

and specific benefits of sleep appear to be tied to specific stages, amounts and timing of sleep. Sleep quality is a sensitive indicator of overall physical and mental health, responding subtly to daily events. The implications for college life are clear: Sleep may make the difference between an A or a C, a stellar athletic performance or a lackluster one, a brilliant solution to that physics problem/art-class assignment or a mundane one. Sleep on it and see!

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# Genocide and Cultures of the Body in Nazi Germany and Rwanda, 1994: Implications for Anthropology and Disability Studies

BY SUMI COLLIGAN

## Setting the Stage

In July of 2004, I accompanied a group of disability studies scholars representing a range of disciplines in the social sciences and humanities to Potsdam, Germany, for a DAAD (German Academic Exchange) seminar on Disability Studies and the Legacy of Eugenics. In addition to exploring the historical context of eugenics and euthanasia during the reign of the Nazis, we also met with archivists and filmmakers who were making efforts to “preserve” or, more accurately, to awake personal and cultural memories that had been masked or erased from the annals of historical documentation. We also met with German disability-rights activists who were striving to change the course of history by repopulating and transforming the geographical and cultural landscape to (re)present the needs, goals and desires of disabled people in national and international arenas.

One of the most haunting aspects of this experience was a road trip we took to medical/psychiatric institutions where disabled infants and adults, physically and psychologically impaired, had been killed in the years between 1939 and 1941. This program, known as T-4, and the subsequent years, leading up to the end of World War II, resulted in more than 240,000 deaths

of disabled people (Snyder and Mitchell 124). I'll never forget blind scholar and expert on reproductive ethics Adrienne Asch reading *Murderous Science* to us in the van as we passed around samples of Ritter Sport chocolate. Perhaps more striking was our visit to Hadamar, where we were housed in a hostel that had been built on top of the gas chambers, because it was the only lodging in the area that was accessible to wheelchair users! The trip engendered an eerie sense of identification and disidentification, as most of us were not of German heritage or upbringing. Nevertheless, these institutions served as a reminder that it could have been we who met our demise in these cordoned-off places, sheltered from public discourse and consciousness. Fortunately, our commitment to a collective enterprise and our ironic humor (as well as ample supplies of chocolate) helped us face the greatest difficulties of this intellectual and emotional journey.

Disability studies scholar and historian Douglas Baynton argues that disability is everywhere in history, but few academics have seen it as worthy of investigation. He speaks of disability both as an empirical experience and as a metaphor that has been used to subordinate and marginalize certain categories of persons in different places and periods (women, African-Americans and immigrants in American history, for example). The sequestering, creation and destruction of disabled bodies could be viewed as manifestations of bygone attitudes and practices; however, as described below, they are linked to nation-state mechanisms and transnational ideologies. Moreover, these processes cannot be detached from our immediate circumstances, as the United States was once, itself, at the forefront of eugenic philosophy and politics and as we now live in a moment that exemplifies a fixation on "perfecting" the body. Our obsession with "fitness," our ongoing fascination with the ideology of cure, a belief system that underscores the value of "fixing" so-called "deviant" bodies rather than accommodating them, and our eternal quest to remake ourselves in the image of bodily ideals promoted by consumer capitalism are all evidence of this fixation.

The comparison of cultures of the body in Germany and Rwanda to follow was presented at the Society for Disability Studies in San Francisco in 2005 on a panel comprised of academics who had accompanied me to Potsdam. The panel provided us a venue to make sense of what we read and witnessed through our own disciplinary lenses. My discussion of disabled bodies in this essay entails both the empirical and the metaphoric aspects elaborated upon by Baynton, as well as the ways in which they are intertwined. It is due

to the powerful resonances of the Potsdam seminar and my concern for the future of all bodies that I undertake this analysis.

### **Anthropology, Genocide and the Comparative Method**

The comparative method is a key anthropological approach to the study of culture. Yet the anthropological literature on genocide has only begun to hint that the impact of eugenic and euthanasia policies on disabled people should be investigated and analyzed within an anthropological and genocidal framework.

This essay offers insights into the value of making such comparisons by examining macro- and micro-level processes as they pertain to cultures of the body in two instances, the T-4 program in Nazi Germany and the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Contributing factors to contemporary human annihilation such as the central forces of modernity (including the drive toward classification, the flattening effect of nation-state structures, the anonymity of bureaucratic functioning and colonial and postcolonial lust) are considered, along with more culturally specific notions of bodily purity, contamination, containment, popular medicine and disposable bodies. An evaluation of the intersection of these global and local processes should reveal means by which the discussion of genocide could be enlarged and deepened within anthropology and disability studies to incorporate a cross-cultural approach to the erasure of disabled people, and our relationship to other groups targeted for erasure from the human community.

Last summer, as we forged our way through Nazi theories and practices of eugenics, euthanasia and racial hygiene, I was struck by the role that German anthropologists had played, directly or indirectly, in sending Holocaust victims to their death. I was particularly disturbed because this information implicated my discipline directly in this gruesome historical moment. This, however, should have come as no surprise, since I had prior knowledge of anthropologists' working in conjunction with colonial regimes. In fact, in *Annihilating Difference: "The Anthropology of Genocide,"* Alexander Hinton points out that perhaps the reason anthropologists have shied away from the study of genocide is that one of the central objectives of the discipline is to discern criteria by which we can evaluate similarities and differences among groups, an inclination that, taken too far, can precipitate genocidal tendencies. He reminds us that as a child of modernity, anthropology helped create the "science" of categorization, essentializing both physiognomy and culture.

Despite our tainted start, I believe that a comparative study of the

“tropology of corporeality,” to use Uli Linke’s term (232), is one means of bringing disability into a discussion of genocide and bringing racial theory into a discussion of disability. Linke postulates “that modern forms of violence are engendered through ‘regimes of representation’ that are to some extent mimetic, a source of self-formation, both within the historical unconscious and in the fabric of the social world” (231). Likewise, Christopher Taylor addresses the need to examine emic perspectives in genocidal events by exploring “generative schemes of body, self, and other” (138). In the German and Rwandan cases, metaphors of the body were foundational to nationalist discourse and practice, rooted in earlier historical epochs and central to the methods and logic of extermination. Moreover, in both instances, the types of bodies being eliminated were thought of as inconsequential to global concern. The geographies of blame were territorialized on the bodies of the victims such that neglect to intercede was made to seem like a normal response to naturally wasting bodies.

### **Germany and Rwanda Compared**

German attitudes toward the body can minimally be traced back to reform movements of the 19th century. During that era, urban spaces, by-products of industrialization, were thought of as catalysts for illness and were juxtaposed to natural spaces that were thought of as health-building and restoring (Gilman; Link). Even prior to that era (the 17th and 18th centuries), spas were thought of as curing centers and places to go for recreation for the well-to-do (Maretzki). Nude bodies in “natural” settings came to symbolize antibourgeois sentiments, unfettered by the corruption of so-called civilization and standing strong and innocent (in a Rousseauian manner) (Linke). The Jewish body, on the other hand, was depicted as inherently weak and disabled, taking its shape and infused by the social ills of cities, and not fully capable of assuming the role of citizen-soldier (Gilman). Hence, discourses on the degeneration of certain bodies were weighed against representations of bodies in their pristine and able-bodied state. By the end of World War I, biological metaphors of the nation (*Volkskörper*) were becoming commonplace, setting the stage for the rise of Nazism (Hogle 46–47).

In the Rwandan case, ethnographer of Rwandan popular medicine Christopher Taylor argues that root metaphors of flow and blockage of the body can be traced back to the period of Tutsi divine kingship. These metaphors linking the physical, social and cosmic orders continue to play

a significant role in theories and practices of health, illness and healing in contemporary Rwanda, and marked the bodies of Tutsi victims during the 1994 genocide. Taylor states that the king was thought of as “a hollow conduit through which celestial beneficence passed” (154). Individuals who were perceived as interrupting the flow, such as childbearing females who lacked breasts or failed to menstruate, could be put to death. Thus, the king exerted both generative and coercive powers. Even today illness is associated with blockage, particularly of a digestive and reproductive nature. This blockage is seen as having serious repercussions not only to the body itself but in the maintenance of social relations and exchange.

Zygmunt Bauman notes that genocide is not an aberration of modernity but is built into its very structure and values. A celebration of technology, a penchant for ordering, a bureaucratic detachment that allows for concealment of responsibility, a fetishizing of efficiency and the surveillance of populations for the purpose of social engineering provide a perfect backdrop for “genocidal priming,” to use Hinton’s term (29). The characteristics of modernity, then, have had a far-reaching hand in setting the preconditions and conditions of genocide in Nazi Germany and Rwanda. These characteristics, in combination with premodernist and modernist conceptions of the body, have intertwined to unleash their destruction and erasure of entire human groups.

Linda Hogle enumerates three interlinked stages that were central to Nazi ideology and practice. These included a notion of a nation composed of a collectivity of superior biological specimens, the identification and classification of those who should be expelled from the social body as “refuse” and “the social and technical means to convert refuse into a valuable resource” (46). Those who were identified as “waste” or “material” had no right to refuse to serve the social good or resist being marked for elimination and/or experimentation (Schaft 130). Blood purity became a major trope for defining the boundaries of the Germanic people, and mechanisms by which national and physical boundaries could be monitored and controlled were devised and implemented. All bodies thought of as having degenerative qualities (those of ethnic and religious minorities, the physically and mentally disabled, gays and lesbians et al.) were to be blocked from permeating the physical/social body (Hogle 48). Michael Burleigh describes these measures as taken to “stem the flow of eugenic damage done throughout the generations” (132). In the Nazi case, blockage was imagined as enhancing the nation’s health, whereas in the Rwandan case, it was detrimental.

Modernity was also implicated in colonial enterprises that established censuses for conquered populations, fixing identities in time, space and body, in order to extract taxes, labor and resources. Freezing identities of local groups often had the effect of creating or exacerbating tensions, facilitating the emergence of scapegoating that would crystallize in the postindependence era. The Rwandans were colonized by the Germans in 1890, followed by the Belgians after World War I, before gaining independence in 1962. The Belgians put a small aristocratic Tutsi elite in charge of Hutu farmers in a system of indirect rule and provided them with multiple privileges (Gourevitch). They also issued ethnic identity cards quite arbitrarily, labeling all those with ten cows or more Tutsis, those with fewer than ten cows Hutus and those who they thought conformed to their image of Twa (Pygmies) Twa (Magnarella 321). Ironically, though, while these distinctions contributed to the promotion of essentialized identities (ones that would have significant political ramifications later on), the arbitrariness of the labels also contributed to intermixing (especially of the Hutus and Tutsis), in some cases, easing intermarriage, underscoring similarities of language, culture and religion and erasing easily identifiable physical traits (Magnarella 317). European theories of race also circulated, creating further divisions because Tutsis were said to be of superior stock due to their assumed Hamitic origins, whereas Hutus were said to belong to the inferior Bantus. Just prior to independence, the Belgians threw in their lot with the Hutus, sending some Tutsis into exile. Although Rwanda ostensibly became democratic, Tutsis were kept out of the army and most high-level political offices, and some exiled Tutsis eventually waged guerrilla warfare from Uganda.

