



## Symposium on "After Dartmouth: Growth and Conflict"

James T. Zebroski; Sharon J. Hamilton; John S. Mayher; Joseph Harris

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SYMPOSIUM  
*on*  
 "AFTER DARTMOUTH:  
 GROWTH AND CONFLICT"

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*Joseph Harris's article on the Dartmouth Seminar appeared in the October 1991 issue of College English. The Seminar, held for three weeks in the summer of 1966, brought American and British scholar-teachers together "to define English as a school subject and to outline the ways it might be best taught." For many teachers, the Seminar came to symbolize "a kind of Copernican shift" from a transmission model, focusing on how composition skills and literary knowledge are passed along, to a growth model, focusing on students' experiences of "language in all its forms." But Professor Harris saw the Seminar less as a "heroic shift" than as a "moment in which the conflicts that define English studies were dramatized with unusual clarity," a moment that continues to shape controversies that influence our work today. The following is a conversation about his views.*

JAMES T. ZEBROSKI teaches graduate courses in composition theory and pedagogy in the Writing Program at Syracuse University:

**P**rofessor Harris's essay speaks to the experience of a great many of us who have come into the profession over the last two decades and who believe that students are central to our intellectual project and that scholarship (and Theory) must in some careful and principled way be made "answerable" to teaching. Still, the essay puzzles me at several points. For one, I find troublesome his assertion that while Dartmouth shaped "the kinds of talk about teaching that go on at conferences and in journals, the Dartmouth ideas seem to have failed to have much practical effect on what actually goes on in many English classrooms" (632).

As a person who for nearly a decade was closely associated with one school district, as intern, teacher, and student teacher supervisor, I strongly disagree with this. In the schools I knew, I saw change brought about in large measure because of the work of a small community of master teachers knowledgeable about, and

committed to, the "Dartmouth ideal." One doesn't have to put forward an heroic view of Dartmouth or to argue profession-wide paradigm shift to admit that the Seminar provided many teachers who worked in the schools with a highly useful "theory" for resisting on a day-to-day basis the very forces that Professor Harris argues have not changed (632). Speaking from experience, I was changed by the ideas and ideals of the Seminar.

"Dartmouth" for master teachers like Fran Lambrecht, who was my cooperating teacher at the junior high where I did my internship in 1973, meant a whole reconceptualization of English, moving away from the U.S. idea that English was a body of knowledge with a structure to which students were introduced by inquiry, and moving toward the British idea put forth by James Britton at the Dartmouth Seminar, but also elaborated, further theorized, and popularized by James Moffett in his *Teaching the Universe of Discourse* and by John Dixon in his *Growth Through English*, that English is a "teaching subject—that is, a loosely shared set of classroom practices, concerns, and activities" (Harris 634). Fran Lambrecht based her teaching on these ideals, and it was her enthusiasm about Dartmouth and her view that it had important effects on what she did in her ninth grade classroom which inspired me to investigate further the ideas that so animated her. I got interested in Dartmouth because I saw how dramatically different and exciting Fran's teaching was from the teaching I had to that point encountered.

When I began to read about Dartmouth and talk about it at great length with Fran and other teachers, I discovered that my daily teaching was changed. Dartmouth gave coherence to my daily teaching in what was often an alienating setting, provided me with a new language for talking about teaching, allowed me by means of those conversations to discover a network of fellow teachers who shared similar ideals, helped me generate questions about the learning processes of my students, provided me with a set of practices which I could take into my class, gave me a wider vision of what teaching was all about and might become, and was just about the only morale booster I had during some tough times. I was a better teacher *and* thinker because of Dartmouth. What more can be expected of a "theory"?

Someone once said that "education cannot compensate for society." In the same way, I'd argue that "theory" cannot compensate for education. It's an illusion to think that getting the right theory, in and of itself, will change the world. And it's a further jump to assume that because the world seemingly hasn't changed, our theory is somehow inadequate. Finally, positing a static world, where the "day-to-day work of most teachers . . . seems to have continued . . . much as it had before" (632), is an ideological act that is itself open to some criticism. It might be more productive to view institutions over the last twenty years as constantly (even radically) changing, as being reinvented (and to some

measure reproduced) on a daily basis. According to this view, we might ask different questions—instead of wondering why change in college and public school classrooms did not occur, we might ask how inevitable change was domesticated, and how this domestication was, and is, resisted by teachers and students.

And even accepting his implicit sense of the uses of theory, I still dispute Professor Harris's statement in empirical terms. I believe that there were and are such institutional changes. One reason that my school district committed itself to no tracking in the English curriculum, to a series of short and elective courses, to the introduction of new content (like composition, adolescent literature, folklore, ethnic and world literature), and to a shift from a junior high to a middle school concept was that a few excellent and very involved teachers were influenced by Dartmouth. These teachers went on to work for changes in the school system as a whole. In saying this, I am obviously not arguing that the schools are now sites for the practice of freedom, nor am I a "romantic" (a somewhat patronizing term in any case) who believes Dartmouth had an inside track on truth. But I am saying that that model even today has important effects as a weapon of resistance for teachers organizing among themselves in grassroots collectives like the Whole Language Movement and its support groups, barely noticed (or found noticeable) by the disciplinary apparatus (journals, conferences, organizational publications) which we too often mistake for, or take to be somehow reflective of, the profession.

