

Following the curve of a sentence: Notes from a reader's diary

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ABSTRACT: *“Following the Curve of the Sentence: Notes From a Reader’s Diary” is comprised of excerpts from the author’s Reader’s Diary, using experimental writing practices that can be modeled and used by English teachers in classrooms. The Reader’s Diary is a subgenre of autobiography, memoir and poetic prose essay, a flexible, hybrid form of inquiry. The author uses collagist techniques of intergeneric writings, moving back and forth between fragments of memory and more recent reflections, visual images, poems, theoretical considerations of teaching literary studies and teacher education, as well as focusing on the effect of reading on the shaping of schooled, gendered and cultural identity. Through these forms, the author draws on poststructural strategies to inform her work and to demonstrate an advocacy of experimental writing methodologies to create an “open text,” which uses inter or cross-generic forms including collage and fictocritical writing (writing that combines “creative” and “fictional/poetic” modes with those of criticism and commentary). Imaginative, innovative practical and philosophical approaches to the teaching of English are considered.*

KEYWORDS: *Reading and gender, literature and gender, literature, reader’s diary, memoir, hybrid genres, poetics.*



Figure 1

That would be a glorious life, to addict oneself to perfection; to follow the curve of a sentence wherever it might lead, into deserts, under drifts of sand, regardless of lures, of seductions; to be poor and unkempt; to be ridiculous in Picadilly.

Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*¹

An individual’s history of reading is an autobiography. To write our own memoir of books reminds us, in the writing and re-reading of books, of a sensual engagement with lived experiences that is at once visceral, creative and intellectual, a connection

to the individual's consciousness of connections of reading literature with the narratives of life histories.

As Elaine Scarry writes in *Dreaming by the Book*, imagining is an act of perpetual mimesis, in our own daydreams, or in the work of writers who create works of art that instruct us how to imagine.² The vividness of our perception as readers depends upon the reading of works capable of reproducing deep structures of perception that evoke imaginary vivacity. Reading is an immense labor of imaginative construction that has the possibility to alter thinking, perception, and creative and critical capacities.

Conventional schooling and structured reading programs have emphasized the teaching of skills, which are sufficient in many ways to develop competent readers, but the conception of reading as an art, reader as artist, may be a more powerful way of imagining the role of reading in educational life.

In my course on English Education for Secondary Teachers and also in my Graduate Seminar on Literature and the Educated Imagination, participants are asked to write a Reader's Diary. This was also a practice I used in my high school teaching years ago. Invariably, it has been the most creative, imaginative and highest quality assignment for students, appealing even to those who are hesitant to write. Most students respond in enthusiastic ways and create successful, sometimes surprising and powerful pieces of writing. Students over the years have taken various approaches to this assignment, from creating chronologies that move from childhood to adulthood to the briefer chronicles of lists of books or "Ten Books That Made a Difference."

The type of creativity that such an approach may foster appears in the remarkable work by one of my students, Niki Chinnick. My class on Secondary English Education, in which Niki participated, had been working together for four months and students were getting accustomed to its highly experiential nature and to experimenting with writing forms. As they came to know one another and class became community – a place of trust – the students' confidence in sharing works orally with others increased. In this context, I had assigned my students, future teachers of English, the task of writing in their portfolio (a space for writing in process) a brief description of ten books that had made a difference in their lives. Most students responded by placing their ten titles alongside brief annotations or by writing brief conventional personal essays. Niki responded with the following prose poem autobiography, a chronology of her years of reading favorite books titled "Reading in Bed":

Oh girl! That Annie-M, that precious habibi. She'll make you *Fall On Your Knees* (2002). Talkin' 'bout waters and Lebanon and love making. She pours her amorous venom all over your aura. Like that man, *Dracula* (2000). He'll put his ruby lips all over your neck. You gotta lock your door tight. 'Course, it's really the men who need to worry. Homosocial desire. Especially the *Hansel and Gretel* (1983) couple. He's holding on to the skinny white bone while she shoves the witch, headfirst, into that pot. That girl should join some sorta *Fight Club* (2003) where sweaty men with one ball roll all over each other. But it's gotta be a secret, a secret 'til the end. Then, when you join again, you'll really understand how things work. Once you've been there, you gotta swim around in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (2004). Wrap your arms around this family/tree, you're coming out with extra limbs and languages and loves. Sexuality sap oozing out of all crevices mixed with old age magic and real time.

Down there, you run into Sirens and mermaids and syruppy voices singing oceansongs to you, lis'n he's [*Ulysses* (2002)] speaking. You know *Where The Wild Things Are* (1985). Hiding in trees, across the creek, creatures with bulging deltoids makin' me king. I'm moving up to *A Room of One's Own* (2002) with my own to engage in the rich yellow flame of rational intercourse with V and to make it all worthwhile. But my sweet *Oroonoko* (2003), I would never change your name but call it out and our new love will earth-shake. My tears can wipe away the fictitious scars but never cover the flame of desires and foolish sentimentality. This story will be *Written on the Body* (1998) in Playboy articles and typewriter ink and historiographies that make no sense, not even to us. Don't worry, paper is the flimsiest weapon against truth and our love will come alive on ruby lips and family trees, old-age magic and muscle crowns. Be ready, we're reading in bed.³

Asking teachers of English to engage in considering reading as an imaginative act requires them to consider how certain books embedded themselves into their consciousness. As Niki Chinnick's "Reading in Bed" demonstrates, the activity of writing about significant engagements with books asks writers to use an imaginary vivacity that is provoked by memory.

At the beginning of the year, I ask students to write a brief essay on the re-reading of a favorite childhood book. *In Search of Lost Books. In Search of Stories Past*. This essay is then used to develop thinking about The Readers' Diary assignment, which has proven, year after year, to be one of the most imaginatively rendered assignments – one that surprises both writer and professor in the creativity and cathartic effect that the process engenders through the encounters with books, often in the meeting again, in the re-readings of books that mattered profoundly to individuals.

In recent years, as inspiration for the deeply thoughtful engagement in memories of reading that I wish to encourage in the English Education classroom and, subsequently, for teachers to foster in their classrooms with adolescent readers, we have read works such as excerpts from Alberto Manguel's *A History of Reading*⁴ as well as his *A Reading Diary*.⁵ Manguel's model of chronicling a year of rereading treasured books provided an inspirational model for prospective literature teachers.

In 2006, student-teacher Paul Carter wrote an especially powerful and eloquent response to Manguel's *A Reader's Diary* – in effect, a reader's diary of a reader's diary. Carter followed Manguel's month-by-month account of rereading favorite books, inserting his own life narratives, readings and responses to Manguel's readings. My response to Carter's assignment, along with others who wrote their own diaries, created a multi-layered Reader's Diary of a Reader's Diary of a Reader's Diary.

Manguel writes: "I could compose a diary made exclusively of fragments from other diaries. This would reflect my habit of thinking in quotations."⁶ I ask students to make lists of quotations, fragments of thinking and lists of the books beside their beds. The lists themselves become springboards for thinking, for creating essays and theoretical writing about reading, human consciousness and the nature of literacy

Reading and narrating the world as a proposed curriculum become imaginative, intellectual acts. As Umberto Eco proposes in *The Role of the Reader*, an "open work" engages readers in the creation of meaning, and each reading is both an

interpretation and a performance.⁷ The original text becomes a homeland that offers a return to memory and possibilities of meaning. As Arab poet Mahmoud Darwish writes in *Journal of an Ordinary Grief*, “writing remains the other shape of the homeland”.⁸

The Reader's Diary is an open text, in the sense of Roland Barthe's assertion in his 1971 essay “From Work to Text,” and in his essay of structuralist literary criticism “S/Z,” that a text that is open is writable and readable, *lisible et scriptable*. The Reader's Diary becomes a form of inquiry into reading practices and bio-cultural (biological and cultural) engagements with literature. The open text is often structured in fragments of memory with associative, stream of consciousness observations that provide opportunities for the reader to construct further layers of imaginative associations based on individual consciousness and imagination.