In Germany the justifications and procedures for sterilizing and/or murdering disabled and ethnic minorities were at once the same and different. According to Proctor, sterilization was not to be viewed as punishment but “as the sacrifice an individual makes as a result of the ‘personal tragedy’ of having been born defective” (102). Sterilization was couched in the language of beneficence, leading others to believe that both the larger social body and the individual herself would be redeemed through this act. This ideology conforms to the notion of “ritual sacrifice” found in certain genocidal contexts (Scheper-Hughes 368). However, the Nazi penchant for making invidious distinctions can be seen in the differential treatment accorded disabled people dispatched to killing centers or put to death in their local institutions. Henry Friedlander notes that the “Aryan-identified disabled” were thought worthy

of having false condolence letters sent to their families, whereas the Jewish disabled were killed without fanfare, being considered individuals with no redemptive value (171). Such distinctions served only to mask the broader Nazi project, since the coining of “lives unworthy of living” segued easily into anthropologists’ taking on a “God-like” role of sorting out the races and creating further “hierarchies of value” (Schaft 120).

The killing centers themselves functioned as institutions of technological “refinement,” since the T-4 program designed to kill the disabled (a broad and nebulous category) was trying out technology that would later be sent off to the concentration camps when T-4 officially ended in 1941. Friedlander describes the process of murder that took place in these killing centers as having the quality of “assembly-line production” in which individuals were summarily assessed by physicians, stamped like documents and taken nude to the gas chambers, where guards sat nearby playing cards and drinking beer, waiting for the gas to do its work. Bodies were then dragged directly to the incinerators or placed on dissection tables to have parts removed. From what we witnessed on last summer’s trip, the dissection tables had holes to allow the fluids to run out, again, literally and metaphorically, “stemming the flow” that was perceived as contaminating the social body (164). We also saw photographs of brains placed in canisters, representing the “recycling” that Linda Hogle describes, transforming “industrial waste” into materials of “value.” Taken to its most macabre extremes, Hogle further describes human heads’ being taken from concentration camps and shrunk to resemble those that Germans had seen in their former colonies, underscoring yet one more time that Germany and Rwanda are linked not only by the comparative forces of modernity but by the process of colonization itself (54).

In Rwanda the techniques of mass murder were no less horrific, no less fashioned by corporeal tropes and no less spurred by European-rooted racial classifications. In 1994, approximately a million Tutsis and their allies were massacred by the Hutus in just 100 days. Despite the rapidity of the murders and the intent of the Hutus to massacre all Tutsis until they “become nothing but memory” (“Triumph”), the UN Security Council stalled in taking any action and the United States ignored all pleas for intervention, instead having a State Department spokesperson hedge by stating that “acts of genocide” didn’t necessarily constitute genocide!

One of the most striking aspects (at least from a disability studies point of view) of Christopher Taylor’s report of this massacre is the way in which

many of the Tutsi victims were disabled before they were murdered or mutilated and left to languish in the hot sun while the perpetrators partied nearby, similarly to their German counterparts. For example, many victims had their Achilles' tendons cut and even those of their cows were severed. Taylor points out that this form of mutilation could not simply have been to keep victims from running away, because the procedure was performed not only on the able-bodied but also on the "elderly, infirm, and those too young to walk," while the disablement of cattle was intended to interrupt the flow of "material and symbolic capital." Additionally, Tutsi women's breasts were cut off to symbolically block the flow of milk (remember that during the period of divine kingship, breastless women were put to death) and victims were impaled from mouth to anus, symbolically disrupting their digestive flow. Furthermore, rivers became "organs of elimination" where massive numbers of human bodies were dumped and swept away into Lake Victoria. In a utilitarian response similar to the Nazi practice of "recycling" human remains, local populations reluctant to eat the fish out of the lake were told that these remains could be thought of as harmless organic material that would help the fish thrive. From a comparative perspective, it is especially noteworthy that the victims (both Hutu and Tutsi) had to be disabled (even the disabled themselves) in order to "be prepared" for their death. As in the Nazi case, disability legitimated human sacrifice. The ultimate goal, as Taylor states, was to free the celestial flow in order to restore order to and redeem the Hutu nation (141–68).

As with the Nazis, racist motivations were no less present in Rwanda. Triggered in part by the possibility of a peace settlement between exiled Tutsis and the Hutu-dominated Rwandan government, the impulse of nation-states to squash internal hierarchies and generate a fictive "horizontal comradeship" came into play (Anderson 7). The language of expulsion was employed as Tutsis were enjoined to return to Ethiopia (recall the European-introduced Hamitic theory), highlighting them as outsiders to the social body (Taylor 170), while physical features (the nose) were highlighted to cast the Tutsis as outsiders to the biological body. Taylor asserts that people marked for death went from "blocked" individuals in precolonial times to a postcolonial "symbolism of malevolent obstruction" of an entire ethnic group (170). However, I would argue that disability had always lurked in the shadow of historical memory (making even those killed in precolonial times categorical rather than individual targets) and making the bodies of those recently massacred doubly marked by disability and ethnicity.

## Neglected Bodies

AIDS activist Cindy Patton asserts that one reason the Western world was so slow to become involved in the AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa was that the image of an AIDS victim as having a wasted body was metaphorically collapsed with an image of Africa as a wasted continent, a continent plagued by a “natural” state of illness and poverty (1990). I believe that these corporeal race/disability metaphors also functioned to prevent the United States from intervening, at least implicitly, in the Rwandan human slaughter because Africans are thought of as expendable bodies occupying an expendable continent. In the *Frontline* film “The Triumph of Evil,” journalist Philip Gourevitch suggests that our failure to act was not a failure of US policy but a success, since our policy stipulated that we should not intervene where we have no economic or political interests. Likewise, while the T-4 program was officially terminated in 1941 and the Allied forces eventually intervened in World War II, it still seems as though disabled bodies were considered dispensable, since 5,000 disabled children were murdered during the war without any interruptions or public accounting and, in the postwar era, most Nazi physicians were treated as unfortunate individuals simply trying to do their job

When I think back to our visits to two of the killing centers, Bernberg and Hadamar, carefully tucked away from public awareness, it is difficult not to experience a deep-seated sense of panic. But must we be sucked in to embracing the contemporary moment as a constant “state of emergency” (Scheper-Hughes 369)? Personally, I don’t want to sound like an anchor on Fox News: “Crisis alert, crisis alert!” One thing that the study of genocide teaches us is that social categories are never discrete and that the “tropology of corporeality” circulates across categorical and national boundaries, creating commonalities in people’s lives, however destructive and unfathomable. Aside from that sense of panic, as I faced the crematoriums with other disability studies scholars, I thought about our collective power to reimagine our lives and our connections with others; that thought quieted my sense of panic. In anthropology, disability studies and allied disciplines, we need to continue to push against the assumed fixity and reproduction of these categories and make sure that our material bodies are not allowed to fade from view.

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# Turning to English

BY ADRIANA MILLENAAR BROWN

I was nine years old in 1947 when I was put into yet another school and forced to learn my fourth language. It was in Berlin. In West Berlin. In the British sector. In a Dutch villa built in Dahlem just before 1938. My mother and my two younger brothers and I were finally reunited with our father after three years of separation.

It had been on a grim day in mid November 1944 that my father raced us in a black car through smoky, smoldering empty streets, slick with sleet. Houses, apartment buildings, storefronts full of holes, shattered glass. Ruins. He drove us to the Tempelhof airport in Berlin. The flight to Stockholm was bumpy. My mother was silent, her ruby-red lips pursed, her eyes angry, her cheeks flushed. I was confused. I was not weepy. I was jealous. Jealous of my one-year-younger brother, who leaned snuggly against my mother's fur coat. Jealous of my baby brother, who huddled peacefully in my mother's lap, oblivious of the noise of the propellers, the veering of the plane, the scratchy seat I was slipping out from under.

My father stayed behind on that grim November day in 1944. Behind in the ruins of the once glittering metropolis, Berlin. He had arrived in 1928. My father's brand-new job at the age of 29 was agricultural assistant to the attaché of agriculture of the Netherlands embassy in the diplomatic

district, in the heart of Berlin. He had come from a farm in Brabant, southern Netherlands, where he had become knowledgeable in horticulture and agriculture. In the late 1920s the Dutch embassies in London, Paris and Berlin needed and appointed agricultural experts. Suddenly countries were trading a new product besides the dairy ones: tomatoes. “Hot” tomatoes.

In 1934 my Protestant Dutch father married my Roman Catholic German mother. I was born two days after Hitler goose-stepped into Austria in March 1938. My brother was born the following year, the year World War II broke out. The Netherlands (having been neutral in World War I) had signed a treaty with Sweden earlier in the 1930s, agreeing that the Swedes would take care of Dutch interests in case of war. When Hitler invaded and occupied the Netherlands in May 1940, the members of the Dutch embassy in Berlin fled. Eight hundred Dutch citizens, studying, living and doing business in Berlin, were immediately incarcerated in the Alexanderplatz prison. My father, after being pressed by the Dutch government and foreign office, gave in and reluctantly agreed to stay behind and fulfill the demand the Swedes had made, namely that one Dutchman assist them with the interests the Netherlands had requested them to protect.

