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Changing the subject: First-person narration in and out of the classroom

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Changing the Subject: First-Person Narration In and Out of the Classroom

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Changing the Subject: First Person Narration In and Out of the Classroom

Susan Friedman

ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of first-person narration for self-transformation and social change is indicated by exploring connections between three emergent discourses: illness narratives and memoirs by rape survivors in which the subject speaks from a privileged yet socially marginalized position about life-altering experiences; clinical discourse that elaborates treatment methods for empowering trauma survivors and helping them reconnect with the social world; and scholarly discourse that reflects on the relationship between trauma, self-representation, witnessing, and recovery. Post-Foucauldian theories of life-writing illuminate how the author-subjects of survivor narratives discursively reconstruct their shattered subjectivity in a therapeutic relationship with themselves and their readers. Cognitive and pedagogy theory illuminate how first-person narratives can foster multiple intelligences. Data from the author's own teaching experience illustrates the strengths and potential pitfalls of first-person pedagogy. An abundance of memoirs have been written by rape survivors and by subjects with critical illness since the 1980s; in these texts, subjectivity is reconstructed, often with the result of empowering, validating, and reconnecting the writing subject to the social world from which she has become disenfranchised. College students analyzing these texts often feel sympathy for the autobiographical subject. In this way, first-person narratives foster a compassionate
classroom environment, and are valuable tools for developing a student’s emotional and
cognitive capacities.

Chapter One introduces my study and examines theoretical discourse concerning
contemporary trauma narratives and autobiography theory. Chapter Two investigates
sixteen rape memoirs using Judith Herman’s *Trauma and Recovery* to trace how
writing about trauma helps the subject heal from its effects. Chapter Three studies fifteen
memoirs about critical illness to see how the subject employs warfare metaphors to
describe the effects of illness on her body, and to portray herself as a hero figure. Chapter
Four investigates the theoretical basis for employing first-person narratives in the college
classroom to foster self-study, well-being, and empathy. Chapter Five presents data from
my own teaching experience to demonstrate how incorporating first-person narratives
into the college classroom does indeed foster self-study, well-being and empathy. As
students come to see themselves as subjects of their own discourse, they also recognize
and support another’s right to work toward self-transformation.
Chapter One: First-Person Narration in Popular Culture, Clinical Discourse, and Trauma Studies

All writing is autobiographical but it is autobiography placed in context, fragments of experience woven into the ever changing lives we create to understand our lives. As we place our life in significant contexts, as we create the legend or myth of our childhood, our schooling, our war, our profession, our marriage, we are changed. We become the product of our writing. (Donald M. Murray, Crafting a Life: In Essay, Story, Poem 69)

Introduction

The aim of this study is to demonstrate the efficacy of first-person narration as a tool of self-transformation and social change. Toward this end, I develop connections between three kinds of discourse that have gained prominence in the last twenty years: popular memoirs that recount traumatic experiences, specifically rape memoirs and first-person illness narratives; clinical discourse that elaborates treatment methods for trauma survivors; and scholarly discourse that reflects on the nature of trauma as a cultural and historical phenomenon. Given the breadth and diversity of autobiography studies in the last twenty years, much of the scholarship on autobiography investigates issues of subjectivity, identity and authority. However, no book-length study systematically assesses both scriptotherapy and autopathography as subgenres of autobiography and also examines their place in the college classroom.

I argue that the author-subjects of first-person survivor narratives recreate their own shattered subjectivity by entering into a therapeutic relationship with themselves and with the readers who bear witness to their stories; and that this relationship is itself produced and mediated by narration. In addition, I argue that the beneficial effects of
first-person narration can also be realized in the college classroom through an approach that can be termed “first-person pedagogy.” The kind of first-person pedagogy I discuss entails the study of survivor discourse in conjunction with writing instruction that involves students in the production of their own first-person narratives, and in bearing witness to the narrations produced by their peers in this setting. This approach enhances students’ writing skills by securing their full engagement in a compelling rhetorical situation. Equally important, it fosters the “education of the emotions” which has been a traditional office of the humanities, by promoting empathy, self-knowledge, and well-being. While the pedagogical dimension of my argument summarizes the views of psychologists, pedagogues, and compositionists, much more broadly I analyze and contextualize my three subject discourses (survivor discourse, the discourse of clinical intervention, and scholarly discourse on trauma, illness and recovery) within the framework of postmodern literary and cultural theory. Michel Foucault’s theories of subjectivity, and those of thinkers who learned from Foucault, enable my analysis, as does the work of literary scholars specializing in life-writing, rhetoric and narratology.

Situating the First-Person Narrative

My project develops two of the areas that Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson suggest in Women, Autobiography, Theory (1998) for further study in theorizing women’s autobiography: interdisciplinary studies of personal narratives (39), and the therapeutics of writing autobiography (40). Throughout women’s autobiography theory, truth, subjectivity, performativity and testimony are problematized. In keeping with this trend, my project defends the agency of the marginalized subject in voicing her position and validating her experience. There are several prominent theories on the construction of self
in autobiography, including Judith Butler’s “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire” (1989), which problematizes the cultural construct of gender and a sexed body to show that the body itself is a construct, a multiplicity (6-8). Butler claims that identities are effects of discursive practices which are historically contingent (24). Similarly, Butler’s *Bodies that Matter* (1993) investigates the performativity of gender and the paradox of subjectification; Butler, a post-Foucauldian, posits that the subject that resists societal norms is produced by those same norms (376). Likewise, Joan Scott claims in “Experience” (1993) that the linguistic event of reconstructing the autobiographical subject’s “experience” produces that subject’s identity without depriving her of agency (66). Like Butler and Scott, Shoshana Felman’s “Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching” (1995) argues that testimony, which has become at once so central and so omnipresent in our recent cultural accounts of ourselves, should be part of pedagogical practice. Felman argues that teaching must “testify, make something happen, and not just transmit a passive knowledge”; in Felman’s view, teaching, like psychoanalysis, is performative in that both strive to enable change (56). In “Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, Resistance” (1995) Sidonie Smith argues that the autobiographical speaker is a performative subject; in effect, the self of autobiography does not exist before the moment of self-narrating (108).

**Questioning the Canon: Finding a Pedagogical Place for Autobiography**

In developing the pedagogical dimension of my argument, I draw on the work of cognitive psychologists, radical pedagogues, and compositionists of several stripes. In *Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions* (1990) psychology professor James Pennebaker’s paradigm of expressive writing attests to the importance of
discussing the self and social relationships in writing. Various clinical studies based on the Pennebaker paradigm demonstrate that this writing intervention can improve students’ health, college grades, feelings of depression, and job prospects (Pennebaker, “Theories, Therapies” 140). Researchers testing the Pennebaker paradigm found that participants “who wrote about traumas evidenced more improvement in immunological functioning, more reductions in subjective distress, and fewer health center visits than participants who wrote about trivial events” (Brown and Heimberg 781). Pennebaker’s expressive writing paradigm claims that for writing to be therapeutic, the autobiographical subject must connect her deepest emotions and thoughts to the life events themselves. In *Writing as a Way of Healing* (1998) feminist scholar Louise DeSalvo incorporates Pennebaker’s paradigm into teaching methodology for her memoir-writing classes at Hunter College (47-150). Writing autobiographically about emotions, labeling them, enmeshing them in symbolic codes, and drawing upon them as a means of understanding behavior accesses what professor of psychology Howard Gardner identifies as the personal intelligences in *Frames of Mind* (1993). Although they control and regulate more “primary orders” of intelligence, such as linguistic skills, Gardner claims that developing students’ personal intelligences also benefits other cognitive skills (274).

A pedagogy that builds upon Pennebaker’s expressive writing paradigm and Gardner’s multiple intelligences theory fosters what, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Paolo Freire calls a “problem-posing” learning environment, where students are “no longer docile listeners,” but participate as “critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher” (68). In problem-posing education, students “develop the power to perceive
critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (Freire 71). Freire’s original focus was exclusively economic, and did not represent other forms of oppression of pedagogical importance, such as issues relating to expression and exploitation of gender. Feminist pedagogy, however, rests on truth claims of the primacy of experience and consciousness grounded in historically situated social change. In Teaching to Transgress: Education as a Practice of Freedom (1994) feminist pedagogue bell hooks advocates “engaged pedagogy,” a progressive, holistic approach derived from Paulo Freire’s radical pedagogy, and Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh’s teachings. Creating social change through progressive classroom practices is the focus of feminist educator Mary Rose O’Reilley’s autobiographical pedagogical narrative The Peaceable Classroom (1993). O’Reilley has two goals for “peace-making” in literature and writing classrooms: to foster the student’s “inner life” and “to help the student bring his subjective vision into the community” (32). In “Radical Introspection: The Personal in Scholarship and Teaching” (2001) feminist scholar Brenda Daly illustrates the benefits of pedagogy which employs personal autobiographical essays to foster what she calls “radical introspection,” a teaching/learning process that is both emotional and analytical. Like liberatory and feminist pedagogies, psychoanalytic pedagogy promotes social change, nurtures students to develop personally, and helps students empower themselves through gaining membership in certain discourse communities. In The Writing Cure: Psychoanalysis, Composition, and the Aims of Education (1999), psychoanalytic pedagogue Mark Bracher maintains that one of the best ways to improve writing is to help writers recognize and deal with “intrapsychic”
conflicts (153). Bracher emphasizes that psychoanalytical pedagogues do not need the exhaustive training required of psychoanalysts to help students work through these conflicts, but should understand the basic aim of psychoanalytic treatment and the primary forces operating within it (9). Bracher also notes the similarities between the process and effects of verbalization both in personal writing and in psychotherapy (147).

The place of “the personal” in the English classroom is of great interest to scholars in Composition Studies. At the center of debate is the split between personal and academic writing, and how the personal can or should be authorized by the academy. My study investigates some concerns about personal writing to bolster support for personal writing pedagogy. In Composition-Rhetoric (1997), Robert J. Connors explores the development of composition pedagogy from the eighteenth century to present, including strategies for composition pedagogy ranging from personal experience writing to expository and argumentative writing. While many contemporary scholars argue that educators must teach students “genres of power” such as the argumentative essay, in Relocating the Personal: A Critical Writing Pedagogy (2001), Barbara Kamler questions “the naïveté of such assertions, in particular the notion that an individual’s life can be changed simply by being taught the ‘prestigious’ genres of her culture” (82). In Kamler’s view, “all writing is personal” because it involves writers with histories that force them to negotiate gender, race, class and other subjectivities (83). In “Forward: About Personal Expressive Academic Writing” (1990) Peter Elbow asserts that the same work done through academic discourse, such as making arguments, solving problems, analyzing texts and issues, and trying to answer hard questions, can also be done with personal and expressive writing. In “Composing Culture: A Place for the Personal” (2003) Patricia A.
Sullivan suggests that, to counter the epistemological, political, and disciplinary biases against the personal, educators approach students’ personal writing as a “cultural pedagogy” that can teach about students’ lived experiences, literacies and culture (46). In “The Scope of Personal Writing in Postsecondary English Pedagogy” (2001), Diane P. Freedman argues that personal writing allows students “to negotiate the divide” between “school and work or school and home, their writing and their caring, their knowing and their being” (199). By bridging students’ private, public, and educational spaces, personal writing can influence a broad spectrum of experience. While engaging in self-writing, the student comes to see herself as what Michel Foucault calls in “The Subject and Power” (1983) “a dual subject”: “subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge” (212). As the student recognizes the technologies of power that subject her, she learns to affirm the agency afforded her through self-knowledge and self-representation.

**Michel Foucault and the Influence of Postmodernism**

Throughout postmodern autobiography studies, and likewise in my project, the theories of Michel Foucault figure prominently. Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality: Volume I* (1978) is relevant to my study of trauma narratives, especially Foucault’s claim that one does not engage in confession without the presence or virtual presence of an authority that requires, prescribes, and appreciates that confession (61-2). The testimony of the speaker is a byproduct of technologies of power requiring a confession to produce a truth-statement, but it is this very truth-telling technology that validates and can empower both speaker and statement. While the speaking subject in autobiography is subject to technologies of power that control and produce her speech-act, her identity is
unmistakably linked to the self-knowledge produced by articulating her story, and
circulated through the channels of communication that both oversee and allow for
individual truths to be voiced in the public forum.

Relevant to my study of illness narratives is *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (1973), in which Foucault analyzes the process through which medical science seeks to bring light to disease, grants access to the recesses of the human body, and exposes the technologies affecting our bodies and the human condition as a whole. Foucault’s large-scale genealogy explores the history, development, and methods of medical observation, whereas my study of individual pathographies explores the effects of illness and medical technologies on the body, and the importance of the subject’s testimony to break the silence imposed by these technologies of power.

My final two chapters on the effects of personal writing on the subject are influenced by Foucault’s “Writing the Self” (1997), an investigation of the moral and ethical effects of “self-writing” on the writing subject. Foucault claims that self-writing serves a function like that of confession to a spiritual director (similar to how subjectivity and confession is problematized in *The History of Sexuality: Volume I*). Foucault’s “What is Enlightenment?” (1978) informs my inquiry into how subjects are constituted as subjects of their own knowledge, and as moral subjects of their own actions, with agency to exercise or submit to power relations. Also influential is Foucault’s “What is an Author?” (1977), which problematizes discourse itself and the form, conditions, and rules under which the subject appears in discourse in the “author-function.” The author-function makes technologies of power to which the subject is subjected visible, situating
the subject’s narrative outside of the subject herself, offering agency and truth-value to
the subject’s narrative, and separating the text from its author-subject.

In postmodern autobiography studies, questions concerning authority and identity
are, of course, central. Because the confessional nature of scriptotherapeutic and
autopathographic texts necessitates that the subject’s textual self-representation be
presumed to have truth-value, each of the following theories is pertinent to my study.
Georges Gusdorf’s “Conditions and Limits of Autobiography” (1956) is the earliest
postmodern commentary on autobiography. In brief, Gusdorf claims that through the art
of autobiographical confession, the self establishes the truth of its individual selfhood
(Eakin 65, Sisson 98, Smith and Watson 7-8). In “Autobiography as De-facement” Paul
de Man inverts the assumption that life produces autobiography, problematizing whether
the limits of self-portraiture determine the subject. Similar to Foucault’s concept of the
dual subject, de Man asserts that just as life produces the autobiography, the
autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life of the writer (69).
James Olney’s Metaphors of Self (1972), one of the most influential texts in postmodern
autobiography studies, posits that the self is constructed linguistically through metaphor
(Autobiographics, Gilmore 74). Often the subject’s life experiences escape direct
linguistic representation, thus metaphor (e.g., illness is a journey) is employed to
approximate what escapes articulation. Metaphor is central to my discussion of
autopathography in Chapter Three.

Recently published studies of autobiography theory expand upon issues of
subjectivity, identity and authority initiated by earlier scholars. The essays in
Autobiography & Postmodernism (1994) edited by Kathleen Ashley, Leigh Gilmore, and
Gerald Peters explore identity construction at the intersection between postmodernism and autobiography. In particular, these essays focus on how the self is constructed in autobiography by questioning the methodologies that produce and reproduce its cultural identity (5). In *Altered Egos: Authority in American Autobiography* (1989), G. Thomas Couser questions issues of authenticity in prominent American autobiographies to defend his thesis that what is demanded of autobiography is a convincing show of authority (253). Joseph Fichtelberg, coeditor with Couser of *True Relations: Essays on Autobiography and the Postmodern* (1998), notes scholars’ concern over authority, boundaries, limits, and alternative visions in autobiography. In his view, autobiography continues to mirror communal concerns and through it, we can still claim the status of truth (8). In “Relational Selves, Relational Lives” (1998), Paul John Eakin investigates how (first-person) narrative functions as the mode in which relational identity is transacted (75).

**Discovering the Discourses of Trauma and Recovery**

The last twenty years have witnessed the explosion of a certain form of popular memoir that might be called “survivor discourse.” Such writings are sometimes dismissed as exploitative, sensational, and/or sentimental expressions of the culture of confession and self-indulgence. However, I believe many of these publications deserve scholarly scrutiny. I am interested not in their aesthetic merit, but in their status as first-person narrations that serve the function of personal and cultural change.

Of particular concern are texts in which the author engages in scriptotherapy, a term introduced by Suzette Henke to describe “the process of writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic reenactment” (xii). My analysis
of rape memoirs centers on their scriptotherapeutic value to both the writer and to her audience. Several of these highly personal texts have become ingrained in popular culture. Trisha Meili’s best selling memoir *I Am the Central Park Jogger: A Story of Hope and Possibility* (2003) is one of the most well-known rape narratives in popular culture due to Meili’s extraordinary story of survival and the worldwide publicity garnered by her 1989 attack. Another highly publicized rape narrative is Nancy Zigenmeyer’s *Taking Back My Life* (1992). Zigenmeyer is best known for appearing on “The Today Show,” giving rape victims a public name, voice, and identity and the crime of sexual assault a national forum. Philosophy professor Susan Brison’s *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of the Self* (2002), a highly respected theoretical inquiry into sexual assault, trauma, and recovery, also includes a first-person account of her sexual assault.

My exploration of autopathography, book-length first-person illness narratives, centers on the metaphoric language employed by their author-subjects to describe being a subject of and subjected to critical illness. As with rape narratives, several autopathographies have entered into the public arena due to the name recognition of their author-subjects. Champion bicyclist Lance Armstrong’s narrative about testicular cancer *It’s Not about the Bike: My Journey Back to Life* (2001) became a national bestseller after Armstrong rode to seven successive Tour de France victories. Also, Gilda Radner’s *It’s Always Something* (1989), published during her protracted battle with ovarian cancer, brought Radner back to the public eye many years after her last television appearance. Many influential academic autopathographies include anthropology professor Paul Stoller’s *Stranger in the Village of the Sick: A Memoir of Cancer, Sorcery, and Healing*
(2004), a parallel study of illness in Western culture and in Africa’s Songhay tribe.


During roughly the same period survivor discourse entered into popular culture, mental health specialists have been developing clinical methods for the treatment of trauma survivors: Judith Herman, most notably. Judith Herman’s groundbreaking text *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) represents two decades of research and clinical work with victims of sexual and domestic violence, as well as work with victims of post-traumatic stress disorder. Herman encourages trauma survivors to speak what had been unspeakable and restore connections between their public and private worlds, between the individual and the community, and between men and women. Herman’s findings suggest that people who have endured trauma suffer predictable psychological harm in a spectrum of traumatic disorders that have basic features in common; likewise, the recovery process also follows a common course. Central to Herman’s study are the psychoanalytic concept of transference, and the “working through” of past experience in a therapeutic setting. According to Herman, the traumatized patient “feels a desperate need to rely on the integrity and competence of the therapist”; consequently, the patient enters the therapeutic relationship unsure of her therapist’s willingness or capacity to help (138). However, by working through the trauma in carefully delineated steps that include naming the problem, stabilizing the trauma symptoms, reconstructing the trauma
narrative, and transforming the traumatic memory into a narrative that ceases to recreate trauma as it is being told, the therapist helps the trauma survivor reconnect to society. I claim that Herman’s delineation of trauma and the steps to recovery and reconnection are recognizable in scriptotherapies about sexual assault. Cathy Caruth’s *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) investigates how we can listen to trauma beyond its pathology for the truth it tells us, and how to find a means to express this truth without endlessly repeating the initial trauma (vii-viii). Kali Tal’s *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (1996) is a theoretical study of the relationships between individual trauma and cultural interpretation, in relation to victims of sexual violence, and to survivors of the Holocaust and the Viet Nam war.

The elaboration of this clinical discourse has sometimes inspired and sometimes run parallel with the development of a substantial body of scholarly discourse that investigates the nature of trauma as a cultural phenomenon, as well as the relationship between trauma and self-representation. In *Shattered Subjects* (1998) Suzette Henke studies how post-traumatic stress disorder figures into a significant number of contemporary feminist autobiographies, and how the autobiographical female subject works through traumatic experience; covering a wide spectrum of texts in her study, she defines life-writing broadly to include confessional forms, autofictions, diaries, and other forms of first-person narrative. Henke argues that autobiography effectively mimics the scene of psychoanalysis so that life-writing can provide a therapeutic alternative for post-traumatic stress disorder (xii-xiii). At the time she introduced her approach, Henke acknowledges it seemed to be more psychoanalytic than literary, appearing to some as marginal to the field of literature. However, since the early 1990s and the publication of
Caruth’s *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* and Herman’s *Trauma and Recovery*, a widespread interest in scriptotherapy has developed, one that spans from mental health practitioners to literary critics.

G. Thomas Couser notes in *Recovering Bodies: Illness, Disability, and Life Writing* (1997) that before his text, few scholars studied marginalization through illness and disability; however, since he began his inquiry, several books that theorize illness narratives have been published. The author of several texts concerning contemporary autobiography theory, Couser claims postmodern autobiography mirrors communal concerns and through it, we can still claim the status of truth (*True Relations: Essays on Autobiography and the Postmodern* 8). Professor of sociology and cancer survivor Arthur Frank is the author of two book-length studies on illness narratives. *At the Will of the Body* (1991) looks at the body as a site where disease occurs, and where medical technologies depersonalize and colonize the human body. In *The Wounded Storyteller* (1995), Frank investigates the quest narrative in pathography. Similar to Frank’s study is Anne Hunsaker Hawkins’ *Reconstructing Illness: Studies in Pathography* (1999), which examines the mythic qualities of biographies and autobiographies that describe personal experiences of illness. In *Stranger in the Village of the Sick: A Memoir of Cancer, Sorcery, and Healing* (2004), anthropologist Paul Stoller, also a cancer survivor, discusses the critical illness survivor as a liminal subject who is never fully reintegrated into society (185). In their different ways, all these discourses—popular survivor discourse, the clinical discourse of treatment and recovery, and the scholarly discourse of trauma—are concerned with the relationship between self-representation, dialog, and the possibility of change or healing. This nexus forms the subject matter of my study.
Intersections

The nature of my project is such that it cuts across professional specialties: literary criticism; literary and cultural theory; psychology and psychoanalysis; Composition Studies; and Women’s Studies. For example, both chapters two and three investigate the role of the compassionate listener in trauma narratives, and incorporate concepts from psychoanalysis, literary and cultural theory, and Women’s Studies. Chapters four and five deal with “first-person pedagogy” in both theory and practice, and draw upon literary and cultural theory, Composition Studies, psychology and psychoanalysis. This kind of hybridity entails both intellectual and professional risks; it runs the risk of being unacceptable to any or all of these specialists, of failing to do justice to the nuances of each specialized discourse. But I am persuaded that the benefits outweigh these risks.

The groundswell of rape narratives published in the last twenty years reflects advances in voicing women’s subjectivity and recognition of the field of trauma studies. According to Suzette Henke, since the 1990s “scriptotherapy has infiltrated the imagination of therapists, literary critics, mental health workers and narratologists alike” (xii). In Chapter Two, I examine sixteen first-person trauma narratives, several of which have been published by the authors themselves or printed and distributed by small presses. These texts disrupt patriarchal social structures and break through the technologies of power that, as Michel Foucault claims in *The History of Sexuality: Volume I*, impose secrecy on those victimized by sexual violence. My structural analysis of these scriptotherapeutic rape narratives explores the three stages of recovery discussed by Judith Herman in *Trauma and Recovery*. I show how, as Herman notes, the public
and private aspects of testimony transform the subject’s narrative into a new story, in
which shame and humiliation can now be seen as dignity and virtue (181).

A fundamental claim of postmodern thought is that narratives are constructed by
the same subjects they construct. In Chapter Three, I structurally analyze fifteen
autopathographies to show how their author-subjects deploy metaphoric language
pertaining to war to immortalize themselves. Drawing from Lakoff and Johnson’s
*Metaphors We Live By*, I illustrate how the metaphorical concept “Argument is War”
applies to the battle for subjectivity undertaken by the author-subject of autopathography.
I claim that autopathography is structured similarly to Lakoff and Johnson’s figurative
categorization of war and argumentation. In autopathography, the primary adversaries are
the subject and her illness; however, other interested parties enter the conflict, including
family members, the medical community, and society at large. In the struggle to save her
life, the author-subject of autopathography also fights for her textual subjectivity;
regardless of the outcome of her first battle, the subject necessarily wins the second one
once her illness narrative is published.

In Chapter Four, I expand my discussion of the effects of life-writing on the
writing subject to include its potential to transform college writing pedagogy. In this
chapter, I assert that life-writing can have a positive influence on the college writing
subject that extends beyond the obvious goal of teaching her to write clearly and
cogently. I present theories from progressive, feminist and psychoanalytical pedagogies
and review critical positions concerning the place of the personal essay in the college
classroom to illustrate how employing personal writing promotes self-study in both
teacher and student. In addition, I present findings from eminent psychologists James W.
Pennebaker and Howard Gardner to explain why and how self-reflective personal writing improves the well-being of the writing subject, and how self-writing taps into a student’s multiple intelligences, facilitating the writing process for some learners. Drawing on my previous arguments on the effects of scriptotherapy and autopathography on the reading and writing subject, I claim that first-person narratives should be employed in the college classroom because they are valuable resources for teaching empathy. A teaching pedagogy that utilizes first-person narrative essays builds upon college students’ propensity to develop empathic skills; it encourages them to focus on affective responses and relate to others’ first-person accounts of life experiences.

I have found through my own teaching experience that incorporating autobiographical texts and self-writing into pedagogical practices can foster a classroom environment that pays attention to subjectivity to promote mindful, ethical behavior, empathy, and well-being in both teacher and student. In Chapter Five, I examine “first-person pedagogy” that connects reading and learning to write first-person narratives with student performance. I cite several of my students’ first-person narratives, journals, and exit surveys to evaluate my pedagogical practices. My self-study concerns such issues as the connection between writing and healing, the ability to improve one’s essay writing skills through personal writing, the efficacy of employing intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences in the college classroom, and the connection between increased awareness of one’s subjectivity and compassion for others. Through first-person pedagogical practices such as peer-editing and the sharing of student texts in the classroom, students report feeling connected to and empathic toward their fellow classmates. My findings
suggest that students who read and write first-person narratives often overcome their preconceived notions and prejudices about others to develop compassion for them.
Chapter Two: Telling the Tale: Rape Narratives as Scriptotherapy

The first task of consciousness-raising is simply calling rape by its true name. (Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* 67)

Introduction

Over the last decade, the field of Trauma Studies has led the way for survivor testimonies, especially memoirs dealing with trauma and recovery, to come to prominence in academic discourse. Since the 1980s, published first-person trauma narratives have been integrated into a range of disciplines including psychology, literary studies, narratology, Composition Studies and Women’s Studies. For example, the anthology *Writing and Healing: Toward an Informed Practice* (2002) explores the verbal and relational consequences of a wide variety of trauma-producing experiences, and how writing has the potential to help survivors deal with these events in a way that mitigates their traumatic consequences (Anderson and MacCurdy 3). In this chapter, I examine published first-person trauma narratives by rape survivors, several of which have been published by the authors themselves or printed and distributed by small presses. These texts disrupt patriarchal social structures and break through the technologies of power that, as Michel Foucault claims in *The History of Sexuality: Volume I*, impose secrecy on those victimized by sexual violence. For Foucault, “power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself [. . .] For it, secrecy is not in the nature of an abuse; it is indispensable to its operation” (86). Foucault examines the societal network which silences and marginalizes individuals who might disrupt technologies of power, such as
survivors of sexual assault; however, this scholarly investigation makes visible the extent to which rape subjects can and will go to insure that their voices are heard, despite these constraints.

In addition, Foucault’s observations in *The History of Sexuality: Volume I* concerning the ritual of confession are central to my investigation of rape narratives. Foucault’s view, similar to those of psychoanalytic scholars, is that the subject “does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile” (61-2). Throughout my study, the dual role of the audience as authority and compassionate listener will be investigated. Furthermore, in light of Foucault’s project, I explore how, in the act of narrating her tale, the subject is created and recreated through confession. In Foucault’s words: “the truth is corroborated by the obstacles and resistances it has had to surmount in order to be formulated” which “produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation” (62). Although Foucault’s project in *The History of Sexuality: Volume I*¹ should not be conflated with the goals of survivors of sexual assault and psychotherapists, Foucault’s discourse on the subjectification of the individual is significant in postmodern literary and cultural theory, and is central to my study.

¹ According to Horrocks and Jevtic, Foucault’s project “is an attempt to understand the experience of sexuality in modern Western culture—the birth and growth of ‘sex’ and ‘sexuality’ as historically given objects” (123).
Naming the Self in Narratives of Rape

In her groundbreaking feminist study of rape, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (1975), Susan Brownmiller offers what she calls a “female definition of rape”: “If a woman chooses not to have intercourse with a specific man and the man chooses to proceed against her will, that is a criminal act of rape” (18). In my study of fourteen rape memoirs written by women raped by men, and two memoirs by male authors raped as children by other men, I expand upon Brownmiller’s gender-specific terminology; however, in each instance, rape is clearly seen as what Brownmiller calls “an exercise in power” (256). For this reason, I introduce each rape subject in my study with a brief synopsis of the events surrounding her sexual assault, to further empower her by making the crime against her visible to my reader. I intend to emphasize how rape can and does affect just about everyone in some manner, and illustrate how, “like assault rape is an act of physical damage to another person, and like robbery it is also an act of acquiring property” (Brownmiller 185). Each subject in my study has been damaged both physically and psychically, yet rather than commodify her as “spoiled goods” which have been appropriated by her rapist (without diminishing the absolute seriousness of the crime), I prefer to categorize the rape subject as vandalized, still belonging to herself, but indelibly marked by her assailant. Accordingly, I employ both “survivor” and “victim” to refer to the rape subject, but recognize that each word connotes a distinct identity. As psychotherapist Judith Herman explains, the rape survivor remains fully aware of her ordinariness, her weaknesses, and her limitations as well as her connection and indebtedness to others, while the victim often carries “a grandiose feeling of specialness” to compensate for feelings of self-loathing, worthlessness, difference and isolation (204).
In other words, a rape survivor has taken steps, most likely therapeutic intervention, toward integration of self and reconnection with society, while the victim stands alone, often in an adversarial role with herself and others. Whatever the terminology employed to discuss the rape subject, it must be stressed that rape is never his or her fault. For this reason, Kay Scott, raped as a teenager while conducting missionary work in Chicago’s slums, refers to herself as a “recovered victim,” employing this term (or “recovering victim”) to emphasize that subjects of sexual violence are not responsible for either the crime or the subsequent damage (11).

Historically speaking, rape and rape prevention, as well as the viewpoints of rape survivors, have been ignored or silenced by mainstream society. A 1998 study by the United States Department of Justice indicates that one in six women and one in thirty-three men have experienced an attempted rape or completed rape (Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women). Furthermore, according to the 1992 study Rape in America: A Report to the Nation, only one out of every six rapes is actually reported, making it the most underreported violent crime in America. Only since the emergence of published first-person rape narratives in the early 1990s have rape survivors and the crimes committed against them been given voices, faces, and agency. We need to pay attention to these courageous authors’ mission to effect change, and respect their tenacity in making sure their stories are available for the general public to read.

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2 Even today, I feel we must stress the innocence of the rape victim, not only in an ongoing effort to educate society, but also out of respect for survivors who may be working through conflicting emotions.
A Place to Begin: The Possibility of Reintegrating the Self through Scriptotherapy

My study of first-person rape memoirs explores narrative recovery, a term often employed by narratologists in reference to a dual process: the recovery of past experience through narrative articulation, and the psychological reintegration of the traumatically shattered subject through narrative articulation (Henke xxii). The act of narrative recovery—of finding the words to articulate trauma and its after-effects—guides the subject’s trajectory from rape victim to survivor: the rape subject narrates, uncovers and recovers memories that, due to their traumatic nature, previously remained outside of language. In this aspect, narrative recovery touches upon the pathology of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as it affects the subject unable to assimilate or experience trauma fully at the time of its occurrence (Caruth 4-5). The shattered rape subject employs language to put the rape trauma into the symbolic order to reconstruct and reintegrate the self. To trace the process of narrative recovery in rape memoirs, I analyze them as scriptotherapy. In particular, I examine how the shattered subject of the rape scriptotherapy reintegrates as a result of narrative recovery, and how writing and publishing her story becomes her survivor’s mission “to transform the meaning of [her] personal tragedy by making it the basis for social action” (Herman 207). Whether the author is a seasoned writer or a novice, whether the text is skillful or amateurish, each survivor in my study bravely reconstructs a life that was first unmercifully shattered and then painstakingly rebuilt. These survivors demand to be heard. For their sake, for those for whom they speak, and for those yet untouched by rape, we must listen.

The writer engaged in scriptotherapy undertakes a process similar to narrative recovery: first, in and through writing the subject reconstructs her rape trauma and
rebuilds her shattered self; second, she creates a text in which she and her reader can follow the subject’s trajectory from trauma victim to recovered survivor. From these actions a textual self emerges that reflects and reinforces the new identity of its subject. Joan W. Scott explains: “Treating the emergence of a new identity as a discursive event is not to introduce a new form of linguistic determinism, nor to deprive subjects of agency. It is to refuse a separation between ‘experience’ and language and to insist instead on the productive quality of discourse” (66). To illustrate this point I have selected several chapter titles from Patricia Weaver Francisco’s scriptotherapy Telling: A Memoir of Rape and Recovery outlining the author’s trajectory from victim to survivor to rape memoirist. Francisco, awakened in her downtown Minneapolis apartment by an intruder who blindfolded, raped, stabbed and robbed her, utilizes chapters two, three and four titled “Telling Details 1, 2, and 3,” to discuss her sexual assault and its immediate aftermath. In chapter nine, “Fear,” she explores the effects of PTSD on her, which include nightmares, hypervigilance, and overwhelming fear. In chapter eleven, “Roots of Fear” and chapter twelve, “Do I Look Angry?” Francisco investigates her reactions to and preconceptions of trauma. In chapter sixteen, “Your Aura’s Got Holes in It,” Francisco partakes in alternative healing methods ranging from consulting a psychic (ineffective) to receiving deep tissue massages (invaluable). In chapter nineteen, “Justice,” Francisco attends a highly publicized rape trial (thirteen years after her attack) where, over the course of two months, she works through lingering trauma by projecting her feelings onto the “surrogate” serial rapist seated in the courtroom before her. In her final chapter “The Laurel Tree,” Francisco dreams of having enough money to purchase a paradise “where women collared by fear can walk and let beauty hold them up” (218). Francisco’s closing
observation that Eden is a place where “knowledge of evil is a force for good” encourages her readers (including herself) to accept that not only is it possible to heal from rape, but also that a survivor can employ the knowledge gained from her ordeal to help others (221).

