



***IMPACT:***

The Journal of the Center for  
Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning

College of General Studies

Boston University

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Winter 2013

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Cover image designed by Naomi Lomba-Gomes. Layout by Anita Cook.

# IMPACT: THE JOURNAL OF THE CENTER FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING & LEARNING

Volume 2

Winter 2013

Number 1

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ISSN 2325-0232

ISBN 10-0615582478

ISBN 13-978-0-615-58247-4

## **Teaching Ethically in Hybrid Classrooms: Critical Self-Reflection, Hidden Curricula, and the Politics of Invisibility**

**JULIE WADE**

Florida International University

In the spring of 2001, when I learned I had been accepted to a Master of Arts in English program with a full teaching fellowship, I began to ask and consider my first set of pedagogical questions. Among them: what does it mean to be a *good* teacher? As I entered the classroom for the first time that fall, teaching a required English composition class at a mid-size, public university, the question evolved to become: what does it *take* to be a good teacher? The emphasis here was placed on the practical side of teaching—what did I have to *do*—rather than on the purely theoretical construction of the “good teacher” I had been exploring in my mind.

In the ensuing eight years of teaching required courses in undergraduate classrooms in Washington, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky, I find this question has evolved again. I am still committed to what it *means*—intrinsically—to succeed in the classroom and also to what it *takes*—instrumentally—to do so. The change has come in how I define this “success,” with the ideal of a *good* teacher being replaced by the ideal of an *ethical* one. What does it mean to teach ethically? In what ways is ethical teaching defined by certain qualities inherent to the teacher herself, and in what ways is it dictated, defined, and re-defined by external factors—including the course being taught, the academic discipline to which it belongs, its relative value within the university hierarchy, and the student demographic it attracts and enrolls?

As a Master’s student, my teaching fellowship was accompanied by several required classes in pedagogical theory and practice. What is striking about these classes in retrospect is their singular focus on formal curriculum, to the exclusion of what John Trimbur and Diana George have termed the “hidden curriculum.” This hidden curriculum, to quote Trimbur and George, “refers to all the unspoken beliefs and procedures that regulate classroom life—the rules of the game no one writes down but that teachers and students have internalized in their expectations about each other.”<sup>1</sup> Successful teaching, as depicted in these early pedagogical classes, depends upon presenting and adapting as necessary the formal curriculum—the clear and cohesive subject being taught—to the individual needs, abilities, and learning styles of a diverse group of students. A “good” teacher established a productive classroom environment and fostered a spirit of study and growth that balanced support, on the one hand, and challenge, on the other. Put another way, a “good” teacher maximized learning for all students, where learning was defined by the standardized objectives of the formal curriculum.

Though the specific techniques and exercises I learned in these classes proved infinitely valuable for my teaching repertoire, I continued to ponder the political nature of the classroom and how its politics were inevitably connected to pedagogy. I taught a required essay that first year called “From Silence to Words: Writing as Struggle.”<sup>2</sup> In it, the author Min-zhan Lu

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<sup>1</sup> Trimbur, John, and George, Diana. Eds. *Reading Culture: Contexts for Critical Reading and Writing*. 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Longman, February 16, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Min-zhan Lu’s essay is anthologized in *Reading Culture: Contexts for Critical Reading and Writing*, pages 150-159.

describes the problem of “the purified world of the classroom.” By this, I understand Lu to mean that the classroom is presented to us, students and teachers alike, as a blank page or a neutral playing field, as if who we are in the classroom—students and teachers alike—has nothing to do with who we are outside it. As if identities and privileges and biases could be checked like a coat at the door.

As a young woman, newly graduated from college herself, I returned to the classroom the following year cloaked in a new kind of authority. I was used to sitting on the other side of the desk, facing the opposite side of the room. The fact that I was recognizably female, the fact that I was twenty-two-years old—the same age as some of my students—the fact that I was white-skinned and spoke standard American English without any distinctive regional dialect—these facts alone complicated the universalizing portrait of a single teacher and a community of intellectually diverse but otherwise homogeneous students. Our visible and audible complexities alone were enough to debunk this myth of classroom purity, including both the mythical neutrality of the material and the mythical homogeneity of the teacher and students. However, it was our *invisible* complexities—the true “hidden curriculum”—that would present the greatest challenge to my evolving concept of ethical teaching.

From 2001 to 2006, I taught courses in English departments where an explicit objective of the formal curriculum was the requirement that students “develop their critical thinking skills.” Reading, writing, and classroom discussion were considered central activities related to this process. Additionally, as students developed the ability to think critically about existing texts and to write thoughtful, inquiry-based analyses of such texts, another explicit component of the formal curriculum was that students should be able to “reflect critically on their own lives.” In other words, students were expected to apply critical thinking skills developed in the classroom to aspects of their own experience—what we might call, for purposes of analogy, “the text of their own lives”—and to demonstrate this reflective ability through a range of tasks, including journal entries, reading responses, and personal inquiry essays. By way of comparison, students in science and math classes are rarely asked—if ever—to demonstrate how their mastery of particular material, the stated formal curriculum of these specific academic domains, is related to their personal lives. They are not required to connect their classroom learning to their religious beliefs, their political affiliations, their family backgrounds, their racial or sexual identities. This is not to say that such connections are never made or that an exploration of the relationship between formal scientific and mathematical curricula and individual students’ lives would not be valuable. Rather, it is to emphasize that we in the Humanities, by the explicit and ubiquitous requirement of “critical reflection on their own lives,” continually complicate the existing hierarchy between students who produce work and a teacher who assigns their work a grade. By requiring students to “reflect critically on their own lives,” and then evaluating these reflections, Humanities teachers grant themselves access to students’ intimate thoughts, feelings, fears, and questions, including often private, sensitive, and occasionally “secret” information about their students’ identities. In the name of the discipline-endorsed enterprise of “critical self-reflection,” teachers in my field find themselves learning far more about their students’ personal lives—*inevitably*—than would be fair to ask of a passing acquaintance or even a casual friend, and those are relationships governed by choice and mutual commitment, not institutional hierarchy. As a consequence, the decentralized authority model prescribed for most Humanities classrooms, with discussion favored over lecture and emphasis

placed on collaborative learning and reciprocal exchange of ideas, is potentially undermined by this widened power differential between teacher and students.

So what does it mean to teach ethically in a field where students' self-examination, and de facto self-disclosure, is incorporated into the formal curriculum via journal entries, reading responses, and personal essays? If I am not willing to dismiss the value of "critical self-reflection" and the importance for students to make connections between what they read and how they think—what they learn in the classroom and how they approach the rest of their lives beyond it—then how do I respond ethically to my necessary role in assessing the quality of this self-reflection? I can construct rubrics that emphasize that students will not be graded based on *what* they think but on how well they express their thinking, that they will not be judged on the basis of *what* they share but on how thoughtfully and thoroughly they connect their experiences to core concepts from the class. I can hold myself accountable to these standards and remain critically aware of my own biases, committing myself again and again to the most objective possible appraisal of every student's work. Yet I am also aware of how dangerously similar this sounds to Min-zhan Lu's discussion of "the purified world of the classroom." We ask students, as part and parcel of this criterion called critical self-reflection, to examine their own contradictory ideas, to raise questions about their own hybrid identities. Yet we, the teachers, are going to evaluate such reflections in the purified space of our own minds, the purified space of our own rubrics? Though we are not fond of thinking of it this way, we are, from a certain vantage, revealing a hidden curriculum that says, *Write about yourself and your own life as honestly and reflectively as possible, and then trust me—a relative stranger with power to affect, at minimum, your grade-point average, and at maximum, much more than that, perhaps your attitude toward your overall college experience or the value of education in your life. I'm a trained professional. Pretend this is not a hierarchal relationship. Trust me.*

These questions have lived with me a long time now, but they were never more prevalent or more potent than during the 2006-2007 academic school year. Having just completed a second Master's degree—this time, a Master of Fine Arts in poetry with a graduate certificate in Women's Studies—I accepted my first adjunct professor position at a small, Catholic, liberal arts college in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I prepared to enter the Women's Studies classroom with overt eagerness and hidden trepidation. I thought back to my first experiences teaching required English courses and the doubts I had faced about the proper degree of formality to guide my interactions with students. Teachers seemed to differ greatly in the degree to which they talked about their personal lives in the classroom. When I had asked my own teachers in graduate school about their classroom personas, particularly their interactions with undergraduates, the answer I invariably received was that it was a matter of "personal comfort" how much to tell students about yourself. It was "up to me" how much I wanted my students to know. I was also reminded that students don't just read textbooks in class; they also read teachers. I would be, inevitably, one of the texts my students studied, whether or not I ever mentioned my life outside of work.

So, on the one hand, I had been worried about what it meant to ask students to submit work that contained personal subject matter; on the other, I had been worried about how much and what kind of personal subject matter I should share with them. In an acquaintanceship or friendship, which is notably distinguished from the institutional hierarchies that undergird

teacher-student relations, a sense of mutuality or reciprocity is typically valued. Trust is established and developed as a result of both parties sharing with each other and collaboratively shaping the relative level of relationship intimacy. Yet because the ethical boundaries are drawn differently for students and teachers than for friends or acquaintances, I knew that the best way to gain my students' trust and to encourage their best critical self-reflection was *not* to match their self-disclosures par for par with my own. At the same time, I remained highly conscious of the fact that I made certain disclosures about myself without ever intending to. Everything about my visible appearance was fodder for students' appraisal and assessment, even where erroneous assumptions might be made. Further, it had happened on more than one occasion that students and I rode the same bus or lived in the same neighborhood or encountered each other in public spaces outside the classroom, gaining unexpected glimpses of each other's broader lives. All this before I had even opened my mouth, before I ever mentioned or chose not to mention—and omissions could speak just as loudly—any person of significance in my life, any sport or hobby, any group affiliation, or personal preference, or episode from my own past. Now, with the proliferation of search engines, a curious student, a curious anyone, can learn where I live, what I've published, and how much I make a year with only a few hits and clicks.

Additionally, the discipline of Women's Studies came already endowed with many "unspoken beliefs" and "internalized expectations" that differed from prevailing student beliefs about other disciplines I had taught. One of the most pervasive of these unspoken beliefs was that women who taught women studies were exclusively lesbians, and more pointedly, lesbians who hated men. Much student resistance to "being forced to take Women's Studies" came from the fear that women's studies course were designed to convert all female students to man-hating, lesbian separatism and to reduce all male students, if there were any at all, to extreme guilt and self-loathing. In this respect, assumptions about the "hidden curriculum" of Women's Studies seemed already to overshadow any actual knowledge of the "formal curriculum," and to some degree, students' willingness to take this formal curriculum seriously.

Before my first day of teaching, I had a frank discussion with the Director of Women Studies who, like me, was an out gay woman. I asked her if she disclosed her sexual identity to her students, and if so, how she went about it. Her response was simply, "I only mention it if it comes up." I countered immediately that I wondered how it *wouldn't come up* when she taught about lesbian feminism and queer theory, two central aspects of the course. She said it always depended on whether she thought her own experiences as a gay woman would serve to enhance or detract from the conversation. What I really wanted to know, but hadn't found the words to ask, was whether she thought a teacher in a Women's Studies classroom had an *ethical responsibility* to identify this integral but invisible aspect of her identity when discussing identity politics with her students. What I suspect is that she would have given me a response similar to what my English teachers had told me in the past: some version of *it's up to you*. However, she did advise me that students would be reading me more closely than perhaps I was used to, more closely than in other discussion-centered courses in the Humanities. "They will want to know your stake in this, particularly because they're skeptical coming in," she said. "They think it's an agenda class or a special interest class, and most of them don't think it has anything to do with them. They'll be looking—and they won't necessarily be subtle about it—at how short your hair is, whether you wear make-up, if you have a ring on your crucial finger. Last year, a woman teaching for us told her students she would be cancelling two classes near the end of term

because she was getting married and taking a short honeymoon. She thought she was being matter-of-fact, giving an honest explanation for the cancellations, but she was concerned when her students let out a collective, audible sigh of relief.”

At home, I discussed this situation with my partner. I had never disclosed my sexual orientation to any of my students before, perhaps because I hadn’t considered it relevant or perhaps because I hadn’t wanted to consider it at all. “I feel a tremendous anxiety,” I said, “because the students already think it’s a questionable course in a questionable discipline, and many come into Women’s Studies unwilling to trust the teacher. I don’t know if it’s best to come out in some explicit way from the beginning or to wait until it comes up in conversation or not to talk about my sexual identity at all.”

Angie listened carefully and replied, “Well, you’re thinking of this as if it’s a binary between teaching your students as an out lesbian or teaching them as a woman with no stated sexual orientation. But in reality, because your sexuality cannot be visibly confirmed or even conclusively assessed the way your sex can, or your skin color can—and by extension, the way your gender and your race can—you’re either teaching that class as an out lesbian or as a heterosexual female. Straight is who you are by default; you’re always straight unless you declare yourself otherwise. That is the particular problem of *invisibility* politics.”

When I teach my students tools for analysis, I always tell them, *Look for what isn’t there*. I emphasize that writers make choices about what they include and what they choose not to include. What we choose not to include has consequences for the story or essay or poem the same way it has consequences for our own lives, as students and teachers alike, and as citizens of the world beyond the classroom. What I have tried to do, in all the classes I teach, including Women’s Studies, is to bring the role of the unstated, and thereby the potentially harmful power of the “hidden curriculum,” into the explicit realm of topics for class discussion and collaborative analysis. For instance, I had to begin to shift my thinking from whether and what I would disclose about my sexual identity to how I would share my own questions and apprehensions *about* such disclosures with my students. Angie’s insights helped me realize that students were probably concerned about these things, too. So one of the essential topics for discussion and analysis in a Women’s Studies course—and perhaps any course in the Humanities—becomes, to some extent, the course itself. Why does this discipline exist? What are our expectations for and assumptions about this discipline before we ever enter the classroom? Where do these ideas come from? What can we learn from them?