That is how Adrianus (Jacq) Millenaar was officially “accredited to the Protecting Power, Department-B, of the Swedish embassy in Berlin” from 1940 until the bitter end of 1945. That is why I, of a Dutch father and a German mother, was born in the hell of Berlin and did not get out of that hell until I was six and then later again until I was 16 and then later again, after I had married in the grand land of the US of America in the late 1960s, and after that much, much later in the late 1980s after college and marriage. I finally figured out what post-traumatic stress disorder meant. It was long, long delayed, but PTSD it certainly was. Because the Allies bombed the hell out of the heart of Berlin. I was always there. Five times a day, the nights, I don’t know, I was grabbed by ever-thinning arms by whoever was near me, down flights of dark stairs into dank, ice-cold cellars. I shivered. My hands clammy in summer and my fingers stiff in winter. My fists pressed against my ears. A bomb exploded. The walls of our apartment building in the cellar of the Nestor Strasse shook. I shuddered. The alarm screeched. The siren pierced my ears, in spite of the fists I had plugged into them, which when I turned 50 or so required hearing aids because of my cookie-bite problem. At the same time I had to acquire a maxillary splint, because I had ground my teeth loose—a remnant of the anxiety I had undergone during

wartime, my dentist suspected. It did not hinder my teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages at MCLA in Massachusetts of the grand US of A throughout the 1990s. On the contrary. I turned up that annoying digital hearing aid, I gritted my teeth and was dead certain that if I could get German, Dutch, Swedish and English under my preteen belt, my adult students from Asia, Latin America and Bosnia could easily master English under my hyped-up tutelage. Because, even though my Dutch father had insisted that my German mother learn proper Dutch from 1934 on, I now believe that she spoke quite a bit of German with us while my father was running himself ragged, trying to negotiate on behalf of Dutch hostages, prisoners of war, slave laborers, resistance fighters, political prisoners. He did manage to free those 800 Dutch citizens from the Alexanderplatz prison, but that was still early in 1940. Adrianus Millenaar officially visited 22 concentration camps until the Nazis branded him a state enemy in early 1944. It was verboten that he take one more step out of Berlin. The reason being: He passed letters from Jews on to Jews. The Swedes urged my father to send Leni, my mother, and us to Sweden. It was six months before we were given visas.

In Germany schools started in April, so I was sent to a German primary school at the age of six. Had to perform the Hitler salute, not knowing what that was about. Up to that time, until November 1944, whenever my father managed to come home, he would rock us on his lap, singing Dutch nursery rhymes and at night saying Dutch prayers (*Here hou ook deze nacht, Weder over mij de wacht*) until that grim day in November 1944 with sleet and smoke choking my passageways down deep into my soul.

In Stockholm in the bleak midwinter of 1944 I was sent to a Swedish school. After all, I was six, had to sink or swim in Swedish. German was verboten (the Swedes had become less “neutral” after Stalingrad). And my father’s Dutch? I felt queasy. Something was not right. His Dutch prayer was not the same. I felt alone. He was not there. My mother wept. She wept during the day. The long nights, I don’t know.

The Netherlands was finally liberated in May 1945. Sometime that summer, we flew “home” and I was entered into a Dutch school. After all, I was a young Dutch citizen at the age of seven. My father, just before the Russians rampaged through Berlin, had escaped with a few Swedes to London, where the Dutch government in exile had resided for five years. He had become a colonel in the Netherlands Military Mission and as such had joined SHAEF (the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force)

under the command of General Dwight Eisenhower and reentered the Berlin of the four sectors: the rightful occupation by the USA, Britain, France and the USSR. Germany was divided into four zones, with the Russian zone encircling the city of Berlin by an approximately 200-kilometer zone with only three corridors leading westward.

Once electricity and plumbing were up and running and the bricks and smoldering mortar piled high into mountains of rubble, my father—a man in uniform with pretty silver stars on his lapels—took us out of our Dutch school in Wassenaar and drove his family back to the British sector of Berlin. His olive-green broad hat with a bright-red band around it must have impressed the pale, stodgy Russian soldiers, checking the *propusk* required to drive through the Russian zone. Brisk salutes were exchanged, and back we were in the hell of Berlin.

I wanted to stay in Holland. I loved school. I loved that lovely guttural language. I loved my new friends: Marijke, Anneke, Hendriekje. I loved my bicycle, my wooden skates. I loved the cows in the field behind our house on the Bloemcampiaan with the beech trees. And my father? He had become a stranger. A stranger in uniform:

“It’s a Dutch house with apple trees from Holland. I’ll plant hundreds of tulip bulbs.”

And so, it was sometime in late summer, when the tobacco plants were still high in our immense back yard on the Rheinbabenallee in Dahlem, that I was put into the British Army School to sink or swim in the British sector of Berlin in 1947.

I fell in love with the English language. It did not belong to my ruby-red-lipped German mother—a Jerry—whose people had done to others what they would not do to themselves. Nor did English belong to my proud, authoritarian stranger of a father, who was so anxious to protect us children from all evil. He never said a word about all the good he tried to do for his dearly beloved countrymen, his compatriots. He became consul general of the Netherlands in Berlin, was dean of diplomats, was one of the first to receive the *Bundesverdienstkreuz*, was decorated by Queen Juliana with the medal *Officier van Oranje Nassau* and many more. He retired from the Netherlands Foreign Office two years after the Berlin wall went up. He had the second highest ranking in spite of his having had only three years of high school—an early dropout. A self-made man.

And Adriana? In spite of four years of fun in the British Army School,

she was sent to yet another German high school for two long, weepy years and after that finally to her beloved Holland to finish school there. She wandered around collecting more languages, became perplexed but not crushed, because whenever faced with a dilemma, she turned to English. English at the University of Amsterdam. It changed to American when she married; it changed to teaching French to American sixth-graders; it changed to English literature in college; it changed to teaching English as a second language. English was her lifeline. Although she is good at speaking English, recording it for the blind and later also for the dyslexic, she is loath to speak up in company, actually shy. She would rather be silent and listen. After all, most people around her love to speak, talk, gossip, lecture, analyze and not really converse, so what she likes most is to write, write in English . . . though . . . one day, she might, just perhaps, maybe, in all likelihood, conceivably start, begin, commence, I daresay, hesitate, commit to paper some sort of piece in Netherlandish, *Nederlands*, Dutch and hopefully not end up in double Dutch.

# Expanding the Circle

BY BEN JACQUES

*Ich lebe mein Leben in wachsenden Ringen.*

—Rainer Maria Rilke

**W**e are seated around a table in a fourth-floor apartment in northern Germany. Four generations: Tante Anna, Harry, Herta, Manfred, Christa, Klara, Alex, Faija, Sasha, Sina, Rita and myself. On the table are *pelmeni*, smoked fish, chicken, kraut salads, potatoes, bread, pickles, grapes, tea, cider, beer, wine and vodka for the toasts.

Lifting his glass, Harry Hægelen is welcoming me, a second cousin from Boston, to their home in Delmenhorst, a few miles from Bremen. For my generation, it is the first meeting of the American and Russian sides of the family.

After Harry's toast, I lift my glass and attempt a gracious response, using my schoolboy German, learned 40 years earlier as a student in nearby Oldenburg. But it isn't the difficulty of the language that stops me. Overwhelmed by emotion, I am unable to speak. Red-faced, I stare at my plate, struggling to regain my composure.

Why is this hitting me so hard? And at the same time, how is it that I feel so at home among these strangers from the former Soviet Union, people whose only connection to me has been an occasional letter?

For a long time it was not safe for our Russian relatives to have any contact with persons in the United States. But in 1991, under Gorbachev,

things were changing. I had recently completed a seven-part narrative for *The Christian Science Monitor* about my grandfather's escape from Siberia, and I longed to know of family members who had survived Stalin and the wars. My uncle gave me an address and I sent off a letter.

Weeks later I reached into the mailbox and drew out an airmail envelope with orange and blue markings and Cyrillic words. I scanned the return address, unable to decipher the Russian cursive. I could feel my heart beating as I sat down on the couch, carefully opened the envelope and read the first line: "*Guten Abend, mein lieber Kind, Benjamin.*"

It was from Anna Gregorievna, my late grandfather's niece, and she wrote in an old German, learned from her mother, and spoken by her Mennonite ancestors, who had settled in Russia under Catherine the Great. Widowed, Anna lived on a kolkhoz in the North Caucasus. In her letter she enclosed snapshots of her four children, my second cousins. I would later meet Margarita, who lived with her two children in a nearby city, and Wolodja, who drove a tractor on the collective farm.

"It's a very difficult time," she wrote, just months before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. They had potatoes and bread, but it was impossible to buy shoes and clothes, and when something did show up in the stores, it was too expensive. She was thankful for her garden and a few animals.

After the first letter, Tante Anna and I continued our correspondence. Each time she told of the comings and goings of her family. A niece had traveled to Germany and written of the amazing things in the stores. Other relatives were emigrating. In one letter she sent me a picture of a white goat, her favorite. "I love my goats," she wrote, "but I haven't had much luck with them. One has kidded, but isn't giving enough milk for the little one."

The next letter brought better news. There had been plenty of rain and the grass grew tall. The goats were giving *schön Milch*.

"But what will become of the kolkhoz," she wrote, "God only knows. If you have money, you can purchase land and farm on your own." They had no such money. In the economic chaos accompanying Russia's transition to a market economy, unemployment was widespread, and the devaluation of the ruble meant that salaries and pensions would not cover necessities.

In a 1994 letter she wrote of the emigration of several more relatives to Germany. Increasingly, relatives were taking advantage of Germany's offer of citizenship to Russians of German ethnicity. For German Russians, life in the Soviet Union had been difficult at best, especially during World War II,

when they were deported en masse to Siberia and Kazakhstan. Sent east with her family, Anna spent two years in a forest labor camp. After the war she returned to the Caucasus, married a Russian and raised five children.

“Yes, your grandfather was a Schaak,” she wrote, using the German spelling of his surname. The Jacques family had two sons and three daughters, including her mother, also named Anna, from whom she had learned of my grandfather’s escape to America. Jailed in Odessa during the first months of World War I, Ivan Bogdanovich had been sent to a penal island on the Ob River. A year later he fled east across Siberia to Manchuria, China, and finally to San Francisco. Anna also knew of his brother, reported to have died in the Gulag under Stalin, and about their parents, her grandparents, who had died of typhus during the Civil War. “What God gives we must accept,” she closed.

Now, sitting around the table in the Hägelens’ warm apartment in Delmenhorst, I note the abundance before us. Platters are circulating and glasses are being refilled. Conversation has resumed in three languages. Across from me, Tante Anna, now 85, thin and white-haired, is laughing with Faija, a gregarious cousin from Siberia. My initial embarrassment at my emotions has vanished, and now I can finish my toast. Raising my glass, I tell my relatives in slow German phrases how happy I am to be with them. I pass on greetings from my wife, children and grandchildren in America. I want to say more, that for decades the pathways of the old family have diverged, that we have been scattered across continents, but that now, for this short happy time, they have been rejoined. But I’m afraid to attempt too much, and leave it at that.