A closed text contains meanings that are traceable primarily to the author, while an open text provides intertextuality in which meaning is brought to a text by the reader. The Reader's Diary becomes an open text, not intended for passive consumption by the reader. The author's lists, fragments, aphorisms, remembrances, theories and thoughts invite the reader to write and read the reader's own entries, layering narratives as acts of imagination. The Reader's Diary becomes a subgenre of autobiography, memoir and poetic prose essay, a flexible, hybrid form of inquiry.

Reading the students' Reader's Diaries inspires me to write with them. My responses to their works, our collective and individual readings and to classroom events create a multi-layered diary, a memoir that is at once a movement into my own memories of reading and consciousness in response to theirs, every familiar book a rereading, every response to a reading an evocation of my own response, a Reader's Diary of Reader's Diaries.

NOTE TO THE READER

The following is comprised of excerpts from my own Reader's Diary, using experimental writing practices that can be modeled and used by English teachers in classrooms. I use a collagist technique of intergeneric writings, moving back and forth between fragments of memory and more recent reflections, visual images, poems, theoretical considerations of teaching literary studies and teacher education, as well as focusing on the effect of reading on the shaping of schooled, gendered and cultural identity. Through these forms, I draw on poststructural strategies to inform my work and to demonstrate my advocacy of experimental writing methodologies, which use inter or cross-generic forms including collage and fictocritical writing (writing that combines “creative” and “fictional/poetic” modes with those of criticism and commentary). The inclusion of visual images provides a model that can be adapted as photo-essays that appeal greatly to visual, aesthetic learners.

The Reader's Diary becomes my autobiography, a memoir in books, a practice of writing that provides useful starting points for English teachers to begin by engaging with their own memories and responses to literature, evoking a vivacity of imagination that they can introduce in their own classrooms with student reading and writing practices. One reflection tumbles into the next as memories of reading from

long ago awaken more recent recollections. A mysterious network of associations reveals itself through our rereadings; in the brain's consciousness, history is remembered in flashes, frequently non-linear, non-chronological fragments.

Poems cited in my Reader's Diary are excerpts from my book *Reading Like a Girl*. The poems function as theorizing counterpoints in the fictocritical sense; the poems provide echoes of reflection on the life of reading from my post-colonial childhood, girlhood, adolescence, to the woman reader, anchoring the diary with theoretical considerations about cultural, historical, schooled and gendered contexts of reading expressed in poetic texts.

READING LIKE A GIRL AND OTHER STORIES: NOTES FROM A READER'S DIARY

Beginnings: Learning to read

Alberto Manguel writes:

In every literate society, learning to read is something of an initiation, a ritualized passage out of a state of dependency and rudimentary communication. The child learning to read is admitted into the communal memory by way of books, and thereby becomes acquainted with a common past which he or she renews, to a greater or lesser degree, in every reading.⁹

With my class of student teachers, I am reading Manguel's *A History of Reading*. We read about global rites of initiation in a child's history of reading that force us to reconsider the bland, curricular conceptualizations of literacy contained in government mandated curriculum documents. In various cultural traditions the initiation rites are connected to bio-cultural experiences, to the sensuous world of the body as well as cultural traditions. In Jewish tradition, on the Feast of Shavuot, when Moses received the Torah from God, the boy about to be initiated was wrapped in a prayer shawl and taken by his father to the teacher. The teacher showed the boy a slate with a passage from the Torah written on it. As the teacher repeated the words on the slate: "May the Torah be your occupation", the boy read and repeated the words. Then the slate was covered with honey and the child licked it. Biblical verses were also written on peeled, hard-boiled eggs and on honey cakes which the child would eat after reading the verses to the teacher.

Reading becomes a practice of the sacred, the beginning of knowledge perceived like the taste of honey, words taken into the body as intimate knowledge.



Figure 2

Once upon a time ...in India...Mother reads to me the primers of a post-colonial child of India of the British Raj. Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*, *I wander'd lonely as a cloud*...Wordsworth's "Daffodils." Kipling's *Just So Stories*, *The Jungle Book*.



Figure 3

1958. In Canada, on Electric Street in Ottawa, and later in St. Laurent, Quebec – nursery rhymes Humpty Dumpty, Jack and Jill, Mary, Mary Quite Contrary. Mother and father reading to me – *Little Red Riding Hood*. How I loved this story, knew

every word in the Little Golden Book version of Grimms' fairytales, knew when to turn the page so no one could ever skip a word, knew how to read before I could read.

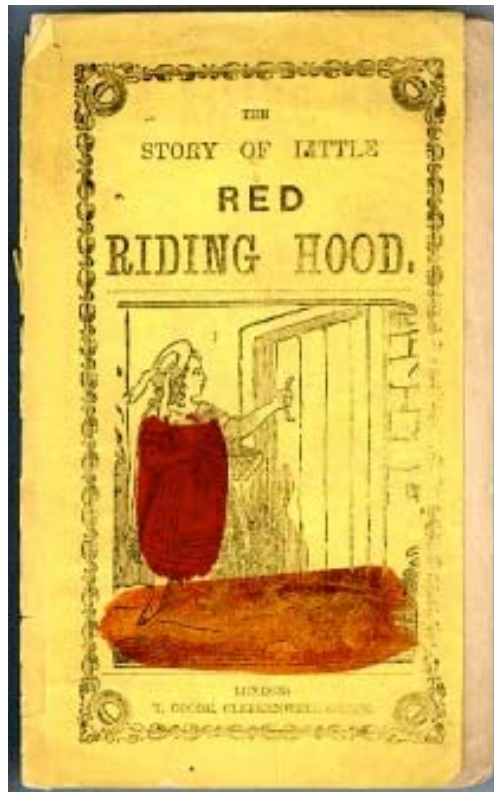


Figure 4

First stories, fragments of colonial texts
 Enid Blyton, Noddy's adventures, Kipling's Jungle Book
 Wordsworth's daffodils
 stories full of words like pram, lorry, Wellingtons, nappies.

Then worlds of fairies and witches
 Rapunzel letting down her hair from the tower,
 princesses and ogres.

The story she loved best was Little Red Riding Hood.
 As a young child she learned all the words
 by heart.

In the storybook her parents read to her,
 Little Red is always saved by the woodcutter.

Years later, when she knows the real ending, the Perrault
 one where the wolf waits for her in bed, and Little Red takes off
 her clothes, lies down beside him and he gobbles her up
 it is no surprise.

She is still the red cloaked one, using her words as incantations
 against the wolf at the door, the wolf who comes again and again
 on nights black as doctrine.

There is no other story, no other text.¹⁰



Figure 5

School begins with the reading of the Lord's Prayer. First Readers of Dick, Jane, Sally, the dog Spot, the cat Puff. House of sunshine and smiling mother in her apron. Phonics.

Basal readers. Primers.

Paddington Bear. Peter Rabbit.

Enid Blyton's stories of the Famous Five, The Naughtiest Girl, Noddy's Adventures.