While not all rape memoirs are scriptotherapies, those texts written by women which depict narrative recovery are almost always easily recognizable by titles which emphasize healing or empowerment, such as After Silence: Rape and My Journey Back; Taking Back My Life; Peaceful Heart: A Woman’s Journey of Healing; and Startling Beauty: My Journey from Rape to Restoration. Interestingly, the two scriptotherapies in my study written by men (the only two I found that were easily acquirable through public libraries or readily available through online booksellers) have titles in which narrative recovery is not immediately evident. The enigmatic title of Richard Hoffman’s Half the House offers little indication that its author overcame the effects of childhood sexual molestation, while Jim Parker’s Raped in the House of God: The Murder of My Soul and Its Lifetime Effects clearly suggests the author was molested by a priest, but provides no information about his eventual recovery and reconnection to society. I propose that the confusing nature of the first title and the searing anger of the second one reflect the relatively late stages at which both subjects sought and received therapy for the symptoms which most often occur in sexually abused men—anger, mistrust and meaninglessness (Tobin 1). Both authors’ delay in seeking and receiving therapy accords with Rod Tobin’s claim in Alone and Forgotten: The Sexually Abused Man that while it
is widely accepted that female abuse survivors require counseling, it is less recognized that males do (69). 

Moving from Narratives of Rape to Narrative Recovery

I will structure my analysis of rape scriptotherapies on Judith Herman’s three stages of recovery from trauma as explained in her breakthrough text *Trauma and Recovery*, the product of a twenty-year psychiatric practice at a feminist mental health facility and another ten years as a teacher and supervisor in a university teaching hospital. Although the text was originally published in 1992, and later reprinted in 1997 with an additional afterword by the author, it remains a definitive text in the diagnosis, study and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder. In the sixteen scriptotherapies about rape and recovery in my study, I investigate how their subjects textually manifest Herman’s three stages of trauma and recovery. I argue that Herman’s stages can be seen at work in each rape narrative. For example, in some manner, each writer reveals how the attack traumatized and permanently altered who she is and how she perceives the world, and how, with therapeutic intervention that includes writing the memoir, she transformed from shattered to reintegrated subject. In every memoir the survivor fulfills the oftentimes urgent need to linguistically reconstruct her trauma, illustrating the psychotherapeutic principle that as long as the traumatic event remains in its “prenarrative” state, it will resurface and retraumatize the victim (Herman 175). In scriptotherapies, as with Herman’s patients, after the survivor reconstructs the ordeal of the sexual assault, she begins her journey on the path to recovery. (Herman strongly

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3 Although I find the immediate differences between scriptotherapies written by male and female rape survivors to be of interest, the nature and limitations of my study preclude further investigation of this issue here.
emphasizes this is an arduous undertaking that necessitates the assistance of a skilled therapist.) Throughout this chapter, I will illustrate Herman’s theories with excerpts from scriptotherapies, emphasizing the Herculean task of recovering from sexual assault, and spotlighting survivors such as Debra Puglisi Sharp whose mission is “to help other crime victims, to share with them all I’ve learned about trauma, survival, and putting together the pieces of my life” (280). As Sharp’s statement reveals, to recover from trauma it is crucial that the survivor have a compassionate audience ready to hear her testimony.

Since the role of the witness is so important to the trauma survivor—both in sharing the burden of her story and in validating its emergent truth—in addition to my discussion of how rape scriptotherapies manifest Herman’s stages of trauma and recovery, I will also investigate my role as a reader of rape memoirs. In several instances I will interject my emotional responses to the text and address the subject’s inclusion of her reader in the narrative. Psychoanalyst and Holocaust survivor Dori Laub believes the audience (reader) plays the preeminent role of witness in listening to the trauma subject and determining the “truth-value” of her narrative. By setting the scene to receive a narrative that previously lacked an audience:

... the listener (or the interviewer) becomes the witness before the narrator does. To a certain extent, the interviewer-listener (reader) takes on the responsibility for bearing witness that previously the narrator felt he bore alone, and therefore could not carry out. It is the encounter and the coming together between the survivor and the listener, which makes possible something like a repossession of the act of witnessing. This joint responsibility is the source of the reemerging truth. (69)
Hence, working as her ally, the audience positions the survivor to bear witness to her trauma narrative; because the survivor testifies to events that involve few, if any, other individuals, she relies upon her audience to situate her trauma narrative as an historical event; however, due to the scope, nature, and content of the survivor’s story, audience members may have difficulty accepting and fulfilling their responsibilities as witness, historian, judge and jury.

In the beginning of *Trauma and Recovery*, Herman claims those who bear witness to trauma such as sexual assault “are caught in the conflict between victim and perpetrator”: likely the perpetrator assumes the bystander will not act, while the victim “asks the bystander to share the burden of pain” (7). Herman asserts that the perpetrator’s arguments are “irresistible” when the bystander faces them in isolation, and that without a supportive social environment he often succumbs to the temptation to “look the other way” (8). I have found that in scriptotherapy, the author (victim) deploys her readers to expose and indict the rapist (perpetrator) for his crimes—which include the falsehoods he perpetuates and the patriarchal ideology he embodies. Depending on the tone, tenor, and truth-value she perceives in the victim’s testimony and the overall efficacy of the memoir, the reader will determine if and how her sympathies lie with the victim, and what type of witness she will be. In this study, I deliberately position myself as an ally to the rape subject. While in principle I wholeheartedly side with the victim of sexual

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4 Brownmiller concludes *Against Our Will* with a concrete challenge to patriarchal society: “Once we accept as basic truth that rape is not a crime of irrational, impulsive, uncontrollable lust, but is a deliberate, hostile, violent act of degradation and possession on the part of a would-be conqueror, designed to intimidate and inspire fear; we must look toward those elements in our culture that promote and propagandize these attitudes, which offer men, and in particular, impressionable adolescent males, who form the potential raping population, the ideology and psychologic encouragement to commit their acts of aggression without awareness, for the most part, that they have committed a punishable crime, let alone a moral wrong” (391).
assault, it has not always been easy to fulfill my role as victim’s advocate. For example, two subjects in my study, Jim Parker and Heather Gemmen, test my ability to remain a sympathetic reader. Parker’s insatiable promiscuity, which he attributes to his molestation by a priest at age twelve, is hard for me to stomach, especially when he boasts about his numerous sexual adventures, many of them extra-marital, spanning the period from his teenage years through middle age. For example, while training to become a “Loving Relationships” counselor (75), Parker has multiple liaisons, about which he boasts to the reader. Although Parker initially believes casual sex with fellow program participants will sabotage his “journey of self-discovery” (78), he continues to engage in risky behavior, including having sex in the bathroom of an airplane on the flight home from a training session (85). After becoming a Loving Relationships therapist, Parker’s sexual behavior becomes more repulsive when, during a “rebirth” session conducted in his hot tub, he fondles his client’s breasts (102). Watching Parker (a victim of sexual abuse) become a sexual predator is quite difficult to handle, especially because I feel great compassion for his own story of abuse and abandonment. On the other hand, I have trouble feeling sympathy for Gemmen (who was raped in her bedroom while her young sons slept in an adjacent bedroom) because she employs racist imagery and dialect throughout the chapters leading up to her rape narrative. For example, in one early scene, Gemmen (who is white) tells Tasha (a black single mother) how she and her husband naively moved to a black neighborhood: “Did you know that we bought our house in the winter? We didn’t even realize we were in the ‘hood until spring when suddenly the whole tribe swarmed outside and beat their bass drums on their car stereos until winter came again””(49).
Although Gemmen admits to Tasha that she’s a racist (51), I neither accept her sincerity nor see her make an effort to change her ways. My allegiance to Gemmen is seriously challenged when she employs dialect to tell her rape narrative (her rapist was black):

“Who are you?” I asked sleepily. I might have rolled over and disappeared back into my dreams, but the ugliness of your voice (“Don’t you worry ‘bout dat,”) shocked me into wakefulness [. . .] The point of your knife again found the nape of my neck. I heard venom spew out of your mouth, but the slur of drunkenness and rush of passion hid the meaning from me. I remained silent. Your face came closer and you snarled words again, but I still didn’t understand. “I don’t know what you’re saying,” I sobbed as you increased the pressure of the knife to indicate you wanted a response. This time I heard you: “I’ll kill you if you tell anyone ‘bout dis.” (57, 62-3)

My sentiments change when Gemmen learns she has become pregnant by her rapist. Devout Christians, Gemmen and her husband decide to raise the baby rather than put her up for adoption; and later in the narrative, the Gemmens complete their family by adopting Deshawn, a (black) toddler from their neighborhood abandoned by his crack-addict mother. By the narrative’s completion, I am moved by Gemmen’s story.

To deepen my analysis of scriptotherapy, I turn to Herman’s three stages of recovery from trauma. According to Herman, immediately following the rape the survivor must establish personal and environmental safety. After she has established safety, the survivor can then begin to employ language to work through the traumatic
event and mourn its tragic effects. Finally, after retelling and working through her trauma narrative in a therapeutic manner, the subject reconnects with ordinary life. It should be noted, however, that the survivor may not necessarily follow a linear progression toward health and well-being and could vacillate between these three stages of healing and recovery (155). The amount of time it takes to create a feeling of safety varies from days to years, depending on the survivor and her perception of loss of control; however, the first priority is for the survivor to regain bodily control before moving her focus outward toward control of the environment (Herman 160). Issues of bodily control include paying attention to basic needs such as sleep, eating, exercise, management of post-traumatic stress disorder, and controlling self-destructive behaviors; environmental factors include finding a safe living situation, mobility, and a plan for self-protection that encompasses the full scope of the survivor’s daily living routine.

Each survivor in my study initially experiences problems with bodily control and grapples with establishing safety. For example, Susan Brison, brutally beaten, sexually assaulted and left for dead while on her morning walk, writes that while recuperating in the safety of the hospital, she still could not be left alone, “even for a few minutes” (3). After her release eleven days later, she remained fearful that her attacker would track her down. Similarly, Migeal Scherer, raped midmorning at her neighborhood laundromat, writes that it took about three weeks before she was able to be left alone for any length of time or walk the two blocks from her home to the mailbox, although she still lacked “a sense of control” over her life (10-11). It would take more than three months for feelings of panic to dissipate and over a year for Scherer’s fearful anticipation of death to pass.

\[5\] It took several years for Scherer to recover from this state of hypervigilance.
Aimee Jo Martin, raped and tortured at age seventeen in her family’s home, writes that her sense of security was “shattered, obliterated” and that she had to keep her guard up all of the time. Weeks after the rape she felt as if she would never trust the world again, and to this day her sense of security is incomplete (13). Following his molestation, Parker would rock in a chair in his attic for hours at a time, soothing himself while trying to figure how to restructure a life that previously centered on joining the priesthood. Unable to function, twelve-year-old Parker withdrew from almost all daily activity and familial interaction.

In many cases of sexual assault, control of the body begins with medical attention. Herman stresses how important it is for physicians to adhere to the primary rule of medicine to do no harm, which entails making sure the practitioner takes precautions to avoid re-raping the victim in the examination process. Alice Sebold, raped while crossing her college campus at night, describes the care and consideration taken by a female gynecologist and a female nurse during their evidence-gathering examination. After injecting Sebold with Demerol to relax her, the two medical workers explained everything they were doing, pausing every so often to massage her thighs (17-18). As they found crucial pieces of evidence, each practitioner showed her satisfaction, exclaiming, “Good, you got a piece of him” (16), and “Ah, now, there is a hair from him!” (18). In fact, all but two of the sexual assault survivors in my study who sought immediate medical evaluation and treatment report receiving care “by people whose kindness seemed schooled by experience” (Francisco 42). While she has no memory of the rape and savage beating which left her brain damaged and comatose, Trisha Meili, known through media coverage as “The Central Park Jogger,” dedicates two chapters of
her scriptotherapy praising the staff at Metropolitan Hospital and Gaylord Rehabilitation Center who treated her physical, cognitive, and emotional injuries and helped her reintegrate into daily life. However, there are those survivors in my study who encountered insensitive and neglectful medical practitioners. Kay Scott remembers the cold hands of the male examining physician as he pressed them against her breast, and his impatience while performing a pelvic exam—her first ever (36). Nancy Venable Raine, raped in her apartment on an autumn morning after taking out the trash, recalls being left alone in a cold examining room, frightened, while doctors and nurses tended to a screaming man “who was a real emergency” (24). In extreme discomfort, but given orders not to urinate, defecate, wash herself, smoke, or drink anything, Raine saw her body as “the scene of a crime,” and her thoughts as “a language without punctuation or structure.” When the hospital staff finally returned to her room, Raine underwent a three-hour rape exam (24-5).

Herman emphasizes the necessity for the trauma survivor to secure her environment to bolster her sense of bodily safety. Once she has found a refuge, the traumatized individual can begin to reengage with the world (Herman 162). Besides finding a safe environment, the survivor must assess the degree to which she is still in danger of attack, and decide which actions to take against her assailant, provided he is apprehended. Herman points out that this decision is “rarely obvious” and that often other people attempt to dictate the victim’s course of action, violating the “cardinal principal” of empowering the survivor (164). Herman insists that the choice of reporting a crime must rest with the survivor, but that the decision to report ideally opens the door to social restitution. The downside to taking criminal action is that this choice necessarily engages
the survivor with the legal system, interfering with and influencing her own timetable of recovery. Herman cautions that the survivor will be retraumatized in the process of taking legal action against her assailant unless she makes an informed choice with full knowledge of the risks as well as the benefits of legal proceedings (165).

It is interesting to note that Herman seeks to empower the survivor, even if that includes not reporting the rape, while other rape crisis counselors believe victims are morally and ethically responsible for taking legal action. In Recovering from Rape, psychologist Linda Ledray lists several reasons the survivor should report rape including: to ensure her safety and the safety of other women, to preserve her mental health, to fulfill her rights and responsibilities, and to become eligible for compensation from the county or state for the cost of her evidentiary exam; in some places around the country, after reporting her crime, the survivor may also qualify for victim compensation programs (36-40). For various reasons, several of the subjects in my study originally kept their rapes secret. Over time, each victim told others about the assault and, regardless of whether the rapist was apprehended, eventually achieved a sense of closure. Aimee Jo Martin waited two years to tell her family she was raped, out of fear of becoming an outcast (3). In fact, Martin’s parents discouraged her from writing her memoir because they didn’t like the idea of telling strangers about their family life (2). It is because of their feedback that Martin felt it “essential” to write and publish her book: “Is it any wonder why it took me two years to tell anyone I was raped? The very reaction I received from my family about this book is the same reaction I feared if I told” (3). Thirty years later, Richard Hoffman told his father that his baseball coach raped and molested him when he was a ten-year-old. Hoffman’s molester was caught and
prosecuted, in part due to his father’s intervention, ending nearly forty years of abuse to hundreds of children (185). After suffering in silence for two weeks, Jim Parker confessed to his mother that he had been sodomized by their parish priest—only to be told to keep the rape secret and “move on” (29-31). Once both of his parents were deceased, Parker wrote his scriptotherapy (forty-three years after his assault) to “deliver the troubled child into the light of day [. . .] to share, to heal and to facilitate the healing of others who had been sexually abused by agents of God” (137).

Survivors who undergo medical evaluation immediately following their rape become “evidence” in a criminal investigation. As shortly after the crime as possible, detectives question the survivor to gather leads. Of the survivors in my study, two unfavorably describe the post-rape interrogation. Scott writes about being interviewed by policemen who ridiculed her naïveté as she sat on the hospital-room examining table—clothed only in a thin, gaping paper gown (37). Gemmen was scorned by a policeman for having left the front door unlocked; the same officer rolled his eyes and tapped his fingers impatiently while awaiting her responses to his questions. Additionally, during the interrogation process, he condescendingly referred to Gemmen’s assailant as “the alleged rapist” (74-77). Most survivors, however, describe their interaction with the law enforcement community in a positive light, especially when their rapist is apprehended and successfully prosecuted. Martha Ramsey, sexually assaulted at age thirteen while riding her bike down a country road, went back to her rural New Jersey home over twenty years after the crime to gather information to include in her scriptotherapy. While revisiting that era of her life, Ramsey embraced the emotional attachment she still held for the detectives, jurors, and townsfolk involved in prosecuting her rapist (45).
Francisco, attending the trial of a serial rapist whose modus operandi and victims resembled her own case offered her a feeling of restitution (194). Likewise, criminal prosecution empowered Sebold who, six months after being assaulted, sighted her rapist as they were crossing a busy street. While his features were fresh in her mind, she sketched his image, and, with Sebold’s rendering to guide them, police apprehended the rapist. Although Sebold misidentified her rapist in the police line-up, her testimony, along with other evidence, enabled prosecutors to win their case.

Only after the trauma victim feels safe and has a support network in place does Herman advise her to undertake the second stage of recovery: to tell the detailed and in-depth story of her trauma (Herman 175). Herman believes that one of the most common errors both survivors and therapists make (after avoiding dealing with traumatic material) is to undergo exploratory work before creating safety and forming a therapeutic alliance (172). For instance, Martin’s first attempt at therapy was unsuccessful because she wasn’t honest with her counselor and “basically faked” her way through treatment: “I guess I just wasn’t ready to deal with all the emotions. It was much easier to remain cold and dead inside. It was my way of protecting myself” (15). According to Herman, initially the survivor’s account may be “repetitious, stereotyped, and emotionless” since the traumatic memory itself is “wordless and static” (175). Raped in her car at seven in the morning while parked outside a college science building, Nancy Zigenmeyer describes the obsession to recollect the events surrounding her attack. She recalls repeatedly phoning her rape crisis counselor to recount her “day in hell” (39); during the “early days,” Zigenmeyer would replay the rape over and over in her mind “like a bad video,” and work through “wild” feelings with her therapist, learning to trust her “like
learning to walk all over again” (39-40). As Zigenmeyer illustrates, a therapist can play the role of witness and ally, helping the survivor “speak the unspeakable” (Herman 175); together, patient and therapist learn to negotiate between the poles of constriction and intrusion: avoiding the trauma leads to stagnation, while approaching traumatic memories “too precipitately leads to a fruitless and damaging reliving of the trauma” (Herman 176). For example, Martin describes how her (second) therapist exercised caution in treating her for PTSD. After sending Martin to a psychiatrist to stabilize her mood, the therapist began Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy—first dealing with a lesser trauma to see how Martin would react before tackling her rape memories (48).

According to Herman, once the patient has begun to verbally reconstruct the trauma, the order in which the narrative is told is of great importance. Herman believes it is crucial to first “restore a sense of continuity with the past” to provide a context within which the meaning of the trauma can be understood (176). Accordingly, the witness (reader) vividly perceives the seriousness of the crime against the victim. Possibly she envisions herself as the rape survivor and wonders, “Could I have been she?” In all likelihood she sympathizes with the writer whose life-path was permanently altered by a senseless act of violence. By contextualizing the rape within the scope of the victim’s quotidian experiences, both the writer of scriptotherapy and her reader are able to situate the traumatic event, illuminating how the sexual assault disrupted the flow of the narrator’s previous life-story. In most cases the writer captures the element of surprise and the abject horror of the assault. I found Sharp’s memoir to be especially riveting due
to the context and order of events, the chronological duration of the rape narrative, and the unfortunate irony that both victims worked closely with matters of death and dying.

The following is a synopsis and chronology of Sharp’s rape narrative: Sharp, a hospice nurse, was working in her rose garden as she waited for a 4 p.m. phone call from her employer. She asked her husband, a funeral home director, to alert her at 3:45 p.m. (20). Thinking her husband had forgotten about her, Sharp walked inside her house to her kitchen, where she was hit from behind and told to hand over her purse (21). The attacker asked, “Where’s your husband?” before dragging Sharp into the basement; she passed out from the blow to her head (22), only to regain consciousness when her assailant returned to rape her (24). After assaulting her, the rapist duct taped Sharp’s mouth, bound her wrists, and threw her onto the backseat of his car (26). At the rapist’s house, Sharp was repeatedly raped both vaginally and anally; with her arms still tightly bound, she was dumped on the bathroom floor (36-8). Sharp awakened to the morning newscaster’s voice reporting her husband’s murder and her disappearance (41). During the next four days, she was humiliated and terrorized—subjected to unimaginable physical and psychological torture (42-76). Then, after making peace with her own death, on her fifth day of captivity Sharp devised a plan for escape (77-80). Her arms and legs handcuffed, she labored for over twenty minutes to unknot the ropes binding her hands. Shuffling through the dark bedroom, Sharp struggled to find the door to the dining room area, where there was a portable telephone. With her arms still bound behind her, somehow Sharp managed to dial 911 (79-80). Her phone conversation with the emergency operator, which reads as if it were occurring in real time, was suspenseful. Like Sharp, I felt anxiety waiting for help to arrive and relief when the police officers finally broke through
the front door (81-85). Sharp’s narrative illustrates how the survivor discursively reconstructs her rape narrative during the scriptotherapeutic process.

As with the case studies upon which Herman bases her findings, each scriptotherapy in my study is structured similarly: to contextualize the rape the subject reviews her life before the rape and details the circumstances leading up to the attack. The remainder of the scriptotherapy describes the subject’s battle with the effects of rape and her eventual path to (narrative) recovery. For instance, Trisha Meili recounts turning down a dinner invitation on the day of her assault, and offers personal background—including her obsession with food and exercise and her history of jogging at night—to explain how and why she was found after midnight on the brink of death in a Central Park ravine. Consequently, in addition to receiving treatment for facial injuries and brain damage, Meili’s recovery also included counseling for anorexia. Sharp, like Meili, reviews several factors crucial to understanding her trauma before reconstructing the rape. Subsequent chapters of Sharp’s memoir discuss survivor’s guilt, PTSD treatment, and therapy to prepare her for legal proceedings. Sharp’s reconnection to society is complete when she resumes her nursing career, moves to a townhouse in a different neighborhood, and marries a longtime friend of the family. In Jim Parker’s scriptotherapy, the chapter titles alone reveal how the author first became inextricably entangled with his parish priest, later avoided dealing with the rape, but eventually reintegrated his shattered psyche. For example, Chapters One and Two, “A Family Defined by Catholicism” and “Apprenticing for Priesthood,” are directly followed by “‘No One Needs to Know’” and “‘Put This Behind You and Move On.’” In Chapter Nine, “Asking for Support,” the forty-year-old victim decides to seek therapy; by the
final two chapters “The Healing Begins” and “Completing the Journey,” the fifty-four-year-old writer is ready to tell his story. Initially, Parker only told his rape narrative to groups of men he trusted; however, after the death of both of his parents, it became his mission “to tell the world, to publicly share the tawdry secrets of my tormented life” (137). Although he did not consider himself to be a writer, Parker decided the most effective vehicle to share his story would be a book, so he searched the Internet for help. There he found a writers’ retreat to attend followed by a six-month intensive writing program. Parker self-published his scriptotherapy using an online print-on-demand company.

According to Herman, for the rape narrative to be fully therapeutic to the patient undergoing treatment, bodily sensations and the accompanying emotions must be recreated (177). At each point in the narrative the patient must reconstruct both the details of the trauma and how she felt at the time of the assault. While published narratives are post-therapeutic, most scriptotherapies reflect this principle in their horrific, painstaking recapitulation of the rape including the emotional and physical trauma inflicted upon the victim. For example, Teresa Lauer, whose rapist was high on amphetamines during her fourteen-hour assault, vividly describes her physical and emotional responses during the rape:

His body was hot, almost burning, but his hands were like ice, rough and violent and tearing into my flesh. He had tied my hands in front of me before I woke, and taken off my underpants and tights [. . .] It seems odd, but I was thinking about my new coat, a dark green London Fog that I’d
saved months for, and how it was getting dirty on this mattress. It was hanging off my shoulder on one side, and completely off on the other side. My hands were bleeding from cuts he’d made while tying me up, and the blood dripped onto my stomach. His skin felt strange against mine. He lay on top of me with nothing on, his penis against my leg, trying to push himself inside me. It wasn’t hard enough to get inside, so he pushed his fingers in instead. The muscles in my thighs ached. Instead of yielding to his demand to spread my legs, I squeezed them tighter together. He continued to struggle, trying to push himself inside me. I felt as if I was an animal to him, as if I was no longer human . . . just a receptacle. I was trapped. I ached to get out from underneath his body, but couldn’t get any leverage. Pushing my head against his shoulder, I tried to get up. Words escaped from my mouth with no connection to my head. I heard pleading . . . begging. It sounded like my voice, yet I was horrified to realize that it was only in my head. Only a whisper . . . a moan . . . escaped. 

Herman advises the survivor to try to determine what the rape means to her and to the important people in her life, in addition to reconnecting with the emotions associated with the assault. This encompasses coming to terms with the random nature of the crime and with moral questions that include feeling guilt and possibly a sense of responsibility. Several survivors in my study write about how they must resolve these issues and find a way to recreate a sense of meaning, order, and justice in the world, often in the face of others’ (including family members) critical judgments. Sharp felt personally culpable to the point that she had to restrain herself from apologizing to her kids, her husband’s
family, and their friends for “making this thing happen” (151). Francisco remembers the
dread she felt returning home to tell her mother and younger sister about the rape. Unable
to say the word “rape,” Francisco was relieved that her mother figured it out “as if written
before her”; from thereon, “everything flowed” and Francisco was able to confide in her
mother without restraint (19). For Hoffman, discussing his molestation with his father
also entailed facing unresolved childhood issues including the severe whippings his
father inflicted, and an offhand comment his father once made that Hoffman’s perpetrator
(the baseball coach) was “Still coaching and fuckin’ around with little boys” (188).
During their long overdue confrontation, Hoffman’s anger erupted. He forced his father
to consider what happens to “a little boy’s soul when you shove a cock up his ass” (119).
Over time, Hoffman was able to work through the lies that estranged him from his father,
and “shed the props and poses” that defined him for so many years (126).

One aspect of the therapist’s role during this process is to affirm a position of
moral solidarity with the survivor in order to facilitate the survivor’s naming and use of
language, “normalizing” the patient’s responses (Herman 178-9). She is to be open-
minded and compassionate with the patient, not “a detective” (Herman 180). As a reader
of the scriptotherapy, at times I was placed in the rhetorical position of Herman’s “ideal”
therapist, other times I was spoken to as a fellow survivor. For example, Nancy
Zigenmeyer presumes her reader to be a trauma survivor as she offers advice about
opening up to a compassionate audience:

I believe with all my heart that there can be no forgetting, and precious
little chance of healing, until you decide to tell someone. There are so
many levels of telling: a friend, a parent, a lover, a brother or sister, a
minister, your doctor, a mental-health professional, a cop. Get help, from wherever you can, and ask for what you need until you get it. It is your absolute right, and it may be your only salvation. (219)

Susan Brison goes into further detail about the survivor’s (writer’s) need to share her trauma narrative to facilitate healing: “Psychologists writing about trauma stress that one has to tell one’s trauma narrative to an empathic other in order for the telling to be therapeutic. But some survivors are helped by telling their stories to imagined others—to potential readers, for example, or to others kept alive in a photograph” (73). For many of the survivors in my study, creative writing or journaling facilitated their storytelling. Two subjects’ personal writings are especially revealing of the failures and successes of this process. Ramsey’s scriptotherapy includes the rape poem (composed directly after her assault) she read aloud in English class to her fellow middle school students—only to discover at the time that “no one wanted to hear it” (81). Lauer shares a journal entry (written two days after her assault) in which she alternates between shame and anger as she describes her rapist’s verbal and physical sadism, and her extreme physical discomfort from vaginal hemorrhaging and a broken jaw (145-56). For twenty-one years Lauer hid this document, hoping to forget these images. Since traumatic memories do not go away or become benign over time, during therapy it became necessary for Lauer to read through her journal, which held her earliest feelings, thoughts, and actions of the day she was assaulted and those that immediately followed. “Only then,” she reflects, “could I comprehend the evil I went through and provide myself with compassion” (156).

While recounting the tale is key to a trauma survivor’s recovery, writing by itself does not bring the subject to Herman’s final stage of recovery from trauma, reconnection
to society. Individuals suffering from symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, including rape victims, need to receive qualified assistance in addition to writing about trauma (De Salvo 175). Each rape subject in my study benefits from therapeutic intervention. Martin, for example, addresses the role therapy played in allowing her to settle into the task of writing her memoir:

How did I get to this point in my life where I’m actually sitting down and writing my story? [. . .] I can tell you what I thought brought me to this point. Little did I know that what seemed to be my problem turned out to be only a tiny piece of it. Only through therapy and hard work did I get to learn the rest. (1)

Even with psychotherapeutic intervention, producing a cathartic release by reconstructing the rape story does not make the trauma suddenly disappear or immediately render it benign (Herman 181). Ultimately, the trauma narrative must be transformed into a new tale in which shame and humiliation can be seen as dignity and virtue (181). This step is crucial to Scherer’s recovery. Deeply troubled by feelings of worthlessness, Scherer transformed the place that signified the terror of her rape, the neighborhood laundromat, to the site of her empowerment. A year after the rape, she returned to the crime scene with a family friend (who is also a police officer); there she realized that by facing her fear while in control of the situation, she could “stare it down and move on” (213). After taking this important step, Scherer no longer experienced debilitating PTSD nightmares and flashbacks (212-13).

Although Herman offers several techniques employed by therapists to transform the traumatic memory, seldom do the writers in my study reveal specific details from
their therapy sessions. Two notable exceptions are Martin, whose text includes journal entries often summarizing her latest “appointment with Gail,” and Lauer, who intersperses excerpts from over fifty sessions with her therapist into *Hours of Torture, Years of Silence*, and in her follow-up text *The Truth about Rape: Emotional, Spiritual, Physical, and Sexual Recovery from Rape*. As Herman cautions, and Lauer illustrates, though retelling the trauma narrative as part of therapeutic intervention should eventually lead to recovery, the process itself “inevitably plunges the survivor into profound grief” (Herman 188). In Lauer’s words, “I was dying inside. I felt as if I was a huge opening into which emotions and feelings and memories poured, without respite” (93). However painful it may be, mourning the traumatic loss is “the most necessary and the most dreaded task of this stage of recovery” (Herman 188). For Martin, attending therapy sessions became virtually unbearable: “By the time we got to Gail’s office, my mood had drastically plummeted. When we pulled in, we just sat there. My eyes filled with tears and I said I didn’t want to do this” (69). Zigenmeyer takes a more proactive approach to the mourning phase by setting an end point for her grieving process: “for four, nearly five months, it seemed that all I ever did was cry. I was sick of it. Once the trial is behind us [. . .] I planned to quit this crying, and put this whole mess behind us for good” (63). Meili reflects upon how mourning her loss helped her move forward: “I was changing—sand turning to glass in the heat of the aftereffects of the assault. A new part of me acknowledged that I would never be the same, and I wanted to express what that change had taught me” (201). Because it can be so painful, often the survivor resists mourning, instead indulging in revenge fantasies, forgiveness fantasies (granting forgiveness without the perpetrator’s desiring and seeking it), and compensation fantasies (Herman
However, since patients might seek a “magical cure” for trauma, Herman advises therapists not to collude with unrealistic restitution fantasies (192). Revenge and forgiveness fantasies permeate Gemmen’s scriptotherapy. In fact, each chapter begins with an italicized prologue in which Gemmen vents her feelings by directly addressing her rapist with angry queries and accusations such as: “Hatred is not a strong enough word to describe what I felt toward you. Loathing. Abhorrence. Repulsion. It came on me in a flash, but it didn’t end in one. I stood trapped, condemned, ruined—all because of your few moments of power” (143). And: “My fantasies about you bounced between watching your face on the stand as the judge sentenced you to the chair and watching your face through a heavy glass as you absorbed the truth of God’s infinite grace. One way or the other, I wanted your life to be changed radically” (199).

Although the survivor is not responsible for the atrocity committed, she is responsible for her recovery; acceptance of this unjust paradox ultimately empowers the survivor (Herman 192). Brison calls this realization the survivor’s “daily Beckettian dilemma”; since inferences from the past can no longer be relied upon to predict the future, there’s no more reason to think that tomorrow will bring agony than to think that it won’t. So, the survivor makes “a wager to believe that life, for all its unfathomable horror, still holds some undiscovered pleasures” (66). For Scott, reconnecting to daily life meant taking a rational approach to fear:

As I sat looking out the window night after night, I came to realize there was nothing more I could do to feel safe, short of leaving our home. Who knew whether this rapist would return or whether the police would ever catch him? It was at this point that I reached a decision: I made a
conscious choice not to let this rapist have the power of fear over me. His evil power was robbing me of sleep and disrupting our normal family life.

As Scott’s narrative illustrates, once the survivor reclaims her own history and feels renewed hope and energy for engagement with life she has reached the end-point on the second phase of recovery and is ready to reconnect to society (Herman 195).

Once the act of telling the story can belong to the past, the survivor has entered the third stage of recovery; she is now ready to face “the tasks of rebuilding her life in the present and pursuing her aspirations for the future” (Herman 195). Ideally, her trauma story is placed into a context that honors its importance, yet renders it benign:

In the case of complete recovery, the person does not suffer anymore from the reappearance of traumatic memories in the form of flashbacks, behavioral reenactments and so on. Instead the story can be told, the person can look back at what happened; he has given it a place in his life history, his autobiography, and thereby in the whole of his personality.

(van der Kolk and van der Hart 176)

After the survivor has reconstructed and reclaimed her story, she must work on developing “a new self” who has reconfigured her belief systems in such a way that she can “find anew a sustaining faith” (Herman 196). In this final phase of recovery, helplessness and isolation are replaced by empowerment and reconnection (Herman 197). Often, survivors empower themselves by learning self-defense techniques. In *The Truth about Rape* Lauer advises survivors to learn self-defense in order to gain control over their environment; the “NO!” assertiveness training can be especially helpful (220-1).
Brison tributes her post-attack martial arts courses with giving her the courage to become a mother (65). Ramsey signed up for a women’s self-defense course “not just to learn how to fight, but to face the rape in a new way” (162). Perhaps the most poetic testimonial to the benefits of self-defense classes comes from Dorothy Allison in *Two or Three Things I Know for Sure*. Allison, who was raped at age five by her stepfather, initially took up karate to break the gender barrier in an all-men’s class. However, weeks into martial arts training, Allison experienced a physical and emotional release of childhood trauma and pain that cleansed and empowered her:

My hips shifted. Something in the bottom of my spine let go. Something disconnected from the coccyx that was shattered when I was a girl. Something loosened from the old bruised and torn flesh. Some piece of shame pulled free, some shame so ancient I had never known myself without it. I felt it lift, and with it my thighs lifted, suddenly loose and strong, pumping steadily beneath me as if nothing could hold me down.