As I waited at Logan Airport to board my Iceland Air flight to Frankfurt for this visit, I wondered if I would like my German-Russian relatives. I wondered if they would like me. I questioned what I was doing, a 60-year-old English teacher from New England, chasing off to meet distant relatives, separated not only by distance and time but by language and culture. Now, as I sit down to eat with my second cousins in Delmenhorst, my questions are being answered.

To my left sits Christa, 24, the Hägelens’ younger daughter. She was nine when her family left Ufa, on the western slopes of the Urals. A graduate student in sociology, she is pretty, wears jeans, an eyebrow ring, and wants to save the world. This morning she and her brother took me on a tour of Bremen, just a few miles away. First we strolled along the *Flohmarkt*, the

flea market that lines the harbor. We paused in a light rain to watch a river freighter advancing against the current of the Weser River, and Christa pulled out a pack of American Spirit tobacco to roll a cigarette.

“Yes, I’ve seen this tobacco,” I acknowledged, recognizing the American Indian logo. “It’s not supposed to have any additives.”

“American Spirit is pure tobacco,” Manfred, her older brother, said with playful sarcasm, “so it’s very good for Christa.”

At the flea market we passed racks of used clothing, appliances, chairs, rugs, CDs and cheap jewelry. “When we first came from Russia,” Manfred, an electrical engineer, said, “we had nothing. So we would come to this flea market to shop. I would look for computer parts.”

Beside Christa at the table sits her older sister, Klara, 28, thin, dark-haired, articulate. She is finishing her practicum to become an elementary school teacher. From a town near Hamburg, she has ridden the train three hours to Delmenhorst to meet me at her parents’ home. She has come without her husband, an African from Cameroon, a linguist, also preparing to teach. But she has brought her dog, a shy, midsized black mongrel obtained from a dog shelter. Too fearful for much socializing, Klara’s dog has sought sanctuary in a bedroom. “It takes time,” she says.

But not Lina, Christa’s dog. A well-fed collie mix, rescued several years ago, Lina makes her way around the table, placing her head in laps while we eat.

After dinner, *chai*, coffee and pastries are brought out, and conversation in German continues into the late afternoon. Occasionally I ask Manfred, or his sisters—the only ones who speak English—for help in translation. The talk turns to literature, and I ask Klara if she knows Rilke, the German poet I have read in my bilingual collection at home. Yes, she says, and she recites, “*Ich lebe mein Leben in wachsenden Ringen,/die sich über die Dinge ziehn.*” I live my life in expanding rings/which move out over the things of the world.”

Meanwhile, her father, Harry, who taught German in Russia, gets up to retrieve a collection of Rilke’s poems. I ask Klara if she knows another favorite, “*Herbsttag*,” “Autumn Day,” and she pauses for a moment, then begins, again from memory, “*Herr: es ist Zeit. Der Sommer war sehr gross.*” “Lord, it is time; the summer was immense.

“Bring the last fruits to fullness, and press the final sweetness into the heavy wine.”

In the windows of the Hägelens' high-rise, the north German sky has darkened. Klara continues: "*Wer jetzt kein Haus hat, baut sich keines mehr./ Wer jetzt allein ist, wird es lange bleiben,*"

"Whoever has no house by now will not build./Whoever is alone now will so remain."

Yes, it is *Herbsttag*, I think, and our table is full with the fruits of the season. And my cousins, Russian immigrants, have found new homes in a land no less strange because it was the starting place of their ancestors. Here they work to build new lives, many of them still struggling with a new language. Here is opportunity for their children. Here they work, study, raise gardens, help new arrivals get settled and provide shelter to animals. Best of all, no one is alone.

Later there will be more meals together, more conversations. I will eat borscht and strudel, pickles and persimmons. I will meet young adults from Siberia and Kazakhstan, engineers and mechanics, teachers and accountants; toss an American football with Aloysha, an 11-year-old boy, and trade shy smiles with the youngest, Angelina, an 11-month-old girl.

With Harry and Herta I will share old albums and documents. They will tell me stories of their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles; show me pictures of life on the kolkhoz in my grandfather's "beloved Caucasus." I will hear of other family members deported, exiled or lost to starvation or violence.

Herta, my second cousin, will also show me pictures of the modest log house she and her brother, who remains in Russia, have rebuilt in a village near Ufa, the dacha to which she returns by train in summer, holding on to something in the old country she cannot bear to abandon—something, I realize, I can only vaguely understand.

## Three Poems

BY TED GILLEY

### The Red Bicycle

All that self-regard the cities spent on civic songs  
had been smoothed away here to two no-fuss frayed  
ends of town

and a road like a string curving and tangling away—that is,  
when it quickened in your hand you woke up and saw  
the ocean it was tethered to.

Christmas bicycles, my sister's in blue and mine in red,  
rested free against the house—and were stolen.  
At a loss,

we strapped on skates to feel the endless chatter of the earth  
on the soles of our feet, or walked, giving in to the flat earth's  
least demand.

The police blamed us for the theft: Why had we not feared the night,  
when thieves stretch out their tireless arms?  
On Saturdays

we rode in the bed of Dad's truck, looking for our bikes  
beneath a sun we no longer trusted—their colors  
had been cut off

*Ted Gilley*

from the only sun we knew. And although we never found them,  
I dreamed I saw my bicycle's red curves bending  
    far from the notice

of the road, brazen on the porch of a house that kept to itself  
back in higher grass. I mounted up and pushed off.  
    I took back

my compliant, heartless friend and forgave, in exchange for speed,  
the miles its wheels had run without me. My thief gave chase,  
    but while I felt his fingers

graze my shirt, I was faster, and always afterward, when I slipped free  
nightly of those who kept me in line, I sped through dream cities,  
    taking what I wanted.

## Listening to Them Talk

All us kids, seeded by Dad, grew secretly, pot-bound, blacker  
than earth, our roots bruised from turning a downpour into tears,  
our tongues laced with ribbons of sweet blood.

Saps for the heavy look and the love, we waited on the distracted kiss,  
the back of the hand, the fist that shook the snake and released the soul  
of the mouse. We draped our bodies

like dishrags over the fence at the border of the combed and corrected  
lawn and wandered like moths through windows of the full moon. We knew  
the wicked would get theirs,

because we did, and that winter would blindside our leather soles  
and crack its cold class ring on our noggins, because it could. And  
so we burned our lungs

on the sting of smoke that shreds the pile of leaves to ashes, counted  
the limbs that let us fall to earth, and took our hurts home to be blessed  
and excoriated and were sent off to bed

when the planets waltzed across the hardwood floor of the sky,  
where tonight I hear them talking in my sleep, their voices young  
and green again, the smoke and whisky fumes fresh

in their gabardines, the notes of their cries and laughter glittering in the thin  
melody an icicle sings as it blazes, returning to the only element it knows, my  
mother and father, widowed aunt, uncle,

longtime family friend long dead whose face is just a shadow  
the lights we tacked up in corners of the simple sky no longer  
illuminate or dispel. Say

one thing more: Have we forgotten everything? Wasn't there one last thing  
you said, long before we set about killing time and before we became,  
each of us, one of you? One thing you told us never to forget?

## Back Lot

A woman splashed through the sky of my dream in a cheerful crawl.  
She wore a swimming cap, which gave her head the shape  
of a full white moon sailing through  
a pastel room.

She winked at me as she chopped by. There were traces,  
in her wake, of my mother's face. The style of the suit  
and the swim cap: late nineteen-forties,  
trim. Serious fun.

And now that I have become a figure in the background  
of my own memory, I laze through the back lot of scenes  
that stood for something, once, and walk those streets  
without purpose.

One of many ghosts, I slip along beneath the sun, headed  
nowhere, out of nowhere, no one waiting up for me:  
a kind of doll who only really wants to catch  
the attention,

for a moment, of the boy whose path will converge with mine.  
But this is his memory, and he looks everywhere except toward me,  
which is as it should be. We'll meet soon enough.  
I'll point out

all he missed as he moved frantic but unseeing through  
what he called his life, and he can accuse me, in turn,  
of not being there, or of showing up too late.  
*Where were you?*

he might ask, the words bringing him out of sleep and sitting up,  
open-eyed at long last, with just a glimpse remaining  
of that familiar stranger's half-familiar walk,  
so much like his own.

## Two Poems

BY MINDY DOW

### Slea Head

pedaling effortlessly toward the end of dingle  
stone graveled roadway  
no rain just yet

tepid brine wind mocks  
october sunlight  
staring off the chrome on my bicycle

this road centuries old  
on the edge of a dark grassy sea cliff  
where twenty miles feels like five

atlantic thundering below  
thatched roof cottages  
peat smoke

there's more sheep here than people  
who speak a language older than ghosts it seems

black shards of slea head appear  
slicing through churning white alabaster waves

I leave my bike and hike down to the beach  
holding coarse sand the color of peaches in my palms

*Mindy Dow*

lime green moss on wet gray rocks  
drips like hot wax  
beading trickles of water from the cliffs above

tea blue water sweeps onto shore rushing for me  
filling depressions and creating crystal deep pelagic pools

behind towering rock walls  
narrow passages

it mists  
I stand watching the tide come in  
there is nothing here

## A Night of Wine and Li Po

green grass  
a blanket  
by fishpond  
we laughed  
warmly  
sharing  
ancient poetry  
I could hardly  
stop thinking  
of your beautiful  
voice  
spilling blossoms  
of words  
into my  
lap

# The People, Places and Stories Behind Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Three Short Essays

BY LEA BERTANI VOZAR NEWMAN\*

1. The “Virgin Recluse” Breaks a Taboo:  
“Wild nights—Wild nights!”

When Thomas Higginson, coeditor of the first edition of Emily Dickinson's poetry, came across “Wild nights—Wild nights!” among the poems discovered in a locked box in the poet's room after her death, he had second thoughts about including it in the collection. He wrote to his coeditor: “One poem only I dread a little to print—that wonderful ‘Wild Nights,’—lest the malignant read into it more than that virgin recluse ever dreamed of putting there” (Bingham 127).

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\*The three essays that follow are a representative sampling from a book in progress intended as an introduction for the general public to the poetry of Emily Dickinson (1830–1886).

Wild nights—Wild nights!  
Were I with thee  
Wild nights should be  
Our luxury!