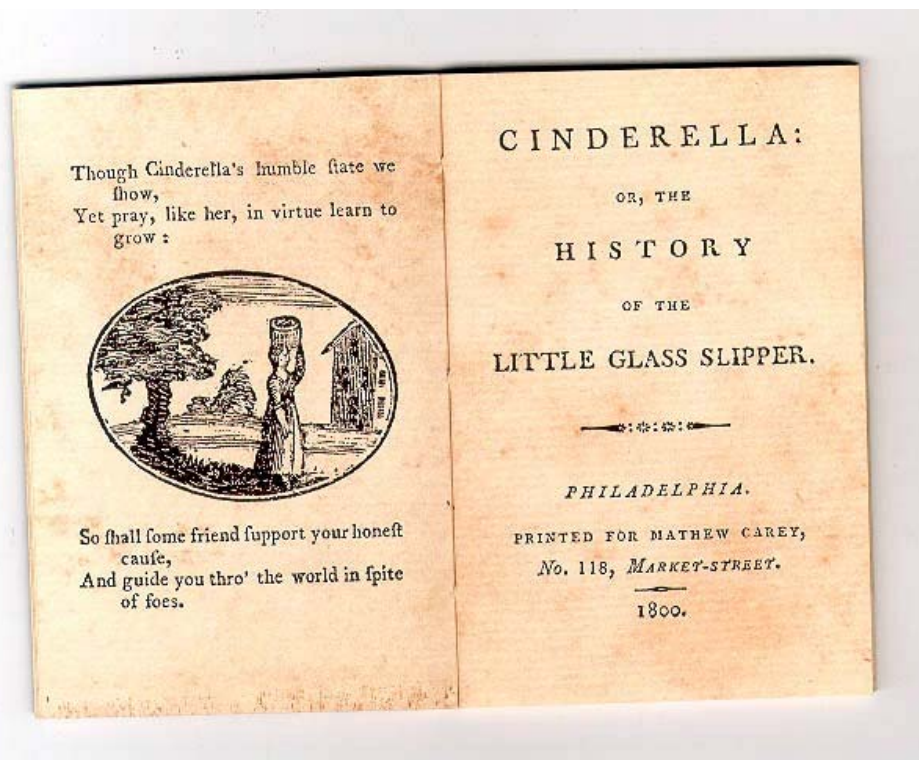


Figure 6

The girl reads neighbourhoods of
 dog, cat, sister, brother, mother, father
 houses lit with yellow sunshine and once
 upon a time glass slippers, long-toothed wolves.

The girl does not know yet
 the broken world,
 that there will be pages for *consequence, coercion, fraudulence*.

Outside her room
 the sky is an X-Ray pinned to light
 armies of birds lifting into skeletal shadows.
 Softness vanishes in the city
 deformed by *contagion, fear, vanity*.

News stories convulse
 palsied in the laws of speech.
 Planes pass over the skyline.
 Traffic lights change voltage.
 Damage is quiet
 oil slick pools in city parkades
 fissured winds, smudge of newsprint.

Elegant hands read the book of lost entries
 trace the red glares of exit signs, writing on tenement walls
 the veined arms of junkies.

The girl reads her picture books.
 A child's garden of verses.
 The alphabet sifts into her ribcage
 opens her to stars, grass, abcs
 whole sentences whispering dark.

In the open doorway
 something cold and distant
 even adult hands are small against it.

The book left on the lectern
 brittle yellow pages without context
 lexicons of disclosure
 soft imprisonment.

The girl does not know yet how words will
 hiss and tremble on fuller pages
 imagined wilderness, insomniac's tale, seductions,
 remembrances and forgettings, child's face pressed
 against shattered window, wrecked lullaby, fiercely beautiful
 derailment, murderer's knife, deep song of
 mouth unnameing the known.

My hands close on empty testimonies
 until I find that girl – a pocket of held light



Figure 8

Eating words has other connotations. In class we read the poems of exiled Cuban poet Maria Elena Cruz Varela in her book *Ballad of the Blood*. Cruz Varela is a poet and human rights activist who was a leader of a Cuban democratic coalition called *Criterio Alternativo*, a group of anti-Castro intellectuals. In 1991, a government-sanctioned mob staged a protest in front of her house for three days, protesting her spreading of anti-government propaganda. They stormed into her house, dragged her down the stairs by her hair and forced her to eat the *Criterio Alternativo* propaganda leaflets she had distributed. She was arrested on November 19, 1991 and imprisoned for two years.

For the imprisoned Cuban poet who was made to eat her own words,
manifesto stuffed down her throat,
books and books of her poems, hardbound and glossy jacketed
on the shelves of every bookstore and library and school of the world.¹⁴

LOST IN BOOKS: THE ABSENT-MINDED READER

A student-teacher reads from her Reader's Diary, speaks about being lost in books as a child, forgetting things, her absent-mindedness. Suddenly, I am transported back to elementary school. Mother calls me an absent-minded child, my head always in a book, a dreamer, not quite with the day to day of my present world. Absent-minded—a curious expression. Is the mind really absent, elsewhere; is it traveling, storied by others' narratives, conscious of other worlds, sensations, perceptions? I get dressed every morning in my white blouse, navy tunic, knee socks and oxfords, my latest book open on my bureau, over the breakfast table, in front of me on my walk to school. *The Wind in the Willows*. *Anne of Green Gables*. *The Wizard of Oz*...click my ruby shoes.



Figure 9

A student-teacher writes about his childhood fascination with the Narnia series, how he imagines himself there in that magical wardrobe. I remember reading in Grade 4. Miss Valentine, who became Mrs Scruton during the year, read out loud to us from C. S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. I could hardly bear to wait for each installment. I entered Narnia through that wardrobe with Edmund and Peter, Lucy and Susan. After that, I read every single book in the series: *The Magician's Nephew*. *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*. *The Horse and His Boy*. *Prince Caspian*. *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. *The Silver Chair*. *The Last Battle*.

The reader becomes a study in human consciousness. The reader lives so intensely in worlds of the imagination, these worlds become more real. As teachers learn after years of experience with young readers and sometimes through their own experiences, the world of a reader's imagination can be salvific, saving lives in the midst of suffering, trauma, violence, oppression. Reading becomes a way to consider the world

creatively, imaginatively and intellectually through the lenses of uniquely invented worlds.



Figure 10

Imagine invented worlds. Malory's King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. The dream of Camelot. Flying in Never Never Land with Peter Pan. Hold your shadow close.



Figure 11

READING MAGAZINES

I encourage my students to read voraciously. Read everything. You never know where the best ideas can come from. Seventeen Magazine. Glamour. Harper's Bazaar. Comics.



Figure 12

Reading my mother's magazines
Ladies Home Journal and *Miss Chatelaine*
pictures of women with cinch-waist dresses,
bouffant hairdos. They ride in convertibles
headscarves keeping every hair in place.

These women are so happy with their pink and aqua
kitchen appliances. In one ad for Scott toilet paper,
the woman wears an evening gown in the exact
pastel blue of the toilet paper and Kleenex tissue.

These women use Yardley Lavender and Cashmere Bouquet
talcum powder. They buy new davenports and credenzas. Pictured
in exotic landscapes in their underwear, they dream in their Maidenform
bras and girdles that promise to set them free.

The ad I like best is for the black lace corset called a Merry Widow.
Under the sedate hairdo and perfect makeup of the model, her Max Factor
red lips. This story is promising.¹⁵

Comic books. I loved reading about the superheroes.



Figure 13



Figure 14

The scent of poppies

after reading the *Vancouver Sun*, July 6, 1999

In my garden, the poppies have bloomed. Petals fall scarlet tissue to the ground. I gather the light of these flowers, watch my daughters run to the beach, their long limbs flying down the road to the sea's embrace.

I read the newspaper headline *Scent of poppies, stench of death*. The story is of a land dismembering itself. Outside Kosovo's capital Pristina is the Road to Leskovac, Makovac, Yugoslavia. Look closer. Call it Highway to Hell. Ethnic Albanians return home along this country road, the air reeking with the stench of death from houses, from mass graves in fallow fields overgrown with wild flowers. Fields of poppies.

Here is a living room. Inside, a shroud of ashes shaped like the body of a man who was rolled in blankets and burned alive. Here the wind blows music through walls punctured with bullet holes, where Serbian men executed men while they kneeled, their words of prayer caught in the stopped pulse of the world.

Here is the house used as a chamber of rape. On the floor dozens of buttons ripped from clothes, bloody blankets, women's underwear.

Here are the cows, slaughtered by machine gun, deliberate hands, pistol chambers triggering bullets through their heads. Their carcasses lie among the fields of flowers, brilliant wounds of poppies, scent of rotting flesh mingling with the perfume of crushed lavender.