The ethical questions that undergird all teaching, particularly in classes where critical self-reflection is an explicit component of the formal curriculum, seem unlikely to be resolved by a single answer or a clearly defined formula. Instead, the movement for me has been one of making my own concerns about the hidden curriculum increasingly more transparent and in giving students room to reflect not only on themselves in relation to the course material but on the course discipline itself, its history, the same set of ethical questions that I as a teacher once believed I had to face alone. Now, on the first day of a Women’s Studies class, before I reveal anything about my own subject position or ask my students to reveal anything about theirs, I ask all of us—collectively—to share the rumors, beliefs, and fears that shape our expectations for the class before we ever set foot inside it. In this way, we begin to dismantle the myth of the



purified classroom together and to postulate the best possible kind of classroom we can create from our hybrid selves, our mixed feelings, our contradictory views.

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## Burden of History: Ko Un's Poetry as a Political and Philosophical Act

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Ko Un is probably the most widely known Korean poet to international readers as well as to domestic readers. His books of poems have been translated into Arabic, Chinese, Czech, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish, and Vietnamese. He was not only awarded with major domestic prizes but also garnered some international recognition with such prizes as the Bjornson Order for Literature (2005), the Swedish Literary Cikada Prize (2006), the Lifetime Achievement Prize by Canada (2008), and The American Awards for a Lifetime Contribution to International Writing (2011). Many world-famous poets have recognized him as “one of the most important poets of our time” (Robert Hass), “a magnificent poet, a combination of Buddhist cognoscente, passionate political libertarian, and naturalist historian” (Allen Ginsberg), and they have appreciated “his Zen insights” (Gary Snyder) and “the intensity” of his language (Michael McClure).<sup>1</sup> In addition, many world-wide literary magazines and newspapers have published articles on Ko Un's literature. But the rich political and philosophical resonances of his poetry have not been adequately appreciated by his readers.

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<sup>1</sup> All these quotes are from the official homepage < <http://www.koun.co.kr/korea/>>.

## I. Ko Un's Writing as a Political Act

Given the continuous political upheavals that unfolded throughout Korean history in the twentieth century, Korean writers have never had a chance to stand outside history. They went through the colonial period, the Emancipation, the Korean War, and the Partition of two Koreas, and the almost-three-decade military dictatorship. They also witnessed how the masses of *Mincho* (the grass roots) who had always been regarded as the foundation of Korea continued to be oppressed under the discourses of the powerful without having their voices heard. *Mincho* subjects had little means to claim their human rights before the powerful *Yangban* rulers in pre-modern Joseon-Korea. In the Japanese colonial period, with their mother tongue politically suppressed, they had to give up their own native names and live as subjects of Japanese empire; in the 1950s with their families divided and disconnected due to the Korean War and the consequential Partition, they had to restrain themselves and put most efforts in surviving in the rubble and ruins of their home towns; in the 1960s, the 70s and the 80s with their freedom of speech completely suppressed under dictatorial regimes, they held back their anger tears to witness a series of brutal suppressions of civil rights movements and supported democratic groups in silence; since the 1990s under the government's discourses of geopolitical threats and capitalism they found their voices easily dubbed as dangerous to the sound economic development of the country.

At the center of political turmoil Ko Un has also witnessed the woeful state of *Mincho* people and the waste of young lives in anti-dictatorial demonstrations. However, it was the tragic death of Jeon Tae-il that left an indelible mark on his mind. Jeon Tae-il was one of the factory laborers who committed self-immolation in 1970 as a way of protesting against the Park regime's suppression of laborers' human rights. His final cry, "We are not machines. We want a proper labor law. Do not brush off my death," moved the whole nation including Ko Un, as he confessed in an interview. He recalled how Jeon's noble self-sacrifice shattered him so thoroughly that he had to take some time for probing his conscience and reassessing the strategy of intelligentsia-led, ideology-driven political resistance. This deep introspection catapulted him from the state of intellectual torpor to a radical awakening to the necessity for connecting his poetry to political activism. Thus, since 1971, he decided to stand at the forefront of political protests and become a major force in establishing the Council of Korean Civil Rights Movement.

Ko Un broke from his previous lyrical poetry predominant with pessimism and aesthetic nihilism and began to write *Minjung* poetry, appealing to general readers to restore the lofty *Minjung* spirit of the past. In fact, *Minjung* literally means the masses of the people, but in Korean historical, cultural, and political contexts *Minjung* means those downtrodden people who are socially disadvantaged and economically exploited and yet have political agency to organize protests and be willing to sacrifice their lives for the cause of Justice. Generally, their political agency is traced back to the late Joseon-Korea through Jeon Bong-jun's *Donghak Uprising*. In 1894 about ten thousand poor farmers oppressed by heavy taxation and ruthless treatment armed themselves under the leadership of Jeon Bong-jun and engaged in armed struggles against corrupt regional governors and other officials. They spoke up against the feudal system, Japanese colonial ambition, and the repression of their indigenous religion *Donghak*. Although the *Donghak Uprising* was soon suppressed with the execution of Jeon Bong-jun, it has been recognized as one of the most significant historical events in which illiterate farmers proved their

own capacity to put their subjective thought into action in times of severe oppression and national emergency. From then on, there have been many common heroes who sacrificed their lives fighting for Justice, and Jeon Tae-il would be rightfully honored as one of *Donghak* farmers' descendents. Therefore, meditating on factory laborer Jeon Tae-il's self-sacrifice and the plight of the masses of contemporary working class people, Ko Un decided to seriously pursue the poetic task of re-imagining Korean *Minjung* and also to call for their political agency to rise up against *Yushin* autocracy. "Arrows" is one of the famous *Minjung* poems written in this period:

화살

우리 모두 화살이 되어  
 온몸으로 가자.  
 허공 뚫고  
 온몸으로 가자.  
 가서는 돌아오지 말자.  
 박혀서 박힌 아픔과 함께 썩어서  
 돌아오지 말자.

우리 모두 숨 끊고 활시위를 떠나자.  
 몇 십 년 동안 가진 것,  
 몇 십 년 동안 누린 것,  
 몇 십 년 동안 쌓은 것,  
 행복이라던가  
 빛이라던가  
 그런 것 다 냥마로 버리고  
 화살이 되어 온몸으로 가자.

허공이 소리친다.  
 허공 뚫고  
 온몸으로 가자.  
 저 캄캄한 대낮 과녁이 달려온다.  
 이윽고 과녁이 피 뿜으며 쓰러질 때  
 단 한 번

Arrows<sup>2</sup>

Let's become arrows  
 Charge our bodies and  
 pierce through the air.  
 Charge our bodies  
 Charge and never come back.  
 Plunge our bodies deep  
 [into the flesh of the enemy],  
 Choose to be rotten there and  
 never come back.

Let's hold our breath tight and  
 dart from the bowstring.  
 What we have achieved  
 for many decades  
 What we have enjoyed  
 for many decades  
 What we have constructed  
 for many decades  
 Happiness or  
 What not  
 Let's leave all behind like tatters  
 and charge our whole bodies  
 as arrows.

The void roars out  
 Let's charge our whole bodies and  
 pierce through the air.  
 In the dark midday  
 our target dashes at us.  
 Until it stumbles spitting blood,  
 only once [in our lifetime]  
 let's all become arrows  
 and bleed as such.

Let's never come back!  
 Never come back!  
 Oh, arrows, the nation's arrows,

<sup>2</sup>All poems in this essay are my translation.

우리 모두 화살로 피를 흘리자.

fighters, Souls of the fallen  
heroes!

돌아오지 말자!

(“Arrows,” *A Wind*, 74-75)

돌아오지 말자!

오 화살 조국의 화살이여 전사여  
영령이여!

In this poem Ko Un compares the monstrous power of *Yushin* autocracy to “the dark midday” an oxymoronic phrase that strongly suggests the absurdity of the 1970s’ reality. Seemingly urging *Minjung* citizens to become “arrows” to end the political monster, he himself makes a sincere pledge to dedicate himself to the process of building a new democratic government despite the fact that he might “never come back.” Finally he commemorates those who would sacrifice their lives as “the nation’s arrows” and “souls of the fallen heroes,” reminding readers of *Minjung*’s resistance spirit in Korean history. Although the poem’s diction sounds propagandistic, it still resonates with the austere protest/resistance spirit of the 1970s. Choi Won-shik finds the significance of this poem in Ko Un’s truthful dedication to the cause of protest literature of the 1970s. Though “not having literary sophistication,” Choi sees Ko Un’s “Arrows” as responding to the political manifesto of Jang Jun-ha, a representative revolutionary leading the 1970s democratic movement. In “The Road of a Nationalist” (1978) Jang once challenged the conformism of academia and the passivity of the intelligentsia:

Is any form of unification good? I think so. There is no higher cause than unification. . . . If all my ideas, ideologies, social positions, material wealth, honor do not add up to result in the nation’s unification but result from the partition, I think I have to give up my privilege. Without self-sacrifice, the unification of two Koreas will never be realized. This might be another form of treason. (“The Road of a Nationalist,” qtd. in Choi 81, my translation.)

In the dim, gloomy reality of *Yushin* autocracy Jang pointed out the necessity for self-sacrificing leadership which would open a new democratic future of Korea. Ko Un seems to respond to his call by pledging his dedication to political activism as well as by summoning *Minjung*’s civil disobedience to end the dictatorial regime. Combining his bold announcement of self-sacrifice with his propagandist purpose, thus, he stands out as a *Minjung* poet and lifts his voice up to urge common readers to participate in taking collective responsibility for nation-building.

As he started to define himself as a *Minjung* poet, however, Ko Un was initially viewed as getting an easy ride in ‘*Minjung* Protest Poetry’ thanks to the turbulent political situations of the day. As some critics indicate, in this period his poetry sounds like raw howling, and his poetic messages seem to be very didactic and propagandistic. However, critics paid little attention to the spiritual and poetic evolution he achieved since he publicly took up the role of *Minjung* poet. It is true that for years Ko Un wrote about human rights of urban laborers and rural farmers and tried to have his political messages cross over to both the masses and the powerful. However, when he was put on the black list of the Korean CIA due to his political activism and finally was arrested for the charge of high treason in 1980, as he confesses later, he could review his own *Minjung* poetry in retrospect while waiting for the death sentence.

Although he actually received a life-in-prison sentence, after serving six years of imprisonment, he was granted the August 15<sup>th</sup> Emancipation Day special amnesty due to his weak physical condition. He recalls that his prison experience changed his idea of *Minjung*. Soon afterwards, he was released and after spending some time recuperating from the long period of imprisonment, he moved to a small, peaceful rural town called Anseong and resumed his writing. Here, he experienced another deep, serious soul-searching, as he had after Jeon Tae-il's death, and he reveals this in "I Walked through a Birch Grove." In this poem Ko Un becomes his own protagonist and writes out of his own transcendental experience of becoming one with Nature; in a calm but passionate voice, he describes the successive awakening of an ecological mode of existence:

자작나무 숲으로

광혜원 이월마을에서 칠현산  
기슭에 이르기 전에  
그만 나는 영문 모를 드넓은  
자작나무 분지로 접어들었다  
누군가가 가라고 내 등을  
떠밀었는지 나는 뒤돌아보았다  
아무도 없다 다만 눈발에 익숙한  
먼 산에 대해서  
아무런 상관도 없게 자작나무숲의  
벗은 몸들이  
이 세상을 정직하게 한다 그렇구나  
겨울나무들만이 타락을 모른다  
슬픔에는 거짓이 없다

어찌 삶으로  
울지 않은 사람이 있겠느냐  
오래오래 우리나라 여자야말로  
울음이었다  
스스로 달래어온 울음이었다.

자작나무는 저희들끼리건만 찾아든  
나까지 하나가 된다  
누구나 다 여기 오지 못해도  
여기에 온 것이나 다름없이

I Walked through a Birch Grove

Before reaching the hillside of  
Mt. Chilhyeon  
in Yiwol village, Gwanghyewon,  
I set foot by chance  
in the large grove of birch trees.  
I looked behind to see  
if someone had pushed me  
to come here.  
No one was there  
except for the looming hill  
with snow flurries.  
There, indifferently,  
naked birch trees stood,  
showing the world as it is.  
Yes, only winter trees  
do not know corruption.  
There is no falsity in sorrow.  
Who has never cried  
over living?  
For a long, long time,  
crying has been women's job,  
They've consoled themselves  
by crying out loud.

Birch trees have been standing  
here by themselves.  
[Yet] They've willingly accommodated  
a visitor like me as one of them.  
Not all could come out here  
but they'd have welcomed  
if they had come.  
How beautiful they are,  
embracing each other  
and those who couldn't come as well.  
Looking at the trees, the boughs,

자작나무는 오지 못한 사람  
 하나하나와도 함께인 양 아름답다  
 나는 나무와 나뭇가지와 깊은 하늘  
 속의 우듬지의 떨림을 보며  
 나 자신에게도 세상에도 우쭐해서  
 나뭇짐 지게 무겁게 지고 싶었다  
 아니 이런 추운 곳의 적막으로  
 태어나는 눈엽이나  
 삼거리 술집의 삶은 고기처럼  
 순하고 싶었다  
 너무나 교조적인 삶이었으므로  
 미풍에 대해서도 사나웠으므로

얼마만이냐 이런 곳이야말로  
 우리에게 십여 년 만에 강렬한  
 곳이다  
 강렬한 이 경건성! 이것은 나 한  
 사람에게가 아니라  
 온 세상을 향해 말하는 것을  
 내 벽찬 가슴은 벌써 알고 있다  
 사람들도 자기가 모든 날날 중의  
 하나임을 깨달을 때가 온다  
 나는 어린 시절에 이미  
 늙어버렸다.  
 여기 와서 나는 또 태어나야 한다  
 그래서 이제 나는 자작나무의  
 천부적인 겨울과 함께  
 깨물어 먹고 싶은 어여쁨에 들떠  
 남의 어린 외동으로 자라난다

and the trembling of the treetops  
 under the dark sky  
 I wished to carry a load of firewood  
 on my back, showing it off to myself  
 and to the world.  
 No, I liked to live, obeying myself  
 to the principles of Nature  
 just like snowflakes falling in complete  
 stillness in this cold place or  
 like soft steamed pork sold at a humble  
 café in the three-way intersection.  
 For I've led such a dogmatic life, even  
 picked up a fight with a breeze.