Futile—the winds—  
To a Heart in port—  
Done with the Compass—  
Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden—  
Ah—the Sea!  
Might I but moor—tonight—  
In thee! (Franklin, *Poems* #269)

In spite of his reservations, Higginson decided to publish the poem, but he had just cause to be concerned. Most readers would see the poem as a candid expression of intense desire for sexual union, erotic in its ecstatic abandonment and with complete disregard for the taboo on such subjects in Dickinson's day. It is totally out of keeping with the "virgin recluse" that Higginson had come to know during the 24 years that he had been her mentor and regular correspondent. This is the woman who claimed in one of her letters to him: "My life has been too simple and stern to embarrass any"—and he had no reason to believe otherwise (Johnson 2: 460). He concluded it had to be her poetic imagination at work and not a revelation of an illicit affair.

### **Attempting to Explain the "Master" Letters**

Subsequent editors, biographers and scholars have examined all available evidence in pursuit of the life experience that might explain how Emily came to know so intimately, at the age of 30, when she wrote this poem, what the consummation of physical lovemaking was like. The most compelling lead that has surfaced is a series of three letters in draft form that were found after her death. Known as the "Master" letters because that is the only identification given for the intended recipient, they raise more questions than they answer. We aren't even sure if final drafts were ever actually written or sent.

They are, however, clearly love letters. In the first one, she observes, “How . . . easy quite, to love” (Franklin, *Letters* 16). The second letter describes the emotion she feels: “A love so big it scares her”; she pleads: “Master—open your life wide, and take me in forever” (Franklin, *Letters* 22, 29). This entreaty bears a striking resemblance to how the speaker in the poem asks her lover if she could “moor” in him after “rowing” the wide expanse of the sea. “Wild Nights” and the second letter are both dated by the experts as having been written in the same year, 1861.

In the last letter, the longest of the three, written either later in 1861 or in 1862, she says:

I am older—tonight, Master—but the love is the same—so are the moon and the crescent—If it had been God’s will that I might breathe where you breathed—and find the place—myself—at *night* [my emphasis]. . . . I want to see you more —Sir—than all I wish for in this world—. . . . Could you come to New England—. . . to Amherst—Would you like to come—Master? . . . it were comfort forever—just to look in your face, while you looked in mine—.  
(Franklin, *Letters* 35, 43–44)

Once again the poem and the letter echo each other, both expressing an intense desire to be with her lover and envisioning her going to him at night. A significant difference is the specific reference to Amherst rather than the mythic “Eden” of the poem, one of several details that have contributed to the theory that the letters were addressed to a real person.

### Trying to Identify the “Master”

Dickinson scholars have not been able to ascertain with certainty who this “Master” might have been, though, unlike Higginson, they do generally agree that he was not totally a figment of Emily’s imagination. The leading contenders are the newspaper editor Samuel Bowles (Sewall; Wolff; Farr) and the Reverend Charles Wadsworth (Habegger; Pollak), both of whom she knew when she wrote the Master letters. Both were married men. Based partly on internal evidence in the letters and on the contacts the two men had with Emily, circumstantial evidence has been convincingly amassed for each of them. It could also have been another man entirely, someone for whom we have no surviving documentary evidence (Habegger 411). Or, according

to one psychoanalytic critic, Emily may not have been able to distinguish between fantasy and reality: As real as Master may have been to her, he may never have existed (Cody).

To complicate the issue even further, several readers have proposed the possibility that Master is a woman. They see the speaker assuming the role of the male lover acting as the phallic force that enters the passive, receptive female (Todd 36–37; Marcus 57–58; Reed 283–84). Their explanation for this role reversal is that the “I” and “thee” of the poem are both women and are not constrained by any predefined roles or set sexual functions (Faderman 20–25n5). The most likely candidate for Emily’s homoerotic partner (assuming there was one) is Susan Gilbert, her best friend, who later married her brother and to whom she wrote what have been described as passionate and erotic letters (Hart and Smith xii, xiv). Some believe they are of greater significance to her love poems than the Master letters.

### **Attending to the Poem Itself**

Ultimately it is the poetry that counts, however Emily came to write it. A close reading of the poem itself provides its own insights. For example, the poet’s use of the word “luxury” in the opening verse sets the erotic tone. According to the dictionary that Dickinson used regularly, “luxury” means “voluptuousness in the gratification of appetite . . . lust,” making it an apt and telling word choice (Wolff 383). Dickinson goes on to use the imagery of being “moored” in her lover as a ship at sea is “moored” in a port to capture the sensual union of coitus. Extending the nautical metaphor, she is rowing toward the safe harbor that is her lover, where she will be contained by him in blissful ecstasy, the winds now futile, the compass and chart no longer necessary (Day 210; McNeil 15; Wolff 383).

Attention to tense choice is also revealing. Dickinson uses the subjunctive mood (“Were I . . . Might I”), suggesting that she is writing hypothetically about a possibility she desires (Juhasz 108–09). The attentive reader will note the use of the plural form of “Wild nights,” thereby gaining insight into the enduring nature of the relationship that she longs for (Wegelin 25).

In the final analysis, if the reader can become as immersed in the poem as the persona is “moored” in her beloved, the biographical details, however intriguing, no longer matter, and the poem speaks for itself.

II. The Good Little Girl Rebels:  
“Some keep the Sabbath going to Church”

In 1861, when Emily Dickinson wrote “Some keep the Sabbath going to Church,” she was 30 years old, and she had stopped going to church entirely. It was a gradual process that neither she nor her family could have foreseen during her childhood.

Some keep the Sabbath going to Church—  
I keep it, staying at Home—  
With a Bobolink for a Chorister—  
And an Orchard, for a Dome—

Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice—  
I, just wear my Wings—  
And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church,  
Our little Sexton—sings.

God preaches, a noted Clergyman—  
And the sermon is never long,  
So instead of getting to Heaven, at last—  
I’m going, all along. (Franklin, *Poems* #236)

As a dutiful little girl, she attended Sunday services regularly. She remembers how devotedly she had listened in church:

The cordiality of the Sacrament extremely interested me when a Child, and when the Clergyman invited ‘all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ to remain,’ I could scarcely refrain from rising and thanking him for the to me unexpected courtesy . . . (Sewall 1: 269, Appendix II)

Hers was a religious household where the family gathered for prayer each day. Emily recalls her father’s proclaiming “‘I say unto you’ . . . with a militant Accent” that startled her (Johnson 2: 537). She grew up with the expectation that she would respect her father’s wishes and accompany her family to services at the Congregational church in Amherst.

## Excuses, Excuses

By the time she was in her early 20s, however, she was finding all manner of excuses for not going to church. Her letters reveal how she used her parents' concern for her health as a pretext. She confides in her brother, Austin:

I am at home from meeting on account of the storm and my slender constitution, which I assured the folks, would not permit my accompanying them today. It is Communion Sunday, and they will stay a good while—what a nice time pussy and I have to enjoy ourselves. (Johnson 1: 140)

To Susan Gilbert, she writes: “They will all go but me, to the usual meetinghouse, to hear the usual sermon; the inclemency of the storm so kindly detaining me” (Johnson 1: 181). Another letter to her brother describes how she is continuing to negotiate her way into minimizing her visits to church, this time in order to indulge herself in the beauty of nature—and prefiguring the sentiments she will express in this poem almost ten years later:

I will write while they've gone to meeting, . . . I stayed to Communion this morning, and by that way, bought the privilege of not going this afternoon. . . . It's a glorious afternoon . . . the sky is blue and warm—the wind blows just enough to keep the clouds sailing, and the sunshine, Oh such sunshine, it is'nt gold, for gold is dim beside it; it is'nt like anything which you or I have seen! (Johnson 1: 187)

## Open Rebellion

One account of Emily's open rebellion against church attendance has survived, though there is only what lawyers would call “hearsay evidence” for it. According to Mabel Loomis Todd, the coeditor of the first edition of Dickinson's poetry, the following is a record of a conversation she had with Emily's sister, Lavinia:

One Sunday [Edward Dickinson] was for some particular reason more than usually determined that Emily should go to church, and she was especially determined that she would not. He commanded, she begged off, until they were both weary. She saw there was no further use to talk, so she suddenly disappeared.

No one could tell where she was. They hunted high and low, & went to church without her. Coming home, she was still unseen, & they began to get very much worried, particularly her stern father. Old Margaret was questioned but could not say anything. Some hours later, Emily was discovered calmly rocking in a chair placed in the cellar bulk-head, where she had made old Margaret lock her in, before church. (Leyda 1: 478)

Lavinia did not specify any date for this incident, but by 1856 Emily was matter-of-factly referring to staying home from church in a letter to her cousin and longtime friend John Graves: “It is Sunday—now—John—and all have gone to church—the wagons have done passing, and I have come out in the new grass to listen to the anthems” (Johnson 2: 327). The “anthems” she listens to “in the new grass” foreshadow the songs of the “little Sexton” in this poem. In another letter to another friend the same year, she writes: “[If] God had been here this summer, and seen the things that I have seen I guess that He would think His Paradise superfluous” (Johnson 2: 329). Again, her conjecture in the letter anticipates the poem, specifically its last two lines: “So instead of getting to Heaven, at last—/I’m going, all along.” Or, as she puts it in another poem: “. . . Earth is Heaven—/ Whether Heaven is Heaven or not” (Franklin, *Poems* #1435).

### **A Fellow Rebel**

Within the boundaries of her family life, Emily’s refusal to go to church was a courageous act of defiance and independence; but in the larger community of mid-19th-century Massachusetts, she was not alone in rejecting the Puritan religious tradition. In nearby Concord, Ralph Waldo Emerson and his transcendental movement had preceded her, both in its rebellion against organized religion and in its celebration of nature as a source of spiritual beauty and goodness. Dickinson had read Emerson, but unlike him, she was not concerned with doctrinal matters (Capps 112). In fact, as a letter dated two years before she wrote this poem makes clear, she chose to ignore theological issues entirely: “Mr S. preached in our church last Sabbath upon ‘predestination,’ but I do not respect ‘doctrines,’ and did not listen to him” (Johnson 2: 346).

Although Dickinson’s concerns may have differed in emphasis from Emerson’s, his ideas had permeated the culture of the times and had prepared the reading public for the unorthodox ideas in Emily’s poem. It is not surprising, therefore, that this poem was one of the ten published during her lifetime

(Pollak 16). Like the others, it appeared anonymously and most likely without her permission. The editor of the journal that printed it was Charles Sweetser, Emily's cousin by marriage, who had probably received it from someone in the family. It was printed with the title "My Sabbath" in the March 12, 1864, edition of the New York journal *The Round Table* (Scholnick).