(64-5)

Like Allison did with her intentional challenge to a male-dominated institution, during the reconnection phase some women come to question their traditional acceptance of the subordinate gender role (Herman 199). At this point, when it has been clearly established that the perpetrator alone is responsible for the crime, “the survivor is free to examine aspects of her own personality or behavior that rendered her vulnerable to exploitation” (Herman 199). In several scriptotherapies, the writer addresses other deleterious

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6 Originally a performance piece, in this text the author reflects upon numerous pivotal relationships and events. Because it neither depicts narrative recovery, nor investigates the traumatically shattered subject and her steps towards reintegration, I do not consider it to be a rape scriptotherapy, per se. I have chosen to cite it, however, for its powerful depiction of healing from rape through self-defense classes.
behaviors that are an effect of the rape, or existed prior to the attack but continue to
impede the survivor’s recovery. For example, Lauer, Martin and Meili also receive
treatment for their eating disorders, while Parker focuses on quelling the sexual addiction
instigated by his rape as an adolescent that persisted through middle age. Behaviors that
impede survivors’ health and ability to function in society must be corrected for them to
recover from trauma.

Reconnection with society and the self comprises the final phase of recovery
(Herman 202). During this process, the patient may choose to renounce parts of herself
that she identifies as her victim identity; often she becomes more forgiving of herself, and
can identify positive aspects of the self “forged in the traumatic experience, even while
recognizing that any gain was achieved at far too great a price” (Herman 204). Scott’s
transition from victim to “recovered victim” is especially dramatic: “after all that I’d been
through, I had been unable to see myself as anything but degraded, unwhole, dirty, and
abused” (88). However, after returning to college, joining a sorority, and participating in
daily activities, Scott’s self-esteem returned. In a few months, she improved academically
and socially: her grade point average rose, she began to perform music at a local
coffeehouse, and she tutored second graders in reading (88-9).

After going through the phase Herman calls “reconciling with oneself” (202), the
survivor learns to reconnect with others. Once the trauma recedes into the past and the
survivor heals, she may now be ready to devote more energy toward a relationship with a
partner, for example. For Scott, this final step was to marry her longtime boyfriend (91).
Raine writes that after she underwent years of PTSD therapy, her husband Steve
“reemerged, recognizable as the man I fell in love with upon first seeing him. Even my
rage was transformed, as stones are smoothed by drops of water or centuries of footsteps” (269). A change in the survivor’s perspective also becomes apparent within the therapeutic relationship, which will feel less intense, yet more relaxed and secure (Herman 205). This transition is key to Raine’s recovery:

Over the course of these years in therapy I internalized my relationship with Dr. Rose, just as I had originally done with my family as a child. Only this time I was an adult with an adult’s capacity for understanding. I learned to trust her and then trust myself. This was how the shattered self had been constructed in the first place, how it had to be constructed again. My relationship with Dr. Rose became a model in my relationship to the various aspects of myself—for my consciousness itself. (268)

The Realities of a Recovered Survivor of Rape

After the rape survivor has reconnected with others and resumed regular activities, she may still have barriers to achieving sexual intimacy. Herman addresses the complexity of treating rape survivors for post-traumatic sexual dysfunction, noting that all techniques “are predicated upon the survivor’s control over every aspect of her sexual life” (206). Herman counsels sexual partners to have a high degree of cooperation and commitment when resuming sexual activity after rape; both parties need to pay attention to activities that trigger traumatic memories and to explore areas that feel safe (Herman 206). Many survivors in my study describe incidents of sexual dysfunction and instability, especially those who were virgins at the time of their rape. Molested at the onset of puberty, both Parker and Hoffman developed sexual obsessions they believe were rape-induced. Parker reflects: “I believe my sexuality would have developed
normally had I not been raped, but the Pandora’s Box was now open and pathetic cravings began to gnaw at me” (34). Parker soothed himself through obsessive masturbation; when that no longer palliated his pain, he sought women to provide sexual fulfillment (37). He began to see every girl as a sexual object: “My cravings were anything but normal for a sixteen-year-old” (42). Soon after having intercourse with a woman, nothing else interested Parker: “I felt compelled to pursue the pleasure of sex. I couldn’t stop even if I wanted to” (43). While still a young boy, Hoffman developed an obsession with pornography. During his sexual encounters with Coach Tom, the ten-year-old was shown 8mm pornographic movies and “cartoon books of Donald and Daisy Duck, Popeye and Olive Oyl, and Mickey and Minnie Mouse doing the same things the people in the slides and movies were doing” (52). Although he was still too sexually immature to achieve orgasm, for over two years following his molestation Hoffman would lock himself in his bedroom closet with pornographic magazines, often bloodying himself in pursuit of sexual release (62). Many of the women in my study suffered from sexual dysfunction as a result of their rapes. For example, Sebold would lie to herself during intercourse, riding over flashbacks of the rape by focusing on her partner’s pleasure (207). Although Scott was stable enough after her rape to marry her boyfriend, she was terrified of his sexuality, unable to touch or look at his genitals. It took months for the intensity of her sexual trauma to diminish and for them to adjust to sexual intimacy (97). Ramsey had intercourse with a succession of men looking for someone to “unrape” her (130). While these frequent sexual relations often brought up vivid memories of the rape, at the time Ramsey did not connect the rape to her promiscuous

7 In light of my view that sexual “norms” are societal constructs, I choose to dissociate myself from Parker’s highly problematic term.
behavior (131). In scriptotherapies where the survivor was married at the time of the rape, resuming spousal sexual relations offers both partners opportunities for healing. Gemmen remembers welcoming her husband’s first passionate kiss after the rape “without thinking of the poisonous touches of my rapist” (161). Frequently, however, even when sexual intercourse is pleasurable for the rape survivor, traumatic memories surface. For example, Scherer writes: “Our lovemaking was splendid, triumphant, intertwining with flashbacks of rape, climaxing with an intensity of safety, love, and life” (90). Brison mourned the loss of sexual desire for years; it gradually returned when her “fear diminished enough to make some psychic space for it” (96). For the first nine months after the rape, Francisco’s sex-life remained “relatively undisrupted” (119); however, when her anger against men escalated, she withdrew sexually from her husband. Although her desire for her spouse returned in what she describes as a mystical vacation in Greece that brought about their son’s conception, the marriage did not survive. Francisco writes: “There are days when I believe that our marriage could have survived if we’d been able to reclaim sexual joy a second time. And there are days when I am certain it was never that simple” (138). However, by the end of her scriptotherapy, Francisco’s healing process, including reclaiming her sexuality, is complete. She reflects on how the rape has physically and sexually transformed her:

. . . I’m in a new chapter, too busy to take notes. Awareness brings pleasure, hunger, and desire. Mornings when I wake and find I am not alone, I feel near tears as if I’d had a close call, barely escaped with my life. My body elongates, relaxes, curls toward the man who wakes grinning. There are long stretches of peace [. . .] I can’t help looking back
over my shoulder. How powerfully my body has shaped my life. Winter came and there was such a frozen time when the rosebushes were buried and nothing, it seemed, could be revived. A long journey back, but not back to the same place. (220)

If the survivor is a parent or later becomes one, in all likelihood eventually she will have to consider the best way to share her story with children “in a manner that is neither secretive nor imposing” that will also protect them from future dangers (Herman 207). When Francisco’s son asked her about the book she was writing, it became inevitable she tell him about the rape. Although he was yet a child, he understood what rape was and that his mother had received “a lot of help” but was “alright now” (222). Since they were already familiar with “good touch” and “bad touch” by strangers, Zigenmeyer told her children “a man had touched Mommy bad, but that Mommy had told the policeman, just like you’re supposed to. Now the policeman was going to get that man and send him away to jail” (32-3). Although at the time her memoir was published Brison had yet to talk with her son about her assault, she plans to tell him “in a way that doesn’t toughen his skin and turn his tender heart to stone [. . .] I can’t tell my son the story of my assault the way I’d like, pretending it didn’t really happen, or that it had a redemptive, happy ending. But my telling doesn’t have to break him. It’s not a tragedy” (117). As these writers illustrate, the survivor’s trauma story can be restructured in such a manner that it becomes her legacy to pass on to the next generation as a “source of strength and inspiration rather than a blight” (Herman 207).

Although most survivors seek to resolve the traumatic experience in their personal lives, a “significant minority” turn their personal tragedies into the basis of social action
For these individuals, the trauma is “redeemed only when it becomes the source of a survivor mission” (Herman 207). The survivor-activists who write scriptotherapies, like survivor-activists who find other means to heal from rape, tell their stories to inspire those unable to speak the unspeakable in public (208). Although altruism is at the center of a survivor’s mission statement, Herman believes “those who practice it recognize that they do it for their own healing” (209). Such is the nature of scriptotherapy. Perhaps the power of scriptotherapy is most poignantly illustrated with Meili, “The Central Park Jogger.” People throughout the United States, including several of the subjects in my study (in particular Brison, Francisco and Zigenmeyer), were profoundly disturbed by the savageness of Meili’s attack and her poor prognosis for recovery. Meili’s journey from rape to recovery to writing her narrative recovery is especially inspiring because, in addition to being “an intensely private person,” she is living with a brain injury that interferes with her ability to concentrate (259). In effect, Meili’s mission statement speaks for all the survivors in my study:

It has taken me fourteen years to go public with my story, and that story isn’t about the justice system, about who attacked me, or whether one confession or five were true. It is about reclaiming a life, my life. I built a life until I was twenty-eight, was struck down, and so had to build another. Two lives, and I’m proud of both. My book is about something I did, not what was done to me. I needed help, and my story is also about the nature and effect of that help. I offer my story and the lessons I learned as an invitation to heal. (3)
Herman acknowledges that resolution of trauma is never final and healing is never complete (212). The effects of rape will reverberate throughout the survivor’s lifetime, sometimes prompting further therapeutic intervention. Yet, as the survivors in my study illustrate, the steps the rape survivor takes to heal from PTSD can and will restore her capacity for pleasure and her ability to participate in ordinary life activities (Herman 212). Each scriptotherapy in my study resonates with the sincere, courageous and optimistic view of its author that indeed life does continue after trauma.
Chapter Three: Autopathography: The Fight for Life in Narratives about Critical Illness

It was very important for me, after my mastectomy, to develop and encourage my own internal sense of power. I needed to rally my energies in such a way as to image myself as a fighter resisting rather than as a passive victim suffering. At all times, it felt crucial to me that I make a conscious commitment to survival. (Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals* 73)

There is usually little to be said for the public scribbles found on the sides of buildings and on the sidewalk, but this morning on my daily walk I came across a new one neatly engraved when the concrete was still wet on a new area of sidewalk. It is the first one I thought worthy of remembering. The lettering was careful and unhurried and it was obvious whoever wrote it thought carefully before committing to the deed. In perfectly spaced letters of knife-thin characters this artistic scofflaw wrote: “ARTISTS LIVE FOREVER.” It was the first real truth I can say I have physically stumbled across. (Thomas DeBaggio, *Losing My Mind: An Intimate Look at Life with Alzheimer’s* 89)

Introduction

Autopathography, book-length first-person and third-person illness narratives, emerged as a genre during the 1950s, thereafter growing in size and popularity (Hawkins 3-5). Anne Hunsaker Hawkins notes in *Reconstructing Illness: Studies in Pathography* that these first texts projected positive images of medical technologies, perpetuating cultural myths about good doctors, helpful treatments, and efficient hospitals; however, by the 1980s, pathographers’ points of view had shifted. No longer were pathographers solely singing the praises of medical science; their illness narratives also decried the depersonalization of medical treatment and reflected an emerging interest in alternative treatments (5). For instance, in the earliest narrative treated in this study, Stewart Alsop’s *Stay of Execution: A Sort of Memoir* (1973), the patient and his (male) physicians develop a relationship as equals that extends beyond the hospital walls; in fact, Alsop
includes a photograph of his oncologist with his family photos in the center of his text (167). In the most contemporary narratives in this study, however, such as Geralyn Lucas’s *Why I Wore Lipstick to my Mastectomy* (2004), the subject (in this case female) is mistrustful of physicians (both male and female). Unsure of whether medical technologies actually have the patient’s best interest in mind, Lucas (as well as other subjects in my study) conducts independent research on her specific illness and treatment options. Despite the fact that Lucas is married to a physician and receives preferential treatment, she feels that modern medicine has failed to see her as an individual. “I’ve become a lab report,” she writes (20). This shift in the narrative voice of pathography may reflect the depersonalization of contemporary medicine, or the subject’s newfound agency to disrupt established technologies of power, or a combination of the two. Whatever the case, pathography empowers those marginalized by illness who are otherwise silenced by the normative values and behaviors associated with and produced by mainstream medical technologies.¹

In this chapter, my focus is on autopathography, a term coined by G. Thomas Couser to categorize autobiographical pathography. My principal interest is how autopathographers deploy battlefield language to represent themselves as illness subjects. Central to my argument is Lakoff and Johnson’s theory that “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another”² (*Metaphors We Live By* 5); hence, metaphor is a vitally important “tool for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally,” and figures prominently into how one makes sense out of traumatic life occurrences, such as illness (193). Lakoff and Johnson explore

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¹Audre Lorde refers to this conglomeration as “Cancer Inc.” (*The Cancer Journals* 62).
²A more thorough reference and explanation of this text is offered later in the chapter.
how metaphor expands beyond language to encompass human thought processes and conceptual systems, concluding that “even our most imaginative understanding, is given in terms of a conceptual system that is grounded in our successful functioning in our physical and cultural environments” (194). Hence, from the experientialist perspective, metaphor becomes part of the imaginative reality that permits understanding of one kind of experience through, perhaps, another more tangible term (235). Consequently, militaristic language is embodied by autopathographers’ self-representations as subjects of critical illness just as it is embedded in our lexicon for critical illness.

Before I further investigate the important role militaristic metaphors play in autopathography, I will offer a brief introduction of the genre. As with most biographers and autobiographers, autopathographers are homogeneous with respect to race and class. According to G. Thomas Couser, pathographers “tend to be white and upper middle class. Before they became ill or impaired, many were already professional writers or worked in professions where writing was part of the job” (Recovering Bodies, Illness, Disability, and Life Writing 4). Most autopathographers included in this study were involved in the arts, had careers as journalists, or were academics. Joyce Wadler, for example, was on staff at People magazine while writing her breast cancer narrative. Noting her excellent health insurance and the availability of first-class cancer treatment, Wadler recognizes her privileged position in society as well as inequities in the medical system.³ She wonders, “What happens to the poor women who don’t have medical insurance, and

³The medical industry, like other technologies of power, is classist and racist. Members of the underclass are less likely to be diagnosed with disease at an early stage, and are also less likely to receive medical treatment and follow-up care due to lack of financial resources. Recent articles detailing the severity of this crisis appear in the Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved: 16: 2, May 2005.
don’t have families that can help them, and don’t have friends who can pull strings to get them into Sloan-Kettering?” (50).

By analyzing the process through which medical science seeks to bring light to “the whole dark underside of disease” and grants access to the recesses of the human body, as well as exposes the technologies affecting our bodies and the human condition as a whole, contemporary autopathographies are illuminated by Michel Foucault’s project in *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (195). Foucault’s large-scale genealogy explores the history of an institution through the development and methods of medical observation, whereas individual pathographies are smaller-scale genealogies of a self, observed through the effects of both illness and medical technologies on the body. Also visible in autopathographies are smaller-scale depictions of what Foucault in *The History of Sexuality: Volume I* calls *bio-power*, operating in specific *anatomo-politics*, the procedures of power that discipline the body, and in *bio-politics*, systems that intervene in and regulate processes of the body (140-4). An effect of these technologies of power is to “discipline” the individual; hence, the body becomes a site upon which technologies of power operate. In Arthur Frank’s words, “When a person becomes a patient and learns to talk disease talk, her body is spoken of as a place that is elsewhere, a ‘site’ where the disease is happening” (*At the Will of the Body* 12). The body as a site of construction and reconstruction is one of myriad metaphors deployed in the discourse of illness.

Throughout my study of metaphors in autopathography, I will also point out the effect this objectifying of the body has on the illness subject. For example, breast cancer survivor Geralyn Lucas recounts maneuvering through her mastectomy. After consulting
“nine strangers,” Lucas comes to feel as if she is her illness: “I don’t exist anymore” (19-20). Massive-stroke survivor Jean-Dominique Bauby employs irony to capture being a subject kept alive by, and subjected to, the dehumanizing effects of bio-power. Afflicted with “locked-in” syndrome, Bauby is completely paralyzed, and reliant on a respirator and gastric tube for life support. Thanks to advances in medical technologies, Bauby remains alive in what outsiders would likely view as a vegetative state. With his right eyelid sewn shut to treat an ulcerated cornea, Bauby’s sole method of communication is blinking his left eye to spell out words on an alphabet chart. It is through this process that he painstakingly dictates his autopathography to a scribe:

“My Lucky Day”

This morning, with first light barely bathing Room 119, evil spirits descended on my world. For half an hour, the alarm on the machine that regulates my feeding tube has been beeping out into the void. I cannot imagine anything so inane or nerve-racking as this piercing beep beep beep pecking away at my brain. As a bonus, my sweat has unglued the tape that keeps my right eyelid closed, and the stuck-together lashes are tickling my pupil unbearably. And to crown it all, the end of my urinary catheter has become detached and I am drenched. Awaiting rescue, I hum an old song by Henri Salvador: “Don’t you fret, baby, it’ll be all right.” And here comes the nurse. Automatically, she turns on the TV. A commercial, with a personal computer spelling out the question: “Were you born lucky?” (57)
Equally vivid is Thomas DeBaggio’s description of how Alzheimer’s disease affects him as a subject of, and with, an incurable illness; throughout his memoir, shifts in subjectivity mirror the cognitive impairment, emotional instability and self-alienation organically produced by Alzheimer’s disease and reproduced by societal influences. In addition to reflecting the unwelcome shift in subjectivity the subject undergoes as a result of critical illness, DeBaggio’s text also powerfully illuminates the subject’s fight for survival in both the real and symbolic orders. As I will suggest later in this study, one reason why militaristic language is proliferate throughout illness narratives is that it captures the war taking place within the illness subject. For example, as DeBaggio’s illness progresses, he gradually loses the capacity for self-recognition and the ability to write himself as a subject. Sadly, the narrative abruptly ends as DeBaggio’s “insurmountable” “struggle to find the words, to express myself” overwhelms him to the degree that he “must now wait for the silence to engulf me and take me to the place where there is no memory left and there remains no reflexive will to live” (207). DeBaggio’s struggle to write himself as a subject parallels his battle to maintain knowledge of self. As long as the subject possesses the cognitive skills necessary for retrieval of language, he can re-member and write himself as a subject, in effect repeating the signification of self necessary for agency and identity, which, consequently, allows for a subversion of identity (Butler 145).

As the autobiographical subject re-members the self, he also engages in the autobiographical act of dismemberment, the “radical separation from the dead selves borne down by time,” as Joseph Fichtelberg writes (3). Fichtelberg explains: “for the autobiographer, subversion and creation coincide; he or she is forced to construct the text
from fragments so characteristic of postmodern experience and yet to proclaim that experience unified” (3). In other words, the work of the postmodern autobiographer is to create a textual subjectivity from multiple identities constructed by and through plural discourses. The effect of this self-construction is to create what appears in text to be a unified subject—an autobiographical act that can be seen as subversive; for, to create a coherent self the writer must also destroy dissonant identities. This discord is reflected in DeBaggio’s memoir, where the subject’s attempt at autobiographical re-membering is affected by the Alzheimer’s disease that literally dismembers his cognitive faculties.

Because Alzheimer’s disease destroys short-term memory faster than long-term memory, the subject loses knowledge of his “dead selves” at a slower rate than the rate at which he can re-member himself as a coherent, textual self. As DeBaggio and others with life-threatening illnesses illustrate, autopathography is contingent on the subject’s fight for survival, a fight that can be seen as succeeding with the publication of his text, even when the narrative is interrupted by the subject’s death. Regardless of the impetus for writing and publishing their memoirs, autopathographers survive as present-tense subjects through their textual subjectivities, provided that their texts remain available to a readership.

Due to the exigent circumstances their subjects find themselves facing, autopathographies often compel the reader to imagine herself in the place of the “other”; accordingly, these texts help us develop compassion for each other and ourselves, and increase awareness of our interconnectedness. In “I Am You”: The Hermeneutics of

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4 In texts in which the subject dies, such as Jenifer Estess’ Tales from the Bed: On Living, Dying and Having it All, the final chapter is often written by a close friend or family member valorizing the subject for her courage in the face of death, eulogizing her life’s achievements, and representing the subject position of someone who is outside of the illness, but nevertheless affected by the illness experience.
Empathy in Western Literature, Theology, and Art, Karl Morrison investigates how the audience becomes the subject of empathetic participation in art, and consequently, how what is fragmentary in the subject, the “I” (the speaker), is unified by and through her relationship with the other, the “you” (art, literature, etc.) (Morrison 349). I find Morrison’s study to be of interest because it addresses how and why a reader is drawn to first-person narratives, through both empathetic participation in the text and through a desire for unity with the other in self-fulfillment. Or, in the words of sociologist and cancer survivor Arthur Frank, “only by recognizing the differences in our experiences can we begin to care for each other” (At the Will of the Body, 42).

By positioning the reader to partake in the subject’s experience of illness, autopathographies allow readers to view liminal subjectivities, a term employed by anthropologists to describe the condition of being situated “betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by custom, convention, and ceremonial” (Turner qtd. in Stoller, 183-4). In Stranger in the Village of the Sick: A Memoir of Cancer, Sorcery, and Healing, an autopathography detailing his treatment for non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, anthropologist Paul Stoller explains that for most people and in most cultures, liminality is a transitional state, lasting for only short periods of time, after which the individual is

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5 Morrison investigates how the concept “I am You” plays out in the works of preeminent artists, philosophers, and writers throughout a variety of epistemological doctrines and epochs, ranging from several Ancient Greek philosophers through three twentieth-century novelists. Morrison writes that his “strategy” in the text is to move from the sentence “I am You” “as an historical artifact [. . .] to patterns of understanding that enabled interpreters to make sense of the sentence [. . .] to ways of understanding the enterprise of understanding that lay at the bedrock of the tradition under review,” first through verbal ways of understanding, and secondly through visual ways of understanding (xxv).

6 It is my intention to investigate the voice of the marginalized other in order to promote empathy for the illness subject. However, this study excludes AIDS narratives, not because subjects with these illnesses are responsible for becoming ill or because their stories cannot produce positive affect, but because their subjects’ special status and the complexity of their illness warrants a separate investigation, such as G. Thomas Couser’s chapter in Recovering Bodies: Illness, Disability, and Life Writing on HIV/AIDS narratives. I am aware, however, that by excluding AIDS narratives from this study I run the risk of further stigmatizing the illness.
reintegrated into society (185). The subject of critical illness, however, remains in a state of continuous liminality: “there is, for all intents and purposes, no full-fledged return to the village of the healthy” (186). Even when one’s critical illness is in remission, Stoller points out, the illness subject will thereafter linger in “a continuous state of liminality” (186). Yet, as Arthur Frank observes in *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*, individuals in “the remission society” may remain invisible to the general population, until some aspect of their condition becomes “an issue” and they are again reminded of their status (8). Drawing from Susan Sontag’s *Illness as Metaphor*, Frank equates the remission society to both “a secret society within the realm of the healthy,” and to a “demilitarized zone” between the “kingdoms” of the well and the sick (9). For example, Joyce Wadler writes that what affects her more than sharing her cancer story with a fellow survivor “is the realization that there are probably a lot of people like her all around me: a secret society of cancer survivors, whom no one is aware of because of the stigma of the disease” (85). Likewise, Thomas DeBaggio agreed to appear on National Public Radio, and subsequently write his illness memoir (while contending with declining cognitive functioning) in order to “break through the sense of shame and silence Alzheimer’s has engendered” (141). Arthur Frank further notes that while citizens of the remission society may travel within the land of the well, they will require “a new map for their lives” (Frank 10). For instance, Suzanne Strempek Shea equates her “travels through cancer” with sojourning in a foreign country—getting accustomed to new surroundings, customs, food, dress and language: “This experience truly has been like going to a different part of the spinning globe” (30). Similarly, A. Manette Ansay describes what it feels like to be a citizen in the kingdom of the ill, stranded without “a
map.” Suffering from inexplicable muscle failure and paralysis, yet with no definitive
diagnosis to explain her condition nor prognosis for recovery, Ansay confronted “the
paralyzing uncertainty, the gradually dawning sense that, regardless of what happens
next, you will never return to the country you have left, to the body you took for granted”
(42).

**Autopathography and the Metaphors of War**

To represent the complexity of their shift in subjectivity as persons with illness,
and register in the symbolic order experience for which there is no previous embodied
knowledge, autopathographers deploy figurative language, in particular, military illness
metaphors. In *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and
Reason*, Mark Johnson describes metaphor as “a pervasive, irreducible, imaginative
structure of human understanding that influences the nature of meaning and constrains
our rational inferences” (xii). For Johnson, traditional Objectivist accounts of meaning
and rationality ignore and undervalue the human body and subjective elements of
meaning (xiv); therefore, a phenomenological approach to experiential structures that
registers postmodernist influences on scientific thought should be considered, for “any
adequate account of meaning and rationality must give a central place to embodied and
imaginative structures of understanding by which we grasp our world” (Johnson’s italics)
(xiii). Citing Johnson’s text, in *The Age of Immunology*, anthropologist A. David Napier
investigates how metaphor becomes a vehicle for embodying meaning, in particular the

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7 For other influential accounts of metaphor, see Aristotle, Quintilian, I.A. Richards, Christine Brooke-Rose, Max Black, Jacques Derrida, and H.P Grice. Also see Paul Ricoeur’s survey of the subject, *The Rule of Metaphor*.
8 Johnson references several texts that changed the trajectory of scientific thought including Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Carl Hempel’s *Aspects of Scientific Explanation*, Frederick Suppe’s *The Structure of Scientific Theories*, and Hilary Putnam’s, *Reason, Truth and History* (Johnson 215).
various metaphors used to discuss illness and how language impacts our understanding of illness (146). In his view, our society condones a military model of immunology in which patients are victimized by the battles taking place inside their bodies:

Each time scientists stop thinking consciously about these metaphors, each time, that is, they unselfconsciously watch one cell ‘killing’ another—in medical school slide lectures, in laboratories, in doctors’ offices—we see the inescapable cultural meaning of the military model. Can there ever be, we must ask, any end to this pugilism? (144)

While Napier believes that military metaphors are not necessarily “better” than other metaphors, or that they are “more accurate” than any alternatives, he asserts, “that culturally we have preferred, favored, and, therefore, embodied them” (146).

Susan Sontag explores what she sees as the deleterious effects of warfare metaphors on the illness subject and society as a whole in *Illness as Metaphor* and *AIDS and its Metaphors*. Sontag (who died in 2005) acknowledges that while military metaphors may be inevitable in capitalist societies, our society demonizes illness as an alien “other,” thereby victimizing the patient (*AIDS and its Metaphors* 11). Sontag notes that warfare terminology infuses all aspects of medicine, including our description of cancer and its treatment: for example, we say that cancer cells are invasive to the body’s defenses; that patients are bombarded with x-rays in radiation therapy; and that chemotherapy is chemical warfare. Ultimately, Sontag seeks to neutralize the language we use to describe cancer and give military metaphors back to “war-makers” (*AIDS and its Metaphors* 95). In Sontag’s view:
As the language of treatment evolves from military metaphors of aggressive warfare to metaphors featuring the body’s “natural defenses” (what is called the “immunodefensive system” can also—to break entirely with the military metaphor—be called the body’s “immune competence”), cancer will be partly de-mythicized; and it may then be possible to compare something to a cancer without implying either a fatalistic diagnosis or a rousing call to fight by any means whatever a lethal, insidious enemy. Then perhaps it will be morally permissible, as it is not now, to use cancer as a metaphor. (*Illness as Metaphor* 87)

In addition, Sontag believes that military metaphors further marginalize an already compromised individual. In *AIDS and its Metaphors*, Sontag writes, “the effect of the military imagery on thinking about sickness and health is far from inconsequential. It overmobilizes, it overdescribes, and it powerfully contributes to the excommunicating and stigmatizing of the ill” (94).

Although Sontag seeks to replace or disarm language associated with illness in order to effect positive social change, my study suggests that, rather than finding military metaphors to have a deleterious effect on their subjectivity, many autopathographers co-opt warfare metaphors to empower themselves as soldiers battling a lethal enemy, or to understand their new status as subjects of critical illness. For example, World War II veteran Stewart Alsop frames his autopathography about fighting leukemia with the phrase: “‘Face it, Alsop. You’re in trouble’” – a self-revelation we are to learn was first uttered during a botched parachute drop into enemy territory (16, 282). Throughout his narrative, Alsop references his experience in France during the war to help him identify
with his current “perilous” situation as a cancer patient (296). By localizing and personalizing their illness experience, subjects who co-opt language in which critical illness is seen an invasive enemy, and deploy militaristic language to write their autopathographies, may indeed de-mythicize illness. Again, metaphor, rather than being merely a linguistic mode of expression, is “one of the chief cognitive structures by which we are able to have coherent, ordered experiences that we can reason about and make sense of. Through metaphor, we make use of patterns that obtain in our physical experience to organize a more abstract understanding” (xv), as Johnson argues.

To frame the next part of my study, I turn to Lakoff and Johnson’s analysis of the structural metaphor “Rational Argument Is War” in Metaphors We Live By. As Lakoff and Johnson illustrate, not only do we deploy military language to reference illness, but we also invoke a warlike schema to engage in argumentation. It follows, then, that in autopathography, which can be viewed as a subject’s argument for continued subjectivity, the language of warfare and the warlike structure of argumentation are often deployed. Lakoff and Johnson remind us: “Fighting is found everywhere in the animal kingdom and nowhere so much as among human animals” (61-2). The rules which apply to fights between two animals—issuing challenges for the sake of intimidation, attacking, defending, counterattacking, retreating, and surrendering—have “evolved” to “the social institution of verbal argument” (62). Accordingly, we conceptualize arguments with the construct “Argument is War” even if we have no knowledge of, nor have never

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9 In this germinal text, Lakoff and Johnson purport to revise central assumptions in the Western philosophical tradition by “rejecting the possibility of any objective or absolute truth and a host of related assumptions”; their alternative, which values human experience and understanding rather than objective truth, is an experientialist approach to issues of language, truth, understanding and the meaningfulness of everyday experience (ix-x). In Lakoff and Johnson’s view, “structural metaphors are grounded in systematic correlations within our experience” (61).
personally engaged in, or any sort of physical battle\textsuperscript{10} (63-4). Lakoff and Johnson argue
that the “Rational Argument is War” metaphor applies equally to the powerful segments
of culture where brutal tactics are denounced, such as the academic world, the legal
world, the diplomatic world, the ecclesiastical world and the world of journalism (63). In
Lakoff and Johnson’s view, regardless of where one is positioned in society, the concept
“RATIONAL ARGUMENT is still comprehended and carried out in terms of WAR”
(63). To further explain the relationship between argumentation and war, Lakoff and
Johnson analyze the “Argument is War” metaphor, employing the six dimensions that
apply to conversational structure:

\begin{itemize}
  \item **Participants:** The kind of participants are people or groups of people. They play the
        role of adversaries.
  \item **Parts:**
      \begin{itemize}
        \item Planning strategy
        \item Attack
        \item Defense
        \item Retreat
        \item Maneuvering
        \item Counterattack
        \item Stalemate
        \item Truce
        \item Surrender/victory
      \end{itemize}
  \item **Stages:**
      \begin{itemize}
        \item Initial conditions: Participants have different positions. One or both
            wants the other to surrender. Each participant assumes he can defend
            his position.
        \item Beginning: One adversary attacks.
        \item Middle: Combinations of defense, maneuvering, retreat, counterattack
        \item End: Either truce or stalemate or surrender/victory
        \item Final state: Peace, victor has dominance over loser
      \end{itemize}
  \item **Linear Sequence:**
      \begin{itemize}
        \item Retreat after attack
        \item Defense after attack
        \item Counterattack after attack
      \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{10} Lakoff and Johnson define an argument as a conversation in which one has the sense of being embattled,
one finds her own position under attack, or one feels the need to discredit another’s position while
defending her own (78-9).
**Causation:** Attack results in defense or counterattack or retreat or end.

**Purpose:** Victory

*(Metaphors We Live By 80-1).*

Lakoff and Johnson’s “Argument is War” construct can enhance our understanding of how the language of warfare influences the way we discuss critical illness, for most battles against illness in Western medicine follow Lakoff and Johnson’s model. Not only do we employ language applicable to both argumentation and war to describe critical illness, but autopathographers also follow Lakoff and Johnson’s trajectory to tell of their protracted battles. For example, in the war against illness, frequently the “participants”—the patient, her illness and, oftentimes, the medical technologies employed to treat the illness—occupy adversarial roles. As in warfare, the “parts” comprising the battle include planning a strategy, attacking the disease, building the body’s defenses, maneuvering around the illness (and often the medical technologies hindering or assisting in treatment), dealing with stalemates, retreating, or entering remission, and so forth; in the end, the participant surrenders to her disease or is victorious over it. The “stages” of battling a disease also resemble Lakoff and Johnson’s diagram. For instance, the “initial condition” is that both parties have “different positions,” since the subject wants to defeat illness, her adversary. In the beginning, the adversary (cancer, Alzheimer’s disease, A.L.S.,\(^{11}\) etc.) attacks the subject. During the fight, the patient exercises methods of defense (where appropriate), as well as maneuvering, retreating and counterattacking. In the end, the patient succumbs to the

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\(^{11}\)Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, otherwise known as Lou Gehrig’s disease.
illness or there is a truce when the disease goes into remission. In some cases the illness
goes into complete remission and the patient, in concert with medical technologies, wins
the war in its entirety. Regardless, at the final stage of both scenarios—the subject
dominates her illness, or death is the victor—there is peace.