How long has it been  
 for us to visit such a grove?  
 It's been almost ten years  
 since I set foot in this power-spot.  
 The strong spirituality!  
 It seems to transmit its divine energy  
 not just to me but also to the world.  
 I can feel it in my overwhelmed heart.  
 There'll be time for everyone to see  
 that one should live in unison  
 with the many.  
 I had myself already grown old  
 in my youth.  
 Coming out here  
 I wish I could be born again,  
 I wish I could feed myself  
 on the natural gift of winter birch trees  
 and grow up as someone's only child  
 so endeared by all neighbors  
 who want to take a bite [of its cheek.]

Forgetting about the initial trail  
 down to Gwanghyeone,  
 I headed without hesitation  
 toward the rugged track of  
 Chilhyeon hill in the winter wind.

("I Walked through a Birch Grove," *A Wind*, 86-88)

나는 광혜원으로 내려가는 길을  
 등지고 삭풍의 칠현산 험한 길로  
 서슴없이 지향했다

In the birch grove, the speaker, while looking at the naked birch trees embracing each other in the cold winter wind, is reminded of the strong pulsation of life that Korean *Mincho* (the grass roots) have so long preserved: just like birch trees, *Mincho* people haven't lost their generosity and warm natural hospitality toward others even when struggling simply to survive in the maelstrom of Korean history. Recalling their tenacity to life and inspired by their simple humanism, he realizes the democratic potentials of the *Minjung* spirit in the minds of Korean *Mincho* and determines to put behind the dogmatic Realism of 'Proletariat Literature.'

Thus, Ko Un, entering the 1980s, clearly starts walking on a new path, challenging the intellectual literati's equation of *Minjung* poetry with literature of 'the Proletariat' and explores the ways to manifest the essence of Koreanism in his new *Minjung* poetry based upon simple humanism of *Mincho*. As for his overt change in literary direction, Ko Un was criticized severely for having lost a sense of ethical duty to produce labor poetry or '*Minjung* Proletariat Poetry.' He was even viewed as having not only lost his previous poetic fire but also regressed to naive humanism. However, he considers this change not as a regression but as a necessary transition. In an interview he talks about his own opinion of "doctrinaire Realism":

I like to incorporate "what is," "what must be," and "what can be" in order to enlarge the boundary of Realism which has been limited so far to doctrinaire Realism or a kind of literary trend. . . . I think today's Realism should include psychoanalysis and even Romanticism so that it can function as something that can extend the width of the real world and the depth of human potentials. . . . We have to think about why Realism gets prosaic since the advent of Postmodernism. (Kim, Seong-woo and Won-shik 29)

By liberating Realism from the frame of ideology and abstruse speculation, Ko Un asserts that literary Realism can be re-configured as a flexible perspective to reflect the real lives of the masses of Korean *Minjung* grass roots.

Interestingly, Ko Un's re-configuration of literary Realism of *Minjung* can be understood more effectively in the context of his life-long pursuit of the *Hwaeom* Buddhist vision of life and the world. He had been a Buddhist monk before becoming a poet. Since then, he continued writing his Buddhist novel *Hwaeomgyeong* (the Avatamska Sutra) for about thirty years and finished it in 1991. To this extent, he kept walking on the road of *Hwaeom* Buddhism even if taking a side road from time to time. Generally, the *Hwaeom* Buddhist vision of life includes everything animate and inanimate in the ecology of the universe. *Hwaeom* Buddhist thinkers emphasize the notion of interdependence, as is stated in *Majjhima Nikaya*:

1. When this is present, that comes to be
2. from the arising of this, that arises.
3. When this is absent, that does not come to be
4. on the cessation of this, that ceases. (Abe 97)

According to Masao Abe, we can replace the demonstrative pronouns 'this' and 'that' with



‘bigness’ and ‘smallness’ in order to understand the statement. Then the first two lines of the statement can be rewritten as follows:

1. When bigness is present, smallness comes to be
2. from the arising of bigness, smallness arises
3. when smallness is present, bigness comes to be
4. from the arising of smallness, bigness arises. (Abe 98)

This interchangeability of ‘this’ and ‘that’ or ‘bigness’ and ‘smallness’ or ‘one’ and ‘the many’ suggests a Buddhist mode of thinking fundamentally different from the Western Hegelian dialectic notion of ‘thesis,’ ‘anti-thesis,’ and ‘synthesis.’ The Hegelian dialectic takes place step by step in a linear manner because the synthesis of the first and second steps become a thesis in the next step and then gets unified with another antithesis. There is no thesis without antithesis, no ‘one’ without ‘the many,’ and vice versa. This is the characteristic of Hegelian *Becoming*, that is, a process which essentially involves temporality. Contrary to this unidirectional nature of relatedness in the Hegelian dialectic, the *Hwaeom* Buddhist process of *Becoming* involves non-temporality. As is revealed in the reversibility of ‘this’ and ‘that,’ ‘one’ becomes ‘the many’ and vice versa in a completely reciprocal manner and without temporal succession. To put it another way, ‘one’ and ‘the many’ arise and perish at one and the same time. This “co-arising and co-ceasing” is called “co-dependent origination” (Abe 94) and signifies a non-linear, non-unilateral, non-unidirectional, non-temporal nature of *Hwaeom* interrelatedness in Buddhism. Thus in explaining the relationship between ‘one’ and ‘the many,’ the proper term to use would be ‘one in the many’ instead of ‘the many in one.’

This notion of *Hwaeom* interrelatedness, then, liberates the duality of the Holy and the Secular, Self and the Other, the Creator and the Created, and One and the Many. There is no primacy of the former over the latter. The former arises together with the latter as a dynamic whole, endlessly giving birth to and negating each other reciprocally. For instance, one’s Self appears only in the relationship with the Other; if the Other disappears, one’s Self also disappears. A poet as the creator, then, becomes ‘a poet’ and maintains his identity as such only in so far as the reader engages him as ‘a poet.’ This non-temporal recognition of one’s identity naturally leads to the awakening that the ground of our existence is “nothingness,” which is, as Abe explains, the expression a Buddhist uses to mean something that cannot be objectified temporally (64). If the ground of one’s self is nothingness, the ultimate reality of the unified whole is also nothingness. This is the *Dharma* truth that Buddhists themselves strive to reach and at the same time try to teach to laymen.

On the basis of *Hwaeom* Buddhist meditation on the relationship between ‘one’ and ‘the many,’ Ko Un does not present his poetic self as the Creator, Truth, the representative Korean Self, in other words, *Being*. Rather, as any *Hwaeom* Buddhist thinker would do, he presents himself as a Truth-effect of the poetic self or *Becoming-in-relationship*, which constantly emerges and then disappears in the relationships between him and the others in the rise and fall of Korean history. In particular, in *Ten Thousand Lives* Ko Un puts this *Hwaeom* paradox of *Becoming* into practice, incessantly making and undoing his poetic self in the act of continual naming and cataloguing various lives of Korean *Minjung* grass roots. Most importantly, unlike Western inclusive poets such as Walt Whitman, he would not presume the ‘absolute substance’ (Being) of Spirit, whether immanent or transcendent, at the outset. He would not create one

hero's journey through meeting many people toward the final Truth. He would focus on representing 'many' forms of life that manifest the 'one' nature. Just like Buddha taught "sharing rice is sharing life" and tried to enlighten and save all people, he would apply the Buddhist notion of 'all people' to the once-politically charged class name '*Minjung*' and expand its boundary large enough to contain all *Minjung* grass roots. By calling out the name of each grass root character in each poem, he would restore the beauty of each spear of *Minjung* grass roots from the amorphous mass of nameless grasses scattered on the cold ideological domain of 'Proletariat Literature.' By 2010 he had completed presenting 5,600 characters in 4,001 poems in thirty volumes. Just as a Buddhist disciplinant continues making one miniature Buddha after another as part of his discipline, he would continue to present *Minjung* grass roots to infinity, as 'ten thousand' symbolically suggests the 'numberless number' in *Hwaom* Buddhism. In this respect it is only proper to call *Ten Thousand Lives* a literary sutra, in which Ko Un, as a Buddhist disciplinant-poet, commemorates and deifies numberless *Minjung* grass roots as Bodhisattvas.

## II. Ko Un's *Hwaom Habitus* in *Ten Thousand Lives*

With new Realism combined with the *Hwaom* Buddhist vision of interrelatedness, Ko Un now redefines the role of a poet as a *Gokby* instead of *Eoreun* (a social leader). In Korean cultural tradition *Gokby* is a designated female servant who is supposed to weep on behalf of a high-born master. In the poem "Gokby" (1988), like a female servant, he desires to weep unspeakable pain and sorrow for those who survived bloody suppressions and endured insurmountable tragedies (1988):

### 곡비

조선시대 양반 녀석들 딱한 것들  
 품잡기로는 따를 자 없었다  
 그것들 우는 일조차 천한 일로 여겼었다  
 슬픔조차도 뒤에 감추고 에헬에헬 했었다  
 그래서 제 애비 죽은 마당에도  
 아이 아이 곡이나 한두 번 하는둥마는둥  
 하루내내 슬피 우는 건 그 대신 우는  
 노비였었다

오늘의 지배층 소위 오적 육적 칠적 역시  
 슬픔도 뭇도 모르고 살면서 분부를 내리겠다  
 "울음 따위는 개에게도 주지 말아라  
 그런 건 이른바 민중에게나 던져주어라  
 그 민중이나 울고불고 아이고 대고 할 일이다  
 그런 천박한 일 귀찮은 일은 내 알 바 아니야"

### Gokby

In Joseon period a Yangban fella,  
 a poor thing,  
 was accomplished in putting on airs.  
 He'd consider showing tears  
 as lowly manners  
 He'd mask his sorrow  
 by clearing his throat loudly.  
 Even when his father died  
 he'd make a short sigh 'Ah-y'  
 and let his female servant cry out loud  
 all day on his behalf.

Today's high class, those five, six, or  
 seven arch-enemies, too, give orders  
 without feeling any sorrow.  
 "Throw away crying  
 to the crowd, not to dogs  
 It's their job to wail out  
 Ah-y-go, Ah-y-go  
 Not our job to care about this vulgarity  
 or that nuisance."

When sorrow stops

하기야 슬픔이 본질적인 것이 되지 않을 때  
 울음이 말단이나 노동자에게만 머물 때  
 그런 것들이 다만 천박한 것으로만 보일 때

시인아 너야말로 그 민중과 함께  
 민중의 울음을 우는 천한 곡비이거라  
 곡비이거라

감옥의 무기수가 나에게 말했다  
 “선생님 내 인생을 노래해 주시오”  
 그 말씀 잊어버릴 때  
 나는 시인이 아니다 시인이 아니다

being something basic to humans,  
 When crying belongs  
 only to the lowliest,  
 When sorrow and crying are despised  
 as vulgarity,  
 Poet, you alone go out there  
 to the folks,  
 become a gokby,  
 become a gokby,  
 and weep their sorrow on their behalf.  
 A prison inmate serving a life sentence  
 asked me  
 “Sir, please sing my life”  
 If I forget his words  
 I am not a poet, I am no poet.

(“Gokby,” *Stars of My Homeland* 33)

In the nineteenth-century Joseon-Korea’s *Yangban* class, accomplished with pompous upper class manners, regarded showing raw emotions like ‘crying out loud’ as a sign of weakness inappropriate for their manly high class code of conduct. Thence they would often hide their sorrow in public even when a family member died: instead, they would hire a female servant to perform a role of wailing out loud so that all neighbors would know that the dead was truly beloved. The speaker compares the present day privileged few ruling class to those pretentious Yangban “fella[s]” and denounces their aloofness and indifference toward the immense pain of the masses of poor citizens. As he criticizes, they view those who cry over the death of innocent lives as simpletons who deserve less care than “dogs.” They even treat them as inanimate things by calling them “vulgarity” or “nuisance,” and without any mercy they express their sense of annoyance and impatience about doing their duty to protect such vulgar things. Appalled by the bleak reality in which basic human rights are denied and such humane feelings as sorrow, sympathy, and compassion are despised as abject vulgarity, the speaker awakens himself to one inmate’s sincere request to tell his life to others and makes a strong resolution to become a *Gokby* who is hired by the masses of common *Minjung* grass roots to weep on behalf of them.

In this respect it is quite powerful and impressive that Ko Un announces his poetic intention to represent the real lives of *Minjung* grass roots instead of promoting the class ideology of ‘Proletariat Literature’ in the poem “Inscription,” which is the opening poem of the first volume of *Ten Thousand Lives*:

## 서시

너와 나 사이  
 여기에 머나먼 별빛이 온다  
 부여땅 몇천리  
 마한 쉰네 고을마다 변한 진한  
 마을마다  
 나와 너 사이 만남이 있다  
 그 아래 하나의 마음이 되고 만  
 노래에 이르기까지  
 하나의 노래 수많은 노래로  
 흩어지기까지

이 오랜 땅에서  
 서로 헤어진다는 것은 학대이다  
 어느 누구도 저 혼자일 수는  
 없는 삶의 날들이 있다  
 오 사람은 사람과 사람  
 사이에서 기어이 사람이다

## Inscription

Here between you and me  
 arrives the star's light million years away  
 In thousands of acres of  
 the Buyeo kingdom  
 In fifty four villages of  
 the Mahan kingdom,  
 In each village of the Byeonhan  
 and the Jinhan kingdom  
 you and I had been interconnected,  
 you and I had been in one mind and  
 you and I had sung ten thousand songs  
 until one song was diffused  
 into so many melodies.