### The Critics

Two years before it appeared in print, Emily had enclosed a copy of this poem in a letter to Higginson. It was her fourth letter to the man she called her "Preceptor," and in it, she asked, "Will you tell me my fault, frankly" (Johnson 2: 412). We don't know if he critiqued this poem as she requested or what, if anything, he had to say about it. He did, however, include it in the first edition of Dickinson's poetry, published after her death.

More than 150 years later, critics have praised the poem for its clever use of meter, its wit and its skillful irony. According to one reader, Dickinson adopted "the characteristic meter and voice" of the songs for children written by the hymn writer Isaac Watts. According to William Stephenson, she follows the form of church music but, like the 18th-century mystic William Blake, she rejects its "traditional teachings" (280–81). Emily's wit shows up in the contrast between the two preachers: the church's ministers with their lengthy sermons juxtaposed with her understated "noted Clergyman," God himself (Towheed 23–24). In the same way, the apposition of "getting" and "going" in the last two lines lightly mocks the delayed happiness of the conventional heaven (Rieke 268).

The speaker's playful tone is effectively undercut by the irony at the core of the poem. It is ultimately a declaration of the wrongheadedness and inadequacy of institutionalized religion as Dickinson knew it (Rieke 268).

### III. The Poet Confronts a "Terror":

"I felt a Funeral, in my Brain"

Emily Dickinson once defined poetry this way: "If I read a book [and] it makes my whole body so cold no fire ever can warm me I know *that* is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know *that* is poetry" (Johnson 2: 473–74). The visceral wallop that the poem "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain" delivers meets Dickinson's own definition of poetry even as it gives expression to what may have been the most terrifying experience of her life.

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,  
And Mourners to and fro  
Kept treading—treading—till it seemed  
That Sense was breaking through—

And when they all were seated,  
A Service, like a Drum—  
Kept beating—beating—till I thought  
My mind was going numb—

And then I heard them lift a Box  
And creak across my Soul  
With those same Boots of Lead, again,  
The Space—began to toll,

As all the Heavens were a Bell,  
And Being, but an Ear,  
And I, and Silence, some strange Race  
Wrecked, solitary, here—

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,  
And I dropped down, and down—  
And hit a World, at every plunge,  
And Finished knowing—then—

(Franklin, *Poems* #340)

When Emily was in her early 30s, she suffered an emotional trauma that she told no one about until seven months later, when she confided in her mentor, Thomas Higginson. In a letter dated April 25, 1862, she wrote: “I had a terror—since September—I could tell to none—and so I sing, as the Boy does by the Burying Ground—because I am afraid—” (Johnson 2: 404). She provided no further details. She never again referred to this fearful happening in any of the many letters she wrote to him during the rest of her life—or, as far as we know, in any way to anyone else. Whatever it was, its emotional impact was strong enough that she is still in its throes when she tells Higginson about it the following spring. She talks about it in the pres-

ent tense: “I sing . . . because I am afraid.” Song has long been a synonym for poetry, suggesting that Dickinson is singing (that is, writing poetry) to alleviate her fear. As she says in her letter, she “sings” in the same way a boy might bolster his courage as he walks by a cemetery.

### Theories Galore

In the same year that Emily told Higginson about her “terror,” she wrote “I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,” a poem that reverberates with terror. Readers have persisted in wanting to know what that terror was or how it might be connected with this poem. Biographers and scholars have obliged with a plethora of theories. The “terror” could have been her fear of going blind as a result of the eye problems she was experiencing at this time (Hirschhorn). Or it could have been her despair at the ending of a secret romantic relationship with Reverend Charles Wadsworth when he moved to California (Habegger 421, fn.1). Or it could have been a profound psychic disturbance.

### The Psychological Perspectives

The last explanation seems to fit the thrust of this poem most closely and has received the most attention. One book-length study uses “I felt a Funeral, in my Brain” as a basis for a psychoanalysis of Dickinson with a diagnosis of depression leading to “an emotional upheaval . . . of psychotic proportions” (Cody 191). Agoraphobia is the mental illness of choice in another book-long interpretation of Emily’s problems (Garbowsky 152).

A third hypothesis has been proposed by John F. McDermott, M.D. Citing the guidelines in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* of the American Psychiatric Association, McDermott concludes that Emily suffered from a series of panic attacks. The “terror” of 1861–62 represents a midpoint in an emotional chain reaction that began with a description of a panic attack that Emily detailed in a letter to her sister-in-law Susan in 1854, and that continued well into 1883 with her doctor’s diagnosis of “Nervous Prostration.” He cites studies that confirm that “the physical sensations experienced by persons with Panic Attacks are perceived . . . almost always as a feeling they are about to die.” He adds that “terror is a word often used by panic victims to describe the fear of death they have experienced” (McDermott 77). Emily appears to fit the profile of a typical panic-attack victim: She applies the term “terror” to her fear in her letter, and she describes, through the persona of her poem, the feeling of dying during the course of her own funeral.

## A Fixation on Death and Funerals

Some readers have gone one step further and have rejected the idea that this poem has anything to do with death or funerals except as a metaphor for a mental breakdown (Monteiro 656–63). However, to dismiss the funeral simply as a poetic device would be a mistake. Death and the rituals accompanying it were a part of the cultural fabric of Amherst in the mid–19th century and very much a part of Emily’s world. From the age of nine to 24, Emily lived in a house on North Pleasant Street, adjacent to the village burial ground, where she could see a stream of funeral processions go by on a regular basis (Longworth 21).

As a member of a family belonging to the Congregational Church, she would have been familiar with the procedure followed in the funerals at their church. This poem follows the same stages: the mourners paying their respects (first stanza), the church service (second stanza), the removal to the graveyard (the lifting of the “box” in the third stanza), the tolling of the bells (fourth stanza) and the burial (last stanza) (Wolff 228). Cynthia Wolff points out that what is significantly missing is the “narrative center” of the standard Congregational ritual—the sermon. Dickinson’s “funeral” omits this crucial element that traditionally sums up the life of the deceased and offers the hope of an afterlife. Wolff sees the poem as an explicit refutation of the claims of Christianity with the hymnal cadence of the verse serving as bitter irony (232).

## The Visceral Imagery of Fear

What makes this poem unforgettable, however, is not Dickinson’s attack on theology but the intensive aural, tactile and kinetic imagery she inflicts on her reader (Cambon 127–28). She appears to have drawn instinctively on two innate fears that psychologists tell us we are all born with: the fear of noise and the fear of falling. The poem generates both of them. The repetitive treading and drumming, followed by the creaking, build to an overwhelming climax of noise until the tolling of a gigantic bell reduces the persona’s entire being to an ear. To that terror of sound, the poet adds the other primal fear—falling: The speaker breaks through a plank and drops “down, and down” in a free fall, hitting obstacles “at every plunge.”

To complete the horror, it soon becomes clear that the persona is dying at her own funeral, raising the specter of the 19th century’s popular obsession with the fear of being buried alive. Familiar examples are Edgar Allan Poe’s

“The Fall of the House of Usher” and “The Premature Burial,” though it is not likely that Emily herself had read Poe, since she admitted, in a letter to Higginson: “Of Poe, I know too little to think” (Johnson 2: 649).

### **Capturing the Uncertainty of It All**

Dickinson’s celebrated ambiguity shows up in the poem’s last line: “And Finished knowing—then—.” Most often interpreted as meaning that “knowing” ended with death (bringing about the end of consciousness), it could also mean that her life was finishing and she completed her grasp of knowledge even at the moment of her death (beginning to understand fully at last) (Faulkner 810–11).

Just as these two conflicting interpretations are equally plausible readings of the poem’s last line, the poem’s origin remains ambivalent and debatable. Whether it is a rendering of the “terror” Emily revealed to Higginson or a literary exercise about what madness or death might feel like, it is a poem written at the height of her lyric power.

As her biographer Richard Sewall put it, “She seems as close to touching bottom here as she ever got. But there was nothing wrong with her mind when she wrote the poem” (Sewall 2: 502).

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# A Humanistic Approach to Teaching Writing

BY JENIFER AUGUR

The zeitgeist that birthed a humanistic force in psychology also delivered a humanistic pedagogy to the discipline of composition theory, whose cries are loud still, debating how best to approach “self” as it is expressed and discovered in writing. The question exists: Should writing teachers *require* that students liberate their unique, signature voices and become more self-aware? Composition theory and humanistic psychology are abutting disciplines in this respect, sharing a concern with human potential. They share also the criticism that they are self-indulgent, a throwback to their origins in the 1960s.

Readers: To experientially participate in this debate, listen for my voice in this article. As I write, I experience a heightened awareness of my own presence. I am pulled in its direction. I want to be audibly present as the author of this article. I don’t want the language of the discipline I’m writing about (composition) or its environment (academics) to swallow me. It is hard, but ours can be an “I and Thou” relationship (Buber).

Reflect on the success of academic authors who were characters in their own prose, whom you could hear speaking in their writing. Consider that a text might seem more *familiar* if you sensed that a person, somebody, was presenting the material. This familiarity would encourage a relationship

between reader and text. Traditionally, academia has judged less authorial presence more appropriate. However, some consider it *imperative* that students be authentically present within their writing—authentic. These self-oriented theorists are called expressivists. According to the late James A. Berlin of Perdue University, they place “the self at the center of communication” (qtd. in Tate et al. 15). They believe that this improves writing, makes it resonate, easier to read and accessible to a greater range of people. Self-less, difficult to access, traditionally impersonal academic language, they contend, isolates and divides, supports a dominant culture of power that accepts individuals who speak its language and rejects those who speak languages based in other discourse communities, relegates them to a lower class status. Ebonics is one volatile example.

Voice in writing reflects how writers feel about themselves. Do they feel subordinate or authoritative? Rejected or accepted? With volition or voiceless? To strengthen their voice, and character, writers must progress toward a keener sense of judgment, an ability to keep their environment in perspective, including the “correctness” of the academic voice, its power and their role in relationship to this correctness. They must move away from relying on others to determine what’s right or wrong, away from an external, judgmental, evaluative source of authority, in order to feel self-generated, internal esteem.