However, aside from the issue of the consequences of Dartmouth "theory," I want to question Professor Harris's implied critique of the subject position(s) found in such Dartmouth terms as "personal growth," "experience," "expression," "process," and "self." He says, "The question of where this sense of self came from in the first place was not seriously addressed" (642). He further contends that "identity rises out of identification; we define who we are through whom we choose to stand with and against" and proposes that we attend more to the "conflicts and differences" that will help us and our students to see what is at stake or what can be gained in reading and writing at the university (643).

It is very easy twenty-five years after the fact to see the gaps, contradictions, even naïveté, embodied in the thinking of that day, judged by present-day standards. But unless we want to risk becoming the object of a similar sort of hindsight after we have left the scene, we need to be intellectually gentle about such critiques. True, in retrospect, it is easy to read the discourses of Dartmouth in bourgeois humanist terms, but this is not the only "legitimate" reading possible. In the case of Dartmouth, these terms are filled with working class content. In examining Dartmouth, it is crucial to note that the Labour Party under Harold Wilson had just come to power in 1964 and had won a large majority in 1965. The Labour Party had been committed from at least 1944 to compulsory and free education provided in a new system of comprehensive schools that were to fight

the class bias of the so-called public schools. It is then not by chance that many of the student examples in Dixon's *Growth Through English* talk explicitly out of experience, to be sure, but tellingly, out of working class experience. In one example, Dixon quotes a sixth former who writes of the complexities he as a person from a working class area faces in having to live two lives—presumably the life (and discourse) of home as opposed to that of school (22). To publish and praise such student writing was, and still is, highly unusual and suggests that the apparently bourgeois discourses of that time were in this case being appropriated by and for working class students. Drawing upon the work of Basil Bernstein, who had always had an explicit interest in and commitment to the working class, Dixon, but also Dartmouth participants like Britton and Moffett who drew on Bernstein's work, was well aware of the questions of class affiliation and personal identity and the conflicts necessitated by these questions. I don't think it is necessarily true that metaphors of growth gloss over conflict and difference, nor do I see that in this case they did.

Finally, to bring it around, I find Professor Harris's essay itself to be somewhat ambiguous about conflict in our professional life. He rightly focuses on the examination of the conflicts that shot through the discourses of Dartmouth and continue to intersect in English studies. He begins the work of mapping "out some of the contested terms and ideas that structure our work in English today" (633). My question is: to what end?

For all his care in detailing difference between positions at Dartmouth and in current forces at work in our field, Professor Harris doesn't tell us where he stands. He seems to be calling for some sort of "synthesis" to be reached in some hoped-for Bruffeean "conversation of profession-kind," some disciplinary dialogue or negotiation that will counter the "odd confederacies" of the English department where to date, "none of these 'specialists' . . . [has] much reason or occasion to speak with any of the others" (640). Some of the assumptions at work here are: (1) this state of affairs (if you will, the balkanization of English departments) is a bad thing; (2) it can be changed; (3) we should work toward changing it; and (4) we ("we" who?) can change it. I am not sure I agree with any of these points, but I do find them strangely reminiscent of the assumptions about the usefulness of a professional dialogue that informed the Dartmouth Seminar of 1966, the very agenda that Professor Harris so eloquently shows us "failed," perhaps even had to "fail." If the first principle of rhetoric is discovering what is worth arguing over and whether such persuasion can make a difference, then the prior case needs to be made that a disciplinary conversation, in which professional conflict and difference are tracked and theorized, is one such useful expenditure of rhetorical energy. While that case is constantly assumed in professional institutions and bureaucracies, it has not yet been made in any explicit form that I am aware of. At least, I have not yet been persuaded that the sort of disciplinary

dialogue that Professor Harris's essay appears to call for would necessarily be helpful. It assumes an equality among English department faculty that simply does not exist. In such a "dialogue" among literature specialists and compositionists, among theorists and practitioners, the unequal power relations will more than likely simply be reproduced, and I have a pretty good idea who will have the last word in such talk and where I will be positioned in it. Unless Theory can be made "answerable," in precisely the way Bakhtin uses the word, to teaching, it isn't clear what would be gained in a disciplinary conversation. Why would I, or anyone in a similar position, want to call for such a dialogue?