In this ancient land  
 living in division is  
 none other than living in torture.  
 In one's whole life there are days  
 that have no meaning  
 if disconnected from the others.  
 Oh, a man can be man  
 only among man and men.

(*Ten Thousand Lives*, Vol. 1, 17)

Poised between a separate individual and a poet for the masses of common people, the speaker calls out the names of the ancient kingdoms, *Buyeo*, *Mahan*, *Byeonhan*, and *Jinhan* from the third century BC and imagines a mythical space in which “I” could be “interconnected” with “you” and “I” and “You” could be united in one song which later gets “diffused into so many melodies.” Nonetheless, wishing to inherit that ‘one’ song of Korea and sing it into “ten thousand songs” of Korean people, he presents his poetic identity not as a prophet or a seer but as “a man” who can be “man only among man and men.” And his vision of Becoming-in-relationship continues in all thirty volumes of *Ten Thousand Lives*.

Ko Un's naming and cataloguing also reflect his poetic vision of Becoming. Through his act of identifying each weed's indigenous name, each nameless weed in turn comes into being as a lively Korean plant named “*Myeongaju*, *Barangyi*, *Soybirum*, *Myeonurissikye*,” and so on. Likewise, through his act of calling out the names of each nameless peddler, servant, woman, and so on, he/she in turn becomes a real Korean named “*Daegil*, *Oh Geum-dok*, *Kim She-kyu*,” and so forth. By just appellating so far ignored grasses and unrecognized people, Ko Un shows all the animate and the inanimate and all the powerful and the powerless constitute the genealogies of Korean flora, fauna, and people. In addition, by letting readers recognize a native Korean name of each grass and leading them to have a sympathy for each weed-like human life, he transmits a Whitmanesque message that “who degrades or defiles the living

human body is cursed” (Whitman 123). It seems that what Ko Un realized in the birch grove gives his version of the Korean epic a substantiality which dogmatic Realism and ‘Proletariat Literature’ could not provide. His poetic gift is, after all, to perceive everything as it is and appreciate the temporary moment in which Being is transmuted into Becoming-in-relationship.

In the Western intellectual context, Ko Un’s *Hwaeom* poetic vision manifested in *Ten Thousand Lives* could be understood in terms of what Wittgenstein indicates in *Philosophical Investigations*, that is, “a mode of investigation” that “cannot have a beginning, middle, and end” and that “cannot have organic unity, a casual, logical, sequential structure, an underlying theme or master plot” (Perloff 65). Making a comment on Fraser’s detailed recounting of the prayers to rain gods in early African culture in *The Golden Bough*, Wittgenstein pays close attention to the limitations of any given description: it may tell something but simultaneously cannot actually tell anything to readers. He suggests that if Fraser’s description can tell anything, it would be the fact that Africans’ knowledge of nature is fundamentally different from ours. Then, also feeling that his own description of Fraser as well as Fraser’s description of the Africans was only fragmentary and provisional for the same reason, Wittgenstein intimates that it would be impossible for him to produce a ‘finished’ book. What he felt about the nature of his philosophical deliberations can, according to Perloff, only be supposed in his remark, “one can only describe and say: this is what human life is like” (qtd. in Perloff 121).

Wittgenstein’s awareness of the limitation of philosophical descriptions, regardless of his original intention, could provide a platform to understand a long narrative poem that contains philosophical insights of life. For it leads readers to muse on the compatibility between philosophy and poetry: as Wittgenstein says, “philosophy ought really to be written only as a form of poetry” (*Culture* 24). In other words, when he states that “thoughts . . . proceed from one subject to another in a natural order and without break,” his philosophical descriptions read like poetry, or in Perloff’s words, “alternately anecdotal and aphoristic, repetitive and disjunctive, didactic and jokey, self-assertive and self-canceling” (66). In addition, as is suggested in the end of his preface, “I should not like to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own” (*Philosophical* vi), his concern in *Philosophical Investigations* seems, to a large extent, similar to a modernist poet’s concern to create a new language in which the collective dream to be-in-the-world can be realized. Thus, when he meditates on “the works of great masters” in *Culture and Value* and suggests that the greatness of a work of art can only be intuited in fragmentary and provisional states without being analyzed and assembled into a logical whole, it seems, as Perloff notes, that he himself *becomes* a modernist poet who struggles with the metaphysics of modern art, history, and culture.

Understanding the poetic nature of Wittgenstein’s philosophical investigation, then, yields an interesting metaphysical ramp for following the trajectory of Ko Un’s poetic imagination since in *Ten Thousand Lives* Ko Un resonates with Wittgenstein’s philosophical insight on the impossibility of achieving a logical whole. In more than four thousand poems in thirty volumes he “cannot have a beginning, middle, and end” and “cannot have organic unity, a casual, logical, sequential structure, an underlying theme or master plot” (Perloff 65). For one thing, the symbolic number of “ten thousand” suggests Ko Un’s grand philosophical design not only of representing the universe but also of letting the disjunctive, anecdotal, and insignificant

lives of Korean *Minjung* grass roots be-in-the-world. Calling out lowborn servants, peddlers, laborers, vagabonds and prostitutes, common fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, as well as highborn heroes and generals, famous Buddhist monks, dictators and presidents domestic and international, historical figures living and dead, historical places, events, even flora and fauna, Ko Un in a sense constructs what Pierre Bourdieu calls *Habitus* or a particular set of dispositions that are acquired through experiences based upon particular ethnicity, nationality, class, gender, and so on. However, by imagining many forms of life and carrying out disjunctive philosophical speculations, he suggests that the meaning of life can be intuitively captured in each fragmentary anecdote of life. In addition, by describing ‘one’ life after another in a unending record of ‘the many’ lives of Korean *Minjung* grass roots, he meditates on the beauty of ever-arising lotus flowers of Vairocana Buddha on the muddy surface of Korean history. Then, the greatness of *Ten Thousand Lives* can only be intuited in a fragmentary and provisional philosophical nature of Ko Un’s poetic investigation of Becoming that resists being analyzed and assembled into one logical whole or Being.

Let’s take a look at how Ko Un contemplates the lowly character Bullye’s life in “Blind Bullye” which is one of his most outstanding lyrical poems.

소경 분례

젓정지 문중안이딸  
세살 때 소경 되어  
스물일곱살 먹어도 누가 데려가야지  
늘 툇마루 걸레질이나 하며  
늙은 부모 굶은 허리로 일 나가면  
집이나 보는데  
볼 것도 없는 집이나 보는데

그런 때 짓곳은 아이들 풍뎡이 잡아다  
떡 하나 줄께 입 벌려봐  
하고 풍뎡이 넣고 도망친다

또 그런 때 짓곳은 동네 어른 스며들어와  
앞 못보는 분례 슬슬 건드린다  
어찌 이렇게 잘도 생겼어 하고  
젓가슴에 손 넣어 지랄하고  
치맛단 들춰보다가  
그것만은 짚끔 막는다  
하지만 소리 한번 안 지르고  
그런 짓 저런 짓 견디며 고요하다

그런 어른  
그런 짐승  
정신 차리고 돌아가면  
그때서야 혼자 눈물 흘린다

소경 눈에도 눈물 있어  
눈물 한 방울 흘린다  
거미 내려와 끈은 거미줄 끝에 매달려 뽀작하지

Blind Bullye

Over in Chaetjonji, Mun Chong-an’s daughter  
went blind when she was two.  
Twenty-six now, she hasn’t been courted.  
All day long wiping narrow parquet floor  
or guarding the old cottage  
with nothing to lose.  
She would stay at home while her old parents  
worked in the field with their bent backs.  
Sometimes little scallywags caught a beetle  
and came in ask:  
“Want some rice-cake? Open wide!”  
They’d toss the beetle into her mouth  
and run away.  
Other times, lecherous neighbors sneaked in  
and made advances to blind Bullye.  
Saying “Oh my, how pretty you are,”  
they’d go on fondling her breast or  
fumbling around the hem of her skirt.  
Startled, she’d block off the worst  
while putting up with this and that.  
But she’d suppress a cry  
in complete silence.  
When those adults,  
those brutes, rather,  
felt sore and went back home,  
only then, alone, she’d shed tears.  
From her blind eyes down came  
a single tear drop, which is dangling  
like a spider spooling down

않는다

and hanging still at the tip.

*(Ten Thousand Lives, Vol. 4, 90)*

In this poem Ko Un brings in an ethnic character “Bullye” to imagine a Korean woman’s life filled with predicaments and sorrow. Yet he adds a universal motif of blindness to the already shared negative socio-cultural associations the name “Bullye” carries, so that he could present this ethnic female character not only as a universal human being who goes through physical hardships but also as a symbol to suggest a painful irony between seeing and being blind. Twenty-six-year-old Bullye, although blind since the age of two, tries to prove her usefulness by doing her best in living, always “wiping narrow parquet floor” and “guard[ing] the old cottage with nothing to lose.” Without any adults who can protect her, however, she has been harassed psychologically as well as physically by brute neighbors, blinded by their cruel and lustful desires. In the first half of the poem, thus, blind Bullye is presented as doubly tormented: she is not only socially disgraced but also sexually disadvantaged. However, in the latter half of the poem Ko Un reveals how she can see everything with her mind’s eye and also judges that those adults are only “brutes” below the level of human beings. At the same time, he lets readers see with their mind’s eye that she is strong enough to put up with every humiliating act of neighbors by “suppressing a cry in complete silence” and that only when all those brutes disappear, “alone, she’d shed tears.” By contrasting the abject being Bullye with the powerful neighbors, Ko Un ultimately questions what it means to ‘see’ and who is really blind: even if she survives long years of unspeakable harassment and pain and sometimes sheds tears over her unchangeable conditions of being, she must have reached a mature perspective on life, so that she can see through such painful experiences and stoically accept her fate of living among ‘blind’ neighbors. Finally, overlapping the image of mature Bullye with a spider which spools out a thread from its own body and acrobatically hangs at the tip of the thread, Ko Un gives readers an intimation of Bullye’s Becoming-in-relationship: now she is not just a blind ethnic girl but a true artist of life who knows how to control her innermost emotions and sheds only one tear drop instead of many.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that Ko Un is a national poet who has been respected as “the greatest poet in the history of modern Korean literature,” “the greatest nationalist poet,” or “the highest peak of critical realism” (Lee Gyeong-su 91). Ko Un’s greatness, however, should be evaluated in the whole poetic journey he made since the 1950s to the present because he is one of those who would carry modern Korean poetry forward in terms of his epic purpose and new *Minjung* poetics. Literary critic Yom Moo-woong once acclaimed Ko Un’s consistent passion to speak up for Korean grass roots, saying “the trickle of Ko Un’s humble resolution forms a little pool, then a river in *The Poems of the Pastoral*, and finally reaches the vast sea in *Ten Thousand Lives*” (136). Ko Un’s constant seeking for *Minjung* seems to have led him to achieve something specifically grown out of the nucleus of Korean *Minjung* experiences in his poetic career. That ‘something’ might be called the authentic Korean epic, since he has called out the name of each individual from the amorphous masses of *Minjung* grass roots, has given each character a literary form and thus a form of life, and then has woven their lives together into a cultural history of Korea in *Ten Thousand Lives*. Nevertheless, that ‘something’ is not limited only to the Koreans. Just as Buddha sent forth universal messages of life in *Hwaomgyeong* (the Avatamska Sutra), Buddhist monk-turned-poet Ko Un has sung the universal epic for all people,

tackling the problems of ‘five desires and seven passions’<sup>3</sup> of human beings in *Ten Thousand Lives*. In his grand literary sutra a local individual Korean is transformed into an active universal agent who would accept his own fate, trace the footsteps of the previous generations, and project his future in the universal principle of Becoming-in-relationship.

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<sup>3</sup> In Buddhism human beings live in bondage to five desires (wealth, fame, appetite, sleep, and lust) and seven passions (joy, anger, sorrow, pleasure, love, evil, and desire).



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## Should the History Lecture Be Ancient History?

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Professors who are familiar with the most recent developments in what has come to be called "the scholarship of teaching and learning" are doubtless aware that the lecture commands less and less respect as a method of instruction. Historian Daniel Trifan is clearly correct in arguing that the single most basic assertion by "proponents of active learning" is the notion that "lecturing is counterproductive."<sup>1</sup> And Craig Lambert has gone so far as to call his widely read attack on this traditional practice "Twilight of the Lecture."<sup>2</sup> Even writers who freely concede that the lecture is unlikely to disappear any time soon often sound resigned, rather than committed, to its continued existence. Fairly typical of this view is the observation that the primary advantage of the lecture is "instructor-student ratio."<sup>3</sup> So lecturing will continue because it is a relatively cheap, if ineffective, way to process many students through large undergraduate courses. In view of the financial stresses confronting American colleges and universities, that's simply the way it is.

Is the lecture really a dead man walking? Is its continued use something of which we should be deeply ashamed? Or are the reports of the death of the lecture greatly exaggerated?

It does seem quite clear from many recent studies that lectures are not an effective means of conveying factual information to students, because they will not retain much of it, can't draw practical applications from what they have heard, and often are not good at taking notes.<sup>4</sup> McKeachie freely concedes this point, as nearly every experienced lecturer would, but argues that conveying factual information is not the only purpose for which a lecture can be used. In other words, "lectures can still be useful."<sup>5</sup> To say that they are not useful for every purpose is not to say that they are not useful for any purpose.

It might be helpful, at this juncture, to remember that the effectiveness of alternative methods recommended by advocates of "active learning" has not been conclusively demonstrated. This is the mainspring of Daniel Trifan's offensive against critics of the lecture; why, he asks, should we be expected to "abandon a technique of proven value in favor of one whose utility remains essentially unproven"?<sup>6</sup> And Bodo von Borries concluded, after an extensive survey of the history knowledge of European students taught by a variety of methods across the continent, that 'open,' 'innovative,' 'modern,' 'student-centered,' and 'autonomous'

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel D. Trifan, "Active Learning: A Critical Examination," in *Perspectives on Teaching Innovations: Teaching to Think Historically*, ed. Susan W. Gillespie (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1999), 69.