### **Mythological Proportions**

In some rhetoric circles, the birth of expressivism and its sibling, the process movement, has reached mythological proportions. Many stories are told, and books written about a “1966 Dartmouth seminar, where the British theorists John Dixon and James Britton invoked the idea of *growth* as part of an attempt to shift work in English away from the analysis of a fixed set of great books and toward a concern with the uses that students make of language” (Harris ix). Much energy for change was disseminated from this Dartmouth seminar, the Woodstock of composition theory. But some of the changes that occurred are criticized. Some scholars react to what they perceive as an endorsement of solipsistic chaos. Those mediating between the two positions plead for dialogue between self and text that does not disallow the self a central role, yet is acutely aware that, in order to learn, the self needs to decentralize as well, to integrate “other” into its being. The tone of voice of the debate borders on squawking. Fingers point from bandwagons. There

is the tendency to compartmentalize. The champion: binary thinking. (It's either this way or that.) I experience this tendency as I present this information. Balance is difficult to achieve. Just ask student writers.

A Cartesian virus wedges itself between internal and external truths, blocks the discipline from moving forward. Articles currently published in English journals feed the ambivalence between a so-called “permissive” approach and a conservative tradition. In many ways, the battle is between generations, between the old-fashioned and the newfangled. Following is an excerpt from an article by Timothy E. McCracken and W. Allen Ashby of what one author presents as an example of extreme expressivism:

“It is loving that is the problem. . . . Our students are not in love with anything. . . . [O]ur task must be to reach deeper and restore the lost connections between the sources of all love and objects of love for it is these that have been severed—and the gap grows wider each year. . . . [W]e insist that there is not and should not be any way to evaluate writing! How would you evaluate a life?”  
(qtd. in Fulkerson 425n4)

The general public becomes involved, with its emotional reaction to the role of the Spanish language in U.S. culture. Allan Bloom writes *The Closing of the American Mind*, and sentiments swing toward standardized testing. Divisions exist within scholarly camps over more abstract questions such as: Is the self “an essence waiting to be freed” or an “essence waiting to be discovered through writing” (Faigley 122)? Social constructionists believe that language and truths evolve from *communities* rather than from individuals. Mikhail Bakhtin, their pied piper, writes that the word always “structures itself in the answer’s direction” (280), that we all write with a “heteroglossia” of voices. Only in our most illusory moments do we speak from a singular self. But these theories are merely lenses through which we look for different reasons and results—many of which are personal.

### **Self-Oriented**

Writing teachers who adopt a self-oriented (also referred to as student-centered) lens encourage students to participate in meaning making, to coauthor the meanings of texts with their own interpretations. “An old model of teaching, centered on the transmission of skills (composition) and knowledge (literature), gave way to a *growth model* focusing on the experiences

of students and how these are shaped by their uses of language” (Harris 1). Within the new model, students are asked to reply to authority rather than to parrot its material and voice; to produce writing that “renders” rather than “explains” (Elbow, “Reflections” 136); to recognize the language of power in the canon of classic literature; and to esteem their authority as independent thinkers by insisting, through the power of their written voice, “Listen to me, I have something to tell you” (Elbow, “Being” 82), rather than “This is what I think you want me to say.” In other words, to accept that language is an epistemological tool. “In teaching writing, we are not simply offering training in a useful technical skill. . . . We are teaching a way of experiencing the world, a way of ordering and making sense of it” (Berlin, qtd. in Tate et al. 20).

This shift in theory delivered the process movement, which awards writing *experience* priority over the written product. Researchers, including Sandra Perl (cited in Tate et al. 149–54), observed the phenomenon of writing, asked writers to articulate their process, their “Umm,” “Ah-ha!” and “I don’t know what I’m trying to say!” Results from these studies revealed that writing is a nonlinear process, *recursive*. It doubles back on itself, often discovers its intent midstream. Traditional teaching methods have treated writing as if it were a linear process, expecting students to be clear about what they want to write before they begin writing, to follow prescribed formats such as five-paragraph essays and to submit papers for final evaluation without opportunity for postfeedback revision.

### **The Process Movement**

The process movement strove to establish teaching methods that honor the often loopy, higgledy-piggledy, divergent creative process and students’ experiences of discovery. It encouraged teachers to assign many essay drafts, to grade only final portfolios, to teach a process of continual revision, to not restrict students as they plow/maneuver through the messy, indeterminate, disorienting stages of composing and to trust and facilitate this process. “A central goal of literary study thus became not only the writing of criticism but the deepening of students’ own creative powers” (Harris 27).

Advocates of the process approach encourage students to separate the creative from the editorial stage, to first freewrite, to unself-consciously generate many pages of raw, unedited material, running blindly with ideas, expanding perspectives, exploring relationships with the subject matter; to

edit at a later stage; to diverge first from the feeling, from the seed of attraction, from why they wanted to write on the subject in the first place, and to repeatedly return to this motivation as they revise. Ultimately, they will converge on what they discover to be the controlling idea. Elbow calls these two stages the “believing” and the “doubting” stages (*Writing Appendix*). In the believing stage, the writer believes everything she writes, affirms her every extension as she seeks to expand her seminal ideas. In the doubting stage, she can question herself, hold firm dialectic with what she has produced, testing its validity, how it stands up to disbelief. If practiced simultaneously, the two stages can stifle each other. Writers often lose their train of thought when they stop to check logic and spelling. They suffer unnecessary frustration trying to outline incomplete ideas. Writer’s block frequently results when writers think they should be producing perfection from the get-go, rather than allowing themselves the necessary time to get there. Critics call the first stage of this process undisciplined. Others charge that striving for precision “in the realm where it doesn’t work is nothing but undisciplined thinking” (Elbow, *Writing* 174).

### **The Teacher’s Role**

The teacher’s role in the humanistic writing classroom is to provide a safe, uncritical, supportive environment in which students can better tolerate the anxiety and insecurity that accompany risk and change. Because as students revise and reorganize their loose ideas, as they search for what they want to say, they discover who they are. “The writer achieves self-awareness through writing. And like the therapist who assists her client in achieving independence, the writing teacher listens with understanding, listens from a nonadversarial position without evaluating or passing judgment” (Teich 143). Teachers communicate where students are understood in their early drafts, constructively point to what is clear rather than focus on what is incorrect. “The main thing that helps writers is to *be understood*” (Elbow, “War” 313). In early studies of the writing process, Janet Emig, professor emeritus of English education at Rutgers University, recognized that correcting language errors has its roots in dysfunctional, controlling behavior. “Much of the teaching of composition in American high schools is essentially a neurotic activity. There is little evidence, for example, that the persistent pointing out of specific errors in student themes leads to the elimination of these errors, yet teachers spend much of their energy in this futile and unrewarding exercise” (qtd. in Faigley 58).

Fear of making errors and of being reprimanded can keep a human voice—self—out of writing. It can paralyze writers, prompt them to withdraw, to shrink to a distance from which they make only minor—the minimum—attempts to extend themselves, to grow. “It is not a lack of skill or knowledge that keeps an audible voice out of the writing of so many poor writers. It’s their worry about conforming to our particular conventions of writing and their fear of mistakes” (Elbow, “Voice” xxvi). Too much correcting results in “performances to avoid penalty, to avoid being hurt” (Teich 77), meek subjects rather than bold, confident, independent thinkers. In Abraham Maslow’s terms, it leads to deficit rather than growth motivation. Students keep their selves, their voices, hidden away.

In process-oriented classrooms, in the early, nonevaluative stages of the writing process, students and teachers, neither of whom are exempt from the difficulties of the process, become active listeners and participants in each other’s process, providing nonevaluative, nonjudgmental feedback in the style of psychologist Carl Rogers, such as, “What I hear you saying is . . .” or “Are you saying . . .?” They learn how to *direct* feedback on their own work by asking for responses only to specific questions, protecting themselves from an onslaught of opinion and diffusing the power of suggestion.

Students spend time writing privately in journals, which are not graded by or shared with the teacher, learning that they don’t always have to write for someone else, that sometimes the most productive writing is done solely for oneself. Elbow calls this “desert island writing” and recognizes its developmental value. “As I use my insecure voice more, I write myself into more passages of confidence; as I use my emotional voice more, I write myself into more passages of calmness and control” (“Voice” xiv). Private writing allows the writer to work through clichés or dead ends, to flush out reactionary, combative tones, to stumble through nonverbal, inarticulate thoughts without manipulating original experience to fit expectations or conventions.

### **The Inchoate**

The nonverbal, the inchoate, that which stubbornly defies articulation, is respected as an important element of the process as well. Sometimes attributed to the body, to a physical sensation or gut feeling, it often dwells closest to the heart of what one wants to but still can’t say. When writers honor this hesitancy, when they admit, “No, I haven’t got it. This isn’t what I really want to say,” they maintain space from which ideas eventually *can*

emerge; they reach toward a “congruence between what you feel inside and what you say outside about how you feel inside” (Teich 78). Prematurely accepting ideas that don’t feel right simply relieves the tension of the process. When writers limit writing to what is known, remain content with surface words, though so many wait/abide below, they rob the quality of their texts of the excitement of honest discovery. Greater tolerance for the open-ended inarticulate helps them actualize their potential, allows both them and their writing to *become*. Humanistic writing teachers lead students to this space, then trust that students will find there what is valuable to them.

And they go there themselves:

Paying better attention to the inarticulate—having more respect for the nonverbal—often leads writers to the articulate. Most of my own progress in learning to write has come from my gradually learning to listen more carefully to what I haven’t yet managed to get into words—waiting and trying to feel better my nonverbal feelings and intentions—and respecting the idea that I know more than I can say. This stance helps me be willing to find time and energy to tease into language what the phenomenologist Eugene Gendlin calls my “felt bodily sense.” (Elbow, “War” 8)

Students can become estranged from this “felt bodily sense,” from an internal, centered motivation to write, when their only audience is an authority. Their writing evidences this. When they safely provide the teacher with what they perceive she wants and will accept, no risks are taken in style. Their writing lacks a resonant, audible signature. “All that can save [sentences] is the speaking tone of voice somehow entangled in the words and fastened to the page for the ear of the imagination” (Robert Frost, qtd. in Elbow, “Voice” xxiv). Some students stop writing when they leave the classroom, stating, tragically, that they “hate to write,” because they haven’t been taught to write for, and from, themselves, to participate at a personal level. But, as the late educator and editor of *Ararat Quarterly* Leo Hamalian has seen, “Once the student finds his own ‘voice,’ he attains an honesty of selfhood in his prose that distinguishes it from the duty-driven drivel that he sometimes submits as a theme” (qtd. in Harris 29).

e. e. cummings eliminated capital letters. James Joyce’s sentences sometimes last pages. Ebonics’ patterns also serve its intentions—as does all language, when it finds the common, holy ground between speaker and listener, writer and reader, teacher and student.