Lakoff and Johnson’s structural description of an argument, especially their
description of the Stages of an argument, corresponds to the narrative structure of the
illness narratives I investigated. Usually, an autopathography begins shortly before the
subject learns of her illness, and the initial conflict occurs when she decides to
prolong or save her life. She then seeks the assistance of outside forces, which might
include traditional Western medicine, alternative medicine, and/or religious and spiritual
practices. As the illness becomes more aggressive, the subject continues to defend her
position, deploying defense tactics such as maneuvering through physical and
psychological therapies, retreating from the enemy (including situations and people who
remind the subject of her changed status or create further discomfort), and
counterattacking with additional medical interventions and lifestyle changes. The
narrative ends after the battle is won or lost, or the subject accepts that the battle will be
protracted. If the subject’s illness goes into remission, the story has a truce-like ending.
The narrative finishes in a stalemate when, at the time of publication, the illness has yet
to be contained or defeated. In the three narratives in my study that end with surrender,
we hear of the subject’s death in a final chapter written by a close friend or family
member. In the three autopathographies that end in victory, the subject is confident her
illness has been defeated.
Keeping Your Enemies Closer: Unexpected Adversaries in Narratives of Critical Illness

Lakoff and Johnson’s schema for the Participants, Parts and Purpose of an argument can illuminate how autopathographers translate their fight for life into textual subjectivities. While illness is the patient’s primary adversary, in autopathographies, oftentimes the medical establishment also plays an adversarial role; frequently, the autobiographical subject reveals her frustration with a medical community that fails to respect her humanity. Arthur Frank asserts that medical technologies depersonalize the human body to the extent that a patient must cede the territory of the body for doctors to colonize (At the Will of the Body 51). Frank recounts a consultation with a physician who referred to his condition as “this,” eliminating the “I,” the “we,” and the “you” from his actual diagnosis (50-1). During chemotherapy, a nurse speaking to Frank’s wife referred to Frank as “the seminoma in 53,” eliminating his name entirely (52). Likewise, Suzanne Strempek Shea laments the dehumanizing effects of medical technologies with her description of the radiologist who drilled for tissue samples “Like a car mechanic working on a rattling muffler” (5). Jean-Dominique Bauby also recognizes the subjugation of the patient by the hands of medical workers. Bauby recalls a nightmare in which hospital workers appear as figures in a wax museum’s chamber of horrors. Toward the end of the dream Bauby sees himself in a gloomy corridor, where a guard shines a flashlight into his eyes. At this moment, Bauby recalls awakening to a plump nurse shining a penlight in his eyes, asking if he is ready for his sleeping pill (113). For Suzy Becker, the insurance companies’ colonization of medical technologies, and both institutions’ power over the patient’s well being, is potentially life threatening. Becker
recounts that during a CAT scan medical workers insisted on injecting her with an iodine-based dye, to which she might have had been fatally allergic, because the other dye, costing $85, was not covered by insurance (23). Jenifer Estess describes how a neurologist sneaked into her room during the night determined to take blood, despite the fact that Estess had asked him to refrain from administering a painful test for blood gas so that she might sleep. The physician failed to find her artery, however, and Estess’ awoke the following morning to find her wrist bloody and bruised (183).

Another autopathographer, Dan Shapiro, resorts to subterfuge to show attending physicians that he is a human subject with rights and dignity. Shapiro recalls brandishing a high-tech water pistol at a team of physicians after they refused to answer his repeated inquiries as to who they were and why they were in his room, and continued to refer to him as his condition (Hodgkin’s disease) and treatment protocol (bone marrow transplant) (87-89). In a different approach to the colonization of the illness subject, Audre Lorde takes aim at forces that socialize women to believe they are insufficient following their mastectomies. Lorde recounts her first post-mastectomy trip to the doctor’s office—also her first journey outside. Her pleasure with feeling and looking “really good” is ruined when the doctor’s nurse chastises her for not wearing a prosthetic breast: “‘You will feel so much better with it on,” she said. ‘And besides, we really like you to wear something, at least when you come in. Otherwise it’s bad for the morale of the office’” (59).

While at one point or another just about every autopathographer is at odds with medical technologies, the most obvious and certainly the most impassioned adversarial relationship takes place between the subject and her illness. Thomas DeBaggio expresses
being overtaken by the “destructive power” of his cannibalistic foe. He calls Alzheimer’s “the closest thing to being eaten alive slowly” (41). Breast cancer patient Joyce Wadler takes a more aggressive approach to countering her enemy. She stages a showdown between herself and her illness, asking her surgeon to slice the tumor “down the center like a hard-boiled egg” for her to scrutinize (2). While Wadler feels as if she has the upper hand over cancer, childhood cancer survivor Lucy Grealy is victimized by its lasting effects on her body and psyche, decades after going into remission at age ten. Disfigured by jaw surgery and radiation treatments, Grealy experiences adolescence as a nightmare of schoolmates’ jeers, doctor visits, and failed reconstructive surgeries. By age fifteen she believes that, due to her disfigurement from cancer surgery, she will spend her life “utterly without hope, completely alone and without any chance of being loved” (155). Sadly, “the only place on earth” she doesn’t feel self-conscious is in the hospital. Gilda Radner’s account of traveling from doctor to doctor for a barrage of inconclusive tests for extreme fatigue, crippling abdominal pains and bloating, is exasperating. The pre-diagnosis sections of her autopathography are especially frustrating for the reader because she parrots the lack of empathy for her physical and psychological discomfort that typifies her patronizing physicians. By exposing the inadequacy of her medical diagnoses, Radner disrupts medical technologies of power, albeit unintentionally. It takes

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12 Grealy died from a drug overdose eight years after publishing her memoir. Although she lived to see her memoir become highly successful, her close friend, novelist Ann Patchett writes, “there is a sense in which that disease [cancer] and its aftermath were a large part of what killed her” (Afterword 227).
from November 1985 to October 1986 for Radner’s ovarian cancer to be diagnosed; by then, it has metastasized to her bowels and liver (63). 13

After the subject confronts her adversary, the fight for subjectivity takes on a sense of urgency. I equate this stage of the illness narrative to Lakoff and Johnson’s *Parts of an argument* in which the subject engages in planning strategy, attack, defense, retreat, maneuvering and counterattack in an attempt to bring her adversary to a stalemate, truce, or surrender, and herself to victory. At this stage, the subject heavily deploys militaristic language to relay her fight for subjectivity. For example, Dan Shapiro aggressively plans his strategy to defeat lymphoma, taking on any adversary that tries to get the better of him: “I was shrewd and prepared. I fired question after question at the little doctor, trying to disarm him by letting him know I was knowledgeable” (37). To illustrate his approach to combat, Shapiro reminisces on his childhood relationship with his brother, with whom he played war games (81). Shapiro’s tactics in childhood play foreshadow the strategy he would employ later in the text, after his second recurrence of Hodgkin’s disease and subsequent bone marrow transplant make it difficult to regain independence. In addition to assessing the weather, dressing correctly, and eating something for energy, leaving his apartment “required bravery, the kind of bravery that allowed boys to charge from their foxholes across a bright open field” (187). Like a true military strategist, Joyce Wadler devises a plan to attack stage-two breast cancer. Following her diagnosis, she goes to a pub with her friend to discuss “tactics”: “I am under serious attack, and when the Scud missiles are raining on your head you don’t have time to get on the phone with your

13 While one would hope that Radner’s experience of multiple misdiagnoses is exceptional, studies of autopsies reveal that doctors seriously misdiagnose fatal illnesses about twenty percent of the time, a statistic that has not changed since the 1930s (Leonhardt C1).
girlfriends and say you are terribly depressed” (43, 47). Later in the narrative, Wadler must undergo radiation treatment to destroy the remnants of the tumor. In order for the x-ray technicians to find the correct spot in the inner upper quadrant of her left breast, her chest cavity is marked with stainless steel clips, which will remain inside Wadler for life. “It makes me feel a little like a war hero, with shrapnel in my chest,” she writes. “I want to go sit on a bar stool, order something in a shot glass, and tell a war story” (139-40). Wadler’s lumpectomy scar marks her as a survivor. “It is the battle scar over my heart,” she muses (166).

From Situating the Site of War to Finding the Warrior Within

In Reconstructing Illness: Studies in Pathography Anne Hunsaker Hawkins asserts that often the language of battle serves to “enhance the ill person’s sense of dignity, self-esteem, and active participation in therapy” (66). In the Freudian tradition, it can be seen how diverting instinctive energy from one behavioral channel into another allows individuals to express and gratify their primitive urges in socially acceptable ways. For example, we employ aggressive forces to describe problem solving and intellectual attainment when we “sharpen our wits,” “attack” and “struggle with” our difficulties, and try to “master” our problems. From this perspective, aggression is actually necessary for optimal human development. In effect, the subject of autopathography fights two wars simultaneously: the most urgent battle is to confront the illness invading her body with the best weapons available; an equally daunting task,

14 Like Gilda Radner, Joyce Wadler employs comedy as a narrative strategy. However, unlike Radner’s text, Wadler’s memoir is actually very funny. A good example of Wadler’s humor is how she introduces herself to her audience: “Who I am is a journalist, forty-four, Jewish, never married, which, as everybody in the United States knows, thanks to our eight billion collective hours of analysis, is a whole other category than single” (4).
however, is bolstered by the success of the first campaign. It requires the subject to wage war textually, manipulating the language in her arsenal to her advantage. Not surprisingly, data prove this relationship to be reflexive: the autopathographer’s immune system is strengthened by and through the writing process; hence, some medical specialists are suggesting that their patients write about their illness to assist in their treatment.\(^\text{15}\)

In *Unleash the Warrior Within*, Special Forces naval officer Richard Machowicz proffers, “Being a warrior is not about the act of fighting. It’s about being so prepared to face a challenge and believing so strongly in the cause you are fighting that you refuse to quit” (15). In autopathography, this type of warrior figure, the fully armed, relentless fighter, is lauded. For example, A.L.S. patient Jennifer Estess is remembered for having displayed “amazing courage, grace, and dignity in most challenging kind of existence and most frightening kind of future. She was the personification of bravery, dealing quietly and matter-of-factly with the indignities of her disease” (viii). To frame her own illness story, Gilda Radner describes her cousin who fought cancer three times, “beginning when she was forty years old—in both breasts, and then, ten years later in her ovaries. She is in her fifties now and has fought like a commando and conquered it all three times” (70). Massive stroke survivor Jean Dominique Bauby, who spends much of his time daydreaming in bed, visualizes himself as a hero with multiple guises—a Formula One

\(^{15}\) Behavioral psychologist James Pennebaker cites studies which show that people who write about their deepest thoughts and feelings surrounding traumatic experiences evidence heightened immune function (*Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions* 37). This topic will be examined in further detail in the following chapter of this study. Similarly, the essay “Thoughts on the therapeutic use of narrative in the promotion of coping in cancer care,” concludes that illness narratives can help patients cope with their cancer and urges nurses to encourage patients to write illness narratives (*European Journal of Cancer Care*: 13: 308-17, September 2004).
driver, or a TV soldier who fights against Caesar, helps Napoleon, and is wounded in D-Day landings (117). During physical therapy, he imagines himself as a rider in the Tour de France (117). In two of the breast cancer narratives in my study, the Amazon is heralded as the supreme warrior. Audre Lorde is awed by the Amazons of Dahomey, little girls who amputated their breasts to make themselves more effective archers. Likewise, Geralyn Lucas admires her mentor, a fellow breast cancer survivor, for being like “an Amazon” (33). Early in her narrative, Lucas describes her visit to a topless dancing club in order to confront “the power I stand to lose” (3). As she sips her beer surrounded by men, enveloped by the bar’s seedy purple velvet-upholstered chairs, walls, curtains and floors, Lucas ruminates upon breasts’ biological and societal significance. It is in this environment that Lucas decides to undergo a mastectomy rather than have a lumpectomy (7). Although she struggles with her decision to sacrifice her right breast, it is clear Lucas will join the ranks of the Amazons to conquer breast cancer.

Although Suzanne Strempek Shea is unable to see herself as a warrior (84), she nevertheless employs a military metaphor to describe her emotional state while undergoing post-operative radiation treatment for breast cancer, comparing herself to the Army reservists ready to perform weekend maneuvers that don’t know where they’re going until the vehicle transporting them stops (86). Like many survivors, Shea suffers from profound guilt over her disease, and wonders if she brought it upon herself (199). Shea’s sentiments remind me of Sontag’s observation in Illness as Metaphor that society

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16 The Dahomey Amazons were an all-female military regiment of the African Kingdom of Dahomey (now Benin). The group originated during the mid-17th century as a corps of the royal bodyguards. Although they rarely fought, they gained a reputation as fearless warriors. By the mid-19th century, there were between 4,000 and 6,000 Amazon warriors, about a third of the Dahomey army. The French, who were armed with superior weaponry, defeated the Dahomeans at the end of the 19th century. The last surviving Amazon died in 1979.
has long viewed cancer as punitive and the victim as culpable. Sontag writes: “Widely believed psychological theories of disease assign to the luckless ill the ultimate responsibility both for falling ill and for getting well. And conventions of treating cancer as no mere disease but a demonic enemy make cancer not just a lethal disease but a shameful one” (57). As Sontag implies, besides dealing with the stigma of being unwell, persons with critical illness are strongly discouraged from displaying negativity during their treatment period.

Throughout his autopathography, Arthur Frank critiques how society enforces the message that it is the patient’s responsibility to get well, and, in the process, to play the sick role well. In Frank’s opinion, “We may talk about the heroic individual who puts aside society’s script for illness, but this is mostly just talk” (At the Will of the Body, 127). Stressing the importance of listening to illness narratives and the voices of the marginalized other, Frank absolves the patient from feeling guilty for falling ill as well as from feeling compelled to make a swift recovery. While autopathographers may co-opt societal metaphors depicting critical illness as an embarrassing and evil affliction, and feel as if they have failed in society’s eyes, I share Frank’s position that only by sharing their stories with others, and including their fears and feelings of inadequacy, will the illness subject and her readers learn to value persons with illness while they are ill, and not just when they have again become well and able-bodied (128). Numerous medical studies indicate that individuals who maintain “congruence” during crisis, that is, who manifest behaviors, emotions, and cognitions that fit their personality structure, may be better able to stimulate the body’s self-healing abilities (Hirshberg and Barasch 147). Psychologist Lynda Temoshok suggests that the cancer patient who distances herself
from emotions necessary for the healing process—including fear, anger, and sadness—is doing herself a disservice (Hirshberg and Barasch 147). Arthur Frank echoes that sentiment in his critique of medical staff, family members and friends who promote the “cheerful patient” image, or at least stoicism, often denying the illness subject a natural, healthy range of emotions that may include depression (At the Will of the Body 65-6).

It can be argued that while it is important to express a wide range of emotions during illness, Frank’s optimistic outlook promoted his recovery. In Optimism: The Biology of Hope, anthropologist Lionel Tiger claims that optimism is necessary for our continuation as a species, exploring the effects of optimism on human development and evolution (xix-xx). Other studies suggest that an optimistic outlook on illness, such as Frank’s, may prolong the illness subject’s life. A pilot study on the psychosocial characteristics of subjects who make “remarkable” recoveries from illness indicates the greatest factors in determining a return to health include: maintaining “a belief in a positive outcome” (75%), having “artistic pursuits at which they were somewhat proficient” (75%), embracing a “fighting spirit” (71%), and “seeing disease as a challenge” (71%) (Hirshberg and Barasch 333). Of course, the illness subjects discussed here were both engaged in the creative pursuit of writing their narrative, and envisioned themselves as fighters.

Previous studies of illness narratives, such as Anne Hunsaker Hawkins’ study of mythic thinking in contemporary pathographies, and Arthur W. Frank’s examination of the quest narrative in illness stories,17 explore the illness subject-as-hero. In the following

17 In “The Quest Narrative: Illness and the Communicative Body,” chapter six of The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics, Frank asserts: “The quest narrative affords the ill their most distinctive voice, and most published illness stories are quest stories” (115). Since Frank’s study also takes into consideration oral
section of this chapter I will focus on how the language of warfare is integrated into the representation of the illness subject as a self-styled war-hero engaged in a battle for continued subjectivity, both in “real” life and through the written word. As the subject wages her war for survival, she reveals the natural and social forces that discipline, intervene in and regulate processes of the body. In addition, many subjects, such as DeBaggio, engage in meta-linguistic discussions about how their subjectivity has been affected by illness and by writing about illness. For these subjects, the subplot “How I Fought to Tell My Story” is as or more important than “How I Battled Critical Illness.” Stewart Alsop, for example, informs the reader that his book “was written by different mes” (10). The first part was written when he was first diagnosed with leukemia and was told he might survive another year; the second part was written when he was released from the hospital, and was feeling “rotten”; the third part was written when he felt “sick unto death”; the fourth part was written by a “euphoric me suddenly feeling better than I had for years and confident—or almost confident—of a final cure”; and the last part is being written by the “me now writing—faced with a recrudescence of the mysterious disease and again in fear of an unwilling expedition to that ‘undiscoverèd country from whose bourn no traveler returns’” (10-11). Alsop’s crisp writing style (he was a political reporter for *Newsweek*), coupled with his *joie de vivre* (he takes great joy in playing tennis and spending time with his six children), makes for an engaging text. Therefore, in this text, especially, the author’s shifts in subjectivity are clearly felt by the reader.

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stories, he differentiates between published and unpublished narratives. Frank believes that most published narratives are quests because the quest narrative requires that one sustain her voice for a prolonged period of time. To define quest narrative, Frank employs Joseph Campbell’s *hero’s journey* signified by the motifs *departure, initiation, and return*. While Frank notes that there are a number of illness narratives in which the hero is a conqueror, he believes Campbell “deserves his influence because of his moral insight that mythic heroism is evidenced not by force of arms but by perseverance” (119). Certainly, both Campbell’s hero’s adventure and Frank’s quest narrative apply to many of the autopathographies in my study.
To describe the war zone that his body has become, frequently Alsop deploys militaristic language. Alsop refers to the “curious feeling” inside his bones as “a battlefield,” and amuses himself by thinking of military analogies for his situation, hoping that it will not be like Vietnam, “the most unwinnable war in modern history” (80-1). Similarly, when Jenifer Estess contracts pneumonia while in the end stages of A.L.S., the situation calls for “heavy artillery, major RNs, veterans of the wars” (178). Estess writes, “In wartime my nurses and I spend each second fighting together for the next” (179). Unlike Alsop, Estess is not a war veteran, but she compares her precarious situation to living in a foxhole: “I hunkered down in my bed and held on as the bombs flew above me” (184). Gilda Radner also views her body as the site of warfare. In chapter eight of her autopathography aptly titled “The War,” Radner deploys battlefield imagery to represent herself as a soldier both burdened by and empowered with her own defense, “deeply embroiled in the battle of my life—a war against cancer taking place inside my own body” (91).

While Arthur Frank does not advocate calling cancer “the enemy,” he does believe that combat is the only appropriate societal analogy to describe being a person with cancer, embroiled in both external battles with medical technologies and internal struggles to become well (83). However, Frank is reluctant to divide his body into two warring camps: the “bad guy tumors” versus the naturally healthy self (84). Rather, Frank believes it is more effective to embrace the illness and divert one’s anger toward the forces that mistreat the patient, a viewpoint that accords with his observation that medical technologies colonize the illness subject. For Frank, the phrase “fighting cancer” implies fighting an “other”; rather than employing the verb “to fight” to describe purging the self
of cancer, Frank suggests substituting “to struggle,” since it affords the body the power to seek medical help (90). In Frank’s desire to gain agency in the body, the difference between “to fight” cancer and “to struggle” with cancer is enormous; however, as Frank acknowledges, regardless of one’s semantic preference, society still refers to cancer as a war that can be fought with a valiant effort (83).

Ruth Picardie’s autopathography, written as the author came to the realization that, at age thirty-two, she was dying from terminal cancer\(^\text{18}\), illustrates the wide range of emotions the subject faces during the end-stages of critical illness. Though it is unclear if and how writing her illness narrative affected her body’s self-healing properties, Picardie embodies what Frank advocates throughout *At the Will of the Body*: “To seize the opportunities offered by illness, we must live illness actively: we must think about it and talk about it, and some, like me, must write about it” (Frank 3). Devastatingly honest, Picardie admits to her cowardice in the face of battle: “Unfortunately, all this suffering didn’t make me feel better about my state of health or fill me with sympathy for others, but made me feel sick, unheroic and afraid” (84). Unlike some subjects who, as a result of their illness experience, become increasingly altruistic, Picardie channels her anger at falling critically ill into hedonism. She decides that “personal indulgence or escapism of any kind” (including going into credit card debt) is one’s best chance at wellness, and mockingly advises “fellow cripples” to buy her forthcoming cancer treatment book *Shop Yourself Out of Cancer* (91). Although Picardie harps on her weaknesses, her readers write letters to the newspaper attesting to the contrary. For example, one reader praises Picardie for being “fantastically brave and good-humoured—even if you don’t feel it”

\(^{18}\) This text is composed of ten months’ e-mail correspondence to friends, published newspaper articles in the British newspaper the *Observer*, and readers’ responses to these articles.
Illness subjects who successfully hold back the enemy to enter “the zone of remission” rarely declare victory (Stoller 183). Rather they live unsteadily, as if a truce has been declared between patient and illness. Paul Stoller compares learning to live with this new subjectivity to navigating through the doldrums: “You are in a space between the comfortable assumptions of your old life and the uncomfortable uncertainties of your new life” (183). Geralyn Lucas refers to this uncharted territory as “living under a cancer cloud” (164). Every time she undergoes a medical evaluation, Lucas is certain the doctors will tell her she has had a recurrence (164). Joyce Wadler takes a more pragmatic approach to the uncertainty of whether or not cancer will return:

Death, I now see, may not come when I am eighty-five and weary, or after I have solved all my problems or met all my deadlines. All I can control—for whatever fight I put up should a cancer make a comeback—is the time between. (165)

Three subjects in my study are victorious in their battle with critical illness. Although they call themselves illness free by the end of their narratives, their subjectivity has been permanently altered by their experience. For example, Lance Armstrong writes, “Cancer no longer consumes my life, my thoughts, or my behavior, but the changes it wrought are there in me, unalterable” (288). Suzy Becker says she stopped thinking of herself as “a person who had just had brain surgery” about a year after her tumor was
successfully removed (277). She started to see herself as “fully recovered” once her tumor was no longer visible on a brain scan and her neurosurgeon told her to schedule a follow-up visit in three years’ time (281). After his first clean gallium scan for thoracic tumors\(^\text{19}\) (following five questionable ones), Dan Shapiro finally basks in hope “like a man emerging from years of solitary confinement, squinting towards the sun” (194).

Thirteen years after his first diagnosis, and eight years after receiving his first clean bill of health, Shapiro proudly reports in his Epilogue: “We are healthy and happy. Scans are clear [. . .] I am the luckiest man I know” (237). From the upbeat tone and images of his final pages—Shapiro’s mother planting tomatoes in her garden with her granddaughter Alex, and Shapiro announcing the birth of Abigail, his second daughter—Shapiro’s autopathography ends optimistically.

**Beyond the Battlefield: Military Metaphors in Autopathography**

To conclude my exploration of the military metaphor in autopathography, I focus on two autopathographies in which the subject employs “fighting” language not directly linked to warfare to discuss critical illness. In Paul Stoller’s *Stranger in the Village of the Sick: A Memoir of Cancer, Sorcery, and Healing*, confronting cancer is seen through the dual perspectives of Western medicine and African sorcery; while in Lance Armstrong’s *It’s Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life*, beating cancer is compared to winning the Tour de France. Although winning figures prominently in both autopathographies, each subject fights for his subjectivity without deploying battlefield language. By offering alternatives to what Susan Sontag identifies as fighting illness with metaphors of

\(^{19}\) A gallium scan is conducted by injecting gallium, a metallic element, into the patient’s bloodstream. Under the scan machine, tumors, as well as the body’s organs, will light up. Shapiro’s tumor was in the thoracic region, the area between the neck and the abdomen.
aggressive warfare, I will illustrate how both subjects de-mythicize cancer as it pertains to the battlefield. However, since both subjects display extraordinary powers (mystical and athletic), their stories of surviving cancer, mythic in themselves, remain beyond the realm of the quotidian for most subjects of critical illness. These texts are fascinating, and could be inspirational to a reader facing critical illness, but their metaphors of illness and recovery are so unusual that the reader may not be able to connect to the subject of the text as readily as in other autopathographies.

Anthropologist Paul Stoller looks back to his experiences in the Republic of Niger as an apprentice to Songhay sorcerers while adjusting to his new subjectivity as “cancer patient” (63). Searching for empowerment as he undergoes frightening medical exams that make him “feel like a powerless subject,” Stoller turns to the knowledge of the Songhay elders to help him “live with ambiguous uncertainty” (66). Like a Songhay sorcerer, Stoller wants to be prepared to confront his illness and face future trouble (114); however, to balance out what he calls the “arrogance” of Western medicine’s “militaristic” approach to illness, Stoller also embraces the beliefs of the Songhay and Balinese people, who accept illness with humility, and respect its power due to, in part, their society’s “inadequate medical care” (115). As he undergoes chemotherapy, Stoller fortifies himself with the understanding gained from having lived amongst the Songhay that “Illness is part of life; it lies within us and waits for the right moment to appear” (128). Stoller does not seek to dispel the fact that in Western culture, “Illnesses are metaphorically framed, as is medical discourse, in terms of war” (128). The question he ponders throughout his narrative —“Although the technological marvels of modern medicine may make you the survivor of many battles, can you ever win the war?”— is
one whose answer eluded him while he studied with his Songhay mentor, Adamu Jenitongo (129).

Throughout his cancer treatments, Stoller counters his “deeply rooted sense of invincibility” with the “reinforced” humility of the Songhay (161). In Stoller’s words, “If a Songhay develops a serious illness like cancer, he or she is likely to build respect for it. Respect for cancer—or any illness—does not mean that you meekly submit to the ravages of the disease” (191). After Stoller’s illness goes into remission, the spirit of Adamu Jenitongo comforts Stoller while he dreams, encouraging him to be patient, humble, and to “refine my knowledge so that others might learn from it” (192-3). Hence, what emerges from Stoller’s text is a fascinating paradox indicative of its author’s reawakened Western/African self-identification: to be powerful is to be humble. While Stoller’s spiritual, yet pragmatic approach to fighting cancer, may not completely demilitarize metaphors of illness, it does offer insight into how the subject can maintain agency and humanity while residing in the land of the critically ill.

Lance Armstrong structures his autopathography by contrasting the pre-cancer hotshot jock to the post-cancer elite athlete/humanitarian. By setting up his narrative with stories of pre-illness bravura, such as how he won at the World Championships, Armstrong illustrates his determination to win at all costs, his willingness to take risks, and his superior resilience. Further, by taking the reader onto the international bike racing circuit before venturing inside the hospital room, Armstrong establishes his predominant theme early in the narrative: “I had learned what it means to ride the Tour de France. It’s not about the bike. It’s a metaphor for life, not only the longest race in the world but also

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20 Published after his second Tour de France victory.
21 At age 21, Armstrong was the youngest man to have won a world title in cycling (60).
the most exalting and heartbreaking and potentially tragic” (68). Accordingly, Armstrong often reminds the reader that while bicycle racing gave him the strength, determination, and tactical prowess to fight cancer, beating cancer built the drive, endurance and character necessary for him to win the Tour de France.

Throughout his narrative, Armstrong defines himself as a subject by and through the language of bicycle racing. Armstrong personifies cancer as he would an adversary on the racecourse: “I was not a compliant cancer patient. I was salty, aggressive, and pestering. I personalized the disease. ‘The Bastard,’ I called it. I made it my enemy, my challenge” (131). He compares his positive response to chemotherapy to a time trial in the Tour, and sets goals with his blood tests with the same enthusiasm he estimates split-times during a race (141). As his tumor markers fall, Armstrong boasts, “I began to feel like I was winning the battle against the disease, and it made my cycling instincts kick in again. I wanted to tear the legs off cancer the way I tore the legs off other riders on a hill. I was in a breakaway” (141). Ironically, after his cancer treatment has proven successful, Armstrong experiences a change in subjectivity in which he finds a “new sense of purpose” that has “nothing to do with my recognition and exploits on a bike” (151), but emanates from his subjectivity as “cancer survivor.” It is after this self-revelation that Armstrong establishes a cancer foundation that benefits from his celebrity, but serves others (152).

As with other subjects in my study, Armstrong emerges from his struggle with critical illness feeling that he is a changed person. After winning his first Tour, Armstrong asked himself why his victory had such a profound effect on people. His

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22 I realize that “enemy” has many connotations. Given that Armstrong’s narrative is grounded in the discourse of bicycle racing, I see the term “enemy” as a cycling adversary, not a war combatant.
response, I believe, resonates throughout all the subjects in my study, those who lived to see the publication of their autopathographies and are still alive today, and those who survive as textual subjects:

Maybe it’s because illness is universal—we’ve all been sick, no one is immune—and so my winning the Tour was a symbolic act, proof that you can not only survive cancer but thrive after it. Maybe, as my friend Phil Knight says, I am hope. (Armstrong 259)

As Armstrong’s text implies, the universality of illness, the potential heroism of the illness subject who endures great hardship, and the tendency for readers of autopathography to believe that there is hope for a better future, all contribute to the allure of the genre. However, crucially important to autopathographers is how they see themselves as subjects subjected to the effects of power intrinsic to Western medicine, and especially to the militaristic language commonly employed to describe critical illness and the treatment of disease. As this study suggests, often autopathographers co-opt language of the battlefield to empower themselves as illness subjects, and deploy military metaphors as a means to explicate how it feels to be an illness subject. While there may be ways to demilitarize, and thereby de-mythicize illness, militaristic language remains a major influence on the subjectivity of the autopathographer. Subsequent chapters of this study further explore the reconstructive effects of writing first-person narratives, and the power of first-person narratives to teach empathy for the marginalized other.
Chapter Four: Using First-Person Narratives in the College Classroom to Foster Self Study, Well Being, and Empathy

To write is thus to “show oneself,” make oneself seen, make one’s face appear before the other [. . . ] one opens oneself to the gaze of others and one puts the other in the place of an internal god. (Michel Foucault, “Writing the Self” 243)

The mark of autobiography, then, is the discursive signature of the subject and signifies agency in self-representation. (Leigh Gilmore, “The Mark of Autobiography” 14)

Introduction

In chapters one and two of this study, I explored how autobiography re(de)fines and empowers the writing subject and seeks to elicit a sympathetic response in the reading subject. While in the previous chapters I focused on how the autobiographical subject is (re)created by and through writing, in this chapter I expand my discussion of the effects of life-writing to include its potential to transform college writing pedagogy. As the title of this chapter suggests, I believe life-writing can have a positive influence on the college writing subject that extends beyond the obvious goal of teaching her to write clearly and cogently.

In this chapter, I focus on Foucault’s “Writing the Self,” an investigation of the moral and ethical effects of “self-writing” on the writing subject.¹ It is important to note that for Foucault, “There are two meanings of the word subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge” (“Afterword,” The Subject and Power 212). This dual concept of subject is of particular relevance to Foucault’s discussion of how self-writing applies to the

¹ This essay is part of a series of studies on Greco-Roman society that Foucault initially conceived to introduce Volumes Two and Three of The History of Sexuality (Foucault and his Interlocutors 234).
governance of self and others. For, in Foucault’s view, self-writing both “fills the role of companion by inciting human respect and shame,” and “exposes what one has done or thought to a possible gaze,” thereby exerting on subjectivity a similar effect that the presence of others exerts in the domain of behavior (Foucault 235). Foucault believes that in this sense, self-writing serves a function like that of confession to a spiritual director (235). This concept is similar to the way Foucault problematizes subjectivity vis-à-vis confession as public testimony in *The History of Sexuality: Volume I*. There he argues that by functioning as “a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement” (61), confession necessarily forces the subject to constitute herself through discourse, and to see herself as a subject constituted by her own discourse. Changing the discourse, or how one sees oneself as a subject of discourse, affects subjectivity. Of course, in *The History of Sexuality: Volume I* the testimony of the speaker is a byproduct of technologies of power requiring a confession to produce a truth-statement, but it is this very truth-telling technology that validates and can empower both speaker and statement. In other words, while the speaking subject in autobiography is subject to technologies of power that control and produce her speech-act, her identity is unmistakably linked to the self-knowledge produced by articulating her story, and circulated through the channels of communication that both oversee and allow for individual truths to be voiced in the public realm.

In addition to empowering the writer, Foucault believes that autobiography can form the subject who examines how she is subjected to and a subject of her thoughts and actions; in fact, Foucault indicates that regular self-writing actually changes the writing subject. For, just as the public self prepares a face to meet the faces that it meets, the
autobiographical subject is likely to be influenced, consciously or otherwise, by her perception of how she will be perceived morally and ethically by her (internalized) reader; therefore, the self-writer begins to act and think as if she were being watched by others, a self-censoring mechanism reminiscent of Bentham’s Panopticon, the focal image in Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*. According to Foucault, even when the subject is not subjected to public scrutiny, such as when she is engaged in self-writing, she performs as if her thoughts and actions were under surveillance, henceforth producing an internalized space shared with an imagined “other” that Foucault deems “an internal god” (“Writing the Self”).

The internalized space that the writing subject shares with an imagined other is significant in the two previous chapters of this study. For example, the rape subject engaged in scriptotherapy internalizes her confessor/therapist in order to write herself as a subject with enough control of her trauma story to *recontextualize* it and *retell* it to her internalized other, the compassionate listener. Similarly, the subject engaged in autopathography internalizes her reader, who, it is assumed, admires her battle against critical illness. In addition, the illness subject may internalize the other in the guise of medical technologies employed to identify and treat illness, or as various social influences that support her self-(re)construction as a soldier in the war against illness. Therefore, as I argue in chapters two and three, subjects of scriptotherapy and autopathography are shaped by and shape themselves according to how they internalize the gaze of the other. Since, as these practices suggest, the effects of self-writing on the

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2 Foucault writes: “Hence, the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action . . . .” (*D & P* 201).
writing and reading subject can be far-reaching, the integration of first-person narratives into college writing and reading pedagogy can be of enormous value. Accordingly, I have found Foucault’s discussion of the effects of surveillance on the writing subject useful for examining the teacher-student relationship commonly engendered in the English classroom. For example, in the public space of the classroom, faculty offices, the library, or even casual interactions anywhere in the college community, the teacher and student perform their roles knowing they are being watched. Likewise, when they are not publicly performing their respective roles, the teacher and student may continue to perform for each other as if their thoughts and actions were under surveillance by the other.\(^3\) Besides the direct assimilation of the gaze of the other in teacher-student relations, there are additional factors affecting how the subject internalizes the gaze of the other, such as expectations from either the teacher’s or the student’s peer group, the influence of former teacher-student relationships, and the subject’s vision of herself as a teacher or student. In addition, in the English classroom, where student writing is often specifically intended for the teacher’s eyes,\(^4\) the internalized gaze of the other can and often will directly and visibly affect teacher-student relations. I believe this effect is magnified and compounded when self-writing is incorporated in English classroom pedagogy in that it makes the self-writing subject aware of and responsible for her subjectivity, and aware of, and reliant upon the teacher’s role as audience.