<sup>2</sup> Craig Lambert, "Twilight of the Lecture," *Harvard Magazine* (March-April 2012): 23-27.

<sup>3</sup> Zdeslav Hrepic, Dean A. Zollman, and N. Sanjay Rebello, "Comparing Students' and Experts' Understanding of the Content of a Lecture," *Journal of Science Education and Technology* 16, no.3 (June 2007): 213.

<sup>4</sup> On this point see Lambert (2012) and Hrepic, Zollman, and Rebello (2007).

<sup>5</sup> Wilbert J. McKeachie, *McKeachie's Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research and Theory for College and University Teachers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 53.

<sup>6</sup> Trifan (1999), 69.

strategies of teaching history cannot be shown empirically to be superior to more traditional ones. At present, the opposite is perilously close to the truth.<sup>7</sup>

This is not the conclusion that Borries anticipated or wanted; in fact he found these results "a bit dissatisfying, but this is not the first time they have surfaced."<sup>8</sup> If we are to discard the lecture because it has demonstrable defects, how much confidence can we have in the proposed replacements?

The arguments against the lecture offered by its critics are so vehement as to make it appear unlikely that anyone has ever learned anything from a lecture. Yet every professor who reads these arguments heard plenty of lectures as an undergraduate and somehow managed to become an educated person. We remember some of our professors as much better lecturers than others. And we have all experienced occasions when at least some of our students clearly did learn something from our lectures. So at our present state of secure knowledge about what works in the classroom, common sense might seem to dictate that we use lectures for the tasks which they can accomplish and not for the tasks they can't, finding ways to make the students who hear our lectures participate more actively in their own learning, and turn to other methods of instruction for the tasks that are not suitable to the lecture format. It was, as Sam Wineburg notes, the Bradley Commission of 1987 "that launched the current reform movement in history education."<sup>9</sup> And one of its most important recommendations was that teachers "select from a mix of teaching methods and techniques."<sup>10</sup> So, at least until a provably better method of accomplishing the same objectives presents itself, why shouldn't the lecture be included in that mix?

### What *can* lectures do well?

Many historians who have pondered the problems of history instruction in the past twenty years have concluded that the biggest problem of all may be the simplistic view of history that most students, and indeed some teachers, possess: what happened in the past can be set down as a series of "facts" that require memorization for the exam, and nothing more. In Wineburg's study of how students approach primary documents, he found that they failed to look for advocacy, intention, and underlying assumptions in these texts.

For students, reading history was not a process of puzzling about authors' intentions or situating texts in a social world but of gathering information, with texts serving as bearers of information.<sup>11</sup>

This is not to say that knowing the facts doesn't matter. As Trifan points out, knowledge of the basic facts about "what happened" is essential to understanding history.<sup>12</sup> But facts alone, taken

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<sup>7</sup> Bodo von Borries, "Methods and Aims of Teaching History in Europe," in *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives*, ed. Peter N. Stearns, Peter Seixas, and Sam Wineburg (New York: New York University, 2000), 256-7.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>9</sup> Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 2001), 8.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

<sup>11</sup> Wineburg (2001), 76.

<sup>12</sup> Trifan (1999), 70.

out of context, do not explain anything. It is here that an interdisciplinary approach can be an invaluable aid, not only to demonstrating how complicated the achievement of historical understanding can be, but also to establishing ways to achieve that understanding. "At its heart," says historian Sam Wineburg, "historical understanding is an interdisciplinary enterprise, and nothing less than a multidisciplinary approach will approximate its complexity."<sup>13</sup> A lecture can model the ways in which the perspectives of the social sciences, the insights obtainable from literature and the arts, and evidence afforded by the "hard" sciences can enlighten the past for us. What does social psychology tell us about the response of individuals to authority? How did European writers react to the French Revolution, and how did their views change over time? Why did people in the Middle Ages see the world in a way profoundly different from ours? How do literary accounts by veterans of the trenches of World War I differ from the official accounts of what happened on the battlefields, and why? Do the primate studies of physical anthropology give us insights on crowd behavior? Our students are very unlikely to raise such questions spontaneously in even the liveliest of discussion sections. But professors can raise them in a lecture, and demonstrate in the process the advantages and difficulties of using these ideas in our interpretation of historical events.

Social change is one of the most important phenomena studied by historians, and by its very nature it invites an interdisciplinary approach. This does not mean that the vast messy details of history should be crammed into constricting molds so they can be made to appear to fit the requirements of some grand theory. But it does mean that the ways in which culture is maintained and passed down from generation to generation are very relevant to the study of change over time. In a lecture it is possible to consider the ways in which a theory of social change elucidates the events being studied. Perhaps more importantly, it is also possible to consider the ways in which it does not. What criteria would be used? Here students have an opportunity to see the mind of a historian at work. In the same way, Peter Stearns urges historians to discuss with their students the issue of periodization.<sup>14</sup> Students may be annoyed by the revelation that most historians don't consider the year 1800 particularly significant, and that there are spirited disagreements as to whether "the Long Nineteenth Century" begins in 1776, in 1789, or in some other year. But when the nature of the disagreement has been well explained, they can see that different assumptions about the character of the century and the nature of the changes experienced by people of this period are involved, and that these differing assumptions underlie different interpretations. History is complicated, but students have to be shown, not told, that it is. And the lecture is the ideal setting in which to show it.

In Joseph Lowman's appreciation of what lectures do well, he particularly emphasizes their motivational potential. "Good lectures," he says, "are very difficult to ignore. They are, above all else, *engaging*."<sup>15</sup> Although critics of the lecture often deplore the short attention span of students attending one, Lowman asserts that the students' minds probably wander even more when they are doing assigned reading.<sup>16</sup> (My experience tells me he has this right, unless the lecturer in question is unusually tedious.) A lecturer who displays a passionate commitment to her subject matter can be extremely effective at holding the attention of a class, particularly if

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<sup>13</sup> Wineburg (2001), 52.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Stearns, "Thinking Historically: Challenges and Solutions," in *Perspectives on Teaching Innovations: Teaching to Think Historically* (1999), 25.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Lowman, *Mastering the Techniques of Teaching* 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), 134.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

she uses arresting examples, appropriate anecdotes, and striking visual images. Indeed, cognitive research on learning clearly supports this practice in terms not just of performance but of retention as well. "Like most of us, college students remember images longer than they remember words, and instructors can aid recall by pairing abstract content with emotionally tinged associations and vivid images wherever possible."<sup>17</sup>

While it is true that students are better able to process information in written form than from lectures, McKeachie points out that their ability to understand what they read can be limited by their ability to distinguish the context into which they need to place this information. He therefore sees it as vital that a lecturer provide "an orientation and conceptual framework" that students can use in understanding what they read.<sup>18</sup> Without any sense of the "narrative arc" they need for understanding, students can walk into a discussion class having read the assignment but unable to demonstrate that they have done so.

Several of the works listed in the references offer lists of the things that lectures do particularly well.<sup>19</sup> But the effectiveness of lectures in achieving any of these goals is highly dependent on how actively students think about what they are seeing and hearing. This brings up the specter that haunts all critiques of lecturing: the totally passive student who attends and yet does not learn. Must we accept this passivity as an inevitable consequence of using lectures as an instructional method?

### **Is "active learning" possible during a lecture?**

There is no requirement that a lecture be an uninterrupted monologue. Linda Nilson offers quite a number of means an instructor can use to insert breaks for activities that require active participation by students, if only for a few minutes.<sup>20</sup> Students can, for example, be asked to take a quiz, to confer with one or more classmates on the correct solution to a problem, or to write a "minute paper." Minute papers are well regarded by many of the writers whose opinions on teaching are discussed in this essay, even by Daniel Trifan, arguably the most skeptical of any of them about the value of pedagogical innovation.<sup>21</sup> In my experience this assignment can serve many useful purposes. At the very least, minute papers are a quick and easy way to take attendance at a large lecture, if you wish to do so; students are instructed to toss them into a basket on their way out of the auditorium. And they can certainly be of use to students, as well as to faculty. Early in the semester, for example, the instructor can halt a lecture in progress to say, "Look over your notes and answer the following question." This gives students a chance to evaluate how well they are taking notes. Or the lecturer can ask, "If I were to ask you one question on our upcoming exam about this lecture, what do you think that question would be?" If an important theory or concept with which students typically have trouble has been explained, then students can be asked for an application of the idea or an additional example, possibly with a brief opportunity to talk it over with their seatmates before they commit themselves in writing. ("I have explained how agriculture can be part of a traditional, a command, or a market

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>18</sup> McKeachie (2002), 52.

<sup>19</sup> See particularly Lowman (1995), 143-4; McKeachie (2002), 53; and Nilson (2003), 95.

<sup>20</sup> Linda B. Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors* 2nd ed. (Bolton, Mass.: Anker Publishing Co., 2003), 98-100.

<sup>21</sup> Trifan (1999), 72.

economy. Can you give an example how a restaurant would operate under each of these three systems?") In the same way, students can be asked which of two possible interpretations discussed in the lecture seems to them more convincing, or why in their view the people involved in an anecdote just related behaved the way they did.

Although a lecture is certainly not a seminar, assignments like these can help to foster the development of essential skills. In its statement on "High Impact Practices" that have been demonstrated to improve learning outcomes, the American Association of Colleges and Universities notes in its discussion of the freshman seminar that "The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies."<sup>22</sup> Many of the students enrolled in courses that use the lecture are underclassmen, and it stands to reason that being asked during lectures to work out and write down applications of the type discussed above, sometimes in collaboration with seatmates, will benefit them in the same way.

Students can also be asked, either by writing a minute paper or by speaking aloud, to react to images used in a lecture. Lowman is undoubtedly correct in his view that strong emotional reactions to images and anecdotes make students likelier to remember the content of a lecture. "Birmingham Sunday" has always been part of my lecture on Social Change, but I found that adding photographs of the four little girls who died that day dramatically increased the number of students who thought to write about violence in exam questions about the Civil Rights Movement. When I pause to ask students for their response to this part of the lecture, that response is always powerful. The same is true of images from "Der Krieg," the graphic portrayal by German artist Otto Dix of the experience of the trench soldier on the Western Front. Students find these images stunning and always respond to them, often mentioning them again in exam essays on World War I.

If carefully selected, a piece of music, a poem, a vivid image, or a striking anecdote can be useful ways to "switch gears" in a lecture. This functions as a change of pace. It can also help students to see a difficult concept from a different angle and make them likelier to remember it. In all of these ways, and no doubt in others, students can be drawn into the experience of the lecture as active participants. We can always find ways to improve the ability of our lectures to enable student learning. But we don't have to accept the lecture as a necessary evil, excused only by its cost-effectiveness. In the words of Joseph Lowman, "The lecture also survives because at its best it can be *magnificent*."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*, by George D. Kuh (AAC&U, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> Lowman (1995), 130.

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**An Interview with Catherine Tumber, author of *Small, Gritty, and Green: The Promise of America's Smaller Industrial Cities in a Low-Carbon World***

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A Boston-based historian and journalist, Catherine Tumber holds a Ph.D. from the University of Rochester, where she studied with the distinguished social critic and intellectual historian Christopher Lasch. She here discusses her most recent book, *Small, Gritty, and Green: The Promise of America's Smaller Industrial Cities in a Low-Carbon World* (The MIT Press, 2012). The volume is an engaging and lucid defense of the importance of small industrial cities to a greener and more economically stable America.

CKC: You have published in many areas as a scholar and on many topics as a journalist. Your last book was about Gilded Age feminism and popular spirituality. Are there connections between that project and this one?

CT: It may seem obscure, but yes, I bring consistent preoccupations to my work. Coming of age in the 1970s, I was deeply influenced by the notion of limits to growth, the whole idea of finding appropriate scale and proportion in a culture that celebrates growth for its own sake, and equates it with moral progress. This cultural propensity was and remains true across the political spectrum. My last book (*American Feminism and the Birth of New Age Spirituality*) was concerned with a form of therapeutic spirituality, akin to ancient Gnosticism, that promoted the idea of no limits—spirituality as an endlessly progressive task, an endless process of personal transformation—the nineteenth century antecedent to what we now call new age spirituality. What interested me was that this form of spirituality sought to exceed all metaphysical limits on human aspirations. For them—I call them Gnostic feminists—spiritual growth rid the world of disease, death, all forms of human contingency. The book distinguishes between Gnostic feminism, which embraced a radically subjective version of the moral self, and other prevalent forms of idealism and pietism, and I argue that it was a fascinating, if disturbing and ineffectual response to the disruptions of public life by large corporate institutions after the Civil War. It captured *in extremis* the disfiguration of both private and public life that remains a hallmark of our culture today. My new book is related in the sense that we have developed a similar discourse of endless growth about cities. Influential urban economists and theorists, people like Richard Florida and Edward Glaeser, who recently published a successful book called *The Triumph of the City*, have developed a theory about post-industrial cities that claims that successful cities will and should grow ever bigger and agglomerate into mega regions. They argue that we should encourage this concentrated growth both on sustainable grounds and on grounds of culture—the alleged cultural superiority of the creative class and “talent.” I was concerned that this argument perpetuated a fifty year process of abandoning smaller cities—particularly smaller industrial cities—to such an extent that they were not even seen as cities anymore. The whole debate about urbanism and the future of urban life has now become organized around two poles: the small town and the metropolis, and smaller cities, particularly smaller industrial cities, were just dropped out of the conversation. It seems to me that this is yet another iteration of our tendency to view growth and what Louis Brandeis called “the cult of



“bigness” as inherently good and to equate it with moral progress. There is a place for urban “bigness”—I don’t want to be misunderstood—and I love big cities. I live in one. But for all kinds of reasons that I lay out in my books, there should also be a place in our economy and culture for smaller cities. And I don’t mean small towns.