## The Education System

The education system, however, does not always hold up its end of this sacred bargain. Schools, undeniably, are places of perceived oppression, where students must do as the teacher says. Teachers possess truths students must learn in order to enjoy status and rewards. But schools also are places of resistance. Humanistic pedagogy participates in such resistance. It weakens the traditional role of teachers by dispersing power, by requiring that they possess the self-confidence to work eye level with students rather than hide behind a desk. Shifting focus to integrity, it exposes the pretension in role playing. It invites diverse voices into the mainstream despite the mainstream's preference to be emulated. By encouraging self-discovery in writing, the teacher is "engaged in a political defense of the student in her struggles to assert herself against what [is] seen as a dehumanizing corporate . . . university system" (Harris 26).

Feminists joined these outcries of inequality from the movement's conception, and, in turn, expressivism has been labeled a feminist approach. According to Thomas J. Ferrell, professor of composition at the University of Minnesota at Duluth, "The female writing style tends to be 'eidetic, methectic, open-ended, and generative,' whereas the male style often 'appears framed, contained, more preselected, and packaged'"; "descriptive and exploratory" versus "definitive" (qtd. in Rosenthal 121).

Expressivism also invites *emotion* into its definition of intelligence, and its punctuation, such as the exclamation point, which women use more often than men and which adds audible voice to writing, arguing that these minority writing practices communicate legitimate experience. In what she calls the "Griselda syndrome," Joan Bolker, a clinical psychologist who coaches authors, warns of the danger of abandoning legitimate experience. Her studies revealed that women tend to receive better grades in traditional writing classes because they are adept at being "good girls," at doing what they are told, at abandoning themselves (cited in Rosenthal 124).

Humanistic writing teachers accommodate "otherness" in the classroom, believe that "human differences are the raw material of writing" (Berlin, qtd. in Tate et al. 18). They supplement the literary canon with alternative models that better reflect minority experience. They recognize how oral and gender styles influence writing, and they bring these influences to students' attention. But students must make their own decisions. The teacher's role isn't to force values, rather to assist students as they identify and articulate

theirs, “even if that means I must sometimes look on helplessly while they believe something I wish they would abandon” (Bartholomae and Elbow, “Interchanges” 91). Teachers must respect the barriers students erect to defend their own uniqueness. And they must recognize their own arbitrary biases, for what does not resonate for one person may profoundly resonate for another.

This is the ability to love and feel great power in a piece while still being able to say, “But this is not my kind of writing—it doesn’t really fit me”—and still help the writer revise her piece in a direction different from one’s own predilections or taste. . . . This kind of reader is more expert at listening for resonance even when it involves what is “other” or “different” from herself. (Elbow, “Voice” xxxviii)

Often, when students are permitted to write authoritatively—to be authors—they respond that it is a strange and difficult experience. Sometimes, they are afraid of the power of their own authenticity, preferring to mask their voice and adopt a persona—an assumed voice—to safeguard them from criticism, to be accepted into the mainstream, to remain invulnerable to uncomfortable change and power. This stylistically adapted writing may be mechanically, structurally perfect, but it hides self. What is written does not linger on readers’ minds. Its voice is not personally tactile; it doesn’t grip the reader; the reader can’t get a handle on it; indeed, the writer has not extended a hand, hasn’t fully extended himself.

Therapists are trained to recognize such ineffectual posturing as a device to avoid growth and change. Writing teachers, also, have begun to value psychological training. Rogerian workshops, based on the ideas of Carl Rogers, are being held by composition scholars, such as Pat Carini, to encourage teachers to *enter* a piece of writing; to locate the uniqueness of the text and the student, no matter how deeply hidden; to listen for the “heteroglossia” of voices that influence the writing; to consider where these voices originate, what prompts them, who’s speaking; and to encourage students to self-reflect, to think about who they are. Why? Because how students express themselves depends on their self-perception, and heightened self-perception helps students be more fully present on the page.

This “relationship between voice and identity . . . is the issue of greatest contention in ‘voice’ discussions in composition” (Elbow, “Voice” xix).

The question remains: Is it the writing teacher's *job* to help students become more self-aware? Is it the teacher's responsibility to shake things up a bit, to ask students to dig deeper, to experience more disorientation, to shift the crusts of their armor, to uncover themselves, to write about less-resolved subjects, to look at seemingly familiar subjects through less-familiar lenses, to participate originally rather than to experience only what they think is expected of them?

For humanistic writing teachers, it is the pedagogy of choice. "To reinvigorate teaching we need a new confidence in our . . . humanistic literary traditions," to trust that "developing the student as a writer and as a person [are] inextricably linked" (Harris 25).

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## *Book Review*

### ***Sentience and Sensibility: “A Conversation about Moral Philosophy,”*** by Matthew Silliman

Parmenides Publishing, 2006

BY LEA NEWMAN

**A**ccording to Matt Silliman’s introduction, his aim is “to develop, explain, and defend a philosophical position . . . in a way that a patient and educated person who is not necessarily a scholar of moral philosophy will find accessible, interesting, and compelling.” Having had some second thoughts about agreeing to review Silliman’s book, my response was: What a relief! Perhaps I am exactly the kind of reader the book is intended for after all—a professor emerita with some patience (I have raised five children!) who knows very little about the discipline of philosophy.

I need not have worried, because the book lives up to its author’s intentions. It is “accessible, interesting, and compelling,” though I might have added “challenging” as well. It’s a book that has to be savored, not rushed through. It’s not weighted down with the jargon that often obfuscates philosophical writing, but the issues that it confronts are not simple ones. They are as complex and complicated as they are compelling.

Part of what makes the book so engaging is its dialogue form. While echoing the dialogues of Plato, this is a literary hybrid, part fiction and part drama. Two fictional characters meet when Harriet Taylor, a caseworker in an immigration office in Boston, interviews Manuel Kant about his application

for “philosophical asylum” in the United States. What results is a long weekend of conversations (from Friday to Monday) about a moral theory that Manuel attempts to explain to Harriet. Manuel is a poor scholar from Cuba who grew up in India, attended university in New Zealand and England and is Muslim rather than Hindu. Harriet’s parents were Jewish refugees from Lithuania; she was raised in Manhattan, was a philosophy major at Oberlin and a graduate student in biology at Columbia. She is piqued by Manuel’s predicament. He is looking for a place that will be open to his theory, one that people elsewhere have found disturbing primarily because it raises the possibility that nonhuman animals merit moral consideration, and the idea that not all morally considerable beings are due exactly equal consideration. Her background makes her a perfect foil for his defense of his theory, and the ensuing dialogue between the two of them makes up the bulk of the book.

The “Summary” that the author provides immediately after the “Introduction” makes it clear that Manuel’s approach to moral philosophy is precisely the same one that Silliman himself is proposing, a theory that he calls “value incrementalism.” It is based on the view that valuers differ in degree, from inanimate objects (a stone) to sentient beings who may or may not be conscious subjects of their own lives (insects, cats, dogs) to moral agents with reflective self-awareness (fellow human beings). In the course of Manuel and Harriet’s discussion, the reader learns a great deal about basic philosophical principles and vocabulary, from the historical origin of moral values to the postmoderns’ rejection of the existence of truth. I was particularly taken with the concept of the “knowledge tax”: The more you know, the more you owe (the more capacity we have for moral reflection, the greater our obligations). We also confront the ethical dilemmas that arise with issues such as abortion, vegetarianism, animal rights and care of the environment, but viewed from the perspective of this new approach that opts for a nuanced solution.

One of the chapters presents a concise and clear survey of traditional moral theories, which the reader can supplement as needed by the section at the back of the book titled “Cast of Concepts and Characters” covering the usual suspects: Aristotle, Kant, Wittgenstein and company, and the less familiar terms of biocentrism, passive valuers and the like.

For a nonspecialist like myself, it was reassuring to find corroborating evidence presented in the words of other nonspecialists: Pogo in Walt Kelly’s comic strip, for example, who declares: “We have met the enemy, and he is us,” and George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, where “Some animals are more equal

than others.” It was delightful to encounter Robert Burns’s “To a Mouse” and the fox in Antoine de Saint Exupéry’s *The Little Prince* in the chapter titled “Ethical Vegetarianism.” Through the dialogue of the characters he created, Silliman’s irrepressible sense of humor comes through, enlightening the occasionally grim scenarios that Manuel and Harriet hypothesize over. The puns and deliberately mixed metaphors “enlighten” in both senses of the word—by providing a lighter note and by illuminating the concept in familiar yet unique contexts.

In the book’s appendix, an essay cowritten with David K. Johnson describes in formal terms the theory proposed by Manuel in the dialogue. It details two major components: an incremental assessment of value and the application of multiple criteria. The moral ideal their approach aspires to, according to their final statement, is neither perfect, exclusive friendship with our nearest compatriots nor generalized and impersonal global compassion, but a reconciliation of these two based on their new multicriterial value incrementalism approach.

*Sentience and Sensibility* is suited to specialists and nonspecialists alike. For novices, it offers an opportunity to get a taste of the pleasures and challenges of an unfamiliar but fascinating discipline. For specialists, it proposes a new approach to moral philosophy, and it serves as an example to be emulated—writing that presents philosophical principles clearly and coherently in accessible language. As Silliman himself cogently puts it: “What earthly good is a theory of morality that hardly anyone can read or use?”

## Contributors

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**Ted Gilley's** poems have appeared recently in *Free Verse*, *National Review*, *Pebble Lake Review* and *Poetry Northwest* and are forthcoming in *Rattle*. His stories have been published in *Northwest Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Other Side* and other magazines and anthologies. He works at the Chapin Library of Rare Books of Williams College.

**Ben Jacques** has taught English and communications at MCLA since 1990. His essays and articles have appeared in a number of magazines and newspapers, including *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Plateau Journal* and *Berkshire Living*. He is currently writing a collection of stories and essays about his Russian heritage, his grandfather's escape from Siberian exile and his cousins' emigration and resettlement in Germany after the collapse of the Soviet Union. His essay "Expanding the Circle" is taken from this collection.

**Lea Newman** taught American literature at MCLA. She has published books on Hawthorne and Melville, was president of both the Hawthorne Society and the Melville Society, and currently serves on the advisory board of *Leviathan: "A Journal of Melville Studies"* and as archivist of the Hawthorne Society. Her most recent books include *Robert Frost: "The People, Places, and Stories Behind His New England Poetry"* and a memoir, *Growing Up Italian in Chicago*. She is vice-president of the Robert Frost Stone House Museum and is completing her manuscript on Emily Dickinson's poetry.