\(^3\) For example, to prepare for class, either party might internalize how she believes the other will respond to course material or anticipate the other’s expectations of her.

\(^4\) I believe English classes differ from other classes in that quite often the student is evaluated, as it were, intersubjectively, by the writing she produces for the teacher. Likewise, many English teachers employ self-writing practices, such as journals and first person response essays. In other fields of study, such as the sciences, most often students are evaluated through objective means.
I have found through my own teaching experience that incorporating autobiographical texts and self-writing into my pedagogical practices can foster a classroom environment that pays attention to subjectivity to promote mindful, ethical behavior in both teacher and student, and teach empathy for the other. To argue for this type of pedagogical approach, this chapter presents theories from progressive, feminist and psychoanalytical pedagogies that I believe fall under the auspices of what bell hooks terms “engaged pedagogy”— a philosophy of teaching that greatly influences my classroom practices. In addition, I will review critical positions concerning the place of the personal essay in the college classroom and how college writers and their teachers navigate through the public and private space of essay writing. After illustrating how employing personal writing in the college classroom promotes self-study in both teacher and student, I will present research to show why and how self-reflective personal writing improves the well-being of the writing subject, and how self-writing taps into a student’s multiple intelligences, possibly facilitating the writing process for some learners. Lastly, drawing on my previous arguments on the effects of scriptotherapy and autopathography on the reading and writing subject, I will argue that first-person narratives should be employed in the college classroom because they are valuable resources for teaching empathy.

**Engaged Pedagogy: Progressive, Feminist and Psychoanalytic Approaches**

Paulo Freire’s well known model for liberation pedagogy promotes a system in which teachers and students are co-subjects in revealing and re-creating “knowledge of reality” (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 56). Central to Freire’s theory is the practice of *conscientization*, or coming to a consciousness of oppression and the commitment to end
that oppression, in which “the oppressed” become fully committed in their struggle for liberation. Freire’s educational reform centers on eliminating what he calls the “banking” system of education, an elitist practice in which the teacher deposits information in the student vault (58). Under this oppressive pedagogical system, the teacher teaches and the students listen; the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined; the teacher is the subject of the learning process and the students are “mere objects” (59). Hence, the student is treated as a “marginal being” to be integrated into the larger, “healthy society” (61). To transform banking pedagogy into a liberatory system, Freire proposes open communication between teacher and students, thereby creating a parallel classroom relationship and modified power relations between “teacher-student” and “students-teacher” (67). In addition, Freire offers a system of “problem-posing” heuristics that foster open teacher-student/students-teacher discussions and develop critical thinking skills (118). In Freire’s system, the classroom is a learning space where both the teacher and her students are in the process of transformation and self-betterment, where “in the context of true learning, the learners will be engaged in a continuous transformation through which they become authentic subjects of the construction and reconstruction of what is being taught, side by side with the teacher, who is equally subject to the same process” (*Pedagogy of Freedom* 33).

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5 Freire was initially addressing the student movement in his native country of Brazil. During the student revolution of the late 1960s, the term “the oppressed” was synonymous with the youth who were demanding a transformation of the university system. In Freire’s ideology, rebellion against bureaucracy leads to a transformation of reality out of which universities are revolutionized (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, fn 27).

6 Freire believes that once the “vertical patterns characteristic of banking education” are broken, “through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teacher” (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 67).
Feminist educator Kathleen Weiler observes that, “like Freirean pedagogy, feminist pedagogy is grounded in a vision of social change” (19). However, Freire’s original focus was exclusively economic, and did not represent other forms of oppression of pedagogical importance, such as issues relating to expression and exploitation of gender (Brady 145). Feminist pedagogy, rather, rests on truth claims of the primacy of experience and consciousness grounded in historically situated social change (Weiler 19-20). Since feminism recognizes that multiple societal constructs (such as gender) influence us as subjects of our own and others’ knowledge, feminist pedagogy takes into consideration a difference of experience among “the oppressed” members of a classroom, avoiding broad groupings such as “woman,” “person of color,” “working-class,” and so forth (Kenway and Modra 139). The feminist educator acknowledges that there are multiple histories and subjectivities in any classroom situation, and that culturally generated meanings and understandings “continually undergo personal and social transformation” (Orner 74). While in Freirean pedagogy it is through interrogation of their own experience that the oppressed come to an understanding of their own power as knowers and creators of the world, in feminist pedagogy teachers’ and students’ sources of knowledge include both their external world of experience and agency, and their internal emotional “spaces” (Weiler 27). For example, feminist scholar Brenda Daly employs personal autobiographical essays in the classroom to foster what she calls “radical introspection,” a teaching/learning process that is both emotional and analytical (80). Not only does Daly recognize the importance of feelings in the classroom, she also confronts traditional methodologies that separate the emotions from intellectual pursuits by including her own autobiographical academic text, Authoring a Life, in her
curriculum. Daly has found that the process of writing autobiographical scholarship enables her “to externalize and analyze personal traumas, thereby overcoming most of their debilitating effects” (91). Additionally, her readers, drawn from academic and nonacademic communities, have reached out to her with their own stories of trauma and recovery. Through the exchange of stories Daly has come to think of personal criticism as a new form of consciousness raising, and the classroom as a space for “radical introspection” that lends itself to social action (91).

As Daly’s personal and pedagogical practices show, “the writing subject is best conceptualized as a dynamic and evolving entity that is shaped by internal and external circumstances that influence behavior” (Harris 181). Here Daly’s feminist pedagogy meets the aims of psychoanalytical pedagogy, “which supports the idea that writing can be therapeutic and, therefore, more meaningful for the student in the long term than other socio-epistemic pedagogies” (Harris 181). Like liberatory and feminist pedagogies, psychoanalytic pedagogy promotes social change, nurtures students in order to help them to develop personally, and allows students to empower themselves through gaining membership in certain discourse communities (Bracher 11). However, unlike feminist pedagogy, psychoanalytical pedagogy also helps students identify and work through previously unconscious conflicts (Bracher 152). In *The Writing Cure: Psychoanalysis, Composition, and the Aims of Education*, Mark Bracher observes that since “intrapsychic” conflicts “underlie writing problems of all sorts, it follows that one of the best ways to improve writing is to help writers recognize and deal with these conflicts” (153). Bracher believes that if a teacher understands the basic aim of psychoanalytical

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7 My chapter on “Scriptotherapy” explains this process in detail.
treatment and the primary forces operating within it, she will be able to effectively adopt strategies from psychoanalytic pedagogy into her teaching practices (9). Bracher appropriates certain concepts from Lacanian psychoanalysis to explain how the teacher can employ classroom practices that have therapeutic potential. Bracher writes, “If a teacher desires that students recognize and assume their own unconscious desire, the students will often themselves come to have this desire” (Bracher 153). Bracher further explains that, in Lacan’s system, the first step for the analysand is to recognize that her own actions serve to produce a situation that dissatisfies her. In the case of writing students, the teacher is positioned to help them see that writing difficulties such as “I have nothing to write about,” or “I’ll never be able to learn these grammar rules,” “are at least partially motivated, (unconsciously) willful, rather than just accidents or the results of some condition beyond the students’ control” (128). Through this process, which Bracher calls “rectification with the Real,” the student begins to recognize that her problems are at least partially the result of her own action and of “an invisible desire” motivating that action (128). Accordingly, the teacher functions as an object of transference, filling roles such as friend, rival, authority figure, benevolent figure, and so forth. By paying attention to many of the same dynamics that arise in psychoanalysis, the teacher can adopt strategies to avoid misusing her position of authority and provide “a space for the Real—that is, for students to experience, express, and examine their feelings and passions: their desires, revulsions, and enjoyments” (Bracher 134).

8 I see a pronounced similarity between Bracher’s observation that through a psychoanalytical pedagogical approach students will see themselves as being responsible for their own actions and Foucault’s definition of the aims of self-writing and its effect on subjectivity.

9 While Bracher offers a complex explanation in Lacanian terms of how transference works between analysand and analyst, it suffices for the purpose of my study to focus on how transference influences power relations in the writing classroom (120-34).
A common objection to psychoanalytical pedagogy is that teachers do not have the necessary training to practice it. Bracher understands that training in psychoanalytic theory is “arduous” and seemingly “interminable” (9). However, he believes any teacher can employ psychoanalytical practices if she understands “a fundamental principle of psychoanalysis” to take care “not to create extreme anxiety for an analysand” and to allow her freedom at each moment to participate or not to participate in the analytic process (7). For example, the student should not be coerced to write about any personal topic that creates anxiety, nor be pushed to reveal personal information in a classroom situation. Bracher suggests that all writing teachers adopt this principle to reduce the likelihood that “uncontrollable psychological forces will erupt”\(^\text{10}\) (8). Thomas Newkirk, who has taught personal writing for over two decades, observes that when students write on these topics [such as divorce, trauma, child abuse, eating disorders, and so forth] they want us to assume a counseling role. In most cases, this [criticism that the writing student feels pressured to disclose extremely personal information] represents a profound and presumptuous misreading of student intent. (19)\(^\text{11}\)

I believe that psychoanalytical pedagogical practices can be beneficial in that they shed light on the internal workings of the writing subject, in addition to making visible effects from teacher-student interactions. In that respect, psychoanalytic pedagogy is sensitive to

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\(^{10}\) A concern of many teachers is that psychoanalytical pedagogy could foster emotional conflict in the classroom. However, Bracher contends, any writing class and teaching pedagogy can ignite volatile emotions, and psychoanalytical pedagogy has a strategy for acknowledging and dealing with student/teacher conflict.

\(^{11}\) I am aware that many teachers are not competent to deal with the profound and troubling subjects Newkirk addresses. For this reason, I suggest that any time personal writing is taught employing elements of psychoanalytic pedagogy, the student should have easy access to counseling services and the instructor should make it clear to the student that she is not equipped to play the role of therapist.
the emotional consequences of teacher-student relations in the college classroom on both teacher and student, and acknowledges that the college classroom is a space of constant change, filled with the possibility of dramatic transformation.

In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as a Practice of Freedom*, bell hooks advocates a classroom situation that embraces the goals of liberatory, feminist, and psychoanalytic pedagogies. The progressive, holistic educational approach hooks calls “engaged pedagogy” is largely derived from Paulo Freire’s liberatory pedagogy and the teachings of Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, both of whom emphasize praxis, “action and reflection upon the world in order to change it” (hooks 14). An ardent admirer and student of Paulo Freire, hooks also believes students should be active participants in transforming the world; yet, like Thich Nhat Hanh, she sees the student as a “whole” human being “striving not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world” (15). In hooks’ view, engaged pedagogy “is more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy,” because (like psychoanalytical pedagogy) it emphasizes well-being. Likewise, hooks encourages teachers to be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being (15). In hooks’ opinion, “part of the luxury and privilege of the role of teacher/professor today is the absence of any requirement that we be self-actualized”; rather than show any interest in enlightenment, hooks believes most professors “become enthralled by the exercise of power and authority within their mini-kingdom, the classroom” (17). To avoid this blatant abuse of power in the college classroom, hooks promotes freedom in student

12 Interestingly, in “The Ethic of Care for the Self As a Practice of Freedom,” Michel Foucault echoes these sentiments: “One must not have the care for others precede the care for self. The care for self takes moral precedence in the measure that the relationship to self takes ontological precedence” (7).
expression and emphasizes a classroom environment that cultivates the instructor’s
growth (20-1).

Like Brenda Daly, bell hooks employs confessional narratives in the classroom to
raise consciousness and foster “collective listening to one another” (hooks 84). When
hooks teaches Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, for example, she asks students to write
and then read aloud in class an autobiographical paragraph about an early memory
relating to race. In hooks’ view, “this exercise highlights experience without privileging
the voices of students from any particular group. It helps create a communal awareness of
the diversity of our experiences and provides a limited sense of the experiences that may
inform how we think and what we say” (84). The approach to personal writing taken by
Daly and hooks promotes a classroom environment that values self-study, self-betterment
and empathy for the other.

Creating social change through progressive classroom practices is the focus of
feminist educator Mary Rose O’Reilley’s autobiographical pedagogical narrative *The
Peaceable Classroom*. Throughout the text, O’Reilley responds to the question: “Is it
possible to teach English so that people stop killing each other?”13 Quoting Thich Nhat
Hanh, O’Reilley urges teachers to embrace the Buddhist concept of right livelihood, and
interrogate whether their work is compassionate (38). To illustrate the need for
compassion in the classroom, O’Reilley offers examples of “academic brutalization,”
such as (de)grading practices that “contain the seeds of violence” (writing “HUH?” on
student papers, for example), and teaching students to bully, demean, and turn others into

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13 This question was initially posed to O’Reilley in 1967, by her professor Ihab Hassan, during a
colloquium for teaching assistants (9).
objects by insulting, bullying and objectifying them (31). \(^\text{14}\) O’Reilley has two goals for “peace-making” in literature and writing classrooms: to foster the student’s “inner life,” and “to help the student bring his subjective vision into the community” (32). While O’Reilley employs heuristics commonly practiced in English classrooms, her class discussions are also attuned to “the dialogue between inner life and outer world,” and her writing groups “figure out ways of criticizing without inflicting terminal injury” (33-4). As with Daly and hooks, O’Reilley is a proponent of personal writing, and has “come to distrust any pedagogy that does not begin in the personal” (60). In what I see as a fulfillment of Foucault’s vision of self-writing, these educators mindfully navigate through the public, private and internalized spaces produced by classroom power relations to create a classroom environment that promotes praxis. In the process, both the teacher and her students employ self-knowledge gained through self-writing to better themselves and those around them.

**Personal Writing in the College Classroom**

The place of “the personal” in the English classroom is of great concern to scholars in Composition Studies. At the center of debate is the split between personal and academic writing, and whether the personal can or should be authorized by the academy.

In *Composition-Rhetoric*, a historical investigation of written composition in American colleges from 1780 \(^\text{15}\) to recent times, Robert J. Connors explores, among many things, strategies for composition pedagogy that seesaw from personal experience writing on one

\(^{14}\) Likewise, it could be seen as an act of violence not to write “HUH?” on a student paper that is clearly confusing. However, I believe O’Reilley is suggesting finding ways to offer constructive, “peaceful” criticism while grading students’ works.

\(^{15}\) Connors claims that Early American composition-rhetoric was shaped by Hugh Blair’s 1783 text *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres*, first published in London (74-5).
side, to expository and argumentative writing on the other. He notes that while historically, the classical tradition in rhetoric “was essentially unconcerned with personal expression or personal experience” (300), by the late 1800s, “students were increasingly allowed to situate themselves within their subjects. From the accumulation of their personal experiences students were advised to choose something, narrow it to a workable theme topic, and develop it in some way” (313). Connors examines how, “from the 1900s onward, personal writing assignments remained central to the teaching of composition” (317) until George P. Baker’s popular text Principles of Argumentation (1895) “slammed the door closed on personal writing in favor of old-style objective, researched, logical argument” (318). Consequently, expository and argumentative writing was privileged by teachers who, in Connor’s opinion, had “a curious discomfort” toward students writing from personal experience” (319). Like much in American culture, from the 1920s onward, modern composition-rhetoric became “product-oriented,” heavily reliant on intellectual property and its offspring, the research paper (321). College writing became pragmatic, giving “students practice in the game of intellectual property rights” and teachers “a grateful mass of practical formal material for which they could hold students responsible” (322). In Connor’s view, the “research attitude” prominent in many colleges today epitomizes “the modern attitude itself” in which the writer is a producer, “a medium, not an originator. His task is to explore the library or the words of the world, not timeless wisdom or his own experience” (322). Connors believes this trend is indicative of the pedagogical shift in the academy away from personal writing toward more impersonal writing (322).
Many contemporary scholars argue that educators must teach students “genres of power” such as the argumentative essay. But, in *Relocating the Personal: A Critical Writing Pedagogy*, Barbara Kamler questions “the naïveté of such assertions, in particular the notion that an individual’s life can be changed simply by being taught the ‘prestigious’ genres of her culture” (82). In Kamler’s view, “all writing is personal” because it involves writers with histories that force them to negotiate gender, race, class and other subjectivities (83). Karen Surman Paley\(^\text{16}\) notes that a main objection to “expressivist” (autobiographical, personal) pedagogical practices largely associated with Peter Elbow is that the genre of the personal essay has been corrupted by sentimental realism (179).\(^\text{17}\) Elbow acknowledges that there are “solid differences”\(^\text{18}\) between more objective academic discourse and personal expressive writing, but questions whether these differences “really mean that personal expressive writing cannot do the work of academic discourse” (9). Elbow believes that the same work that is done through academic discourse—making arguments, solving problems, analyzing texts and issues, and trying to answer hard questions—can also be done with personal and expressive writing.\(^\text{19}\) In Elbow’s words, “Because personal expressive writing invites feeling does not mean that it leaves out thinking; and because it invites attention to the self does not mean that it leaves out other people and the social connection” (10). In addition, Elbow

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\(^{16}\) Paley is author of *I-Writing: The Politics and Practice of First-Person Writing*.

\(^{17}\) David Bartholomae voiced this critique.

\(^{18}\) According to Elbow, these four differences are: 1.) Objective academic writers try for a larger perspective that shows how their position relates to others’ views; 2.) Objective academic writers try for clear thinking that centers on claim, reasons, evidence and argument; 3.) Objective academic writing is usually structured in a manner Elbow calls “bony”—in that it incorporates a prominent skeleton of an argument; 4.) Objective academic writing is restrained and judicious in tone (8-9).

\(^{19}\) Elbow believes that personal academic essays can be written in a more personal tone of voice, with more associative organizational structure. Although a personal view is expressed, personal writing, like academic writing, should have a focused argument, and also like academic writing, it can summarize, explain and build on the work of others (9-10).
dismisses claims those who “pigeonhole” his work as “expressionist” [sic], arguing that this view dichotomizes the social and the personal, and falsely presumes that Elbow privileges the personal over social constructionist theories. In fact, he claims that often the personal and social are reciprocal and emphasizes that “the personal and individual need not be at war with the social […] it is as natural that they support each other as they fight each other” (13, 14). Elbow pointedly urges scholars to avoid dichotomous thinking that pits the personal against the social, asserting that “a community or social collectivity that is not made of individual consciousnesses with individual agencies is some kind of mystical group consciousness or oppressive blob collectivity” (14).

Although personal writing is a mainstay of his pedagogy, Thomas Newkirk confesses that his academic training has conditioned him to guard against emotional appeals. In spite of this, Newkirk believes that English teachers who seek to achieve an “aesthetic distance” from emotionalism are, in fact, encouraging elitist class practices which allow “a social class to distance itself from various ordinary urgencies” (27). Patricia A. Sullivan\(^\text{20}\) claims that the academy marginalizes and marks students as beings whose writing has no intrinsic value or social import because their writing lacks official knowledge (45). Sullivan believes that student writing has the status of a “subjugated” or “naïve” knowledge that has been disqualified as inadequate due to its distance from scientific discourse, which Foucault situates at the top of the power/knowledge hierarchy (45). To counter the epistemological, political, and disciplinary biases against the personal, Sullivan suggests we approach students’ personal writing as a “cultural pedagogy” that has the potential to teach us about our students’ lived experiences,

\(^{20}\) Sullivan is the director of the Program for Writing and Rhetoric at the University of Colorado in Boulder.
literacies and culture (46). I agree with Sullivan’s view that when teachers view their students’ writing “seriously as a form of cultural pedagogy, it offers us a glimpse into a social text, drawn from the cultural subconscious, that reveals us to ourselves” (47). Like Sullivan, I believe student writing has intrinsic value, and that it can teach us about others and ourselves; further, I believe that encouraging the development of individual student voices affords students agency in an academic environment that, as Newkirk suggests, often tends to be exclusionary. If only for pragmatic reasons, English teachers should include personal writing in their pedagogical practices because, as composition scholar Richard Miller observes, what is defined as “personal” and “better left unsaid” by the academy has shifted and continues to shift over time, so that today some kinds of personal narratives are authorized by the academy, further blurring the demarcation between academic and personal writing.²¹

Moreover, personal writing is a valuable pedagogical practice in that it can bridge the multiple spaces and identities college students often occupy and perform. Diane P. Freedman²² believes that personal writing allows students “to negotiate the divide” they “often feel between school and work or school and home, their writing and their caring, their knowing and their being” (199). Accordingly, Freedman reminds us “that students are unavoidably bringing their personal lives into their academic work, the classroom space, and their conversations with teachers and peers” (200). In effect, all classroom practices are affected by personal and interpersonal relationships, regardless of whether or not “the personal” is integrated into an instructor’s pedagogy. However, once “the

²¹ As personal writing gains widespread acceptance in the academy, scholars seek ways to create what Diane Hindman calls “a more embodied scholarly rhetoric” (9).
²² Freedman is a professor of English and Women’s Studies who has written numerous texts about autobiographical scholarship across the disciplines.
personal” becomes visibly integrated into a teacher’s pedagogical practices, both the teacher and her students can begin to explore their shared experiences and emotional space, and investigate their subjectivity with respect to the gaze of the internalized “other.” Consequently, the teacher’s physical and emotional presence becomes central to classroom practices.

Because the personal cannot be avoided in the classroom, bell hooks calls for teachers to return to “a state of embodiment in order to deconstruct the way power has been traditionally orchestrated in the classroom, denying subjectivity to some groups and according it to others” (139). In addition to recognizing the importance of the teacher’s physical presence, and her possible abuse of power in the classroom, hooks also advises professors to allow space for emotions in the classroom (154-55). As previously mentioned, emotional and intellectual “honesty” are central to Brenda Daly’s pedagogical practice of “radical introspection” (80). Daly admits that since many academics hold the “unacknowledged fantasy” that intellectual work must be separate from its feelings and passions, she feels vulnerable when using the personal in her scholarship and teaching; “nevertheless, the practice of self-inclusion has helped my students and me to resist and even transform debilitating ways of understanding the world” (80-1).

The connection between self-writing, emotional engagement, and praxis is the focus of Writing to Create Ourselves by T.D. Allen. In her autobiographical text about

23 By embodiment, hooks has in mind a teacher’s body posture, tone, word choice, and so forth, in addition to the oftentimes-obvious markers of gender, race, and ethnicity. In addition, hooks urges teachers to recognize the less easily noticeable, but nevertheless significant, marker of class differences (129-65; 177-89).
24 Daly is referring to David Bleich’s critique of English scholars who hold this “scientific” view (80).
25 T.D. Allen spent most of her teaching career working with American Indians, for many of whom English was a second language. Her instruction allowed for “a long-restrained Indianness” to emerge in students’ written English (Povey qtd. in Allen, x).
teaching indigenous Americans, Allen describes how, through writing about what they want to express, students create themselves. Allen’s students learn to look at conflicts within themselves “and sort them out in relation to the requirements of living with others”; they examine and set goals for themselves, and develop discipline; as a result, they find within themselves “legitimate sources of dignity and pride” (15). Allen notes that a student who is “aware of the world, of other human beings, and of relationships between things and people,” usually has access to “material from which he is eager to write” (18). Therefore, as Connors also points out, students who write about something that interests them (namely themselves), stand a better chance of fulfilling “the writer’s job” which she defines as “to write interestingly” (Connors 316). From a practical standpoint, including the personal essay in college writing pedagogy gives students something to write about in which they have a vested interest; on a more philosophical level, inviting the personal essay into the college classroom promotes self-awareness and, consequently, what Foucault would call “care for the self.”

A crucial step to achieving self-awareness through self-writing is for the writing subject to view herself as a subject created by and through discourse. Accordingly, Barbara Kamler explains how and why she centers her writing pedagogy on critical discourse analysis, a process whereby the subject estranges herself sufficiently from her writing to read her experience as text. Kamler notes that by viewing our discourse as text, we make visible how discourse operates in constructing subjectivities, thereby

26 Foucault argues that one cannot care for the self without self-knowledge. He also believes that one must acknowledge the rules of conduct that affect how knowledge of self is produced. This is where ethics plays a part in construction and knowledge of self (“The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom” 5).

27 Kamler notes that linguists and social theorists, such as Foucault, employ the term “discourse.” Kamler takes a linguistic approach in which discursive practice is seen as a form of social practice (112).
exposing the functioning of “power relations in the institutional contexts of everyday life” (112). Kamler’s writing workshops center on training students to analyze their own discourse and their classmates’ discourse as text; for example, in the “Stories of Ageing” workshop showcased in her book, Kamler’s students begin by analyzing “a powerful phrase or image” and then moving “to absences, to what the writer had not said” (166). From there, students attend closely to lexical selections or wordings and try to read for traces of dominant cultural discourses operating within them (167). By asking her students to negotiate their writings as societal discourses, they learn “to provide more than an empathic response to texts of personal experience” (119). Although empathy is an important byproduct of hearing and understanding another’s story, as Kamler’s students illustrate, analyzing personal discourse as text educates us as to how subjectivities (including our own) are constructed.

Research on Personal Writing, Learning and Empathy

As Kamler’s study suggests, not only does seeing oneself as a subject created by and through discourse foster understanding of other subjectivities, employing self-writing in this manner can also promote emotional and physical well-being. Numerous studies based on psychologist James W. Pennebaker’s expressive writing paradigm verify that individuals who write self-reflectively about emotional topics evidence improved

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28 A male member of Kamler’s writing group wrote: “I found the strong feminist perspective from some members of the group challenging, enlightening and frustrating […] To be made aware of the range of patriarchal discourses running through society and then identifying some of these elements in myself was an uncomfortable realization [sic]. To think that you’re full of these influences and that for a variety of reasons, you can get away with it as a white male and so are possibly part of one of the most insidious forms of sexism is confronting. As is the prospect of change. Nobody is immune to the abundance of discourses that shape our society, but it is easier to identify them in other people than in yourself” (120-1).
emotional and physical health. Pennebaker admits he has no explanation for how his writing paradigm works: “no single theory or theoretical perspective has convincingly explained its effectiveness.” But he attributes the lack of data pinpointing exactly why expressive writing works “to the fact that expressive writing affects people on multiple levels—cognitive, emotional, social, and biological—making a single explanatory theory unlikely” (“Theories, Therapies and Taxpayers” 138). In general, expressive writing can function within the same parameters as the personal essay. For example, a subject writing expressively along the lines of Pennebaker’s paradigm would be given topics such as something she thinks or worries about too much; something she dreams about; something she feels is affecting her life in an unhealthy way; or something she has been avoiding for days, weeks or years. None of these topics necessarily requires the student to delve deeply into highly personal or traumatic events; however, since they evoke emotional self-reflection and require the subject to view herself as a subject of her own discourse, they tend to have therapeutic results. In this vein, it should also be noted that writers do not need to write only about troubling or traumatic events to experience health benefits from expressive writing. In a study that employs a variation of Pennebaker’s writing paradigm, Burton and King found that students who wrote self-expressively about

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29 In addition to his books on writing and healing, including Writing to Heal: A Guided Journal for Recovering from Trauma and Emotional Upheaval, and Opening Up: the Healing Power of Expressing Emotion, Pennebaker and his associates have published articles about the Pennebaker Paradigm vis-à-vis writing about trauma, including “Effects of Writing About Rape: Evaluating Pennebaker’s Paradigm with a Severe Trauma” and “Disclosure of Traumas and Immune Function: Health Implications for Psychotherapy.” Pennebaker is also interested in how the words we choose serve as keys to understanding a person’s personality and actions in social situations. He has published many articles in this field—an area of study I feel is tangential to his expressive writing paradigm.

30 These topics are listed on Pennebaker’s website.

31 In Writing As a Way of Healing Louise DeSalvo explains Pennebaker’s paradigm in relation to her classroom pedagogical practices. For a thorough illustration of why Pennebaker’s writing topics have therapeutic value and how they could be implemented, see chapter two of her book, “How Writing Can Help Us Heal” (17-28).
intensely positive experiences (IPEs) (rather than about troubling personal experience) also experienced increased health and wellness (150). Therefore, teachers who employ personal writing heuristics that accord with Pennebaker’s expressive writing paradigm might want to offer the student the opportunity to write emotionally and self-reflectively about either a troubling experience or an intensely pleasing experience, as either topic promotes health and well-being in students. As a result of her own experience with the Pennebaker paradigm, for example, Louise DeSalvo developed a personal writing pedagogy that employs Pennebaker’s findings (“Telling Our Stories” 50). In *Writing as a Way of Healing* De Salvo explores her methodology for teaching healing and self-reflective writing, and offers insight into how this practice transforms the writing classroom. DeSalvo’s text is a compelling treatment of how and why Pennebaker’s paradigm of expressive writing should be employed in college writing classrooms.

Because of my interest in the connection between writing and healing, I have expanded my “Expository Writing as Life-Writing” curriculum to include readings from both De Salvo’s *Writing as a Way of Healing* and Pennebaker’s *Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions*. Accordingly, I now ask students to write and workshop self-reflective personal essays and keep a journal in which they are supposed to write self-reflectively for ten minutes everyday. While some students balk at the burden of keeping a journal, it proves to be a worthwhile experience for most. For purposes of illustrating the significance and healing potential of self-reflective writing, as well as the

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32 Burton and King report: “In a variation of Pennebaker’s writing paradigm, a sample of 90 undergraduates were randomly assigned to write about either an intensely positive experience (IPE) or a control topic for 20 minutes each day for three consecutive days. Mood measures were taken before and after writing. Three months later, measures of health center visits for illness were obtained. Writing about IPEs was associated with enhanced positive mood. Writing about IPEs was also associated with significantly fewer health center visits for illness compared to controls. Results are interpreted as challenging previously considered mechanisms of the positive benefits of writing” (150).
importance of incorporating Pennebaker’s expressive writing paradigm in the classroom, I will share the following excerpt from one student’s self-assessment written at the end of the spring 2006 semester of my “Expository Writing as Life-Writing” class. The passage is several pages long:

As a class we were instructed to write in our personal journals as often as possible. I didn’t really object to it like some did. I had no problem writing about the issues in “my world.” We were assigned reading by James Pennebaker regarding writing and well-being. I felt there actually could be some value to it. Ah, finally some positivity! I read a section on a study he did with people who had been laid off, and it said that those who wrote about it had a much easier time dealing with being fired and finding a new job. I found it ironic that I was in the exact same situation as the people in the study—I was losing my job.

“Hey, there might be something to this,” I thought.

I wrote. I wrote about my feelings, about how I felt about being laid off from Allstate. I wrote about change, the stress, questions I had, and the gamble involved with unemployment and new employment. I didn’t really expect it to work. I expected to blow up at my wife like I sometimes do, or lose my cool with my parents on the phone. I expected to snap in some way, shape or form that is “typical Jason.” I didn’t, and still haven’t. Maybe it’s subliminal or subconscious, but I have a peace that I simply do not feel I’d normally have. That’s not to say I don’t get angry, or my patience isn’t tested. It just never gets to the “punching out a wall”
or angst phase, and that makes all the difference to me—all because I typed it in a journal (and a writing assignment which later stemmed from it) for a self-writing class.

I had known about my layoff for some time, but as the time got nearer to my firing date, as I watched fellow co-workers around me tense up like rigid knots, I wasn’t feeling the weight of the world on me like I felt they were. And yes, I’m still unemployed. However, I am calm in my job search and in the knowledge that everything will work out in the end. I’m confident in my abilities and I am confident in this bachelor’s degree I’ll be getting—all because I typed it in a journal.

I would be lying if I said being laid off was the only stress in my life during this semester. On top of the unemployment is the fact my wife and I are expecting our second child in October, in addition to taking care of our sixteen-month-old son Brady. It was a bit unexpected…oops. I would also be lying if I said I wasn’t feeling the pressure. Pressure for health insurance. Pressure to put food on the table. Pressure to keep up with two kids. The initial shock when we found out about my wife’s pregnancy was numbing. I wrote about it in my journal. It helped me to sort it out coherently in my head. When I did that, I was able to think the potential problems through, look for solutions, and just “GET IT OUT” to…somewhere, the air, I don’t know. I cannot explain it as eloquently as Pennebaker or De Salvo, I can only say it’s like some sort of epiphany—a quiet, coherent calm, all because I typed it in a journal.
ENC 3310 was a class I feel extremely fortunate to have taken. I find a lot of weird coincidences with attending this class, too many to avoid. What are the chances that my last class would coincide with me being laid off and then (in class) reading about people with the same experience who felt better after writing about it? And then I write and I feel better like they did. What are the chances that I’d be reading about people positively dealing with trauma and stress in their lives that mirrors my own? To me, that’s so odd. I feel like this class was brought to me to help me cope with the stress and anxiety of graduation, a new baby, and a loss of my job. Call it divine intervention, luck, or just fortunate coincidence, but this class wasn’t a class to me. No bullshit. It was therapy.  

Jason’s self-reflective essay illustrates that “effective thought, emotional health, and active values” can be, as James Moffett claims, an important part of an English teacher’s curriculum (24-5). Recognizing and respecting how levels of linguistic abstraction reflect an individual’s psychological development is central to Moffett’s theory and pedagogical practices. In brief, in Teaching the Universe of Discourse, Moffett advocates a pedagogy that aligns itself with a student’s developmental capacity for understanding “speaking, writing and reading in forms of discourse that are successively more abstract” (25); consequently, with the help of her peers and “a guiding adult,” the student has an opportunity to correct and adjust her cognition by observing

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33 Jason Burke has given me permission to reprint his words in this chapter.
34 Roger Brown refers to Moffett’s pedagogy as A Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum (xiii).
how she abstracts her discourse (27). By viewing herself in the “abstractive hierarchy,” the student gains knowledge of her “internal complexity” and of her external relationships (29). Through dialogic discourse, such as conversation, correspondence, and writing to an audience, the student learns rhetoric, or “how to do something to or for or against or with another ‘party’” (41); through “monologic” discourse, such as the personal journal, autobiography and memoir, the student observes the resonance between the main figure (third-person subject) and the observer-narrator (first-person subject) (43). Moffett believes both dialogic and monologic activities are equally necessary pedagogical practices: whereas dialogic activities develop interpersonal communication skills, monologic activities develop intrapersonal skills (88). Thus, interpersonal and intrapersonal communication “feed each other: when we communicate we internalize conversation that will influence how we code information in soliloquy; how we inform ourselves in soliloquy will influence what we communicate in communication” (88). As Moffett’s study suggests, our interpersonal and intrapersonal communication skills are linked together in such a manner that not only does one inform the other, but also each skill has the capacity to improve the other.