CKC: What would you say are the roots of the megalopolis *versus* small town dyad that governs our thinking about cities? Where does that come from?

CT: It arose after World War II, when full-on suburbanization changed the subject, and it gained traction with Jane Jacobs’s paradigm altering *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, published in 1961. When you look at earlier literature on urbanism, there are all kinds of books on urban planning for small and mid-sized cities. Sociologists were especially preoccupied with the smaller industrial city as a type because it was a relatively new urban form. They had appeared very suddenly and grown very quickly beginning in the 1880s and through the 1920s in this country, and a bit earlier in England. So you had people like the sociologists Robert and Helen Lynd, who wrote *Middletown*, an ethnographic study of Muncie, Indiana, which they very clearly labeled a study of the “typical small American city.” Today, even scholars who should know better refer to it as a study of a small town. That alone underscores how invisible smaller cities have become. C. Wright Mills wrote about small industrial cities at length, but he’s not known for that anymore. It was one of his primary preoccupations. In his work on the rise of salaried workers, *White Collar*, one of the things he looks at is their effect on small cities. Their loyalties, he argued, were to distant corporate entities based in big cities, and as a result their presence affected the civic infrastructure of smaller cities—mainly for the worse. And then there’s Sinclair Lewis, best known for *Babbitt* and *Main Street*. *Babbitt* and most of his other novels are set in small industrial cities, and explore their culture and economic competition with the Big City. We’ve lost sight of all of that. It changed after the war, as smaller industrial cities began to fall on hard times. Jacobs’s *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, along with her later work, hastened urbanists’ neglect of smaller industrial cities. In response to the effect of suburbanization on cities—which caused a true urban crisis—Jacobs focused our attention on the metropolis, and pointedly ignored smaller industrial cities. Since then, urbanists have cut their intellectual eye teeth on her work. As much as there is to admire in Jacobs, we can attribute the invisibility of smaller cities in urban theory partly to her ground-breaking work.

CKC: In pondering relations between your last book and this one, I thought of Henry James, about the moment in *Daisy Miller* when her brother declares he is from Schenectady, as if everyone in Switzerland will know where and how important this place is and have some notion of its social world. It is another example of these things that are disappearing. Not even the brother knows where Schenectady is anymore.

CT: These kinds of cities were regularly invoked throughout our earlier literature, and you rarely see it anymore. A recent exception is Richard Russo’s *Empire Falls*, which illuminates life in a failing industrial town in 1980s Maine.

CKC: One of the strengths of your most recent book is that you bring to it not just wide reading from a lot of disciplines, and not just the skills that a historian in academia would have, but also those skills of someone who knows something about activism and knows something about

journalism and has practiced these many callings in different sorts of ways, in different sorts of combinations. Do you think that a combination of approaches is necessary to discovering solutions to today's big questions? Do the old disciplines no longer serve as problem-solving approaches? Can we be just a sociologist or just a historian anymore?

CT: I'm of two minds on this question. On one hand, I believe it's important to preserve disciplinary practices and specialized bodies of knowledge, and not to dilute them. But, I also think that academics don't do a very good job of integrating specializations into broader intellectual and civic contexts. Many fail to do this in the ways that they write or in the ways that they teach, others in the ways that they understand their intellectual obligations to a broader civic project. I don't think the answer is necessarily to be an activist. I think that, in our time, higher education has a distinct role to play in a rounded democratic culture and the transmission of meaningful knowledge from one generation to the next, and that getting too far away from that mission risks turning higher ed into an anti-intellectual project. That said, there are some disciplines and certain subjects within disciplines that lend themselves to activism more than others. I do think this is an important conversation to be having. We should be reluctant to trade a medieval history position, for example, for a practicum in community organizing.

CKC: In the back of my head here is the debate about the public intellectual. Should they be part of the university world or should they be their own creature? Are they incompatible with academia?

CT: I think there should be room for both, and academia does not provide well for that, for the broader intellectual life of its faculty. One of the ways that shows up is that universities tend to frown on writing for a broader educated audience. If you don't publish in a specialized journal, you probably are not going to get tenure and so forth. It's not seen as anything that advances your case, and oftentimes, it's a detriment. I think that's intellectually stultifying and maybe even psychologically disfiguring. A faculty member should be able to walk both paths—to be a specialist engaged with other specialists with deep subject area knowledge and to be conversant with a general public—and to be rewarded for it.

CKC: Could you speculate a little bit? You emphasize alternative energy and land use as pressing concerns of which smaller cities may be best positioned to take advantage as they reposition themselves, redefine themselves, and recover. You also discuss various examples of steps being taken to enact programs in these areas. Do you have a sense of how many of the cities you looked at are on the right track at some level?

CT: I can't really quantify it. Since I reported and did the research for this book, in 2009-10, many more smaller industrial cities developing a vision of what they should do are taking a multi-pronged approach, by trying to curb sprawl while revitalizing their neighborhoods. Many of these cities have been shrinking, in some cases losing half their populations since the 1960s. They're focusing on tearing down abandoned properties and replacing them with parkland and urban agriculture projects and systematically shrinking their urban footprints, but no one's been able to do this yet. It will require a huge amount of political will. Invariably, in neighborhoods that are basically abandoned, there are one or two people who still live there, often older African-Americans who remember the ravages of 1960s-era urban renewal when the working poor,

primarily minorities, were forced out of their neighborhoods to make way for urban highways and new housing. Cities have to walk very delicately with plans for cutting off the services of current residents. That's what shrinking the urban footprint really involves—no snowplowing, no mail service, no road maintenance, no water, and no electricity. Most of these places are trying to do a number of things in tandem, such as revitalizing the still-functioning neighborhoods and doing what they can to repurpose old brownfield sites so that when work comes back to the city there will be places to put it, so that companies aren't tempted to move out further away from the urban job base. Most of these places are also situated on waterways, thanks to older, nineteenth-century forms of water-borne transportation. So many of these cities are taking advantage of that and doing more to integrate walkability, bike paths, urban density and transit-oriented development with their riverfronts, making their downtowns more appealing to residents and businesses alike. They also happen to sit on some of the richest farmland on earth. More and more people in these smaller metro areas are beginning to understand that it is counterproductive to sprawl into that land, especially as they become more aware of food systems and food security as we enter a period of global warming. They may very well need that land to produce food. The local food movement has really taken root in many of these places far more than it had three years ago. As I've been revisiting these cities while promoting my book, I've found that the local culture has changed quite a bit, that public officials and philanthropic leaders see the economic advantages of sustainable practices, that they're not just some impractical countercultural throwback. The other thing that's starting to happen is that the suburbs, which have traditionally looked away from the city and aligned their interests with nearby rural areas, viewed as an amenity or as developable land, are now viewing their interests as more aligned with the city. It's discussed as a reappraisal of the city, of urban life, particularly among the millennial generation. They really are beginning to move back to these places. It's not just happening in New York or Chicago. So there's more affordable housing being built and renovated in the neighborhoods and the downtowns. In the neighborhoods, too, there is quite a bit of community activism that has contributed to the stabilization of these neighborhoods. There's been a lot of effort with federal funding and affordable housing initiatives to stabilize long-neglected neighborhoods, victims of industrial and urban disinvestment over the past fifty years, and to make them safer. Community gardens and urban agriculture have played a significant role in stabilizing neighborhoods in these cities, and public officials are paying more attention to that. All that said, while urban agriculture might, for example, help with a family's expenses and bring in extra income, none of these efforts will bring badly needed jobs to these cities or make suburban jobs accessible.

CKC: The cities you discuss are largely post-industrial. What was the role of organized labor, of unions, in the decline of these cities, and what should their role be in these cities' revival? What role does organized labor play in what you are proposing?

CT: I've been looking at organized labor in terms of the history and future of manufacturing in these cities and workforce education and development. Unions on their own had little if anything to do with white flight, but they didn't discourage it. After all, the industrial unions were not very receptive to issues of racial equality during the postwar period, and the construction trades, in particular, had much to gain economically from suburbanization. Frankly, federal suburbanization policy—with its highway development and its write-offs for new commercial and residential construction, which were unavailable to mom-and-pop stores and

older urban real estate—represented a wholesale affirmative action policy for second-generation white immigrants. Union bosses did nothing, as far as I can tell, to challenge this. As far as today is concerned, there has been an uptick in U.S. manufacturing. Over the past thirty or so years, neoliberal political and corporate leaders have assumed that American manufacturing is gone forever, that all those jobs have been outsourced or automated, and they're never coming back. My newer work explores evidence that manufacturing work *is* coming back and pays attention to what this could mean to smaller industrial cities—how they could attract it in ways both economically and environmentally sustainable in the age of global warming. It's coming back in different forms. We probably won't have the huge factories providing lots of low-skill jobs that built the middle class in the twentieth century. One thing I'm looking at is the crucial role the unions have played in educating their members. In the great anti-union drive of our times, which stresses the cost of wages and benefits, unions' educative role is rarely discussed. They had these well-developed skills training programs, journeyman and apprenticeship programs, and as the unions are stripped out, that educational structure is stripped out too. I'll give you an example. I was in Muncie, Indiana a few months ago. A subsidiary of Caterpillar, which is notoriously anti-union, decided to move a locomotive plant that had been in London, Ontario. The union in London was still intact; they were paying workers something like \$35 per hour. Building locomotives requires very highly skilled welding, and these guys had been at it for all of their lives, and were passing their skills on to the younger generations. So Caterpillar went to the trouble of moving this work to Muncie, which is desperate for jobs, and they renovated a big plant, put a lot of money into that capital expense, and had a job fair. Nobody had the welding skills they needed. Nobody. And they were paying \$14 an hour, so there was little incentive to get the skills or for skilled workers to move to Muncie. So they had to turn to the community college system, and pull an old welder out of retirement, to teach their people. I talked with this welder, and he said something like, "what kills me is they seem to think you can teach these people these skills in six months or a year, and that's all it takes to make locomotives. It doesn't work that way." It requires practice and skilled supervision over time, and the stakes are really high. As manufacturing is beginning to reshore, unions are paying more attention to where the plants are located. I just recently visited a Jeep plant outside of Toledo, where the union negotiated for making sure that the plant wouldn't be located more than fifty miles from the city center. It's part of the contract. I find that promising, and a model worth emulating.

CKC: I am interested in what you write about Muncie and industry investment. It seems that most of the companies investing there are foreign. You point out that the neoliberal assumption is that America's economy should be a knowledge economy, and you argue that this assumption will prove a hurdle to the revivification of manufacturing in the United States.

CT: The strategy has been to position the U.S. as a global leader in innovation and the so-called knowledge economy, and that you can separate high-profit innovation from the work of manufacturing—while paying much lower wages in the developing world. It's supposed to be a win-win, in neoliberal-speak. But it's becoming increasingly clear that you can't so easily separate knowledge work from manufacturing, that much innovation takes place on or near the shop floor. One of the reasons why these smaller industrial cities failed is because many of them were one- or two-industry towns, and once those industries started to falter, the cities faltered, too. I think that they're in a good position to develop a diversified economic portfolio that

includes manufacturing and manufacturing-based innovation, but also more locally controlled agriculture, services, and retail.

CKC: In your book, you talk about relocalization. How involved should, or must, federal funding or oversight be in terms of promoting initiatives, providing tax incentives, and so forth? Is this something that should be locally driven? Would it be better to have some top-down push at this point?

CT: It would be helpful to have a clearly articulated national industrial investment strategy, instead of leaving it all to the market—which isn't really all that free, in the end, but driven by lobbyists and their congressional manservants. Since Reagan, many of these decisions are also passed along to states and localities. They get some direction from the federal government, particularly with regard to housing, but they are given a lot more discretion than they were before the Reagan years. That said, this arrangement also gives people interested in restoring greater local control for the sake of the public good levers they can use for restoring the wealth of local communities. The Institute for Local Self-Reliance, which has a useful website, does a great job of researching and promoting such efforts. Much of our current retail economy sucks wealth out of communities and puts it into large corporate structures. All the high-level management and service people—the lawyers, the publicists, the advertising and marketing people—are located in other places, generally big-city firms. So when you spend money at Wal-Mart, Best Buy, Olive Garden or the like, community wealth is drained off rather than distributed among local service providers and suppliers. The political and economic levers are in place to address the problem, but most communities lack the political will to take advantage of them. It's a tough upward fight, since local economies must compete on an unlevel playing field. They lack the economies of scale and tax breaks routinely doled out to large, corporate “job creators.” Still, I've encountered more and more people in smaller industrial cities who see that they are disproportionately hurt economically by these arrangements.

CKC: You emphasize the importance of good public schools to the revitalization of faltering communities. One of the success stories you discuss is that of Raleigh, North Carolina. Why did you not take on Southern cities in the book? How translatable is Raleigh to Rochester?

CT: I had to draw the line somewhere. Historically, most American industrial cities are in the Northeast and the Midwest. Yet there's no reason much of my argument couldn't apply to a smaller industrial city anywhere in the country. My discussion of public education focuses on the advantages of smaller scale to overcoming the legacy of racial, socioeconomic inequity, so there the “industrial” piece is somewhat irrelevant.

CKC: You talk about state level support for research centers as a way to promote regional growth. Do you think the university has any particular role to play in helping regional growth? Does the academy offer something that research facilities run primarily by the government or corporations cannot provide?