Here is the black quartz watch in the mass grave, still ticking next to the sleeve of the man who once wore it. And everywhere in the villages under skies full of pitch and smoke, women bury their men, fathers, husbands, lovers, sons, women's labour rinsing away the fetid stench, scrubbing, scrubbing.

In my garden, my fingers blacken with the newsprint. I hear my daughters laughing. The charred utterings of poets.

The poppies tremble.¹⁸

2005. I am thinking about the idea of a poetics of relation. Reading the *Toronto Globe and Mail* front page on July 7, 2005, the news of the subway and bus bombings in

London are in the headlines. Author Ian McEwan writes in the wake of the bombings, evoking W. H. Auden's famous poem "Musée des Beaux Arts". In this poem the tragedy of Icarus falling from the sky is juxtaposed against life's refusal of disruption. A ploughman goes about his work, a ship "sailed calmly on", "dogs keep doing their doggy business".

McEwan writes:

In London yesterday, where crowds fumbling with mobile phones tried to find unimpeded ways across the city, there was much evidence of the truth of Auden's insight. While rescue workers searched for survivors and the dead in the smoke filled blackness below, at pavement level, men were loading lorries, a woman sold umbrellas in her usual patch, the lunchtime sandwich makers were hard at work.¹⁹

Although the Londoners' stiff upper lips, the carrying on with life, are ways of saying terrorism has not won, we survive, life goes on, the increase of such violence in the world evokes an urgency in me, in my belief that something must change to provoke empathy and compassion in human beings. Our hope for change might lie in the arts, in creative practices, in poetry and fiction and an appreciation of beauty and aesthetics in the public sphere, especially in educational institutions. Creativity becomes our hope, a poetics of relation, a possible form of opening us to beauty, of speaking across differences.

READING AND GENDER

Readings uncover constructs of gender and reveal how identity is shaped through multiple forms of literacy, through reading, writing, postcolonial and diasporic identity, particular texts in girls' education, rereading, rewriting of memory, history, a poetics of relation constructed in the dialogue with the human imaginary.

Poetic vocation is not simply the act of writing poetry. It is also the act of reading. Of finding poetic language in the midst of "mechanical empiricism." The vocation of responding to another language when it appears. There is the suggestion that the woman reading is the woman corrupting. Wherever she goes, intentionally or not, she disturbs, corrupts, the comfortable logos that there was before.

Kristjana Gunnars, *The Rose Garden: Reading Marcel Proust*²⁰

The girl sleuth. Louise Fitzhugh's Harriet the Spy and her secret notebooks. Trixie Belden. Nancy Drew.

Long after my mother thought I was asleep,
late into the night, I would read under the
covers with a flashlight.

How I loved them, the stories about the
girl detectives, reading and recording the
world in notebooks – Harriet the Spy,
the ones who solved crimes with their
wits, their brains, their All-American good looks.
I drove that blue roadster with Nancy
Drew, dated Ned, looked lovely and charming

and desirable at college football games.

And how I dreamed of being Cherry Ames, student nurse, with her stylish cap and uniform, her black hair and rosy cheeks, her boyfriends and her adventures.

And when I grew up, I became them, Nancy and Cherry. I cut off my long black braids, styled my hair into a bob.

I became the girl detective, the nurse, capable of building nations and soothing the hearts of men for awhile.²¹

As a young girl, I read *Little Women*. *Madame Bovary*. *Anna Karenina*. I wanted to rewrite them, read them differently, give them different destinies.

The volume of Tolstoy thumbs her open.
She tries to keep the heroine alive.

Outside the library windows
ragged moths beat against the streetlamps.
She feels the heat of locomotive steam
rising from the stacks, weeps when she
sees Anna's red purse on the tracks.

She closes the book with stunned hands
as if she had touched the hem of a final
morning, a sense of that going into it alone.
She begins to think she will not be carried
unscarred, untorn into any heaven. Wants
someone to hold her while she burns.²²

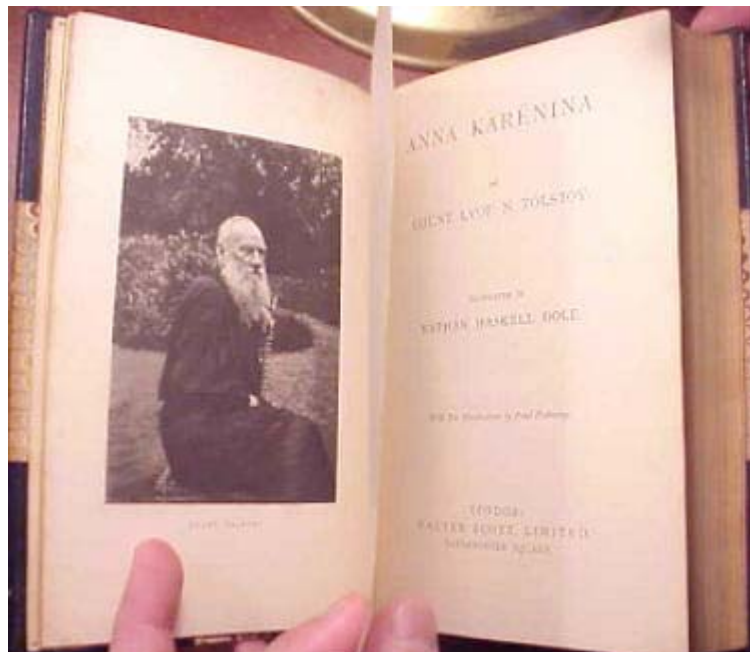


Figure 15

LITERATURE, LOVE AND SEX

Star crossed lovers. Romeo and Juliet.