Moffett writes: “The more one becomes conscious of his own abstracting, the more he understands that his information is relative and can be enlarged and modified. By perceiving, inferring, and interpreting differently, he enlarges his behavioral repertory, and sees new possible courses of action, and knows better why he is acting as he does. Choice becomes more real” (27). Moffett’s viewpoint, as with others in this study, mirrors Foucault’s aim of self-writing and in which the writing subject is made aware of how he is subject to and a subject of his own knowledge and actions.

Moffett’s book includes a detailed and complex hierarchy of language abstraction in which he divides the “mind’s materials” into hierarchy of classes, sub-classes, super-ordinates and sub-ordinates (19).

I am referring to Moffett’s “Spectrum of Discourse,” which is organized according to a hierarchy ranging from simplest to most complex: Interior dialogue (egocentric speech); Vocal Dialogue (socialized speech); Correspondence; Personal Journal; Autobiography; Memoir; Biography; Chronicle; History; Science; Metaphysics (47). While I find Moffett’s theory to be of interest, I find his categories to be stringent, limiting, and outdated. In brief, they do not account for the blurring of genres commonly seen in postmodern literature, such as in Tim O’Brien’s autobiographical/fictional account of the Vietnam War, *The Things they Carried*. 

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The function and development of an individual’s multiple intelligences, including interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence, is the focus of research by the eminent cognitive psychologist Howard Gardner. In brief, Gardner’s multiple intelligences (MI) theory divides human intelligence into eight areas: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist (Gardner, “Audiences” 216). Typically, those students who perform well in English class have high linguistic intelligence, and “sensitivity to spoken and written language”; these individuals are often drawn to become lawyers, speakers, writers and poets (Gardner, Intelligence Reframed 41). Yet, regardless of a person’s actual linguistic performance in the classroom, Gardner believes most people possess the linguistic intelligence to allow for a significant degree of sensitivity to the meaning, order, sounds, rhythms, and other subtleties of language (77). Because linguistic intelligence is the most widely and democratically shared human intelligence, and because it encompasses a wide range of cognitive abilities such as memory, rhetorical function, and metalinguistic analysis, Gardner considers linguistic intelligence to be the most important of all the multiple intelligences (Frames of Mind 78-9). Although Gardner believes poets epitomize those individuals gifted with linguistic intelligence, he notes that anyone of normal linguistic intelligence can improve her language and communication skills through practice (Frames of Mind 81-3). In addition to linguistic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence and intrapersonal intelligence are vital to the development of communication skills. According to Gardner, interpersonal intelligence is one’s capacity to understand “the

38 MI theory is a broader view of intelligence than what some consider the standard view of intelligence (the IQ), which only gages linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence (Gardner, Intelligence Reframed 41).
development of the internal aspects of a person,” while intrapersonal intelligence is having “the core capacity” to “access one’s own feeling life—one’s range of affects or emotions: the capacity instantly to effect discriminations among these feelings and, eventually, to label them, to enmesh them in symbolic codes, to draw upon them as a means of understanding and guiding one’s behavior”\(^{39}\) (Frames of Mind 239). Although Gardner separates interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence into two categories, he often refers to them as “the personal intelligences” since “under ordinary circumstances, neither form can develop without the other” (Frames of Mind 241). Due to their differences from the other intelligences,\(^{40}\) Gardner addresses the question of whether the personal intelligences should be classified with other intelligences, but chooses to incorporate the personal intelligences in his study because they “are of tremendous importance in many, if not all, societies in the world,” and are often “ignored or minimized by nearly all students of cognition” (Frames of Mind 241).

As I have suggested in this study, all too often English teachers fail to acknowledge, let alone employ, heuristics that recognize the personal intelligences. Too frequently, academicians privilege the more quantifiable intelligences, such as linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence. Unfortunately, this potentially elitist practice is also reflected in how certain university departments receive grant monies and other funding. For example, the University of South Florida is slated to receive $310.2 million in external research grants in the 2006-2007 academic year; federal and state funding

\(^{39}\) I believe that Gardner’s definition of the personal intelligences defines the goal of Pennebaker’s expressive writing paradigm.

\(^{40}\) While some types of intelligence, such as spatial or bodily-kinesthetic, are readily comparable across diverse cultures, Gardner believes varieties of personal intelligence to be culturally determined, thereby being “perhaps unknowable to someone from an alien society” (Frames of Mind 240).
agencies such as the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Health, the United States Department of Education, the Florida Department of Education and the Department of Defense award these grants to faculty members who write and present their research plans and submit fiscal estimates. Of the grant money USF will receive, the College of Medicine will receive nearly 147 million dollars, while the College of Arts and Sciences will receive approximately 21 million dollars.\(^{41}\) (It should be noted that the agencies that grant monies to universities are themselves heavily weighted towards achievement in math and science.)\(^{42}\) These statistics reveal how heavily prioritized math and science are in our educational system. To counteract this trend in education, I believe those of us in the humanities must do what we do best: reach out to students; teach them to recognize and develop their less quantifiable, but equally important, if not more, personal intelligences, so that they may become effective communicators and compassionate, ethical citizens. In fact, one aim of my project is to encourage teachers throughout the humanities to incorporate first-person narrative writing into their pedagogical practices to stimulate their students’ personal intelligences and to allow the voice of the marginalized other to be heard in multiple arenas across the campus. I believe incorporating multiple forms of self-writing into our pedagogical practices cultivates awareness of our connection with each other, both locally and globally.

My twenty years of teaching\(^{43}\) and my evolving pedagogical practice have convinced me that drawing upon the personal intelligences can connect the teacher to her

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\(^{41}\) This information was printed in the USF Student newspaper The Oracle, “USF Sees Gains in Rankings, Grants,” by Haya Radwan. Sept. 6, 2006. Section: News.

\(^{42}\) To be fair, I must acknowledge that scientific research is also, on the whole, more expensive to conduct than research in the humanities.

\(^{43}\) I started teaching high school English in 1986.
students, the student to herself, and the student to her peers, especially the student who may feel unsure of her linguistic aptitude. I have found that most students who are unsure of their ability to write a traditional argumentative essay or research paper (an assignment which draws heavily upon linguistic intelligence) will be comfortable writing a personal essay. Research on MI theory confirms my own observations. A seven-year study by neuropsychologist C. Branton Shearer on implementing MI-inspired curriculum concludes that teachers who understand and recognize their own and their students’ multiple intelligences can enhance their intrapersonal competence and practice strategies to use these strengths to maximize learning (160). As Shearer’s study shows, encouraging a college student who assesses herself as being weak in linguistic intelligence to rely instead upon her interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences can foster the interest and self-discipline necessary for that student to thrive in a writing or literature class.

In addition, fostering the development of the personal intelligences in the social setting of a classroom can bring about changes in both the individual and the group to promote empathy. As social psychologist George H. Mead notes, “the institution” (such as a university) creates a common response in a community (such as a classroom) “that varies with the character of the individual” (teacher and students) (260-1); as such, “the degree to which the self is developed depends upon the community, upon the degree

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44 For English and non-English majors alike, learning to analyze discourse and write correctly and effectively is prerequisite. If a student is more inclined to practice writing and literary analysis when the personal intelligences are accessed, then the teacher should find ways to facilitate that student’s success. The OED defines empathy as: “The power of mentally identifying oneself with (and so fully comprehending) a person or object of contemplation.” Sympathy, a similar term, is defined as: “An affinity or correspondence between particular subjects enabling the same influence to affect subjects similarly or each subject to affect or influence the other, especially in a paranormal way.” I find it interesting to note that sympathy suggests feeling affect for the group identity that draws upon interpersonal knowledge, while empathy is individualistic, and suggests intrapersonal knowledge.
to which the individual calls out that institutionalized group of responses in himself” (265). In other words, the institution promotes an ideology and provides the corresponding educational setting; however, the tenor of what takes place inside the classroom is determined by a teacher’s pedagogical practices and how her students respond to those practices. Therefore, in any classroom situation, the individual self is transformed to the degree that she identifies and interacts with group practices. Sympathy is developed, according to Mead, “in the arousing in one’s self of the attitude of the individual whom one is assisting, the taking the attitude of the other when one is assisting the other” (299). Pedagogically speaking, a sympathetic classroom “attitude” is created when students are called upon to employ their interpersonal intelligence to work collaboratively with others, yet are also encouraged to develop their intrapersonal intelligence to find the other’s “attitude” within themselves. Ethically, the teacher’s pedagogical aim becomes, as Mark Bracher might say, to encourage the student to consider the other as she recognizes, understands, and works through issues of her own subjectivity.

Furthermore, studies by cognitive psychologists show that teaching empathy to students positively influences a student’s ability to comprehend literature (Bourg 242). Empirical studies suggest that understanding characters’ emotions is necessary for empathizing with characters and that empathizing with characters is related to inferential text comprehension (i.e., thematic interpretation, causal inferencing).

\[46\] Again, the personal intelligences weigh in heavily. The student with self-awareness (intrapersonal intelligence) and awareness of others (interpersonal intelligence), will have a greater awareness of and capacity to be affected by pedagogical practices that foster the personal intelligences.
There is also some evidence that causal coherence\(^{47}\) and empathizing with characters interact in facilitating comprehension. (Bourg 256)

In effect, literature that produces empathic responses also facilitates a student’s ability to comprehend literature. Although studies by behavioral psychologists have determined college age students to be the most developmentally ready to learn empathy, other studies show empathy can be “successfully taught” to other age groups as well (Hatcher, Nadeau, et al, 972).\(^{48}\) For example, the PEACE Curriculum, a training program designed to teach empathy and reduce violence in adolescents, has been successfully implemented in ten states in a variety of settings, including hospitals, detention centers, group homes, school districts, and alternative schools (Salmon 168). Major components of the PEACE curriculum reflect reliance on the personal intelligences, including projects that teach compassion by correctly assessing another person’s feelings, and articulating another “person’s feelings in your own words” (Salmon 168). Salmon reports that even violent students, or students who lack perceptiveness with regard to spatial boundaries, can be taught empathy through learning to respect another’s “personal space” (168). Findings from middle schools that implemented programs to teach empathy show that school

\(^{47}\) Bourg points out that in order “to understand someone’s emotions, one must understand the antecedent events that led to the emotions” (254). Accordingly, in literature, “story events that fall on the main causal chain of a story and events that have relatively large numbers of causal connections with other events are deemed important by adult and child readers” (254).

\(^{48}\) I found especially interesting a study of deaf children, ages eight and nine that found “that children can learn empathy through classroom activities, projects, and discussions that emphasized perspective-taking and social interaction” (Toranzo 121). Another study on the effects of teaching literature by ethnically diverse writers to multiethnic high school classes concludes that “the study of literature and language can help students explore essential points of connection with and respect for others, however different” (Athannes, Cristiano and Lay 33). Another article, by Nancy Gorrell, attests to the power of Ecphrastic Poetry (the poetry of empathy) to teach empathy to high school students (English Journal, May 2000. 32-41). Gorrell notes that “ecphrasis” is “a little known, technical term used by classicists and art historians concerning the long tradition of poetic responses to great works of art” (32). In Gorrell’s view, “ecphrastic poetry requires the viewer/poet to enter into the spirit and feeling of the subject through a variety of poetic stances: describing, noting, reflecting, or addressing” (32).
attendance increases and suspensions for violent behavior decrease when at-risk students are involved in empathy training programs (Solomon 172).

In *Empathic Teaching: Education for Life*, Jeffrey Berman explores the place of empathy in the college classroom. Chapter Two offers a thorough explanation of what empathy is (and is not) to support Berman’s position on why it is important to teach empathy; additionally, in chapters three and four, Berman shares heuristics for teaching empathy in the college classroom. Although Berman provides much anecdotal information from his thirty-plus years of empathy-based college-level teaching in this exhaustively researched, psychoanalytically influenced inquiry, he offers only a cursory mention of James Pennebaker’s work. Most crucial to my discussion of why we should teach empathy in the college classroom is Berman’s last chapter, which addresses major concerns that educators might have about a teacher’s motivation behind “the pedagogy of self-disclosure” (Berman 354). Here, Berman addresses controversial issues surrounding personal writing such as whether the teacher encourages voyeurism in the classroom, whether the teacher uses his power (consciously or unwittingly) to prey upon his students’ vulnerability, and whether the teacher tries to play the role of “natural

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49 Berman includes the syllabus and course readings for his “Literature and the Healing Arts” class (377-80). In addition, he discusses his personal writing pedagogy that includes fairly standard but effective assignments, such as writing two classmates’ biographies (149), writing a letter to one’s parent(s) about how one feels about their marriage (150), and keeping reader-response diaries that reflect the student’s reactions to deeply empathic texts, such as William Styron’s depression memoir *Darkness Visible* and Lucy Greely’s illness narrative *Autobiography of a Face* (285) (which is discussed in my chapter on Autopathography).

50 Like other proponents of personal writing, including those who see its potential to teach empathy, Berman does not consider Gardner’s findings. I believe the connection between the personal intelligences and personal writing should be further explored by contemporary scholars.

51 Here Berman identifies many conflicts I had while writing this dissertation, such as whether I, as a reader and teacher, was being voyeuristic. Was I earnestly seeking to be empathic, as was my conscious intention? By asking my students to read personal narratives, some of which deal with highly sensitive topics like rape and critical illness, and also to edit their classmates’ personal writing assignments, was I asking them to be voyeurs? Or, was I sincerely working to develop their skills to become empathic people?
therapist” (354). To address the first problem, Berman has his students fill out surveys to answer whether they feel they are being voyeurs when reading their classmates’ essays (7 percent said “yes,” while 81 percent said “no” and 12 percent were “not sure”) (357). While Berman’s survey might appease his conscience and offer an outlet for student expression, I have found another solution to the problem of encouraging voyeurism rather than my intended goal of teaching empathy. Four times during the semester, I ask students to discuss and critique their class readings and address their possible discomfort with these readings in short response essays that are graded, but are weighted to reflect only one third of their final class grade. (I give this assignment to my literature and my writing students, since I employ personal writing in both classes.) Further, in my “Expository Writing through Life Writing” class, students have two private teacher conferences in which issues surrounding a student’s comfort with class material and pedagogical practices are directly addressed. In addition, in all my classes I allow peer editing to be voluntary. Students who want their peers to read their personal essays are strongly encouraged to participate in our writing workshops; students who prefer privacy are permitted to have me as their sole reader. Further, students are given the prerogative to mark as “off-limits” portions of their personal class journals that they do not want me to read. Frequently, students exercise these options. For example, this semester a student writing about childhood sexual molestation selected me as his sole reader. In almost every journal there is at least one entry that is marked “private.” Often a student’s most emotionally evocative essay will begin as a journal entry. Again this semester, a student journaling about her paternal grandmother’s death went on to write her first personal essay about her American father’s family’s racism towards her Columbian-born mother.
But what about my own motives for reading personal student writings and published personal narratives? Voyeurism or empathy? I sincerely believe that due to the rhetorical situation I place myself in as a primary reader of my students’ personal writings, I occupy the position of compassionate listener who affirms “a position of moral solidarity with the [student],” to use psychotherapist and trauma expert Judith Herman’s formulation from *Trauma and Recovery*\(^{52}\) (Herman 178). In my “official” capacity of English teacher I acknowledge my role as judge and jury, as a compassionate listener of my students’ narratives, but also as their assessor.\(^{53}\) However, I believe I often transcend my place on the bench to occupy the space of “therapist”\(^{54}\) (a term I do not casually interchange with that of “teacher”). In Herman’s view, a therapist is called to provide a context that is at once cognitive, emotional, and moral. The therapist moralizes the patient’s responses, facilitates naming and the use of language, and shares the emotional burden of the trauma. She also contributes to constructing a new interpretation of the traumatic experience that affirms the dignity and value of the survivor (178-9).\(^{55}\)

\(^{52}\) I am citing from Judith Herman’s *Trauma and Recovery*, which deals with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In the original text, Herman employs the word “survivor” where I have written “student.”

\(^{53}\) Sometimes this position is problematic. However, my students and I openly acknowledge my somewhat precarious position, and are almost always able to distinguish my classroom duties from my role as compassionate audience—*provided I am able to feel compassion for my students’ discourse*. Chapter Five further explores what happens when a student challenges my empathic attitude.

\(^{54}\) I hold with Herman’s definition of “therapist” in that the teacher is a facilitator of language, who shares in the burden of naming the trauma, and respects the confessor’s dignity in the process.

\(^{55}\) I am reminded of Foucault’s position that “Western man has become a confessing animal.” Hence, our society has produced the genre of confessional literature, in which the writer undertakes “the infinite task of extracting from the depths of oneself, in between the words, a truth which the very form of the confession holds out like a shimmering mirage” (*The History of Sexuality: Volume I*, 59).
I make a direct correlation between what Herman sees as the role of the therapist and that of the teacher who includes personal narratives in the college classroom. In the context of Herman’s definition of “therapist,” I agree with Jeffrey Berman’s view that teachers do not need to be “natural therapists” to engage in empathic teaching; however, through the practice of receiving and sharing personal writing, teachers will become more experienced over time such “that traumatic knowledge creates the opportunity for posttraumatic growth. They will learn that their students want them only to listen to their stories rather than to intervene in their lives” (Berman 375).

To conclude, I offer some reflections on Louise M. Rosenblatt’s classic text Literature as Exploration,\textsuperscript{56} which considers the dynamics of the reader’s personal responses to literature, and the power of literature to transform the individual. Throughout her study, Rosenblatt reminds us that when a student has been emotionally moved by a work of literature, she will be led to ponder moral and ethical decisions that have implications outside of classroom practices. Hence, our pedagogical choices not only offer us inroads to our students’ emotional lives, but also situate us in a position where we become morally and ethically responsible for what takes place in our classrooms.\textsuperscript{57} Rather than “evade ethical issues” brought about by classroom practices (that include one’s choice of literature), Rosenblatt invites the teacher to examine her contribution to the social relationships created in the classroom and to develop “the most precious human attribute,” “the capacity to sympathize or to identify with the experiences

\textsuperscript{56} This book was originally published in 1938. I cite the revised edition, published in 1968.
\textsuperscript{57} While Rosenblatt is addressing the English teacher at all levels of instruction (elementary, secondary, and college), and thus considers students who might be too immature to be held fully responsible for their contribution to the classroom environment, I believe that college age students should be accountable for their behavior in and contributions to the classroom environment.
of others” (17,18, 37). What Rosenblatt hoped would be the outcome of her study, published on the eve of the United States’ involvement in World War II, and reissued during the Vietnam War, has far-reaching implications in today’s world. Through the study of literature, Rosenblatt hoped to train the student to “imagine the human implications “ of “political blunders or social injustices which seem to be the result not so much of maliciousness or conscious cruelty as of the inability of citizens to translate into human terms the laws or political platforms they support” (184). She wanted students to recognize that “whole nations have been, and indeed are today, so dominated by such dogma in their political and social life that they follow its dictates no matter how disastrous the consequences to themselves and others” (184). Rosenblatt’s vision is that by considering the ethical and moral consequences of our actions, teachers will help to create “citizens with the imagination to see what political doctrines mean for human beings” (185).

Like Rosenblatt I urge teachers to adopt a pedagogy that allows personal voices to be cultivated, heard, respected and felt in the college classroom. If we persevere, I believe we can teach each other to recognize that each subject we encounter might have hopes and fears similar to our own, masked by political rhetoric and marred by social injustice. Equally important, however, is my belief that our classrooms must be spaces in which we listen to and give agency to the voice of the other, and recognize the importance of difference, dissent and alterity. In effect, I am advocating a classroom environment that is both essentialist and anti-essentialist in nature. Similar to what Gayarti Spivak discusses in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, I believe the classroom must become a space in which students learn to see the authority of their voices, but also recognize the
limits of their power. We must teach our students that they are responsible for themselves as subjects within the limits of their power, a power that is limited so that others might also maintain their right to power (Spivak 18-19).

To conclude, I return to Ihab Hassan’s probing question: “Is it possible to teach English so that people stop killing each other?” It is my hope that this study replies to that question with a resounding “Yes!”
Chapter Five: “First-Person Pedagogy” in the College English Classroom: A Self Study

What happens in a classroom when diversity begins to be expressed? It would be nice if suddenly everything got better, but in reality this does not happen. There’s a very dangerous moment when feelings, real feelings, start to emerge. (Toi Derricotte, The Black Notebooks: An Interior Journey 122)

In emphasizing the value of speaking and listening, I want to point out the importance of realizing that healing doesn’t happen to someone who has suffered trauma, it happens by someone who has suffered trauma. (Claude Anshin Thomas, At Hell’s Gate: A Soldier’s Journey from War to Peace 146)

Introduction

In the Foreword to I, Pierre Rivière, Michel Foucault explains why he and his colleagues spent over a year compiling and publishing a text documenting the life of Pierre Rivière, a twenty-year-old French peasant convicted of parricide in 1836: “It was the beauty of Rivière’s memoir. The utter astonishment it produced in us was the starting point” (x). Indeed, Rivière’s memoir, reproduced to resemble its original manuscript, is both shocking and tragic. Written as a genealogy, a multi-faceted analysis of types of discourse as they emerge in historical periods, I, Pierre Rivière includes, along with Rivière’s memoir, several other documents: nineteenth century legal and medical documents regarding Rivière’s upbringing, his conviction, and his imprisonment for

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1 Foucault problematizes the odd spelling and mechanics employed by Rivière’s typesetters, who would customarily make necessary changes to documents before printing them. Foucault wonders why standard rules were not employed in Rivière’s document, and if the typesetters were trying to parody a peasant miming a master discourse. After studying Rivière’s handwritten manuscript, Foucault believes the copyist or the printer’s foreman fabricated more of the errors than there really were (I, Pierre Rivière 53-4).

2 In particular, Rivière’s painful sexual awakening moved me, especially how his “horror of incest” caused him “to shun the approaching women of my family”; similarly, I was both saddened and sickened by how alienation from his peer group caused him to create false personages in his head, and drove him to torture and kill small animals (103-4).
parricide, and scholarly articles by Foucault and his colleagues discussing the Rivière “dossier.” 3 As often occurs in Foucault’s genealogies, varied discourses reveal the effects of technologies of power on the individual who is rendered powerless and marginalized (with the notable exception of Rivière’s volitional acts of murder and suicide). 4 I have chosen to reference *I, Pierre Rivière* at the beginning of this chapter to emphasize how the effects of power on the individual can be made visible by listening to multiple discourses. Moreover, as I have suggested throughout this project, Foucault’s text exemplifies the profound and lasting effects a first-person narrative can have on the reader, perhaps inducing her to feel interest in a subject who might previously have been unseen and voiceless.

Among the discourses I will reference in this chapter are personal narratives written by my students, materials studied in class, course syllabi and other teacher-generated documents, and critical theories that influence my pedagogical practices. Much of the data in this chapter is derived from four of the semester-length courses I taught while working on this dissertation between Fall 2003 and Fall 2006; in each course, our focus was on issues of subjectivity and constructions of the self, including the connections between personal writing, self-knowledge, empathy, and well-being. 5 While

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3 In *Introducing Foucault*, Horrocks and Jevtic write: “Genealogy describes Foucault’s attempt to reveal discourse at the moment it appears in history as a system of constraint. Genealogy compels Foucault to analyze literary, biological, medical, religious and ethical bodies of knowledge, and how such ‘knowledges’ might, for example, relate to the discourse on heredity or sexuality” (97).

4 A newspaper article published at the time of his arraignment calls Rivière a “madman” with “very limited mental faculties and a somber character unsuited to his age” (51).

5 These courses are: “Expository Writing as Life Writing,” “Women’s Crisis Memoirs,” “Images of Women in Literature,” and “Contemporary Literature.” The expository writing course and the two literature courses are general education courses, open to English majors and non-majors alike. Being an exit requirement for all students, expository writing has a good mix of students with a wide range of majors. “Women’s Crisis Memoirs” is an upper-level course that is cross-listed as a special topics literature course and a Women’s Studies course.
class content was directed to the preparation being instructed, in each course my pedagogy emphasized the personal voice in spoken and written form.\(^6\) I believe these practices were effective in that my students’ essays and personal narratives were generally well constructed and fit the criteria of what composition scholars refer to as “successful writing.”\(^7\) In addition, I found the vast majority of my students highly supportive of pedagogical practices centering on “the personal.”

In a genealogical investigation of sorts, in this chapter I examine the effects of my writing pedagogy upon my students and myself, and explore its possibilities for other teachers of college English and their students. The coursework in autobiography and biography I completed through both the English and Women’s Studies departments helped me develop the pedagogical practices I describe in Chapter Four, and develop further in this chapter. In fact, in the spirit of this dissertation (which unites complementary concepts from various disciplines), the idea for my project—finding a way to teach empathy to our students—was conceived in a feminist research methodologies course.\(^8\) Accordingly, I study first-person narratives that produce a profound emotional response in readers and which, for practical purposes, can be grouped as a genre. The result of this inquiry is seen in chapters two and three of this study, in which I investigate rape memoirs and critical illness memoirs for their potential to teach

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\(^6\) I will include class syllabi for these four preparations as appendices to this chapter.

\(^7\) In *Successful Writing*, Maxine Hairston and Michael Keene argue that “good writing” says something of consequence to a specific audience for a specific purpose: “Its central quality, whether its purpose is to inform, persuade, or entertain, is this: *It communicates the writer’s ideas effectively to the audience for whom it is intended*” (9). Hairston and Keene believe that regardless of the ways writers work, writing must be clear, well organized, economical, grammatically acceptable, and free of spelling errors (10).

\(^8\) The graduate level courses I took to obtain a Certificate in Woman’s Studies were invaluable to my development as a scholar and teacher. Several courses were themselves interdisciplinary: “Philosophy of Culture” was cross-listed with Philosophy; and “Latin-American Feminisms” focused on contemporary Latin American women writers and issues.
empathy. Ultimately, I seek to teach my students to feel empathy for all “others,” marginalized and mainstream alike; however, I have found narratives about trauma and recovery to be especially effective in producing an empathic attitude.

This study will spotlight five of my students (Cindy, Mandy, Jay, Wendy and Edward), four of whom wrote self-reflectively\(^9\) about topics dealing directly with traumatic occurrences, and one who opened my eyes to the risk inherent in teaching material that privileges the personal.\(^{10}\) Although the four students whose writings I analyze in depth are in their twenties, they tackle mature subjects, addressing their experiences of visiting a grandfather with Alzheimer's disease; having a brother commit suicide during the semester our class was taking place; living with a debilitating brain abnormality; and watching one’s mother's die from breast cancer. I have selected these students’ stories for the courage it took for them to write about themselves as subjects, the positive effect writing self-reflectively had upon them, and the empathic response they produced in readers. I was pleased that my students felt safe enough in the classroom to share their narratives with me, and in most cases with their peers, and even more pleased that their fellow students read these (and other) students’ writing with compassion. For example, a student whom I will call Kristy, writes that “hearing other classmates’ stories helped me gain a better understanding and respect for them, because

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\(^9\) As I use the term here, self-reflective writing embraces the “notion that subjectivities are discursively constructed and can therefore be reconstructed” (Kamler 48).

\(^{10}\) While most student essays focused on more quotidian concerns, in keeping with the tenor of my previous chapters, in this chapter I will primarily discuss several of my students who wrote about trauma.

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some of them had been through horrible events in their lives, and it gives you a whole new outlook on them.”

In each of the four classes I discuss in this chapter, students were required to write response essays and keep journals; additionally, students in “Expository Writing as Life Writing” and “Women’s Crisis Memoirs” were also required to write their memoirs. My pedagogy for these assignments is largely based on behavioral psychologist James W. Pennebaker’s expressive writing paradigm and Louise DeSalvo’s *Writing as a Way of Healing*, while my motivation for creating a personal writing pedagogy comes from developmental psychologist Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligences (MI) theory. In brief, Pennebaker’s expressive writing paradigm says that to improve health and well being through writing, subjects must write detailed accounts of trauma, or detailed accounts of intensely positive experiences, linking feelings with events. Kristy’s testimony personalizes Pennebaker’s claim:

> Writing about personal feelings and certain personal subjects made me feel better about them overall. I remember I talked about all of my medical problems and my painkiller addiction that followed. That was hard to talk about, but I definitely felt better about it after getting it out in the open. I did not feel as ashamed or upset about it anymore.

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11 Kristy’s comments come from an exit survey conducted in conjunction with this study. A copy of this survey appears at the end of this chapter.

12 Chapter three offers a more thorough explanation of Pennebaker’s and Gardner’s theories.

13 Pennebaker links expressive personal writing to illness prevention. He found that students writing about trauma “evidenced an impressive drop in illness visits after the study compared with other groups” (*Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions* 34). In addition, in a variation of Pennebaker’s expressive writing paradigm, Burton and King found that students who wrote about an intensely positive experience also evidenced “significantly fewer health center visits for illness,” compared to control groups (150).
I believe a pedagogy that adheres to the widely accepted guidelines associated with personal narrative, and also accords with the Pennebaker paradigm, will not only improve students’ writing skills, but also improve their mental and/or physical health. Louise DeSalvo, whose memoir writing course at Hunter College incorporates Pennebaker’s paradigm, observes, “the more writing succeeds as narrative—by being detailed, organized, compelling, vivid, lucid—the more health and emotional benefits are derived from writing” (Writing as a Way of Healing 22). In addition, I believe self-reflective writing can offer students experiential insight into contemporary theories of subjectivity and self-construction because it mirrors the widely accepted belief that “not only are we culturally constructed, but in some sense we construct ourselves”(145). 14 Certainly, personal writing entails viewing oneself both as a culturally constructed subject and as a self-constructed subject.

Early in my teaching career, I discovered that even those students who felt unsure of their competency in English could excel in various modes of personal expression.15 As a longtime champion of “the personal,” I am drawn to Gardner’s MI theory, which separates the personal intelligences, specifically interpersonal intelligence and intrapersonal intelligence, from other, more standard intelligences, such as linguistic intelligence and logical-mathematical intelligence. 16 My pedagogy appeals to students’ multiple intelligences rather than to their linguistic aptitude alone. According to Gardner,

16 I detail Gardner’s MI theory in Chapter Three. However, it should be restated here that linguistic intelligence and logical-mathematical intelligence traditionally have been more valued in school (Intelligence Reframed 41).
interpersonal intelligence “denotes a person’s capacity to understand the intentions, motivations, and desires of other people, and consequently, to work effectively with others” (Intelligence Reframed 43). Even students who initially feel uncomfortable about their skill in written expression can rely on their interpersonal intelligence to participate in class discussions and contribute to collaborative learning groups. It is a widely held view among educators that students’ writing skills can be fostered through sustained writing practices that include free-writing exercises, peer editing, and multiple drafts and revisions. Obviously, such labor-intensive pedagogy assumes that a student will remain engaged in classroom practices throughout the semester. By appealing to a student’s interpersonal skills, I believe we can reach even those students who profess to “hate writing” by involving them in collaborative learning activities (such as peer editing) that emphasize the social side of learning to write. While interpersonal intelligence involves the social aspect of one’s being, intrapersonal intelligence affords individuals the capacity to understand their interior world, “to have an effective working model of oneself—including one’s own desires, fears, and capacities—and to use such information effectively in regulating one’s own life” (Gardner, Intelligence Reframed 43). In Gardner’s view, intrapersonal intelligence corresponds to “one’s range of affects or emotions: the capacity instantly to effect discriminations among these feelings and, eventually, to label them, to enmesh them in symbolic codes, to draw upon them as a means of understanding and guiding one’s behavior” (Gardner, Frames of Mind 239).

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17 Conversely, as I will illustrate later in this study with my discussion of “Edward,” a student lacking in interpersonal intelligence can disrupt classroom discussions and destabilize classroom power relations. 18 For example, in the textbook Perspectives on Argument, Nancy Wood presents a checklist for college students that is heavily weighted toward pre-writing activities, writing multiple drafts of a paper, and then rewriting and revising the “final” draft (94-95). 19 Later in this chapter I provide student commentary that attests to improvement in student writing skills as a result of interpersonal classroom interactions.
The ability to place one’s experience into the symbolic order, and the capacity to merge emotions with language (a function Gardner attributes to interpersonal intelligence), is crucial to understanding experience. As Pennebaker’s findings illustrate, the subject who explores her thoughts and feelings in written or spoken language is likely to see herself more objectively as being capable of change. In this respect, intrapersonal intelligence helps the subject translate emotions into effective language—with the added benefit of helping individuals recover from trauma and learn to write with depth and feeling. In light of Pennebaker’s and Gardner’s findings, I employ a writing pedagogy that emphasizes social activities that manifest interpersonal intelligence, such as collaborative learning, and self-reflective practices, such as journaling, that use intrapersonal intelligence. By fostering a student’s knowledge of self and others, we open up the classroom to become a space of both learning and healing.

**Cindy: Beneath their Surfaces**

In *Relocating the Personal: A Critical Writing Pedagogy*, Barbara Kamler observes “that why and how students write is not separable from their lives” (85). I find this statement especially descriptive of Cindy, a technical writing major who enrolled in my “Expository Writing as Life-Writing” class expressly to satisfy a statewide writing requirement.

When the life experiences being articulated are traumatic in nature, the subject must include traumatic imagery and bodily sensations in her narrative for it to have therapeutic effects (Herman 177). Judith Herman credits Breuer and Freud with the following statement: “recollection without affect almost invariably produces no results” (177).