CT: Well, the university has had a deep funding relationship with the military-industrial complex, as President Eisenhower called it, since at least World War II—at least in the sciences and engineering. That was one of the student radicals' big grievances in the 1960s. Today,

proportionately more research is done at universities, with public and corporate support, as well as venture capital, and less is done in-house by government or business. It is not, however, quite as driven by military needs as before. Think of pharmaceuticals, the genome project, advances in solar and other forms of clean energy technology. Much of this is university based. In any case, regionalism is important to smaller industrial cities in all kinds of ways that I discuss in my book. In this context, some states have worked with their university systems to develop research specialties for each of their campuses, specialties usually grounded in the industrial history and legacy knowledge of the host city. This funneling limits competition for faculty, students and funding, while strengthening the larger metro economic region and (it is hoped) attracting private industry in their specific field. So in Syracuse, historic home of Carrier air-conditioners, the local universities concentrate on green building technology and air-quality systems; down the road, in Rochester (of Kodak and Bausch and Lomb fame), they focus on photonics and optics. Universities bring other strengths to smaller industrial cities, and their presence can make a world of difference both economically and culturally. For one thing, they are what are called anchor institutions, with jobs that cannot be outsourced. In many of these cities, healthcare and educational institutions are the dominant employers, and have played a big role in stabilizing their host neighborhoods and even other parts of the city. Because they are centers of learning, they contribute to the intellectual life of the cities and to the arts. In some cities you see universities collaborating with community colleges to develop programs for skills that working people need, programs for people who don't have the money for or any interest in going to college, but want skills suited to today's higher-tech economy. For example, Ball State in Muncie is now working with the local community college system to coordinate the engineering side of the work with the workforce training side of the work. That arrangement between the community colleges and the university is one of the reasons the companies I discuss in the book—the gear box makers for wind turbines and the solar lighting group—were drawn to Muncie.

CKC: So are community colleges going to take on the role of trade schools?

CT: To a large extent, they already have. Community colleges were at one time funded by the community through local property taxes. With the G.I. Bill and then receiving direct federal funding in the 1960s, community colleges were an important part of the infrastructure for training working people. Reagan cut down federal funding, and moved support responsibility to the states. With the decline of manufacturing, there was a decline in demand for the skills for which community colleges had offered training. There was also a decline in high school shop classes. They used to be mandatory. These reductions happened simultaneously in the 1980s. That infrastructure is something people are now paying attention to as something worth restoring, and the Obama administration has been increasing federal funding again. Matthew Crawford's *Shop Class as Soulcraft* talks eloquently about the cultural consequences of the evisceration of this world of manual work, and some among the millennial generation have embraced a culture of production, a "maker" ethos, to rival our excessive consumer culture. I find this promising for the future of smaller industrial cities, since I argue in *Small, Gritty, and Green* that they can ground the productive green economy in ways that larger cities can't. Anyway, so there's a renewed appreciation of the vocational curriculum offered by community colleges, especially given the skyrocketing costs of traditional four-year schools.

CKC: You make a lot of good arguments defending the importance of having agricultural land near dense populations. This arrangement seemingly makes it more viable for more people in small cities to have fresh food than it is for people who live in most other places. Do you think larger cities are going to have problems with money for food distribution? Can good urban farming practices like those you describe seeing in Detroit help in a still-populous city like New York or Boston? Might food motivate the reforms you consider?

CT: The forms urban agriculture can take in New York or Boston are very different from the full-scale farming going on in Detroit, where there are some 40 square miles of vacant land. I remember those neighborhoods when they were still intact twenty-five or thirty years ago; now there's acre upon acre of urban prairie. It's eerie and heartbreaking. Anyway, for New York to emulate urban farming in Detroit doesn't make any economic sense because the land values are too high. That said, urban agriculture takes several forms: it can be community gardens, roof gardens, or a sprig of basil on your balcony. That's urban agriculture, too. It's a matter of scale and what the land values can support. People can still grow their own food. What's more likely to happen—and there's been a lot of conversation about this in bigger cities and strong-market cities—is that cities like New York might source more of their food closer to home, say two-hundred or three-hundred miles out. To source fewer of their apples from New Zealand when there is a flourishing apple industry in upstate New York. And it would be good for the smaller cities of upstate New York, which ground the state's ag economy, to find a much bigger market in New York City. That's not to say it's never appropriate to source food elsewhere; it's a matter of finding greater balance. Cities, after all, owe their existence to trade. It's desirable to have lots of goods move around the globe, exporting and importing. Fresh vegetables aren't among them. The local food market infrastructure has been dismantled, and in the Midwest it barely existed thanks to its historic base in commodity agriculture—corn and soybeans. Whether we like or want it or not, the disruptions of climate change are probably going to make it necessary to relocalize our food systems.

CKC: How are you extending what you have done in this book? What is next?

CT: I'm doing more work on manufacturing and the nature of innovation in the manufacturing context. I'm looking not just at how manufacturing is changing, but at how it's tied to what is called "process" innovation, which is quite different from the big science breakthroughs that we usually associate with innovation on the Silicon Valley model. This is critical to the revival of manufacturing in smaller industrial cities. I'm kind of surprised by how much this grips me, since I'm pretty much a humanities person! But it's important to understanding what I think could be an era-defining shift away from the culture of consumption and all its forms. Speaking of which, I'm also focusing much more on sprawl and its history. I'm outraged by what I'm learning about the system of subsidies, the tax incentives that underwrite sprawl and always have. People who are concerned about taxes, like the Tea Party and taxpayer reform groups, should also be outraged because it's a complete and total abuse of taxpayer's money. It's hard on the fiscal purse, it's terribly inequitable, it's aesthetically ravaged our landscape, and we will need to work our best agricultural land in the era of global warming. In other words, it's unsustainable.



**Holmes, Richard. *The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2008. 552 pp. Hardback ISBN: 978-0-375-42222-5.**

### When Science Was Romantic

In 1816, John Keats penned a sonnet celebrating his discovery of the poetry of Homer. “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer” is a well-known example of Romantic poetry, but it contains a reference that squarely identifies one of the most electrifying scientific discoveries of the eighteenth century as a highly Romantic endeavor. Keats writes that encountering Homer was, to him, like finding a new world:

Then I felt like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken . . . .

The “watcher of the skies” to whom Keats refers was amateur astronomer William Herschel, who had set the world of astronomy on its heels with the discovery of the planet Uranus in 1781. Uranus was the first new planet to be identified in almost a millennium, and excitement about it engulfed the European scientific establishment and charged the imagination of poets, painters, and philosophers. Herschel, a German-born musician (he held the position of organist at the Octagon Chapel in Bath), was a passionate and careful observer of the heavens. He not only pushed back the frontiers of the solar system, but also observed nebulae and speculated that they were “island universes,” or galaxies beyond our own.

Herschel’s career, as well as those of a number of other extraordinary scientists and explorers, such as Joseph Banks, Mungo Park, Humphry Davy, and Michael Faraday, forms the foundation of Richard Holmes’s 2008 study of science and imagination at the dawn of the Romantic age in Europe. Holmes is not content with mere biography of the scientists and descriptions of the impact of their discoveries. Instead, he seeks to examine these intellectual adventurers as foils to and inspiration for the poets and philosophers who were their friends and admirers. In Holmes’s compulsively readable account of the critical interplay between science and literature at the turn of the nineteenth century, the practice of science as a creative endeavor possesses a power acknowledged and understood as transformational. That is, in the process of investigating the awe-inspiring universe the searcher is himself transformed.

This scientist-as-hero theme is certainly fodder for Romantic interpretations of the exploration of Tahiti and the search for Timbuctoo, the first balloon flights in the 1780s, and the awful experiments with human tissue and electricity that fueled the Animist approach to life. Heroes, however, occupy a plane beyond that of normal human ken, and that is not the image of the scientist in *The Age of Wonder*. Romantic science was not arcane or insular. The poets and philosophers of the day befriended the scientists who were changing the view of the natural world. A world in which ordinary humans master the secrets of nature rather than remain thralls of a cruel and capricious universe became a frequent theme in the poetry that issued from the pens of George Gordon, Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley. The older Samuel Taylor Coleridge was an intimate of pioneering anthropologist Banks, president of the Royal Society, as



well as Herschel. Inspiration flowed in both directions; the prodigiously talented and startlingly imprudent chemist, Davy, nurtured a modest talent for versification. Byron and Shelley are perhaps most successful in creating the image of the hero who strides fearlessly into the universe, but also keeps one foot firmly planted in the realm of the senses:

He thought about himself, and the whole Earth,  
 Of Man the wonderful, and of the Stars,  
 And how the deuce they ever could have birth;  
 And then he thought of Earthquakes, and of Wars,  
 How many miles the Moon might have in girth,  
 Of Air-balloons, and of the many bars  
 To perfect Knowledge of the boundless Skies;  
 And then he thought of Donna Julia's eyes. (Byron, *Don Juan* I, 92)

Note that Don Juan is not a scientist by profession, but more the kind of restless polymath that Byron imagined himself to be. In the Romantic understanding, an educated and cultured person was also an amateur scientist; there was no firm disciplinary boundary between the humanities and the sciences, and no such person would ever think of protesting that he did not “understand” science.

Of course, the harmony between the majesty of the sciences and the emotional power of verse would not—and perhaps could not—last. Holmes is careful to draw out the troubling tendencies of this Romantic approach to the understanding of the world—exploration of new peoples and their cultural treasures planted the seeds of colonialism and Empire; science in England drove a wedge between classes because investigation of nature was a product of either personal obsession or the leisure afforded to only the moneyed and titled. These tendencies have real consequences: Banks's widely-circulated description of Tahiti, for example, unleashed a fad for all things Polynesian that culminated in public exhibitions of Tahitians as curiosities, scandalous “Tahitian” nude revues in London, and the eventual despoliation of Tahitian society as European visitors brought smallpox, alcohol, and Christianity.

Holmes suggests that the Tahitian experience, viewed through a Romantic lens, may have engendered three themes that have become commonplaces in the discourse of science: first, the genius who uncovers the secrets of nature in isolation; second, the “Eureka moment,” in which discovery is accomplished in a single flash of penetrating insight; and last, the “Frankenstein nightmare,” in which scientific progress is disguised destruction. This kind of understanding of the work of the scientist may have inspired Coleridge and Byron to pen rapturous verse about the triumphs of human reason (and fostered Mary Shelley's definitive description of scientific hubris), but it has also led directly to the notion of the scientist as social misfit, his accomplishments as incomprehensible to the vast majority of citizens, and his gifts to human understanding as disasters in the making.

Another consequence of the Romantic view of science is its perceived threat to conventional wisdom and religious certainty. Herschel's speculation on the existence of other galaxies led him to suggest that the universe is in a continual spiral of evolutionary birth and death. While this idea fired the imagination of no less a scientific and literary personage than

Erasmus Darwin, it caused consternation among many in England who equated celestial change with atheism—and atheism with the dangerous ideas that were at the time violently transforming France. Herschel did not suffer the public outcry that led to the burning of chemist Joseph Priestley’s home, but the fact that his astronomy was viewed as genius by one sector of British society and as heresy by another underscores the class divisions that science created—and still can create—in a nation.

*The Age of Wonder* is more than scientific biography, more than literary history. It is a daring amalgam of the two—one that seeks to heal the gulf between the two major avenues of human exploration and experience by illuminating an exhilarating and transformational moment of their shared stories. The fact that the separation between science and humanities still exists is evident in the fact that the moon landing, the space station, and the discovery of quantum theory have produced no body of poetic response; we tend to look inward now, rather than outward, for our literary inspiration. But that may change—if poets again see value in learning and deeply understanding the “beauty and terror of science.”

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**Leavy, Patricia. *Essentials of Transdisciplinary Research: Using Problem-Centered Methodologies*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2011. 167 pp. Paperback ISBN: 978-1-59874-593-1.**

*Essentials of Transdisciplinary Research* is both an exposition of current dilemmas in mainstream academic research as well as a call for alternatives that more effectively reach both academic and “real world” quarters. Leavy begins by acknowledging traditional disciplinary boundaries and the tendency of academic funding bodies and administrators to maintain them. Shortly after, she elucidates the real necessity and inevitability of interdisciplinary research in modern scholarship, the difficulties of its promulgation in the face of disciplinary demarcation and the consequent “inefficient turf battles”<sup>1</sup> notwithstanding. While the concept of “transdisciplinarity” might appear to be a new and exciting development, Leavy explains that such a structure guided the educational practices of the Greeks, who were focused on the generation of ideas and not on the formal organization of institutional disciplines, and is thus an ancient educational method to which she advocates the academy revert. While the words “multidisciplinary,” “interdisciplinary,” and “transdisciplinary” might appear to be interchangeable, Leavy meticulously defines each term and distinguishes one from the other. She explains that the three methods are on a continuum, in that order, of “increasing interaction and integration between disciplines,”<sup>2</sup> from a method in which each discipline involved in the project “maintains its autonomy during the collaboration”<sup>3</sup> to one in which the interaction between disciplines is so great as to lead to the “development of new conceptual, methodological, and theoretical frameworks.”<sup>4</sup> (In the passages pertaining to these and other differentiating concepts, helpful tables are featured to more clearly compare and contrast them.)

According to Leavy, the hallmarks of transdisciplinary research are its “problem-centered” nature, its use of innovation and flexibility in research methods, and its propensity to deal with issues of public significance as opposed to the abstruse quandaries of academia, such as relatively minor interpretive disagreements regarding its more esoteric literature. A sense of the universal relevance of such a “problem-centered” approach can be ascertained from reading the mission statement of the Bologna Institute for Policy Research, an agency that, by virtue of its “problem-centered” research framework, explores such issues as “implications of the global economic and financial crisis,” “ethnic conflict and post-conflict resolution,” and “energy, technology, and the global environment.”<sup>5</sup> This widening of research focus facilitated by transdisciplinarity is a result of a “moral imperative” for researchers to deal with “real-world” problems from a standpoint of “wisdom” and “compassion,” rather than from the position of mere knowledge acquisition that characterizes so much disciplinary research.<sup>6</sup> She provides excellent coverage of how the civil rights movements, including those for women, racial minorities, and LGBT citizens, were informed by, and even constructed upon, a transdisciplinary approach that included feminist, critical race, and queer theories as well as post-modern and

<sup>1</sup> William James Smith, Jr., “Problem-Centered vs. Discipline-Centered Research for the Exploration of Sustainability,” *Journal of Contemporary Water Research and Education* 142 (August 2009): 80.