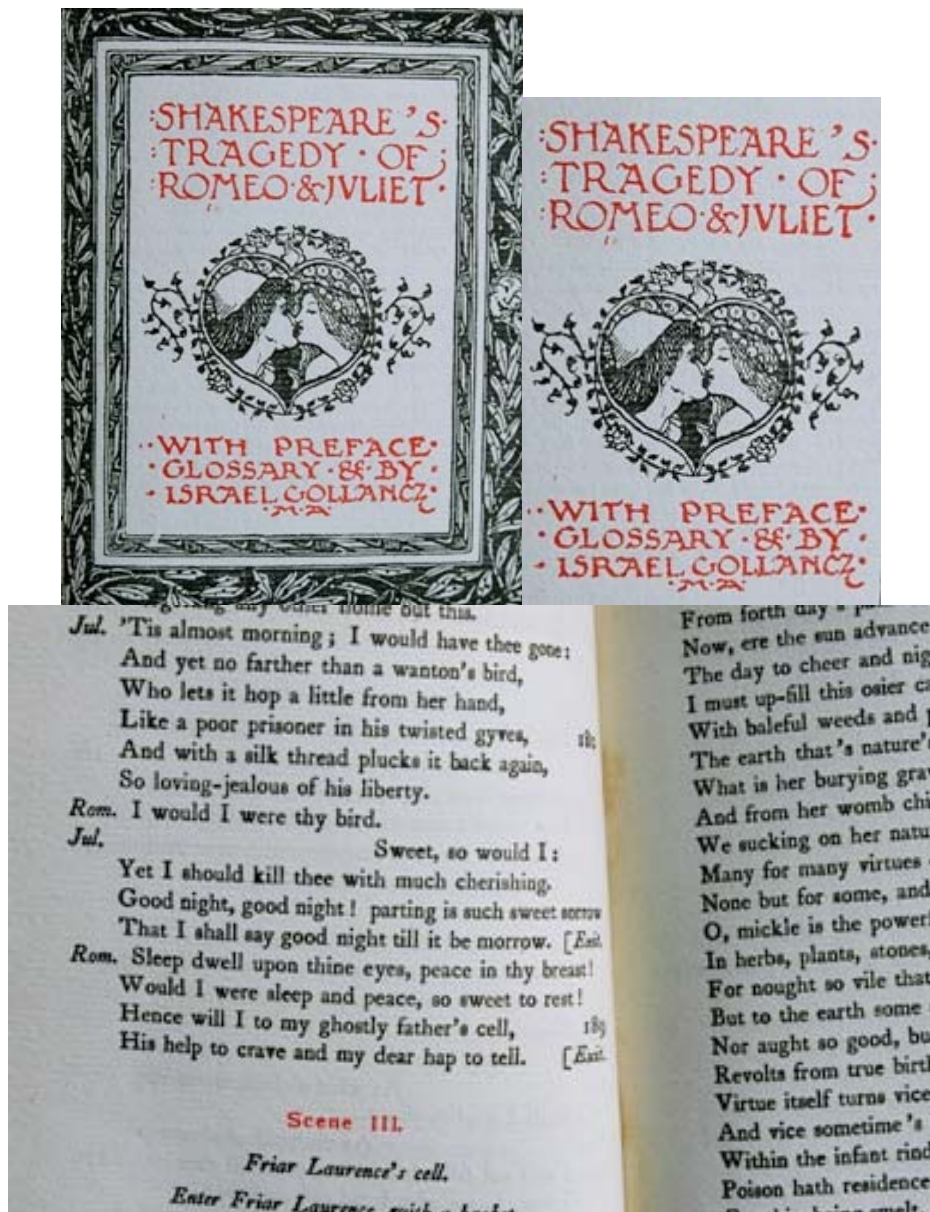


Figure 16

Forbidden reading. Literature as sex education. D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. Jane Rule's *Desert Hearts*. James Joyce's *Molly Bloom*:

...I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.²³

Reading Chekhov

Reading Chekhov. Stories about love
 the sadness of his characters, always meeting each other too late.
 Missed lives, mourning what could have been
 departing forever in railway stations.
 Tears, a lorgnette raised to the eye, ice etched on windows, gaslit winter scenes
 a loveless marriage in a country house in a town like all the
 others.

I'll read the story differently. A Chekhov love letter.

Love me through departures,
 through the faltering valves of your heart,
 the ticking of clocks and moving trains.

Kiss me in the cleft of each elbow, behind each knee.

Buddhists tell us to live our days unattached
 to the dust of the world
 to enter the blackness.
 To always see ourselves as light.

Not so easy to do when the hum of the world
 dulls us in its gears.

I am trying to wear light as a garment
 to find it in the paradise of afterlife under a stone
 in the opened door of a commuter train.

I have waited for you all my life.
 Four decades to find you
 and still and still a story that turns back on itself.

Dance with me beloved.
 I am your wild, sweet girl.
 I would have you as you are,
 aging and heartsick with the world.

All night, all night you can have this book.
 Turn the pages on your lap, until they become like well-worn linen
 last words soft in your hands.

Meet me there in that story
 afterlife of spine cracked open.²⁴

DIFFICULT READING

Difficult reading. In 2004, I teach a graduate seminar on Literature of Witness. Carolyn Forché's anthology: *Against Forgetting: Twentieth Century Poetry of Witness*. Bertolt Brecht's poem "When Evil-Doing Comes Like Falling Rain." Primo

Levi's poem "Memorandum Book." Reading Rwanda. Philip Gourevitch's *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families*. Romeo Dallaire's *Shake Hands With the Devil*. Gil Courtemanche's novel about Rwanda: *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali*. Students are shocked and disturbed by the readings. They are resistant to Courtemanche's novel in their diaries in our discussions. In the end, it is the novel that haunts us all, the one most written about in readers' diaries and final papers. In the end, it is the reading of poetry that is salvific and evocative of profound empathic response. Amidst the blood and horror of unspeakable genocide, Courtemanche weaves a love story sustained by readings of Paul Éluard's love poetry.

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I am reading in a school of dreams,
 a lost girl in a night's tale, wandering through
 a *jardin d'essais*, underfoot, the crunch of pale
 green lichen on the forest floor.

Hyacinth gardens fade into a scene of
 city lights and I am on Vancouver's Hastings Street.
 The pages become stained with east end rot, humanity
 pumping heroin through collapsed veins and
 there on the corner is a woman weeping, the sound of
 her pain palpable in every crack of concrete,
 a prostitute whose knees have been broken by
 a man with a baseball bat. I take her by the hand and
 take her home with me, wash her body and her crushed limbs,
 her sore-covered feet. I try to absorb her fever in my touch,
 lay her down to sleep in my bed.

In the morning when I wake, she is gone,
 only a cool, clear light shining on the tumbled sheets.
 Tonight, I'll turn the pages of the book again
 my hands inside the spine, reading the places
 where memory doesn't work. ²⁶

READING LISTS

Alberto Manguel makes lists. As I do. I ask students to make their own lists. These lists themselves become creative, intellectual imaginings. As Manguel notes, the magical arbitrariness of list-making demands that we make sense by associations. Write an assignment that is a list of books on the Theme of Time Suspended. On Places that Cannot be Left. On Places that Cannot be Reached.

I recently read Francine Prose's lucid book, *Reading Like a Writer: A Guide for People Who Love Books and For Those Who Want To Write Them*. Essential reading for readers, writers and teachers. Her closing list of Books to be Read Immediately is a model for a list assignment I tried with students. Some amazing lists were generated. Lists became inspiration for essays, for teaching activities with student writers and readers.

Excerpts from my own lists:

On love

Paul Eluard's poems.

Grace Paley's story "Goodbye and Goodluck".

On beauty

Stephen Dunn's *The Insistence of Beauty*

Adam Zagajewski's *Another Beauty*

Elaine Scarry's *Beauty and Being Just*

Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*

Ann Carson's *The Beauty of the Husband*

Allan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty*

A favorites list

Shei Shonagon's *Pillow Book. A book of 164 lists.*

The Diary of Lady Murasaki. The Tale of Genji.

At French College. Jean Paul Sartre, René Descartes, Simone de Beauvoir.

At University. Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir*. Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own. Mrs. Dalloway. To the Lighthouse.*

The Waves.

Joan Didion's *The White Album.*

Louise de Salvo's *Vertigo*. Alice Kaplan's *French Lessons.*

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

Elizabeth Bishop's poems

Mark Doty's poems *School of the Arts, My Alexandria*

Willa Cather's *My Ántonia*

Nabokov's *Speak, Memory, An Autobiography Revisited*

V.S. Ramachandran's *A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness*

Sapphire's *Push*

Martha Cooley's *The Archivist*

Czeslaw Milosz's edited anthology *Luminous Things*

ABC for adults. *Milosz's ABC*, an autobiography of sorts.

But my lists begin far earlier. In Grade 7, I am 12 years old. I break my leg in three places competing for the high jump on the track team. In 1969, they put a ten pound plaster cast on my leg, freezing it in a bent knee position for three months. As this was summertime, I plough through the shelves in our local library, reading voraciously. *War and Peace, Dr. Zhivago. Jane Eyre. Wuthering Heights. Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities.*

THE LIBRARY AS SACRED



Figure 17

I who always imagined Paradise to be a sort of library.
 Jorge Luis Borges

The Beaconsfield Public Library was always sacred space. In my early years, the library was located in its modest, shabby beginnings in an old building on Beaconsfield Boulevard. Sometimes the Bookmobile would come to our elementary school.

Later it moved to a new location attached to the city hall.

Today, as an adult, I remember libraries as sacred places, shelter from the sharp corners of the world. Mourn the burned libraries of the world:

When the National Library burned for three days in August, the town was choked with black snow. Those days I could not find a single pencil in the house, and when I finally found one it did not have the heart to write. Even the erasers left behind a black trace. Sadly, my homeland burned.²⁷

Goran Simić, "Lament for Vijecnica" in *From Sarajevo With Sorrow*.