In a self-evaluation, Cindy writes: “Most of the time, we get caught up in or we only see the “surfaces” of others (and ourselves)”; and, “Seeing myself as a subject—and my classmates as subjects—showed me how many complex, crazy, angry, sad things people all over the world have going on beneath their surfaces.”
requirement for all students, regardless of their major. What first struck me about Cindy was how her all-American-girl appearance and soft, lilting voice belied the sadness deep within her. In the first of our many student/teacher conferences, Cindy discussed her battle with bulimia, and how she wanted to write about it—but wasn’t ready yet. She also confessed that while she felt confined by the limitations of technical writing, she was, nevertheless, wary of writing about herself. At the time of this conversation, our class was reading a selection from Thomas DeBaggio’s *Losing My Mind: An Intimate Look at Life with Alzheimer's*, which evoked memories of her grandfather’s struggle with the disease. After writing about DeBaggio in her journal, Cindy composed the following personal essay (which is several pages long):

**Forgot Me First**

He forgot me first. Mommy whispered that it didn’t matter, that he would soon surrender his memories of all of us, that he only lost me first because I was the youngest.

They flew me fourteen hundred miles to lead me to his nursing home patio, a glassed-in cage filled with white wicker and sunshine. All the light in the room could not blind me from the man I did not want to see, did not want to be trapped with, did not want to be near. He had Alzheimer’s, and even though he could not remember my name, they sat me next to him. I had nine questions for him, one for every year he knew me and one for why he forgot.

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22 Cindy was in my first “Expository Writing as Life-Writing” class, taught in fall 2003. She has agreed to let me use her name and reprint her writing. Cindy is currently employed by Publix Supermarkets as a technical writer.
My tongue, tied in a dozen knots, would not let me speak, would not let me ask him my questions. Grandma said that I shouldn’t talk to him much anyway, that he became frustrated easily, that he accidentally hit her once, and that he might smack me too. She made me feed him grapes. I trembled at the thought of feeling his wrinkled, parched palms. Reluctantly, I outstretched my hand, gingerly held one purple ball at a time, and waited while he wrapped his fingers around it, taking care not to touch me too.

His lips moved. Words and jumbled ideas tumbled out but missed my ears. I only heard the names he casually tossed around between broken syllables and desperate thoughts of the war, Uncle Al, and U.S. Steel. He hit everyone’s name except my own. He paused often, in between grapes, and let out low, slow sobs that seemed to come from deep inside. I had never before seen a grown-up cry. I could not turn away. The few seconds of tears seemed to testify that life was still in him, that he was human again, that he was the same man I knew for so many years. He was still Grandpa.

I was eleven before the guilt settled deep enough to promise Daddy that I would fly with him to Corpus Christi again. Half a nation’s worth of travel did not prepare me for the journey. I stood behind the giant glass wall, soaked him in for a while, and searched naively for signs of improvement. He sat at the bridge table, unable to join the others, unaware that he hated the game, and undaunted by the nurses scurrying
around him. He was alone in his white, sterile world, separated by the invisible barrier his mind created for him. Other residents slapped cards on the tabletops, scraped food off of plates, requested iced tea. I hooked his arm, taking care to keep my fingertips on the blue sleeve of his sweatshirt, and helped him shuffle to the mauve chairs lining the wall.

He seemed older than I imagined he would be, defeated by the disease that makes you forget and then forces you to mellow into resignation. Slouching deep in his seat, he stared straight ahead, without any words, not one name to share. The sun-spotted skin around his wrists and surrounding his knuckles wrinkled into small folds. I craved to touch his skin, to feel him in his entirety, to collect the warmth from his body. Not one tear trailed down his bristly cheek. I longed to know if he couldn’t experience misery anymore or if he simply could not remember how it felt.

The image of Grandpa’s skin, freckled and crinkled at the seams, danced in my mind until I turned thirteen. He was nearly shackled to his bed by the time I reached his side, a six-foot tall man, too frail at ninety pounds to hobble to the patio, to the bridge table, to the chairs. I rolled back the cuff of his navy blue shirt and let my fingerprints swirl softly, lazily across his paper-thin skin. Bending at the waist, I smoothed my lips across the furrows in his brow. His cheekbones protruded like stalagmites, with giant, sunken valleys stretching to reach his jaw. Grandpa’s eyes searched my face, conveyed infinite apologies to me. I
tried to smile. We shared a few moments of tears. When I could nearly picture the man he had always been, I looked closely at the man he had become, memorized them both, and turned away.

Cindy’s effective use of figurative language to portray loss—loss of memory, loss of identity, loss of innocence—enriches this skillful essay. Additionally, Cindy employs two crucial personal writing techniques that were emphasized during the first weeks of Expository Writing class: She writes in a “natural voice” and “shows” the reader her narrative through vivid imagery, rather than simply “telling” her.23 Further, in keeping with the Pennebaker paradigm of expressive writing, Cindy links her feelings to details about visiting Grandfather at the nursing home. Certainly, after reconstructing this episode of her childhood and constituting both her grandfather and herself as subjects in written discourse, Cindy is changed as a subject.24 In fact, Cindy observes that writing self-reflectively “changed everything [. . .] how I am able to cope with my emotions and with my environment; how I view the world; how I see myself” and, “most importantly, it taught me that despite everything I’ve ever done or felt badly about, I’m okay.”25 Furthermore, Cindy’s growth and transformation as a (writing) subject is evidenced by the fact that the essay following her “grandfather essay” deals with bulimia. Cindy explains:

23 The first reading assigned to Cindy’s class was Wally Lamb’s introduction to Couldn’t Keep it to Myself, a collection of women’s prison memoirs. In his essay, Lamb relays his experiences teaching a writing workshop to women incarcerated at York Correctional Institution, in Connecticut. Among the instructions he offers is to invoke “one’s natural voice on paper”(8) and “Show it, don’t tell it” (12).
24 Foucault claims this will occur in “Writing the Self.” In the opening paragraphs of chapter three, I explain Foucault’s argument in more detail.
25 Cindy’s comments come from an exit survey conducted in conjunction with this study. A copy of the survey appears at the end of this chapter.
I started with writing about my grandfather because it was safe to me. Death and illness, although tragic, were something that so many of my peers could have identified with. But an eating disorder? Few, if any, would have shared that experience with me. And I would've felt lost, ashamed if I had put such a personal story out there and it had been ridiculed, belittled. Or if I had been looked at with less respect. But after I wasn't judged for my memories of my grandpa, I felt like I could venture into more dangerous territory, offer something about myself I had long been scared of, and still be okay, accepted [. . .] On some level, I had come to terms with food and weight before class, but I had not shared my battle with anyone and it sat heavily on my mind. Writing about it was an avenue to seek solace. Once on paper, the thoughts and obsessions no longer circled and circled in my head, and I was able to let go of guilt and notebooks full of calories and running distances and see that my problems were not really about my body but about how my mind equated thinness with worthiness. And writing let me separate the two, so that I could move on, stop the yo-yo dieting, and seek balance in food, exercise, and weight.

The effect our writing class had on Cindy is similar to what Judith Herman calls “the therapeutic task” of an “interpersonal group” (Trauma and Recovery 234-5).26

According to Herman, an interpersonal group “aims for diversity rather than homogeneity” (as would likely occur in a trauma-based group), and encourages its members “to attend to their interactions in the here-and-now” (234). I believe that

26 Herman distinguishes between a “trauma-focused group” that deals primarily with the past, and an “interpersonal group” whose time focus is on the present, not the past. (234-5)
through their social connection, Cindy’s classmates helped her heal in much the same way a therapeutic interpersonal group would a trauma survivor. Moreover, like a trauma-focused group, part of Cindy’s healing process emanated from her discovery that “It’s okay to let go, to not even try for perfection, to let others into the parts of us we’re ashamed of.”

Jeffrey Berman asserts in *Empathic Teaching: Education for Life* that “by not psychoanalyzing or diagnosing our students—we can unleash the healing power of reading and writing” (365). While this seemingly paradoxical observation generally holds true for most teachers and students in most situations, and it was certainly true for Cindy, I nevertheless believe Berman’s statement begs the following question: What does the instructor do if, during the semester, a student confronts or is confronted by a trauma that requires therapeutic intervention?

**Mandy: Through the Rabbit Hole**

The vast auditorium, situated in the basement of a building housing administrative offices, was much too large and impersonal for our “Women’s Crisis Memoirs” class. While many students took advantage of the size of the room to spread out and sit far away from the teacher’s podium, Mandy always sat in the center of the front row, within arm’s reach. A petite woman with a creative knack for mixing and matching vintage clothes and shoes, Mandy sported chin-length, fire-engine-red hair, diamond earrings in both nostrils, and black-rimmed rectangular-shaped eyeglasses. She stood out in a group

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27 Cindy’s comments come from her student survey.
28 Mandy has given me her journal from our “Women’s Crisis Memoirs” class from fall 2005. During this semester, her brother committed suicide.
29 The first time I taught this class, I worked as co-instructor with Dr. Gurleen Grewal from the Women’s Studies department.
of Women’s Studies students, which is hard to do, since many Women’s Studies students take pride in creating a style for themselves that is “outside the box.”

Mandy always spoke her mind in class, and, knowing I was going to read her response journal, wrote for “shock value.” For example, in one of her early journal entries Mandy declares in black magic marker, “Yes! I’ve been drinking and so what?” In another entry, Mandy personifies her “naturally large” breasts: “Women and men alike are fascinated by their authenticity and size. It’s like they have their own personalities and one day they might talk back.” In other entries before her brother’s suicide, Mandy’s observations are similar to those I’d find in other students’ response journals: She cried after reading two breast cancer narratives. And, after reading Writing as a Way of Healing, she admonished herself for being “lazy,” saying that what she “needed to do” was “pick up this damn journal and write, even if its not what I want someone else to read or its nothing but babble.” Mandy’s journal meanders about in this manner for about six weeks. In fact, her last entry before her brother’s death (ominously) concludes with the following query: “My God. I’m 28 and in the same cycle I was in 10 years ago, minus innocence [. . .] At what point can I ‘grow up’ and act like an adult? Am I an adult? I feel like it sometimes, only sometimes.”

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30 Mandy’s comments come from her student survey.
31 During our first class session, we advise students to use their response journals “to help you process the materials for this course,” and to feel free to “express any feelings class material evokes.” On the first day of class we also inform students that our school offers excellent counseling services, and that we are available to discuss their concerns in utmost confidentiality. Both Dr. Grewal and I informed the students that if we felt we were not able to offer them the assistance we felt would best help them we would suggest counseling services. There have been five students I know of personally who, after a teacher conference, initiated therapeutic treatment.
32 Ruth Picardie’s Before I Say Goodbye and Audre Lorde’s The Cancer Journals.
Two weeks after this entry, about two months into the semester, Mandy resumed writing in her journal. She notes her marked change in subjectivity and questions her previous performance of self in the following entry:

Everything I’ve written so far is foreign and I feel like Alice in a way, that the preceding pages are “before” and now I write about the “after” part of my life. Since Michael’s death, so many pieces do come together, but the thread, I think, never breaks [. . .] the night I found out I remember thinking how can I be there for him[her father]? I don’t like him and my anger with him overrides any grief I have for my brother. My grandmother says it’s not all about me and to set aside my anger and be there for him, now that I’m his only child, comfort him. Why? Fuck him! Where has he been in my life?

Mandy attended class the week her brother died, patiently waiting until the room emptied out to set up a teacher conference with me. She suggested we meet at a centrally located Starbucks not far from her workplace. At the time she made the meeting, Mandy didn’t tell me about the tragic turn her life had taken. It was only when we met a few days later that Mandy stoically told me her brother recently committed suicide by taking a drug overdose. When I asked Mandy how she was doing, her main concern was with missing an exam in her Bible as Literature course, a popular class that, unlike ours, actually filled the auditorium. She had tried to talk to the venerable professor who taught the course, but was always directed to his teaching assistants, who were resolute in not allowing her to make up any missed work. After we devised a plan to contact the English department chairperson and rectify the situation, Mandy and I talked about several things
that were troubling her, mainly her heavy drinking and her searing anger at her father. At this point, I told Mandy that I felt she needed therapeutic intervention, and asked her if she had health insurance. Since she did, I gave her the phone number of a counseling center in the neighborhood where there was a female therapist whom I felt would be a good fit for her. I also urged her to go that afternoon to the student counseling services on campus. The student health center helped her formulate a plan for finishing her coursework, and prescribed medication to help her sleep. In addition, Mandy started treatment with the therapist at the counseling center, whom she continues to see today.

There are several former students with whom I keep in contact, including Mandy. I see Mandy rather often since, until recently, she worked at a popular café I often frequent. I e-mailed Mandy to ask her to participate in this project and invited her to meet me at Starbucks. More than a year had passed since her crisis, and what surprised me the most about Mandy was her drastic change in appearance. Dressed in a rose-colored velour tracksuit and white tennis shoes, Mandy’s shoulder length hair was tinted a natural shade of brown. If it weren’t for the twin diamond studs in her nose, I might have mistaken her for any of the other customers dropping in for a latte after working out at the YMCA around the corner. When I commented on her new look, Mandy laughed and said that her therapist was also surprised by it. Mandy’s entire demeanor had changed, as well. Where she was once fidgety and self-deprecating, she now sat calmly with her legs crossed under her. She responded with earnestness and sincerity to my

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33 Cindy and I have met for lunch a few times. Other students send me e-mail every now and then to say hello and give me an update on their life activities. While, generally speaking, I do not initiate relationships outside of the classroom with students, I do not discourage students from remaining in contact with me.

34 Of course, I do not mean to suggest that all individuals who embrace alternative styles in grooming and dress do so as an expression of underlying personal crisis.
inquiries. In the course of our hour-long visit, Mandy said that she felt her drinking was under control, and that while she is still estranged from her father, she feels this is a wise choice.

Later that day, I e-mailed Mandy a copy of my student survey and asked her to relate back to me any observations she felt comfortable sharing about what took place during our semester together, and what transpired in year that followed our class. In a statement that reminds me of her earlier foray through the rabbit hole, Mandy wrote that had she not been in this class, gotten therapy, and had a “forum to write daily, I'm not sure where I would have come out.” She commented on how her “brother's death combined with this class” gave her “the opportunity to put my pen to paper and begin to connect events with situations and articulate my feelings regarding the past.” These days, Mandy writes, she feels “energized and better about [her] familial situations.”

Mandy has shown me the importance of teaching students to writing expressively. As I have stated several times in this project, self-writing can offer students an immediate outlet for their emotions and can give them the perspective to see themselves as subjects of their own construction, with the capacity for change. Moreover, Mandy’s experience strengthens my belief that studying scriptotherapeutic first-person narratives might help to destigmatize psychotherapy, encouraging students who would benefit from therapy to actually seek it—either while enrolled as a student, or at a future time.  

**Jay: Shipwrecked by the Storm**

In *The Wounded Storyteller*, Arthur Frank recognizes those subjects who have been indelibly marked by critical illness and who will never consider themselves as being

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35 Chapter one centers on scriptotherapy, defined by Suzette Henke as: “the process of writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic reenactment” (xii).
fully cured. For these members of “the remission society,” as Frank calls them, “the foreground and background of sickness and health constantly shade into each other” (8-9). A member of the remission society himself, Frank also knows firsthand what it is like for those who suffer from critical illness to write their illness narratives. From his insider’s perspective, Frank observes that “almost every illness story […] carries some sense of being shipwrecked by the storm of disease” (54); yet, there is a “way out of the narrative wreckage” through “telling stories […] ‘self-stories’” (55). In Frank’s view, self-stories allow the self to be formed in the telling of the story (55-6). Therefore, telling self-stories is especially important to illness survivors since the act of telling them “is a dual reaffirmation. Relationships with others are reaffirmed, and the self is reaffirmed” (56).

Jay, a student in my Spring semester 2006 “Expository Writing as Life-Writing” class, embodies what Frank describes as the “shipwrecked” subject who tells stories to find her way out of the “narrative wreckage” of her disease. On the first day of class, Jay informed me that she suffered from Arterio-Venous Malformation (AVM), an illness in which masses of abnormal blood vessels grow in the brain producing migraine headaches and, in some patients, seizures. Jay suffered from frequent seizures, and previously had been hospitalized for several days after having one that left her partially paralyzed. She was understandably concerned that she might miss more than the two classes the syllabus indicated would be permissible. I assured Jay that, considering the circumstances, I

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36 A medical sociologist, Frank suffered a heart attack as a result of a viral infection; a year later, he was diagnosed with testicular cancer. Frank sees The Wounded Storyteller as being “equally a collection of stories and a kind of memoir” (xii).

37 In fact, during the third class session of “Expository Writing” Jay had a seizure. With the aid of several students, we stabilized Jay and kept her safe until the paramedics arrived. Determined to finish the
would do my best to work with her. Jay also informed me that in addition to suffering from a debilitating brain disorder, she was also being treated for depression stemming from her battle with AVM, and from her mother’s death the previous summer from diabetes. I found out early that even when Jay was having a “good” day, sickness and depression clouded the horizon.

Jay was driven to write her autopathography from the very first day of class. For example, she writes in her journal during the second week of class:

I really don’t want to give up. If I can make it through another semester I would feel like I have accomplished something [. . .] I have a personal essay to write and I feel I should write about my illness. It is something that I have never been brave enough to write about because I hate to be reminded of everything I’ve gone through. This is why I never kept a journal.

Eventually, by telling her “self-stories,” Jay was indeed able to reaffirm herself as an empowered subject. It should be noted that Jay wrote from two perspectives: as an illness subject engaged in a war with her body, and as a member of “the remission society.” Through self-writing, Jay was able to accept her illness as part of her identity, and fully embrace herself as a member of the remission society. This semester-long process unfolded much as Jay’s narrative did, through gradual steps of self-reflection. For example, in her first personal essay, Jay sees herself as a subject tossed about by the dual storms of AVM and depression:

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\(^{38}\) Jay has given me permission to cite her personal essays, journals, and student survey.

*sem\(^{38}\)ester, Jay bravely returned to “Expository Writing” class the following week. Her fellow students were lovingly supportive of her. We all admired her courage. Jay managed to complete all of her coursework, assist in peer editing, and contribute to class discussions. She was only absent a total of five class sessions.*
I know that depression was not listed earlier as a symptom of AVM, but it was a symptom for me. I was so depressed after going from this happy, outgoing, energetic person to this new person I had to become acquainted with. That new person was always sad, crying, sick, fatigued all the time, and angry as hell. There was not one happy bone in her body. Depression started to take over my life just as the AVM had invaded my life. I did not know who I was anymore. I did not know whether I was coming or going. I felt lost. I wanted to give up. I felt that there was nothing left to live for. That is how depressed I was. I ended up losing eighty-two pounds. My daily regimen consisted of sleeping and taking medication, as well as numerous trips to my doctor’s office, followed by numerous trips to the hospital.

What I find particularly interesting about this essay is that Jay refers to the “new person” she has become in the third person, but switches back to the first-person to tell us how her adversary AVM, “invaded” her life. Understandably, Jay’s physical changes also alter her subjectivity, estranging her from the “happy, outgoing, energetic person” she once was.

In Jay’s second personal essay, she starts to see herself as a subject with agency. In her words:

I got tired of being sick and tired, so I made a promise to myself that I would make every attempt to feel better. I went to a psychiatrist and a psychotherapist to help me start emotionally healing […] I have come to
realize that I am not a sick person, I am a person first and then a person that lives with an illness.

Jay’s journal from this time also reflects her gradual transformation from disempowerment to power, and from sickness to health:

It is so ironic how I never wanted to keep a journal after my therapist told me to. I thought the journal would be too traumatic for me. I would not be able to handle it. During this journal experience, I find myself discussing my illness more and more. It is a part of who I am. It is something that I deal with on a day-to-day basis. Looking at it on paper allows me to understand myself more and realize how strong I have been through the years.

In her third personal essay, it first becomes apparent that Jay has begun to heal both emotionally and physically.\(^{39}\) She accepts her change in subjectivity, and now sees herself as a subject living with illness. In the Afterword that follows her final essay, Jay is upbeat, but self-reflective. Perhaps it is because Jay has spent a full semester examining herself as a subject, that glimpses of the “happy, outgoing, energetic” Jay reemerge:

I started the semester off with death in my family, but I was able to keep up with my assignments and continue two of my classes. Even though I fell sick a few times, I still continued to go to class. During this spring semester, I was not hospitalized. I had to make a trip to the hospital, but for once I did not have to stay. I had occasional seizures, fainting spells, and migraines this semester, but I didn’t stop or get behind in my

\(^{39}\) In Jay’s words: “My hospitalizations are becoming less frequent, maybe once or twice quarterly. (It beats once or twice a month!) My hospital stays are not as lengthy as they used to be either.”
assignments too often. This semester has been the best semester that I have had so far.

By articulating her fears and sharing them with others, Jay emerges from the solitude and self-stigmatization often experienced by those suffering from critical illness. Through narrative, Jay completes what Anne Hunsaker Hawkins sees as the aim of pathography: She builds a “bridge between the suffering self and the outside world by an overt act of communication” (25).

In The Cancer Journals, Audre Lorde proclaims: “Your silence will not protect you” (20). Lorde’s profound statement has become a mantra for many of my students. Invariably, after reading Lorde’s memoir, students adopt this catchphrase and repeat it throughout the semester—often to bolster their courage when writing personal essays, or to encourage their peers to speak up in class. In addition, many students carry this mantra with them into the world as a reminder that they must not silence themselves or others. For example, Alexis, a student in my “Contemporary Literature” class, reflects that Lorde’s words came to signify how her classroom experiences affected her as a subject:

I suppose the most significant thing that the class did was bring up the subject of silence. We focused on that a lot in class and I think it was the richest topic for me because it is one that I pondered the most in terms of how I should be living my life. When discussing it in class it led me to see that silence has its hand in every single form of oppression, and to speak is something we can all do.

40 Alexis’s responses come from her student survey.
As with Alexis, Lorde’s words influence how I interact with others, and how I conduct my classes.

In The Cancer Journals Lorde observes that “the need for every woman to live a considered life [. . .] grows and deepens as one faces directly one’s own mortality and death. Self scrutiny and an evaluation of our lives, while painful, can be rewarding and strengthening journeys toward a deeper self” (57-8). I believe Lorde’s statement is fully embodied by Wendy, a student in my spring 2005 “Expository Writing as Life-Writing class.”

Wendy: “Imma be alright, Imma be okay”

A naturally gifted writer, Wendy is uninhibitedly musical in her prose. Although Wendy does not call herself “a writer,” nor has she taken many classes in the English department (she is a business major), Wendy writes passionately and prolifically. A shy woman, the youngest child of four in a close-knit family, Wendy’s quiet demeanor and conservative dress conceal her offbeat sense of humor and unabashed addiction to Tampa’s club scene. However, those first weeks Wendy attended my class, her calm exterior hid a much greater, more profound reality: her mother’s death from breast cancer just two months before the semester had begun.

Wendy’s memoir is an emotional journey from her mother’s initial diagnosis to her final breath in an Orlando hospital.¹⁴¹ Wendy does not spare her reader any details of how her mother’s body wastes away from chemotherapy, nor does she sugarcoat the death experience. This makes for emotionally raw reading that fosters admiration for the gifted twenty-two-year-old woman sharing her story, which offers an incredibly moving

¹⁴¹ Students create a memoir by compiling their personal essays and linking them together. Wendy wrote one continuous work, divided into three personal essays. The final memoir was twenty pages in length.
experience. Wendy begins her narrative by telling us she was going into the eleventh grade when she and her mother took the Greyhound bus to visit relatives in Alabama. Upon their return, Wendy’s mother informed her she had cancer. In this excerpt, we begin to see the roles Wendy and her siblings play in their mother’s illness narrative:

Mamma says that the lump was in her breast way before she and I took our trip to Alabama. She was scared to go to the doctor and the reason why she went to the doctor was because of me. I am the youngest of four children. Mommie Blair wants to be healthy and stay around for me as I grow into an adult. My mother says that when she went to her doctor, he only had to feel her breast—he didn’t even have to get an x-ray—to find out that she has cancer. I feel the lump. I can’t describe what it feels like. All I know is that it is hard. [. . .] My sisters and I go to the doctor’s office with Mamma. We sit at the round table, looking at the doctor, while he talks about the cancer and the procedure he was going to take. He doesn’t want to take my mother’s breast off. He assured us that he was going to get all of the cancer out and that she would be fine. One of my sisters starts to cry, while the other listens to him. But me, I ask questions. My mother is proud of me. “My baby sat there and asked questions,” my mother tells others. She was shocked. I am known as the quiet child. Her baby really wants to know what’s going on with her mother’s body.

In Reconstructing Illness: Studies in Pathography, Anne Hunsaker Hawkins writes, “pathographies are compelling because they describe dramatic human experience

42 A term of endearment Wendy often employs when referring to her mother.
of real crisis: they appeal to us because they give shape to our deepest hopes and fears about such crises, and in doing so, they often draw upon profound archetypal dimensions of human experience” (31). One such archetypal dimension Hawkins discusses is the journey myth, which is linear, and “realized in a metaphorical movement away from and back into the everyday world” (88). The journey metaphor provides the structural framework for Wendy’s story and a thematic basis for her revelations; accordingly, Wendy’s pathography is linear in that it begins with her recounting the trip to Alabama in which she learns of her mother’s breast cancer, and finishes with her final visit to her mother’s hospital bed. Also, at several junctures Wendy’s saga takes on mythical elements, such as when, in the first essay, Wendy’s mother encounters “Mr. Chemotherapy” then later emerges from treatment reborn. In Wendy’s words: “Eight months later, after the treatments, we notice little fuzz starts to appear on her head. A smile has grown on my face. Her hair is growing back as if she is a newborn straight out of my grandmother’s womb.”

Wendy’s memoir is especially effective in her comfortable use of colloquial language and her attention to detail, all of which infuse her narrative with intimacy and emotion. Although it seems as if storytelling comes naturally to Wendy, it is not an easy story to tell. As Wendy captures the immediacy of death without resorting to cliché or euphemism, the reader witnesses her pain and confusion. For example, in Wendy’s second essay, entitled “Imma be alright, Imma be okay,” she writes self-reflectively about the difficulties associated with making difficult decisions about her mother’s palliative care, and how she felt as her mother’s death loomed on the horizon:

One of the many nurses answers the phone and I ask for Ruby Blair.
“Is this Wendy?” he asks.

“Yes,” I said.

“Your mother wanted to talk to you,” he says.

Mamma gets on the phone. She is breathing a little heavy as if she is having an anxiety attack. She says, “Imma be alright, Imma be okay.” Then she gives the phone back to the nurse.

She called me for a reason. I was on Mommie Blair’s mind. I don’t know what it is, but it is something about Saturdays. Saturday, Fee calls me and asks me if I want to put Mamma on a respiratory system or the machine to bring her back alive if something happens. I can’t believe this. Why are they asking me these questions? I know why they are asking, but I can’t believe this. My sisters and my brother say “no” to the machines. I am the only one who says “yes.” Hey, I guess my vote doesn’t count anyway. Zay explains to me the reason for her decision. Zay doesn’t want to bring Mamma back to all this suffering if something was to happen. I understand. Larry explains to me he will be all right if Mamma leaves this Earth […] I don’t think anything is going to happen to Mamma. Am I the only one who thinks Mamma is going to be all right? Has everyone else lost faith? I find out by Fee that the cancer has spread to Mamma’s bones. The chemo wasn’t helping at all anymore. Fee found this out on October 14, her birthday. Today is October 30.

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43 Fee, short for Fionda, is one of Wendy’s older sisters.
44 Zay is one of Wendy’s older sisters. Her given name is Xzaviar.
Throughout her pathography, Wendy refuses to accept her mother’s impending death. For example, in the final installment of her memoir entitled “This, Too, Shall Pass,” Wendy is aware that her mother is no longer cognizant of her surroundings; however, she refuses to give up hope:

When we finally made it to the hospital, Mamma wasn’t talking anymore. She was in the bed with her eyes closed. The hospital gave Fee papers on coping with death. I didn’t care what the nurses said. I still believed that Mommie Blair was going to stay alive.

Similar to Audre Lorde’s observations on facing death and mortality, Wendy’s journey remains a rewarding and strengthening experience that leads her to a deeper understanding of self. I also believe Wendy’s text succeeds on another level: Immortalizing her mother as a narrative subject, Wendy does, indeed, keep Mommie Blair alive.

Anne Hunsaker Hawkins believes that pathographies about terminal illness “override the conventional boundaries of self and other or biographer and subject” because they form a part of the writing subject’s process of grieving (3). By inviting the reader to witness the “author’s feelings, thoughts, and organizing images and metaphors, as he or she goes about the work of mourning,” the writing subject builds a bridge between herself and her reader (3). In part, I believe this accounts for the profound effect Wendy’s memoir has upon the reader: We also grieve for Wendy’s many losses.

In ‘I Am You’: The Hermeneutics of Empathy in Western Literature, Theology, and Art Karl Morrison identifies four doctrines of empathic participation in art. The first doctrine, Aristotelian, claims that the artist is identified with his work and is considered
to exist within his work (21). The second doctrine is subject-centered, and teaches that the subject, not the artist, informs the work, in that the subject infuses meaning into the work (21-22). The third doctrine, also Aristotelian, states that it is the skill of the artist that produces an effect on the audience; the fourth doctrine alleges that the viewer becomes what he beholds through an “emotional bonding” with the text (23). “Each of these doctrines” Morrison asserts, “identification of the artist with the work, identification of the subject with the work, identification of the artist with the subject, and identification of the beholder with the work—has survived into modern times. In each, the principles encased in the sentence, ‘I am you,’ apply” (23).

I believe that both singly and collectively, these doctrines of empathetic participation in art explain how the empathic response is produced in the reading and writing subject, and hence in the literature and writing classroom. As I stated in both the introduction to this project and in subsequent chapters, one reason I incorporate first-person narratives and/or literature about trauma into my pedagogy is because, in some way, most students can relate and react to these texts. After reading a startlingly honest narrative such as The Cancer Journals, for example, many students feel as if they have developed a personal relationship with the writer; in fact, feminist students often emphatically embrace Lorde’s bold self-identification as “a black lesbian feminist mother lover poet” (25). Additionally, students infuse meaning into these texts and begin to see themselves in and through the narratives, like Virginia, a student in my fall 2006 “Images of Women in Literature” class, who writes:

I found that empathizing with the women in Dorothy Allison’s Two or Three Things I Know For Sure gave the book a more honest read. My
empathy for these women allowed me to forgive them for being beaten down by the men in their lives and society itself; in turn it opened a door in myself and offered me a personal escape from those in my past who subjected me to the same manipulations.  

As Virginia indicates, by engaging emotionally with the text, students feel empathy for the subject of discourse, and can, ultimately, learn to better understand and feel compassion for themselves as well. In addition, as Morrison suggests, students also may be emotionally affected by the writer’s craftsmanship. For example, Lacey notes: “Some authors were writing to stimulate an uncomfortable reader response, which added to the depth of the writing, (like Lorde’s uninhibited style, and Achebe’s startling ending in *Things Fall Apart*).” In addition, the student may unite with the text in such a manner that it feels as if is her story is being told, and she is the subject of discourse. For instance, Stacy reflects: “As I began to read [*The House on Mango Street*], I came to the conclusion that Esperanza reminded me of myself. She was so amazing—to the point where she takes you on a ride into her own personal world [. . .] Sometimes, I was just like Esperanza, being tied to an anchor.”

In a classroom that allows for and, preferably, nurtures an empathic response to literature, students often reveal their personal experiences to the rest of the class. For example, as the semester progresses I ask students to share journal entries with their peers. (They are not required to do so.) Further, many students opt to read aloud their

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45 Virginia’s comments come from a student survey.
46 *Things Fall Apart*, by Chinua Achebe, is a novel that reveals the effects of colonialism on an African warrior and his village.
47 *The House on Mango Street*, by Sandra Cisneros, is a novel about Esperanza, a young Mexican-American woman living in a Chicago barrio.
48 Stacy’s comments come from her response journal, which she has given me.
personal essays both as works-in-progress and as final drafts. On several occasions, students have shed tears as they listened empathically to their peers’ stories. For example, Mandy writes in her journal:

After Monday’s discussion my heart felt heavy for a woman who has endured the fight with breast cancer and survived to tell me she stayed quiet throughout. Why?! Why would you want to keep it inside? She left the class crying—I wish she could have seen my tears as she left the room—Would it have been rude to follow her and hug her? Why should I be quiet in her time of comfort? So brave—I can only imagine . . . .

Another effect of students seeing themselves and their classmates as feeling/thinking subjects is that students become thoroughly invested in improving their reading and writing skills. For example, Jazrick, an English Education major, believes that learning to write about himself clearly and cogently in “Expository Writing” class “produced many transformations,” including learning he “wasn’t as good of a writer as I thought I was. That was a huge awakening for me—especially as an English major.” However, by writing “until I could barely write anymore about myself,” Jazrick’s “vocabulary increased” and his “writing style and use of grammar and mechanics improved—as well as the knowledge of how to use them.”

Currently employed as a public high school English teacher, Jazrick uses materials from expository writing class as teaching heuristics for his ninth grade and twelfth grade classes, and is a firm believer

49 Jazrick’s comments come from his student response survey. Jazrick’s memoir dealt with ongoing domestic violence in the home. During the semester Jazrick was enrolled in my class, the police were called to his house after his brother acted violently toward his stepfather.
in peer editing. While I’m not suggesting that personal writing is a panacea to all problems, I am not surprised that, despite working in an arena that can often be quite challenging, Jazrick credits self-reflective writing for showing him how to keep his stress levels under control.

**Edward: Things Fall Apart**

Things fell apart in my fall 2006 “Contemporary Literature” class after I failed to exhibit an empathetic attitude, or effectively employ my interpersonal intelligence. I share this unfortunate episode which illustrates my fallibility as teacher as a cautionary tale for other teachers who might adopt pedagogical practices that privilege the personal. While unhealthy learning environments such as this one can develop regardless of a teacher’s pedagogical practices, I believe I was especially vulnerable in this situation because I privileged literature that featured minority voices, and held the expectation I could teach empathy by problematizing social constructions such as white dominance and patriarchy. While this approach worked for a majority of the students, there were several students, both male and female, who resisted my pedagogy, promoting instead what appeared to their personal agendas of intolerance.

Initially, I was excited about the class, which, for an English class at our school, had good mix of both male and female minority students. The second week of class,

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50 In his exit survey, Jazrick writes, “Classmates reading other classmates’ work is an excellent way to get ideas about your work from someone within your own ‘range’ or ‘group.’”

51 In Jazrick’s words: “writing about myself as a subject showed me that stressing over things I could not control was unnecessary.”