<sup>2</sup> Patricia Leavy, *Essentials of Transdisciplinary Research: Using Problem-Centered Methodologies* (Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, 2011), 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>5</sup> Johns Hopkins University, “The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies: Bologna Institute for Policy Research,” <http://www.jhubc.it/BIPR/> (accessed August 7, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Leavy, *Essentials*, 50-51.

post-colonial frameworks. Furthermore, she emphasizes the need to investigate such issues “holistically and not artificially broken down into narrow research purposes that suit disciplinary lenses.”<sup>7</sup>

A helpful set of guidelines for creating and conducting a transdisciplinary research project is also featured, including instructions for an appropriate division of labor among the participants, methods for responsible data collection and interpretation, and suggestions for the dissemination of the research findings, particularly in those cases in which this information is vitally important to the members of a certain community that faces a significant set of challenges addressed in the research project. The arts are proposed as an effective method for presenting these research findings, as artistic outlets like plays or movies are highly accessible means of presenting a picture of a set of circumstances through which a community must struggle. The importance of involving a “lay” community audience in the research process is especially important, Leavy argues, as it combats the notion that universities or other researching bodies are detached from issues of great concern to people outside of academic circles.

Leavy has presented a significant contribution to the literature on inter(trans)disciplinary research methods by virtue of her thorough exposition of different strategies for conducting such projects, promotion of the importance of community participation, and call for engaging in interdisciplinary research that addresses significant societal issues. This text is unique in that it addresses transdisciplinary research methods in the social sciences, while most others focus in the “hard” sciences.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the greatest strength of Leavy’s exhaustive presentation of transdisciplinary research practices is its inclusion of and, one might say, amiability towards the different forms of knowledge among both academically inclined and “lay” audiences, and across cultures, that are deemed by Leavy to be equally appropriate in the transdisciplinary research model. Of much importance to the spread of transdisciplinary research, this allows for the realization by “lay” audiences that they can be significant partners in research, unencumbered by the often prohibitively complicated technical and conceptual jargon that pervades much academic literature.<sup>9</sup> In addition, it allows the knowledge held by often marginalized groups to be valued in research design, thus engendering a sense of trust and friendship between these communities and researchers.<sup>10</sup> Leavy’s text is necessary for researchers in both the humanities and the sciences interested in both the study of interdisciplinary research methods as well as their overall applicability to “real-world” problems.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Leavy makes reference to the “isolation and exclusivity” inherent within disciplinarity because of the barriers of communication among practitioners of different disciplines. Ibid., 17.

<sup>10</sup> A precedent for this inclusive approach can be ascertained from Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 61.

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**Schweizer, Bernard. *Hating God: The Untold Story of Misotheism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. 246 pp. Hardcover ISBN: 978-0-19-975138-9.**

If in the elections of 2012 you decided to oppose Barack Obama—or Mitt Romney, or any other politician for that matter—you had many options for expressing your dissent. You could denounce him on your Twitter feed. You could give money to his political opponents or to the super PACs intent on his defeat. You could write letters to the local newspaper denouncing his policies or attend his speeches and jeer. One option was not open to you, however: you could not claim that Barack Obama does not exist.

That option is available, of course, for those who oppose God, and the last ten years have been heady times for unbelievers, as so-called New Atheists like Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, and Richard Dawkins have made the rounds of the cable news circuit while selling thousands of books with titles like *The God Delusion* (Dawkins, 2006), *God Is Not Great* (Hitchens, 2007), and *The End of Faith* (Harris, 2004).

For Bernard Schweizer, atheism is not the only option for those who have cast their lots against the deity. In his new book, he identifies an alternative that he calls “misotheism,” roughly defined as god hatred. Misotheism combines loathing of the Lord with an “indestructible belief in divinity” (Schweizer 171). Paradoxically, misotheists are believers who despise the very object of their belief, and we are unsurprised to learn that their numbers are few.

In defining his central term, Schweizer smartly recognizes the narrowness of the strip of dance floor on which he’s waltzing, and he takes pains to distinguish misotheism from other heterodox stances vis-à-vis the godhead, among them Gnosticism, antitheism, deicide, and metaphysical rebellion. After Schweizer leads us through this crowded field, we may fear that the misotheist is a member of a vanishing tribe. The author, however, is undeterred, and he believes that he can trace a thin but sturdy intellectual lineage for his shiny new coinage—one that stretches all the way back to ancient Greece and beyond. He thus devotes the first part of his book to narrating misotheism’s “untold” history. The prototypical God-hater is Job’s wife, who advises her afflicted spouse to “curse God and die” (Job 2:9). However, the first historical misotheist is Epicurus (341-270 BCE), the Athenian philosopher whose critiques of religion are outlined in the first-century poet Lucretius’s *On the Nature of Things*. The rest of Schweizer’s history features some world-makers—e.g., Marx—and some figures who would be mere footnotes in the intellectual history of the West—e.g., John Stuart Mill’s father, James. But for him, they are God-haters all. Then, in a second, longer movement, the author elaborates on the literary manifestations of misotheism in the work of six modern-ish authors: Algernon Swinburne, Zora Neale Hurston, Rebecca West, Elie Wiesel, Peter Shaffer, and Philip Pullman.

Schweizer embarks on this quixotic journey for good reason: he contends that atheism is too pat a label for describing the complex spirituality of some of history’s best-known “unbelievers.” Take, for instance, Nietzsche, whose famous epitaph for God belies the thorough—if thoroughly unorthodox—religiosity of books like *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. As modernity has given way to post-modernity and its aftermath, we are ever more aware of the

variegated spiritual spectrum that spans the gap between faith and total skepticism, and Schweizer's volume hopes to map that space more precisely.

But in misotheism, Schweizer has knitted a garment so tight we're surprised when it actually fits. Granted, misotheism helps the author reconcile Proudhon's hope that others "grant me the supposition that God exists" with his philosophical project, described as "a complete criticism of God and humanity" (Schweizer 41). Further, the term does aid in explaining why Wiesel, a still-devout Jew, can write a diabolical excoriation of the deity in *The Trial of God* (1979). (Personally, I'm more convinced by David Blumenthal's incorporation of Wiesel into the tradition of protest theology throughout *Facing the Abusing God* [1993], but I'll leave such terminological quibbling to Schweizer.)

More often, however, the authors Schweizer engages are square pegs that just won't fit into misotheism's small round hole. Occasionally, he has to work against the explicit claims of his subjects. For instance, it is hard to square Pullman's unequivocal statement, "I've got no evidence whatsoever for believing in a God" (Schweizer 204), with Schweizer's reminder that misotheists possess an "indestructible belief in divinity" (171). Elsewhere, Schweizer too often assumes that a protagonist's words represent a writer's feelings about religion. He claims that Shaffer "speaks personally" (191) through Dysart in *Equus*, conflates Wiesel with both Gavriel and Gregor in *The Gates of the Forest*, and sees Jenny as West's alter-ego in *The Return of the Soldier*. In all three cases, Schweizer takes undue liberty in extrapolating his authors' misotheism from their characters' religious critiques. (His efforts to support such claims with material from journals, interviews, and memoirs falls short.) And his tortuous argument that Zora Neale Hurston is a secret God-hater who must "code" misotheism in her novels is undermined by a much simpler thesis: Hurston isn't a misotheist at all.

Further, in introducing the second part of his book, Schweizer offers no compelling reason for focusing on the six authors he's chosen. While he suggests that misotheism is more acceptable in the modern era, he implies that Blake and Milton are also God-haters, and it's unclear then why Schweizer gives a whole chapter to Pullman—a contemporary author of middling talent—while granting the greatest English poet outside Shakespeare little more than passing mention.

Finally, there's a stubborn literal-mindedness to Schweizer's application of his term. The author is over-eager to convince us that Hurston, Swinburne, Epicurus, and the rest are actually battling against an all-powerful creator in whom they fervently believe. Too often, then, he deflects more credible claims that his subjects' complaints about "God" are actually critiques of the idea of God, or a mistaken characterization of God, or God as synecdoche for religion, or all of the above. In doing so, Schweizer flattens his subjects' language, counteracting the under-explored potential of literature to describe the types of religious experience that so often escape expression.

Nonetheless, we can hope that more scholars follow in Schweizer's footsteps. If his interpretive tools are too blunt, his impulse in crafting them is true. The sub-field of religion and literature needs a better critical vocabulary, and we may admire Schweizer's efforts to improve

it. In writing *Hating God*, Schweizer simply learns the hard lesson Jacob learned so long ago: Wrestling with God is dirty business. And God usually wins.

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Joshua Pederson





## CITL CONFERENCE ON TEACHING GLOBALIZATION

*An Interdisciplinary Conference  
to be held  
June 22, 2013  
Boston University  
College of General Studies  
871 Commonwealth Avenue  
Boston, MA*

This is a one-day event where college professors and high school teachers can present ideas and share strategies for making courses more global and interdisciplinary.

**As the challenges now facing students transcend old borders dividing cultures and polities, new curricula must also transcend old boundaries dividing the academic disciplines. To address these parallel trends, our conference calls for papers from teachers and scholars in the humanities, sciences, and social sciences addressing the following question: How has the challenge of teaching your students about globalization, or teaching other subjects with a more global orientation, required you to integrate more than one academic discipline?**

Submit one-page abstracts to Professor Sam Deese ([rsdeese@bu.edu](mailto:rsdeese@bu.edu)), or Professor Cheryl Boots ([cboots@bu.edu](mailto:cboots@bu.edu)) by February 28, 2013.

For additional information, please go to [www.bu.edu/cgs/citl/](http://www.bu.edu/cgs/citl/).

## CITL SUMMER INSTITUTE ON THE IRISH IN BOSTON



Courtesy of the John F. Kennedy Library

This summer, the Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching & Learning (CITL) is offering an interdisciplinary institute on “**THE IRISH IN BOSTON**” to be held on July 26 & 27, 2013. CITL institutes are designed for alumni, parents and members of the general public who enjoy exploring a subject of common interest from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. These institutes draw on the expertise of professors at the College of General Studies at BU. The weekend will include a day-and-a-half of lectures, discussions, pub outings and performances on the history, music and poetry of the Irish in Boston. The institute will be held at Boston University’s College of General Studies, 871 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215.

Sally Sommers Smith, an Associate Professor of Natural Science and an expert scholar and practitioner of Irish fiddle music, will be presenting a session on “The Sounds of Home: Irish Music in Boston, 1880-2012.” Megan Sullivan, an Associate Professor of Rhetoric and author of *Irish Women and Cinema* and *Women in Northern Ireland: Cultural Studies and Material Conditions*, will be presenting a lecture/discussion on “‘Bridget’ in Boston: Irish Domestic Servants and the Culture of Work.” Meg Tyler, Associate Professor of Humanities and author of *A Singing Contest: Conventions of Sound in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney*, will be giving a talk entitled “Crossing Yet Another Border: Irish Poetry in Boston.” And Tom Whalen, Associate Professor of Social Sciences and author of *Kennedy Versus Lodge: The 1952 Massachusetts Senate Race* and *Profiles in Presidential Courage*, will be hosting a lecture/discussion entitled “Triumph of the Irish Brahmin: John F. Kennedy, the 1952 Massachusetts Senate Race, and the Creation of a Political Dynasty.” Together these presentations and discussions will explore questions such as: How has Irish music influenced the American music scene? When Irish

women cleaned houses, did they also reorganize a city? Does Irish poetry matter beyond Ireland? And, what's the difference between 'shanty' and 'lace curtain' Irish? The Kennedys knew—do you?

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With regard to lodging for the “BU The Irish in Boston Institute,” you can stay in a dorm room in the Student Village OR you can stay in one of the two hotels below. Blocks of rooms have been reserved until **June 26, 2013**.

**Boston University Dorm Room** has single rooms available in suites of four that share two baths and a common area for \$79.00 per person per night. *We will make those reservations for you.*

**Hotel Commonwealth** has rooms available for \$259.00 per night not including taxes. *You are responsible for making your own reservation.* The phone number to make your reservation is 866-784-4000 or 617-532-5019. In order to get the above rate, you will need to mention “BU The Irish in Boston Institute.”

**Hotel Buckminster** has Standard Queen rooms available for \$169.00 per night not including taxes and Standard Double Twin rooms available for \$179.00 per night not including taxes. *You are responsible for making your own reservation.* The phone number to make your reservation is 800-727-2825. In order to get the above rate, you will need to mention the “BU The Irish in Boston Institute.”

Experience Irish Boston in all its interdisciplinary wonder! Join us for a memorable weekend of fun, friends and exploration of America's Irish background. For more details about the schedule, please go to <http://www.bu.edu/cgs/citl/interdisciplinary-institutes>. If you have any questions, please contact [njmck@bu.edu](mailto:njmck@bu.edu) or [akcook@bu.edu](mailto:akcook@bu.edu).

## IMPACT BEST ESSAY COMPETITION

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The Editors of *IMPACT: The Journal of the Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching & Learning* invite submissions of scholarly and creative non-fiction essays between 500 and 5,000 words on any aspect of interdisciplinary teaching or research. Essays should be readable to a general, educated audience, and they should follow the documentation style most prevalent in the author's disciplinary field. Essays should be submitted to <http://CITL.submittable.com/submit>.

The author of the winning essay will receive a \$250 award and publication in *IMPACT*.

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**Julie Marie Wade** is the author of two collections of non-fiction: *Wishbone: A Memoir in Fractures* (Colgate UP, 2010), winner of the *Lamda Literary Award for Lesbian Memoir*, and *Small Fires* (Sarabande Books, 2011), winner of the Linda Bruckheimer Series in Kentucky Literature. Wade is the newest member of the graduate teaching faculty in English at Florida International University in Miami.