POSSESSING BOOKS

Owning books. In classrooms, it frustrates me to see that students often don't have their own books. There are not even enough class sets of novels. How can we instill a love of books if readers can't own their books, write in the margins, hold the heft of a book in their hands? How can stories become beloved if readers can't possess books? Even in relatively wealthy school districts, novels for class reading must be kept at school, not taken home by students. It is a culture that assumes students cannot be responsible for books. Yet as teachers of English we must do what we can to help students envision books as treasures. Beg, borrow, cut deals with bookstores, school boards, appeal to parents, invent creative ways to finance the ownership of books. Let students make books their own, insert their marginalia, their reader's diaries onto the pages.

GIFTS OF BOOKS

In the early years, frequently, my books are birthday gifts, inscribed by my parents. *The Wind in the Willows*—my mother has written on the flyleaf...*seven years old. We hope you will enjoy reading!*

Gifts from others, frequently from students, become experiences of collective reading, and our discussions in classes of responses to valued books become locations of intellectual and imaginative exchange and relationship. These are treasured books, books as aesthetic objects that hold within them memory and human narrative layered upon the fictional and poetic texts. From Janet Pearson, Toni Morrison's *The Dancing Mind*. From photographer and teacher, Joe Paczuski: a copy of *Crow* signed by Ted Hughes and a rare chapbook edition of Adrienne Rich's *Twenty-One Love Poems*. From doctoral student Lorin Schwarz, who shares his love of books with me: *Einstein's Dreams*; from former English Education student Laura Weiss, Rilke's *Book of Hours*, a collection of Neruda. From artist and friend Vanessa Barnett, Jonathan Safran Foer's jewel of a book on Joseph Cornell, *The Convergence of Birds*; From Burcu Yaman Ntelioglou Orhan Pamuk's *My Name is Red*. Every gift book contains its own narrative of the memory of the gift-giver, of my teaching experiences, our collaborative and singular experiences with readings. Histories of relations and events inscribed on flyleaves, in the pages of stories.

BEAUTIFUL SENTENCES, QUESTIONS, ANSWERS

My teaching methods of integrating creative writing practices with reading bring me to the realization that students who are training to be teachers of English have frequently had the love of literature thrashed out of them by university education. Texts have been approached with little attention to pleasure, creativity, imagination; rather, students have been trained to form strong, critical and frequently negative opinions of writers who created works long before they were born. Many students approach such literary works with disdain, with a mission to prosecute or defend as if in a court of law concerned with writers' racial, class, gendered backgrounds. Many students have been encouraged to rewrite the classics into more politically correct forms. In the end, the orientation towards intolerance of classical texts leads to the general dislike for reading. So I ask, how can these students convey a passion for reading and writing to students in their own classrooms? How will they derive pleasure from literary study? How can literature be experienced in ways that open the mind and body to creative modes of perception and cognition?

Begin with the beautiful sentence. Consider how these sentences enable a poetics of relation with others, a way of speaking and addressing alterity. Read voraciously. Read everything. Look at writers whose sentences convey the sensibility of human consciousness. Study their sentences carefully. Gertrude Stein. Raymond Carver. Virginia Woolf. Joan Didion...the marvelous economy of her sentences. Tim O'Brien's story "The Things They Carried." The study of these writers and their literary works will teach students of literature far more about reading and writing than style and grammar guides.

WOMEN, READING, WRITING

Figure 18

Women, reading, writing. Reading and the slipperiness of memories. Summer 2002. I am teaching as a Visiting Scholar at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. The course is *Women, Writing and the Imagination: Curriculum as Aesthetic Text*.²⁸ We are reading an excerpt from Louise DeSalvo's memoir *Vertigo*.²⁹ DeSalvo writes that her memories of how she grew from a working-class, Italian-American child in Hoboken to become a Virginia Woolf scholar may not be accurate because memory cannot always be trusted. Her happiest time, she claims, was during WWII, when the world as she saw it was composed only of women and children (she was only three at the war's end). Then the men returned and life became grim. Later her mother became depressed and was institutionalized, her sister committed suicide, she herself was sexually abused by a female family member. Books and the public library were her refuge. In hindsight she finds parallels between her life and Virginia Woolf's that might escape a casual reader. She also sees them in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, which she saw 11 times in one week when she was 15.

We are introducing ourselves. A woman named Nicola speaks about the readings I have asked them to prepare for class – Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and Louise DeSalvo's chapter in *Vertigo* titled "A Portrait of the Puttana as a Middle-Aged Woolf Scholar". Nicola tells us that in these readings she has begun to make connections between Virginia Woolf's narratives and suicide, De Salvo's writings, and the suicide of her own mother. She tells us her mother committed suicide, walked into Heart Lake with a rock hung around her neck.

The room falls silent. All I can hear are the loud, air-fans blowing cold air into the classroom. After a pause, we continue the last few introductions. Now, in this place, in this time, I wonder, what do we perceive of each other? Despite the startling nature of Nicola's revelation on this first day together, it seems to fit, given the nature of the readings I have chosen for this collective literary journey. This curriculum, *curriculum vitae*, this course of our lives. It is a disruption, rupture of the careful discourse of university classrooms, as appropriate a place as any to begin. Perhaps this course will be a navigation, a reading/writing of narratives moving between a waltz of love and a mother's suicide.

I leave the class that day with the image of Nicola's mother walking into still waters, stones around her throat. Something turns inside me and I know this class will be a deeply emotional space, curriculum of the emotional. I hope that it will transgress boundaries in ways that acknowledge the darkness and light of human knowing and living. I am struck with the impression of these women as individuals of courage. A new generation of women writers/academics. A classroom full of hope, faith and possibility. I hope that our learning and teaching here may in some ways embody

hope and beauty, pushing at the existing order of things, silence made speech. Reading. Writing. Creating. A woman's throat opened into voice.

READING HOME

Literary study is a branch of ecology, anthropology, history. Literature should be taught as the study of humankind in the context of the earth and its peoples. Education must enable us to consider ideas in the context of human memories as the lessons of the past concern us in the present and future world. Reading literary works and responding to them through a bio-cultural, creative consciousness, locates education in a place of beauty and truth, and artistic, aesthetic forms become our most powerful ways of speaking to others. Education, then, as a practice and engagement of love, becomes a religion of love against a religion of death.

A bio-cultural philosophy of education is anchored in the belief that human biological experience is inseparable from the world as *oikos*, meaning home, and from our human relations to this world. This home is at once a natural phenomenon and an aesthetic and cultural world. Ideally, we read our home in a process that is a form of resistance to dystopia. This ecotopian notion is linked to education conceptualized not as a discrete discipline in the arbitrary manner of institutions of higher education; rather, education is conceptualized as inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary, contained in and relevant to all fields of study.

Reading Amy Lowell: A meditation on home

Summer and I have returned to the town where
I was a young wife
where we raised our daughters.
The name of the place means *a place to live forever*.
Mythology and daily life. Legends of sea serpents,
ghosts of horses lost swimming in from the island, tangled with
slow pitch tournaments, ball players and Winnebago campers,
tourists on the beaches and lunching at wineries.

Today I am marking freshman English papers in the backyard.
The air is sweet and fugitive. In the garden, wild strew of roses,
pink blooms amidst the silver foliage of planted pathways
fragrance spilling from their thorn beds
the morning stillness stung by the
screeching of Steller's jays and flocks of crows
singing a crude chorale.

In the distance, the sound of ducks landing on the swimming pool,
splashing and flapping their wings.
My daughters laugh and I am struck by that particular radiance
again and again how the laughter of girls
cuts through blue air.

How did I come to this place
the professor circling sentence fragments,

the occasional leap of the heart when a student writes a beautiful phrase.
 My student has written an essay on Amy Lowell.
 And suddenly I am transported, back to 1972 at Beaconsfield High
 in Mr. Whitman's North American Literature class,
yes that was his name.