52 While I will focus on racism in this discussion, there was an equally disturbing incident of patriotic zealotry shown by a pro-military female student who refused to discuss Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried*, a work of autobiographical fiction about the Vietnam War, because he staunchly opposed the war.

53 According to the official University of South Florida website, USF has a student enrollment of approximately 42,000 students. Ethnic minority students and international students comprise approximately 35% of the student population. The class in which Edward was enrolled had fourteen white female
three female students (one black, one Hispanic, one white) gave their presentations on Sandra Cisneros’ *The House on Mango Street*, introducing topics such as female sexual oppression and growing up in the ghetto. The class related well to these students and asked respectful, thought provoking questions. The semester-long “meltdown” began during the third class session, when a student I’ll refer to as Edward gave his oral presentation on *Gorilla, My Love*, a collection of short stories by Toni Cade Bambara that employ vernacular black English. The sole student presenting on Bambara’s text, Edward had center stage. During his discussion, he employed broad terms such as “the community” and “those people” to speak about diverse black characters from a variety of communities and socio-economic backgrounds. As Edward spoke, it became clear to me that he had not read the stories closely, nor did he have much respect for literature written in what he referred to as “Ebonics.” To direct the discussion in a manner I thought would be helpful to the class as a whole, I asked Edward pointed questions about the story, and questioned his use of generalizations. Rather than change the direction of his presentation, or answer the questions asked by some of the more courageous students who dared to enter into our little skirmish, Edward literally turned his back to me and said something along the lines of, “Stab me in the back, won’t you?” Class was dismissed shortly thereafter, but evidently not soon enough for a handful of students. After class, four of my black female students waited in the doorway. They wanted me to know they had been terribly offended by Edward, and that they were considering staging a “walk-out” at the next class to protest racism in the classroom.
I went home that evening deeply troubled by Edward’s lack of preparedness, my reaction to his actions, and my students’ discomfort with both Edward and with me. I realized that although it was a potentially volatile situation, had I allowed the students to further interrogate Edward, we might have more directly discussed the societal expectations for spoken and written English that seemed to color his reading of the text. Had I “accepted,” but not condoned, Edward’s performance (after all, I was the assessor), perhaps he would have been less defensive during my attempts to redirect the class discussion. Perhaps some insightful class conversation would have taken place had I simply allowed Edward to continue, and did not abruptly dismiss the class. Regardless, something needed to be done to rectify the situation, so I decided that during part of the next class I would address the issues that so obviously had troubled me during the previous class. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, Edward was absent. During our round table discussion, in which I voiced my concerns about Edward’s presentation, I clarified teacher expectations for in-class presentations, which I felt would assist students in giving future presentations. Everyone had the opportunity to discuss his and her feelings and frustrations about class. What I heard, though, threw me for a loop: Many students empathized with Edward, noting the difficulty of conducting a solo class presentation on such complicated reading material. Other students, including those who had suggested the walkout, voiced how frustrating it was to discuss literature in which characters from a variety of ethnic, social, racial and economic backgrounds spoke directly to the reader—only to have these texts discounted by their classmates.

I would like to say that Edward and I came to some sort of understanding by the semester’s end. However, that is not the case. We merely coexisted, trading barbs when
the discussion got heated. It was one of “those” semesters when I was truly relieved to turn in my grades, lick my wounds, and get on with my life.

However, in light of my pedagogic commitments, I couldn’t simply walk away from the experience. I had disappointed both my students and myself. Resolved to learn from this difficult situation, I studied my students’ journals for insight into how a class that valued “listening to the voice of the marginalized other” had become so contentious. The following extended journal excerpts are from two students who spoke to me directly about what had transpired that class session, and remained deeply concerned throughout the semester. Alexis writes:

> It was obvious when Edward gave his presentation that he had not read the material. I think, starting off, that really offended me. As a courtesy to his classmates and to the professor I thought he should have just said he wasn't really prepared to talk about the book since he hadn't finished reading it, or whatever. That's what I would have done. I mean, we can't all be fabulous 100% of the time . . . some day you are bound to slip up, and that's all he had to say instead of making us all sit through his talking about a book that he obviously didn't read. . . . Not only did he not read the material, but when you asked him questions about the material he got defensive. It was almost like he was saying, "how dare YOU question ME" . . . really outrageous. The more you asked him questions, the more aggressive and disrespectful he became, even to the point of saying, “Stab me in the back! Jesus Christ.”

54 Alexis summarized her journal entry and e-mailed this excerpt to me.
Right then I think the presentation should have been ended, because it was really uncomfortable to witness the exchange between you two. I felt that he was incredibly disrespectful to his classmates and to you as the professor [. . .] When I got home I discussed this incident with Darius (my partner), and told him how I was shocked that Edward had the nerve to act the way that he did. Certainly I would have told him, “Ummm...pump your brakes! WHO do YOU think YOU are talking to?!” And I would have said it in the heaviest black accent I could have mustered at the time! Darius said something that made me even more angry. He said that he seriously doubts Edward would have acted the way that he did had the professor been male. I don't know if that is the case, but I do know that there was an obvious lack of respect there. Whether or not he would have respect for a male professor in that same situation, I don't know, but I do know he had no respect for you or his classmates that evening.  

Alexis goes on to say that she does not believe I should have brought the situation up as a round table class discussion; rather, I should have discussed it in private with Edward. She felt that from our round table discussion onward there seemed to be an “obvious ISSUE” with Edward that permeated the classroom and made students uncomfortable. While I respect Alexis’s viewpoint, I still stand by my decision to air our differences during class time. And, as Alexis suggested, I did, in fact, speak to Edward outside of

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55 After listening to Edward’s views on rape, gender performance, constructions of masculinity, and patriarchy, I can say with near certainty that had I been a male professor, Edward would not have acted as he did in our class.
class. He simply brushed off my comments, saying something to the effect of “It’s no big
deal.”

When she heard I was working on this project, Lacey was kind enough to let me keep her class journal, reminding me, “You can always learn from every situation, even if it is a negative one.” Lacey’s journal response directly following the “Edward incident” provides a perspective I simply hadn’t seen through my own myopic lens of “tolerance.” In Lacey’s words:

On the surface it may appear that Edward was a bit under prepared—his lack of “knowledge” of character names—his lack of understanding the theme of underlying racism [. . .] his lack of ability to follow the class’ participation, because we all wanted to touch on key points that we felt were very important that we all felt Edward had not touched on [. . . ]Well, the immediate reaction from what appeared to be everyone in the class was: “If the shoe fits, wear it!” [. . .] But, perhaps this is not the case at all. I feel that, while his presentation seemed dry, callous, and lacking, Edward actually put forth the only thing that was asked of him: His perspective on the writing. You see, Edward has a much different perspective or literary lens. His life experiences, his race, his sex, his beliefs and morals all contributed to the way he read the book and thus, affected the way he presented it to class.

In effect, Lacey reminded me that in my heartfelt attempt to create a loving, inclusive classroom, I was, in fact, excluding those students who simply didn’t see things the way I did. In retrospect, I do not believe I should change my curriculum so that potentially
volatile reading material is avoided. Rather, I have learned a valuable lesson from what Lacey would call a “negative” experience: However much I might wish my students to become empathic, enlightened beings, I can’t change them through mere volition. To paraphrase Gandhi, if I am going to effect change, I must be the “change I seek to create in the world.” I must allow for alterity in the space of my own classroom. I must allow the Edwards of the world to be themselves, whether I like it or not.

Conclusion: “The Thread that Makes the Cloth”

This week, I received an e-mail message from Jen, a student in my fall 2005 “Women’s Crisis Memoirs” class. It was the first time Jen contacted me since our semester together. She wanted to know if there was a rape crisis center where she could volunteer. Jen was ready to share her story and wanted to help others by telling it. Her brief letter gave me an opportunity to reflect on how far Jen had come in accepting her change in subjectivity from rape victim to rape survivor. During our semester together, Jen was repeatedly retraumatized each time she told her rape narrative; consequently, several times she left class in tears, and threatened to drop out altogether. Yet, Jen persevered, and painstakingly wrote about her rape in both her journal and her memoir. I find in Jen’s words an inspiring testimony to the pedagogical practices I propose in this chapter.

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56 This is an amalgamation of two overused quotes from Mahatma Gandhi: “Become the change you seek in the world,” and “We must be the change we wish to see.”
57 Granted, I accept that as the teacher, I must create a safe classroom space first and foremost. I must prevent violence from erupting, or hateful epithets from being uttered. However, the question remains: When is “safety” really an excuse for institutionalized oppression? In effect, do I claim to err in the name of protecting my students in order to justify stifling voices and views I find distasteful?
58 Jen had undergone extensive psychotherapy before enrolling in class.
59 Jen’s comments come from a student exit survey.
My mental health is amazingly better since I have begun self-writing. My hyper-vigilance is under control about 98% of the time. I rarely have nightmares or flashbacks, and my PTSD symptoms are easily managed on most days. Writing has changed my life! This course has helped open my eyes to the many traumatic experiences that humans are so, unfortunately, exposed to. I also came to realize that people before me have been raped. I am not the first. As silly as it sounds, I hadn’t fully realized that before. I have a close friend who was raped a few years before me, but I always considered her to be different. I always thought every other woman who was raped was “different.” I came to realize, though, that even though our experiences were different, the emotions can be quite similar, and overall, we went through the same type of experiences. I learned so much about myself, and I am extremely thankful for the experience!

In *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman writes: “The survivor who has achieved commonality with others can rest from her labors. Her recovery is accomplished; all that remains before her is her life” (236). Yet, Jen does not want simply to rest from her labors. She wants to take her newfound knowledge of self into the world to work with others. In my view, this is the ultimate goal of liberatory education: to show our students that, if they choose, their college experience can extend far beyond the successful appropriation of a “master discourse.” It is my wish this study has shown that subjects can and will “name the world, to change it” when they use their voices, and their knowledge of self and others, to listen compassionately.  

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60 Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (76).
In “How to Tell a True War Story,” Tim O’Brien writes, “In a true war story, if there’s a moral at all, it’s like the thread that makes the cloth. You can’t tease it out. You can’t extract the meaning without unraveling the deeper meaning” (77). As O’Brien suggests, often in a writer’s quest to state the truth there is a hidden thread, or concept, that holds the fabric together. As such, a tightly woven text whose truths are deeply embedded in its fibers cannot be fully dissembled without many threads of meaning surfacing in the process. In this project, my primary thread is to teach empathy—both in and out of the college English classroom. Accordingly, in this dissertation I have quilted together several approaches and methodologies from several complementary disciplines, including Women’s Studies, Psychology and Psychoanalysis, Literary and Cultural Theory, and Composition Studies, to create a multifarious text. Situated within the bounds of Foucault’s overall project, through my various discourses I investigate how subjects are constituted discursively, and how their experience can be translated into a linguistic event in which the subject’s narrative becomes the site of self-construction.

For example, in my discussion of rape narratives, I appropriate theories from Psychoanalysis and Women Studies. Expanding upon Suzette Henke’s concept of “narrative recovery,” I analyze rape scriptotherapies, stories in which the writing subject reintegrates the self through the writing process, writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic reenactment. Central to this study is

61 In particular, I focus on theories concerning language, subjectification, discourse, and the effect of power over and within the body. According to Horrocks and Jevtics, for Foucault, the true subject is not found in language, but is made visible in a representation of itself through various discourses. (71). Subjectification is “the way the individual turns himself into a subject of health, sexuality, conduct, etc.” (6). Discourse is described as a practice, not just linguistics systems or texts (86). Power relations have an immediate hold upon the body, marking it, training it, disciplining it, forcing it to emit signs, etc. (111).

62 A term often employed by narratologists in reference a dual process, narrative recovery concerns the recovery of past experience through narrative articulation, and the psychological reintegration of the traumatically shattered subject through narrative articulation (Henke xxii).
psychotherapist Judith Herman’s germinal text *Trauma and Recovery*. In light of Herman’s view that a compassionate listener is essential for the telling of the trauma narrative, I excerpt rape narratives to amplify the survivors’ voices I use in my study. In the telling of their tales, systems of social control produced by medical and judicial technologies are revealed and the stigmatization of rape is interrogated. My study suggests that listening to rape narratives can produce an empathic response in the reader.

In a similar vein, I examine the genre of autopathography, book-length autobiographical illness narratives, and the empathic response these texts produce. I study how the illness subject is subjected to, and a subject created by, the discourse of illness and various social and medical technologies of power. Central to my inquiry is how autopathographers deploy battlefield language to represent themselves as illness subjects. Borrowing heavily from Lakoff and Johnson’s classic text *Metaphors We Live By* and Susan Sontag’s *Illness as Metaphor*, I investigate why and how, as textual subjectivities, subjects recreate themselves as warriors who fight illness. Because of exigent circumstances illness subjects find themselves facing, their narratives often compel the reader to imagine herself in the place of the “other”; accordingly, these texts help us develop compassion for each other and ourselves, and increase awareness of our interconnectedness.

To further my investigation, I examine how incorporating reading and writing first-person narratives, including scriptotherapy and autopathography, into pedagogical practices can foster a classroom environment that pays attention to subjectivity, promotes well-being in both teacher and student, and teaches empathy for the other. Drawing upon complimentary discourses from liberatory, feminist and psychoanalytic pedagogies, I
investigate classroom practices that center on “the personal” to situate my study within the larger context of Composition Studies. However, I extend my discussion to include views of behavioral and cognitive psychologists to examine how producing first-person narratives, and bearing witness to autobiographical narratives produced by their peers, engages students emotionally in the learning process, and improves their writing skills. Referencing James W. Pennebaker’s expressive writing paradigm and cognitive psychologist Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligences theory, I explore the multiple benefits of pedagogical practices that center on self-writing and access the personal intelligences. In addition, I cite clinical and pedagogical studies demonstrating how empathy is taught to high school and college students.

As this chapter illustrates, over the years I have translated my theoretical approaches into practical applications and learned a great deal. I feel that by reading and writing first-person narratives, my students learned to see themselves as subjectivities capable of change. Through my choice in literature and writing assignments, and other pedagogical practices, I strove, with a fair amount of success, to create a classroom environment that promoted well-being and fostered empathy. When I began this project, I had one goal: To teach empathy to college students. As my project unfolded, I cut across professional specialties, taking both intellectual and professional risks. I understand that in piecing together my text in such a manner, I run the risk of being unacceptable to any or all of these specialties, of failing to do justice to the aims of specialized discourses. But I believe that, as these case studies suggest, the benefits of promoting first-person narratives outweigh these risks.
Works Cited


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Appendix A

Expository Writing through Life-Writing

Course Objectives
This course will allow us to examine our constructions of self in and through writing. We will study how language affects us as individuals, and how the mastery of language enables us to refashion the self. Thus, our course becomes an opportunity to evolve as individuals by and through the process of refining our writing skills.

The readings selected will help us appreciate the connection between writing and knowledge of self. Some readings represent viewpoints of marginalized individuals. Others examine the benefits of writing about the self. All readings focus on the transformation of self through trauma, self-discovery, or healing.

Four times during the semester, you will be given short response essay assignments in which you will be asked to discuss/critique your class readings and address your possible discomfort with these readings. Twice during the semester students will schedule private teacher conferences in which issues regarding the class material, student performance, and classroom practices are directly addressed. Throughout the semester we will incorporate peer editing into our classroom practices. Although peer editing is voluntary, students who want their peers to read their personal essays are strongly encouraged to participate in our writing workshops. Students who prefer privacy will be permitted to have me as their sole reader, and/or mark as “off-limits” portions of their personal class journals that they do not want me to read.

From a practical standpoint, by focusing on writing the personal essay, students will be assured to have something to write about in which they have a vested interest. On a more philosophical level, inviting the personal essay into our classroom promotes self-awareness and care for the self. You will find in this course that the same work that is done through academic discourse, such as making arguments, solving problems, analyzing texts and issues, and trying to answer hard questions, will also be done with personal and expressive writing. Just because our approach to personal expressive writing invites feeling does not mean that it leaves out thinking; and because it invites attention to the self does not mean that it leaves out other people and the social connection.

I believe students’ personal voices should be cultivated, heard, respected and felt in the college classroom. I believe we can teach each other to recognize that each individual we encounter might have hopes and fears very similar to our own. Equally important, however, is my belief that our classrooms must be spaces in which we listen to and give agency to the voice of the other, and recognize the importance of difference, dissent and alterity.

Texts (read in the following order)
Appendix A (Continued)

Articles on Electronic Reserve (read in the following order)

Requirements and Assignments
- Regular Attendance and Participation
- Journal: 100 points
- Four Critical Response Essays: 400 points
- Three Personal Essays: 300 points
- One Final Exam Essay: 200 points
- Attendance and Participation

Journal Writing
In order to help you process the materials for this course and strengthen your writing skills, I am asking you to write daily in your journal (starting January). I define “journal entry” as at least ten minutes of writing (by computer or by hand). This writing should respond to the readings, lectures and discussions for this course, in addition to material you will include in your essays. You should express any feelings class material evokes, and try to make connections between texts and your own experience. The journal is a way for you to respond in a relaxed, risk-free way to readings and issues that affect you personally. You should write spontaneously and authentically, without editing. In your journal you are free from concerns about your reader’s needs and other expectations of stylistic or grammatical correctness. The journal grade will not be based on grammar or organization, but on how fully you have explored the self, and your reactions to class readings and discussions.

Critical Response Essays
On four of the class readings, you will write a 3-5 pp. double-spaced essay responding to a theme or central issues that you see weaving through the work, with a brief critique of the writer’s style and approach.

Personal Essays
You will write three 3-5 pp. double-spaced personal essays based on life experience and observation. You are asked to explore a facet of yourself in a coherent, self-reflexive manner. Perhaps employing concepts from texts read in class, you should investigate your emotional responses and attachments to a life event or relationship in a way that brings about personal growth and illumination.
Final Exam Personal Essay
You will be asked to select one of your personal essays from this semester’s class, revise it, and expand it to a document that is a minimum of 10 pages in length, double-spaced. You may choose to incorporate insights from your personal journal into this document, as well as other materials such as poetry or personal correspondence. Naturally, you are to demonstrate proficiency in Standard English, however, you are encouraged to write in your own voice and develop your own style.
Appendix B

Women’s Crisis Memoirs

Course Objectives
This course examines constructions of women in crisis. For the purposes of this class, a “crisis” is seen as a decisive point during a subject’s development, or a turning point in a subject’s life. Our class will investigate crises of the body and the spirit, and will hear firsthand accounts from women with a range of subjectivities, such as prison inmates, rape survivors, women battling critical illness, and women searching to reclaim themselves as spiritual beings. The memoirs selected as course readings will help us appreciate the connection between writing and knowledge of self. All of the readings represent viewpoints of individuals who have experienced, or are experiencing, moments of crisis; each reading will illustrate the transformation of self through trauma, self-discovery, or healing.

Four times during the semester, you will be given short response essay assignments in which you will be asked to discuss/critique your class readings and address your possible discomfort with these readings. In addition, you will be asked to keep a daily journal in which you respond to your reactions and observations to class material, including other insights you might have outside of your direct classroom experience. Inviting the personal essay into our classroom promotes self-awareness and care for the self. You will find in this course that the same work that is done through academic discourse, such as making arguments, solving problems, analyzing texts and issues, and trying to answer hard questions, will also be done with personal and expressive writing. Just because our approach to personal expressive writing invites feeling does not mean that it leaves out thinking; and because it invites attention to the self does not mean that it leaves out other people and the social connection.

I believe women’s voices should be cultivated, heard, respected and felt in the college classroom. I believe we can teach each other to recognize that each individual we encounter might have hopes and fears very similar to our own. Equally important, however, is my belief that our classrooms must be spaces in which we listen to and give agency to the voice of the other, and recognize the importance of difference, dissent and alterity.

Texts (read in the following order)
Appendix B (Continued)

**Articles on Electronic Reserve--available through Blackboard.** (To be read in the following order)
2. Donald Murray. *Crafting a Life*.

**Supplementary Readings**
I will supply supplementary readings as photocopies. Therefore, you will not be responsible for retrieving these documents, or capable of retrieving these texts on electronic reserves. Our supplementary readings will be shorter in length than those on electronic reserves, and should be read by the following class session.

**Requirements and Assignments**
- Regular Attendance and Participation
- Journal: 100 points
- One Class Presentation: 100 points
- Four Critical Response Essays: 400 points
- One Midterm Exam: 200 points
- One Final Exam Essay: 200 points

**Attendance and Participation**
Please come to class regularly. More than one unexcused absence, and more than two total absences may reflect in a lower grade. Since this class will be small in number, your attendance is imperative. In fact, as a courtesy to others, please e-mail the instructor if you will be absent from class, preferably a minimum of a day before the class session. I expect close familiarity with all the assigned readings. All students must be prepared to actively engage in class discussions. Any student who arrives more than fifteen minutes late, or leaves more than fifteen minutes before the end of class, may be marked absent. One fifteen-minute break will be given each class, midway through the class session.

**Journal Writing**
In order to help you process the materials for this course and strengthen your writing skills, I am asking you to write daily in your journal (starting January 8). I define “journal entry” as at least ten minutes of writing (by computer or by hand). This writing should respond to the readings, lectures and discussions for this course, in addition to material you will include in your essays. You should express any feelings class material evokes, and try to make connections between texts and your own experience. The journal is a way for you to respond in a relaxed, risk-free way to readings and issues that affect you personally. You should write spontaneously and authentically, without editing. In your journal you are free from concerns about your reader’s needs and other expectations of stylistic or grammatical correctness. The journal grade will not be based on grammar or organization, but on how fully you have explored the self, and your reactions to class readings and discussions.
Appendix B (Continued)

Class Presentation
You will sign up for one presentation, choosing your text and class session. The presentation will be given on the date of the assigned readings. You must be present on the date of your scheduled presentation, or inform the professor more than one week in advance if you will need to reschedule your presentation.

The presenter will prepare 3 to 4 discussion questions, including page numbers for class discussion, and submit a paragraph-length summary of her insights regarding the text. Any material that will inform your discussion, including background material about the author not provided in the memoir, will be welcomed.

Critical Response Essays
On four of the class readings, you will write a typed, 3-5 pp. double-spaced essay, in 12-point font, responding to a theme or central issues that you see weaving through the work, with a brief critique of the writer’s style and approach.

Midterm Essay
Your midterm exam will be a take-home essay based on the material from the first half of the semester. You will be given your prompt the week before your exam is due. As with all class essays, your midterm should be typed, double-spaced, in 12-point font.

Final Exam Paper
Your final exam will be similar to the midterm exam, but will ask you to consider material from the entire semester. As with the midterm exam you will be given your prompt the week before your exam is due. Your final should be typed, double-spaced, in 12-point font.
Appendix C

Contemporary Literature

Course Objectives

This course allows us to examine issues in contemporary literature in relation to gender performance, gender roles, and the social construction of the self. We will see how the concept of self is affected by various influences on subjectivity such as societal expectations, crisis, and challenges to our concept of self. We will also investigate alternatives to widely accepted “performances” of self that have the potential to challenge our perception of the status quo.

Most of these texts tell stories of a subject’s struggle to find her or his place in a shifting universe; therefore, this course will provide insights into how the individual attempts to situate herself in an unstable world. In order for us to pay close attention to gender roles and subjectivity, the course readings have been organized to center primarily on women’s subjectivities before changing its focus to men’s subjectivities.

This course will be enriching to the degree of your own investment in it. If you attend to its requirements and challenges, your perspective on contemporary literature may be enlarged. Please know that course material may be somewhat controversial and could “push some buttons.” If that happens, please use that opportunity to investigate your own subjectivity in both class discussion and in the writing of your class journal. If at any time, course material touches upon matter that is personal and you seek confidentiality, please let me know. I will certainly honor your need for confidential counsel.

Texts (read in the following order)
7. Selected Stories by Raymond Carver. (See the library’s Electronic Reserves.)
11. Selected poetry and selections from the “Beat” writers. (See the library’s Electronic Reserves.)

Requirements and Assignments

- Regular Attendance and Participation
- 1 Oral Presentation: 100 points
- Journal: 100 points
- 4 Critical Response Essays: 400 points
Appendix C (Continued)

- In-Class Essay: 200 points
- Final Exam: 200 points

Attendance & Participation
Please come to class regularly. More than one unexcused absence will result in a lower grade. I expect informed and close familiarity with all the assigned readings; be prepared to actively engage in class discussions. Bring your class journal to each class session, as we will begin class with journal writing sessions.
An essential part of this class is informed class discussion: we shall explore our ideas and reactions together, and consider others’ reactions to, and opinions of, the course readings.

Oral Presentation
You will sign up for one presentation, choosing your class session. The presentation will be given on the date of the assigned readings. You must not be absent on the date of your scheduled presentation!
The presenter will prepare 3-4 discussion questions or topics for her session; these must be photocopied and distributed to the class. The student should be prepared to discuss her topics with the class and have insights into her interpretation of the reading. In addition, biographical material about the author, or other related material that will inform your discussion, is welcomed. When there is more than one text assigned for that class meeting, you are responsible for all of the readings for that class session.

Journal Writing
To help you process the material for this course, I am asking you to write at least two journal entries per week, in addition to your in-class journal writing requirements. I define a journal entry as at least 20 minutes of continued writing. This writing should respond to the readings, lectures, and discussions for this course. You can express any feelings the material evokes, and might want to make connections between your course readings and your own experience. You are to write spontaneously, authentically and without editing. Therefore, the journal will be graded not on grammar or organization, but on how you have used it to explore your responses to the reading.
Please write at least 4 pages per week. I expect a minimum of 25 pages at the end of the semester.

Critical Response Essays
You are to write four 3-5 pp. double-spaced essays responding to a theme or central issues that you see weaving through specific texts, including a brief critique of the writer’s style and approach. You have been given specific due dates on which to submit these.
Appendix C (Continued)

In-Class Essay
Your mid-term exam will be an in-class essay based on the material from the first half of the semester. You will be given study questions ahead of time and will be permitted to bring notes and texts to the in-class exam session.

Final Exam Paper
Your final exam will be a longer version of a response essay, between 6 –10 pages, typed, double-spaced. You will be given a prompt for the final exam on the last day of class.
Appendix D

The Image of Women in Literature

Course Objectives

This course seeks to trace the origins of contemporary views about women, to analyze major Eastern/Western literary portrayals of women, to examine ideas about women's roles, and to compare/contrast cultural/racial images of women. Specifically, this course allows us to examine women’s issues in contemporary literature in relation to gender performance, gender roles, and the social construction of the self. We will see how the concept of self is affected by various influences on subjectivity such as societal expectations, crisis, and challenges to our concept of self. We will also investigate alternatives to widely accepted “performances” of self that have the potential to challenge our perception of the status quo.

Most of the texts on our syllabus tell the story of a woman’s struggle to find herself or her place in a shifting universe; therefore, this course will provide insights into how the individual attempts to situate herself in an unstable world.

This course will be enriching to the degree of your own investment in it. If you attend to its requirements and challenges, your perspective on contemporary literature and women’s issues may be enlarged. Please know that course material may be somewhat controversial and could “push some buttons.” If that happens, please use that opportunity to investigate your own subjectivity in both class discussion and in the writing of your class journal. If at any time course material touches upon matter that is personal and requires confidentiality, please let me know. I will certainly honor your need for confidential counsel.

Texts (read in the following order)

8. Various selections from contemporary Caribbean Writers. (On electronic reserves.)
9. Various selections from contemporary Asian Writers. (On electronic reserves.)
10. Selected poetry from contemporary women poets. (On electronic reserves.)

Requirements and Assignments

- Regular Attendance and Participation
- 1 Oral Presentation: 100 points
- Journal: 100 points
- 4 Critical Response Essays: 400 points
Appendix D (Continued)

- In-Class Essay: 200 points
- Final Exam: 200 points

**Attendance & Participation**
Please come to class regularly. More than one unexcused absence will reflect in a lower grade. I expect informed and close familiarity with all the assigned readings; be prepared to actively engage in class discussions. Bring your class journal to each class session, as we will begin class with journal writing sessions.
An essential part of this class is informed class discussion: we shall explore our ideas and reactions together, and consider others’ reactions to, and opinions of, the course readings.

**Oral Presentation**
You will sign up for one presentation, choosing your class session. The presentation will be given on the date of the assigned readings. You must not be absent on the date of your scheduled presentation! The presenter will prepare 3-4 discussion questions or topics for her session; these must be photocopied and distributed to the class. The student should be prepared to discuss her topics with the class and have insights into her interpretation of the reading. In addition, biographical material about the author, or other related material that will inform your discussion, is welcomed. When there is more than one text assigned for that class meeting, you are responsible for all of the readings for that class session.

**Journal Writing**
To help you process the material for this course, I am asking you to write at least two journal entries per week, in addition to your in-class journal writing requirements. I define a journal entry as at least 20 minutes of continued writing. This writing should respond to the readings, lectures, and discussions for this course. You can express any feelings the material evokes, and might want to make connections between your course readings and your own experience.

You are to write spontaneously, authentically and without editing. Therefore, the journal will be graded not on grammar or organization, but on how you have used it to explore your responses to the reading. Please write at least 4 pages per week. I expect a minimum of 25 pages at the end of the semester.

**Critical Response Essays**
You are to write four 3-5 pp. double-spaced essays responding to a theme or central issues that you see weaving through specific texts, including a brief critique of the writer’s style and approach. You should adhere to the specific due dates on which to submit these.
Appendix D (Continued)

In-Class Essay
Your mid-term exam will be an in-class essay based on the material from the first half of the semester. You will be given study questions ahead of time and will be permitted to bring notes and texts to the in-class exam session.

Final Exam Paper
Your final exam will be a longer version of a response essay, between 6–10 pages, typed, double-spaced. You will be given a prompt for the final exam on the last day of class.
Appendix E

Personal Writing Survey

Please indicate your name (or pseudonym) and which class(es) you attended, including year.

The purpose of this student survey is to collect data for an academic study of the place of personal writing in the college classroom, and the connection between self-writing, health, and well being. Please feel free to respond to any or all of the following writing prompts. Your response may be as long or short as you wish, and include specific or general information, according to your desire.

1. In our class, you were asked to examine yourself as a subject. You were asked to investigate how you are subject to someone else or something else by control and dependence, and/or constructed your identity through self-knowledge. Now that you have been made to acknowledge these aspects of subjectivity, how have you changed? Has your worldview, or view of self, been altered as a result of investigating yourself as a subject of your own writing? If so, how?

2. The French historian Michel Foucault believes that regular self-writing actually changes the writing subject. Do you agree that regular self-writing changes the writing subject? If so, how did you change as a result of regular self-writing?

3. In class, you were asked to engage in self-writing by keeping a journal, writing first-person essays, and perhaps writing your memoirs. Much of your writing was directed only for the teacher to read. Did you ever feel uncomfortable knowing I was going to read your writing? If “yes,” then explain how. Also, did you feel uncomfortable reading your classmates’ work or reading some of the highly personal published texts our class studied? If “yes,” then please explain why and how.

4. I believe that the classroom can be a learning space where both the teacher and her students are in the process of transformation and self-betterment. Now that you have had time to reflect upon your classroom experience, did you experience any sort of transformation? Likewise, did self-writing produce any transformations or awakenings? If so, please elaborate.

5. In our classroom, we paid attention to the multiple histories and subjectivities of our classmates and of the writers whose work we studied. It was my intention to create a communal awareness of the diversity of our experiences and provide understanding into how our experiences inform how we think and what we say. Can you recall any particular experience or text that expanded your concept or understanding of the “other”? If “yes,” please explain.
Appendix E (Continued)

6. I believe that personal writing can bridge the multiple spaces and identities college students often occupy and perform. Furthermore, personal writing can allow students to negotiate the divide they often feel between school and work or school and home. Did your experience with personal writing bridge the divide between your school and non-school experiences? If so, how?

7. Numerous studies based on psychologist James W. Pennebaker’s expressive writing paradigm verify that individuals who write self-reflectively about emotional topics evidence improved emotional and physical health. Are you aware of any notable improvement in your emotional or physical health after having written self-reflective personal essays or after having kept a self-reflective journal? If so, please explain.

8. According to behavioral psychologist Howard Gardner, interpersonal intelligence is the capacity to understand the development of the internal aspects of another person. On the other hand, intrapersonal intelligence is having the core capacity to access one’s own feelings and range of emotions. According to Gardner, self-writing draws upon one’s intrapersonal intelligence (knowledge of self), while reading other people’s personal writing draws upon one’s interpersonal intelligence (knowledge of others). Do you feel that the personal intelligences came into play during our class? If so, how? Further, do you feel that employing the personal intelligences bolstered your linguistic aptitude (standard English skills) in any way? If “yes,” then please explain.

9. Sympathy helps us to adopt another’s attitude or helps us understand another person. Studies show that sympathizing or empathizing with a writer or a character can help us better comprehend the text. Can you recall any time when sympathizing or empathizing with your fellow students or with the teacher, or sympathizing or empathizing with the course readings or with characters or subjects in a text helped you to better comprehend course material? Is so, please explain.

10. Literary scholar Louise Rosenblatt writes that when a student has been emotionally moved by a work of literature, she will be led to ponder moral and ethical decisions that have implications outside of classroom practices. Do you believe that your experience in this class helped develop the capacity to sympathize or to identify with the experiences of others in any way? Furthermore, do you feel that this course helped you in any way ponder ethical and moral consequences of your actions? If “yes,” then please explain which ethical and moral questions you personally sought to investigate.
Appendix E (Continued)

Thank you for your participation. Please indicate if you would like to be cited in my study and if I may use your name. If you are using a pseudonym, please use that name when responding to this survey.
About the Author

Susan Friedman received her bachelor’s degree in English from The University of Miami in 1984. In 1985, she received “The First Degree in Fluency” in French from the Université de Dijon, France. In 1996, Susan received her master’s degree in English from Barry University, in Miami, Florida. While at The University of South Florida, Susan earned Graduate Certificates in Women’s Studies; Creative Writing; and Teaching Composition. Susan has received several awards including: the Prentice-Hall Award for Outstanding Teaching; the James Parrish Fellowship; the Dorothy Newman Linton Award; and, in two successive years, The Provost’s Commendation for Outstanding Teaching by a Graduate Student. Susan has lived in France and traveled extensively throughout Europe. A certified fitness instructor and fitness professional, Susan is also an ardent yoga practitioner and instructor. Currently, she is studying to become a Certified Iyengar Yoga instructor.