Fifteen years old, sitting in those straight-backed wooden chairs,
my legs cramped under the tiny desk with my huge Norton anthology
open at Amy Lowell's "Patterns."
 There have been so many words I have committed to heart. This poem was one of
 them.
 I could taste this poetry, feel the rhythms of it beating in my eyelids.
 For the first time, reading Amy Lowell,
I understood that burnt cadence of sense,
the quickstep of syllables in my throat.

I wrote an essay on Amy Lowell's "Patterns"
 something about the Imagist movement, the poet's use of figurative
language and form
 in a consideration of how societal expectations may
inhibit a woman's actions in society.

Mr. Whitman gave me an A on my essay.

I promptly forgot what I knew about patterns
in the wisdom of my sixteenth year.

I must have known then, something about the effect of patterns,
 knowing Lowell's narrator, the feel of her corset, her pink and silver
 brocade gown, how she grieves for her dead lover
how a heavy-booted lover would have loosened
the stays of her stiff correct brocade
 in the pink and silver garden
the bruise and swoon of it.

*I too am a rare
 Pattern.*

In dreams I see the husband of my girlhood
my pink and silver time
 his arms around me like a familiar blanket.
 He is holding something out to me, places it in my palm
a scroll, a tablet, some lost history inscribed
unreadable.

And centuries pass and we are still *gorgeously arrayed*
trousseaus of pink and silver
 mouths stuffed with bone china
 pink and silver, boned and stayed

Christ! What are patterns for?

At sixteen I used to mouth the words
 swords springing from the repetitions
 from the ribs of consonants.
 Today, I reread the poem and the body flies apart,
 remembering how a grown woman can brush back her hair in moonlight
 watch her husband and daughters inside her house as if in a dream.

Remembering days when the woman wakes up and she understands her skin
 doesn't fit her anymore
 What she does inside that skin leaves
 her outside her house in long nights of crickets
 singing and the lake whispering.

Sometimes, she longs to be like characters in a novel or a poem,
 the relief of flatness on paper.

The heart is literate.
 It wants to read the pages it has unfurled.
 It wants the grip of roses on love-ridden afternoons,
 the ordinary of tv, chair, table, plate, sneakers
 entangled through a sky of blood tracery swept innocent by rain.

I want conversation that is like the stripped truth of the poem,
 the way I felt when I first read Amy Lowell's "Patterns".
 Over the years I wondered what kind of shelter
 I could make with words.
 I search for the color of home in the extravagance of reading.
 I am looking for it still.

This town is not a place for introspection. Such beauty.
 The lake, the blue air, the sun, all defy me
 to find some fault in this horizon.

Over the years I weaned my babies, got ready to walk
 into the pink and silver light.³⁰

READING WITH MY DAUGHTERS

Reading with children, with students, gives us the chance to reread childhood books, to relive memory and to experience texts in new ways. *The Velveteen Rabbit*. *Winnie the Pooh*. Janet and Allen Ahlberg's exquisitely illustrated books: *Each Peach, Pear, Plum*, *The Jolly Postman*. The vicarious reading of other people's mail. One year, in my class for elementary teachers, we set up a metal mailbox in the classroom for a You've Got Mail Project. Whenever class members wanted, they contributed imaginary letters from characters in books, correspondences between characters. Some of these letters and postcards were works of art. A postcard from Cinderella looking for her glass slipper. Personal ads. Fractured fairytales. A feminist professor

writing to Wendy about her role looking after lost boys. An imaginative way to bring theory into play with interpretive readings of literature.

When I was young my father called me *Princess*.
And princess stories were the ones I loved most,
especially the one about Sleeping Beauty. Her
name was sometimes Briar Rose or Aurora. The
story of the beautiful princess who pricked her
finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel, falling
under the spell of the witch who had been shunned
at her christening. The curse of a girlchild's birth.

She slept along with her kingdom for a hundred years
until she is rescued by a handsome prince who hacked
through the dense tangle of thorn and wild roses.
The curse lifted with love, his kiss on her lips
awakened the world.

While my daughters are young, I read them princess stories
The Paper Bag Princess, *The Princess and the Motorcycle*.
tales of strong, independent princesses of wit and courage and
intellect who do not depend on princes.

Still, as I watch my girls, young women now, I am filled
with longing, something that mourns the loss of belief
that a beloved would hack through forests of thorns into
waking.³¹

AGING AND READING



Figure 19

*Life changes fast.
Life changes in the instant.
You sit down to dinner and life as you know it ends.
The question of self-pity.*

With these lines, Joan Didion begins *The Year of Magical Thinking*. It is January 2006. I am reading Didion's memoir of loss and grief, of the death of her husband, John Gregory Dunne, after a massive, fatal coronary in 2003. The story is devastating and compounded by the illness and coma of their daughter, Quintana, a few days prior to Dunne's death. The book holds another layer of loss and grief for the reader; by the time the book is published we know that Quintana too has died without recovering. In

a second, a forty-year partnership ends, a child is lost. Didion writes with clarity of the nature of such loss: “weeks and then months that cut loose any fixed idea I ever had about death, about illness...about marriage and children and memory...about the shallowness of sanity, about life itself.” I weep through my reading of this book; Didion’s prose affects me deeply and I am struck by the truth of what she says, how we face this cutting loose of our carefully constructed narratives when they do not tell the planned story. She cites Delmore Schwartz: *Time is the school in which we learn, / Time is the fire in which we burn.*³²

Aging and reading. We read books differently when we return to them. Perhaps, if we are lucky, we are schooled to be more compassionate readers. Didion writes:

I remember despising the book Dylan Thomas’s widow Caitlin wrote after her husband’s death, *Leftover Life to Kill*. I remember being dismissive of, even censorious about, her self pity, her “whining,” her “dwelling on it.” *Leftover Life to Kill* was published in 1957. I was twenty-two years old. Time is the school in which we learn.³³

ROMPING IN THE BOOKISH DARK

Literature has mimetic power. A novel or story or poem can work its way into consciousness, into thinking, moods, dreams, into the reader’s immediacy. For those of us who teach literature, much of our research and writing is a form of fieldwork on our conversations with students, our perceptions of our teaching worlds as intellectual, moral and imaginative territory.

Books can become an enduring refuge for readers who live in times of violence and uncertainty, a refuge that provides a home for a conscious acknowledgement of the estranged, the displaced, the misunderstood. The students who come to school without bus-fare or lunches, whose lives are rife with violence and despair, may find in the pages of books a chapter of their own, a home of their own. The creative consciousness of the reader is a gift of companionship, a place to feel less alone in the world. As teachers we can do little about the despair in daily lives, but we can hope that our classrooms might be homes to come to, and that the books we read with students might provide shelter and comfort. Imagine the literature classroom as a place to *romp with joy in the bookish dark.*³⁴

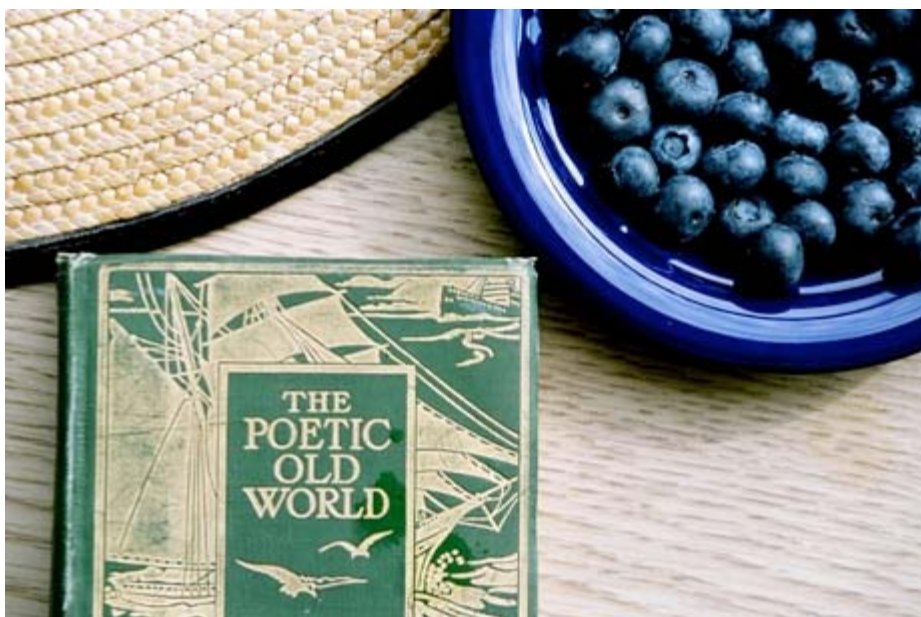


Figure 20

READING AS ART, ASTONISHMENT, ALIVENESS

Openings and closings. It is my practice to end every semester with a Literary Café. Everyone brings a reading and food to share. I ask students to bring one piece of their own composition from their writing portfolio. As well, I ask them to bring one piece by another author. One year, I arrived at my classroom at the University of British Columbia and the class of Elementary Language Arts teachers had transformed the room. The usual dull classroom with its fluorescent lights, concrete walls, was lit with candles and lava lamps. We entered a hip, beat café, jazz playing. Janet and Esther dressed in long, poker-straight wigs with forehead bangs, berets, black turtlenecks. These days of shared readings with a community of readers and writers always yield surprises. In my course syllabus, I ask students to astonish me. As Roland Barthes wrote: *étonne-moi*. And they do. Given the opportunities to create and think about reading as an art, students astonish me; they astonish themselves. Year after year, there is always something new and astonishing in the reading and writing together.

I just read Jonathan Safran Foer's stunning book, *Everything is Illuminated*. Everything is illuminated if we are oriented toward astonishment and beauty.

Literature has always accommodated loss and tragic vision. However, we turn to reading imaginative literature because it stands in opposition to that which destroys life and human dignity. Now more than ever, education that claims a poetics of relation will embrace creativity as a global force, a world-embracing reality that enables in us a recognition of others. Education in poetics and creativity encourages expressive consciousness embedded in language, a movement toward connection and coexistence with other human communities. Creativity becomes a force of revolution and human agency that works against oppressive dominations of global history. Those who are educated for poetic vision embrace a creative human imaginary of relation that can offer us transformational modes of comprehension. The multiplicities of literature recall to us our sensual lives and the lives of other and different human beings. In literary study, we are reminded that through creativity, the infinite and

multiple possibilities of human relations, including love, tenderness and compassion, are still very much alive in a world in which violent material power is prevalent.



Figure 21

CLAIM

All she did was read. This left a commotion in her wake. Reading as faith. Book as talisman. Startled breath. Childhood sets of golden books. Nursery of stars. Winken, Blinken and Nod. Kipling has a theory about how the alphabet came to be. *Cahiers d'exercices*. Lined notebook with pink margin. Faint blue lines of sans serif. Vanish through a rabbit hole, a looking glass, a wardrobe. Take a blessing from the lion. Find a page that does not tear the retina. Paul Éluard's love poems. Poems that enter like slivers of glass. In the burned libraries everything is winged and dreaming. *Soirs volés*. *Nuits blanches*. We are not all born with grace. A manifesto of stars is necessary. Words unfurling on prayer flags. Cicero's memory palaces. Reading Yehuda Amichai. *Open Closed Open*. *The language of love and tea with roasted almonds*. After Auschwitz, no theology. *The touch of longing is everywhere*. Click of ruby heels. The letter that begins in honesty Dearest Beloved. After Rwanda, no language. Poem that tempers grief. Stone of witness. Tablet of amen and love. The breath of Rappaccini's daughter a fatal kiss. In the ruined garden stand in the shadow of the scar. Her hands busied by daylight. Schopenhauer approves of art. The experience of art constitutes cessation of the will: beauty wipes the slate clean. The nape of her neck bent over the page. The heart is the toughest part of the body. Tenderness is in the hands. Repair. After a requiem begin to hear the noise of the world again. Door opening as the palm of the eye. A poetry of shine.³⁵

FIGURES

Figure 1 Antiquarian Books, collection of Rishma Dunlop. Photograph by Joe Paczuski © 2006.

Figure 2 Photograph by Joe Paczuski © 2006. Collection of Rishma Dunlop. 05.

<http://www.library.pitt.edu/libraries/is/enroom/illustrators/smith.htm#verses>

Figure 3 Jessie Wilcox Smith Illustration. *A Child's Garden of Verses*, Robert Louis Stevenson. New York: Scribners, 19.

Figure 4 *The Story of Little Red Riding Hood*. (London: T. Goode).

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Figure 5 Little Red Riding Illustration. Jessie Wilcox Smith. http://www.art.com/asp/display-asp/_/id--9196/Grimms_Fairy_Tales.htm

- Figure 6 *Cinderella : or, The history of the little glass slipper*. (Alhambra, CA: G.F. Braun)
- Figure 7 *Through the Looking Glass: And What Alice Found There*, Lewis Carroll, Philadelphia: Henry Altemus, 1899. Photograph by Joe Paczuski © 2006, collection of Rishma Dunlop.
- Figure 8 *Through the Looking Glass*. Photograph by Joe Paczuski © 2006, collection of Rishma Dunlop.
- Figure 9 Photographs of *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame. New York: Scribner's 1961 and *Emerald City of Oz* by L. Frank Baum. Chicago: Reilly & Lee, 1910. Joe Paczuski © 2006.
- Figure 10 Figure 11 *Emerald City of Oz*. Photographs by Joe Paczuski © 2006.
- Figure 11 *Peter Pan*. J.M. Barrie.
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Peter_Pan_1915_cover_2.JPG
- Figure 12 Reading Fashion. Photograph by Joe Paczuski © 2005.
- Figure 13 Wonder Woman by Charles Moulton. 1st edition Limited Collector's Series No. C-30. DC Comics. New York: National Periodical Publications @1941, 1968, 1974.
- Figure 14 Gerhardt Richter. Lesende (Reader), 1994 Oil on linen. Downloaded Sept. 10, 2007.
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- Figure 15 Anna Karenina. Leo Tolstoy. (London:Walter Scott) 1990.
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- Figure 16 *Romeo and Juliet*, Temple Shakespeare, Cambridge Edition, First Edition 1896, 7th Edition 1900. London: J.M. Dent. Photograph by Joe Paczuski © 2006.
- Figure 17 Sacred. Photograph by Joe Paczuski © 2006.
- Figure 18 Memory. St. James Cemetery, Toronto. Photograph by Joe Paczuski, © 2006.
- Figure 19 Age. Photograph by Joe Paczuski © 2006.
- Figure 20 *The Poetic Old World*. L.H. Humphrey. New York: Henry Holt, 1908. Photograph by Joe Paczuski, ©2006.
- Figure 21 All she did was read. Photograph by Joe Paczuski, ©2005.

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Note on Referencing: The author has used Chicago referencing style, a departure from the journal's usual requirement of APA. The author's preference for a humanities style for English Education research is grounded in the desire to create a literary, "open text" for the reader, without the interruptions of bracketed references. The open text is conceived in the sense of Roland Barthe's assertion in his 1971 essay "From Work to Text," and in his essay of structuralist literary criticism "S/Z," that a text that is open is writable and readable, *lisible et scriptable*. The Reader's Diary becomes a form of inquiry into reading practices and bio-cultural (biological and cultural) engagements with literature. The open text is often structured in fragments of memory with associative, stream of consciousness observations that provide opportunities for the reader to construct further layers of imaginative associations based on individual consciousness and imagination.

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- ³⁵ Dunlop, Rishma. "Claim". *Reading Like a Girl*, p. 92.

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