SHARON J. HAMILTON (*formerly Hamilton-Wieler*) teaches English at Indiana University at Indianapolis:

**D**artmouth delivered, in disputation and indisputably. As Joseph Harris writes in "After Dartmouth: Growth and Conflict in English," the Dartmouth Seminar can be viewed as "a moment in which the conflicts that define English studies were dramatized with unusual clarity." Harris positions these conflicts, appropriately, within the context of ongoing discussions about "What is English?" that were occurring in North America and Britain at the time, summarizing the essential tensions as

a point where two opposing ideas of English—one centered on a loyalty to a certain kind of knowledge, the other rooted in a certain view of the classroom—met head on and found that they seemed to be talking about different subjects. The Americans tried to define the subject matter of English apart from the ways it is taught; the British saw the work of teachers and students as an intrinsic part of what that subject was. (640)

These words crystallize, with the same clarity Harris ascribes to Dartmouth, not only the Dartmouth debates, but also conversations currently taking place in English departments (as well as in other disciplinary areas) in the 90s. Just yesterday, for example, in my own department, a peer teaching evaluation procedure was questioned because it appeared to validate a view of English based upon a social-epistemic collaborative model over the more traditional knowledge-transmission lecture model. The ensuing discussion situated itself squarely in the same arena of conflict defined above by Harris. Furthermore, comments from colleagues attending recent CCCC and NCTE conferences indicate this arena of conflict can still be found in most English departments, and also, even more surprisingly, in many schools of education in the United States.

Educated in Canada, with doctoral studies in England, and currently teaching in the United States, I have become inevitably swept into the opposing currents of these positions. I therefore followed Harris's discussion with considerable

interest. His conclusions—that “we need to talk about language not simply as a form of expression but also as a form of action”; that “we need . . . to show how personal and social uses of language are rarely discrete but are always intertwined”; and that we should aim to “help students achieve a different sort of textual power . . . one they can use not merely to meet but to question the demands their society makes upon them” (643–44)—provided an agreeably challenging resolution to my journey through his article. Some of the conceptual paths he chose to arrive at these conclusions, however, initiated equally challenging confusions.

These confusions emerged from some of the categories Harris chose to set up in opposition to each other, when their relationship is much more intricate and interdependent than oppositional. My initial stumble came at the introduction of “the troubled relations between research and teaching . . . since research and teaching address competing needs and audiences” (635). Do they really, I wondered? Willing to acknowledge for the moment the tradition which promulgates this view, the prevalence of which is affirmed in James Zebroski’s mention of it as a central point of agreement in the opening sentence of his response, I suspended my urge toward argument. However, when Harris returned more forcefully to this arbitrary, though widely accepted, dichotomy, accusing “the growth theorists of reinscribing the split between teaching and research” (641), I was compelled to pick up the challenge.

Even prior to Dartmouth, in their evening Diploma Course of the mid-60s, James Britton, Nancy Martin, and Harold Rosen were urging teachers to become “reflective practitioners” by examining and articulating their classroom practices and learning. With the publication of *Language, the Learner, and the School*, the development of “action research” spread, as teachers began to view their classrooms as laboratories of opportunity to merge theories of language, learning, and schooling with their own classroom practices by researching those practices. Teachers began to form collaborative groups to discuss writing processes as learning frameworks for students, not just as teaching frameworks. They opened up writing assignments to students’ suggestions and choice, and experimented with student journals, focusing on relationships among thinking, process, and written product. John Dixon’s post-Dartmouth work also furthered this emphasis on the teacher-as-researcher, as he urged teachers to explore and discuss what happens when the kind of close readings traditionally accorded canonical works of literature are applied to student writing.

I suggest that rather than “reinscribing the split between teaching and research,” the so-called “growth theorists” inspired a much closer, more interconnected relationship between the two.

The category “growth theorist” itself merits deeper scrutiny, particularly in view of Harris’s attempts to show “how the meanings of *growth* differ from those

of *maturity*." Harris suggests that maturity implies adaptability to "the demands of society . . . in ways that growth does not," with the further implication that the "growth theorists" offered a model of personal, virtually spontaneous growth in opposition to rather than in negotiation with the "acculturative goals of most schooling" (638). Troubled by Harris's more precious than essential distinction between "growth" and "maturity," I burrowed into the history of "growth" as it became applied to the Dartmouth discussions.

I discovered that Dixon's suggested title for his Dartmouth report had been *Language in Operation*, but that an editorial advisory board, consisting of James Squire, Frank Whitehead, Al Markwardt, and others, had recommended the title *Growth Through English*. Dixon himself categorizes the model offered in the book as "developmental," and in chapter two refers explicitly to Vygotsky's and Luria's work on the language roles and purposes young children learn to internalize through social interaction. This focus accounts for the primacy given to talk and drama in his discussions of classroom activities. Equally, he envisions students' encounters with literature as interactional. Dixon calls for an interest, first, in culture as the students know it—in the networks of attitudes to experience and personal evaluations they develop in living response to their families and neighborhoods—as a basis for understanding the interplay between these "personal worlds" and the worlds created by the writers of literary works. His term "language in operation" incorporates, therefore, a developmental model of shifting responses to both the world of literary texts and the world of discursive texts about ongoing, day-to-day life experiences that students encounter.

Similarly reductive and problematic is the assertion that "the growth theorists especially argued for an acceptance of the individual's own language or dialect, with a resulting de-emphasis on teaching correct or standard forms" (637). This either/or interpretation of Dixon's and Britton's work has resulted in considerable misrepresentation of their ideas in North America. The Dartmouth report makes clear, to begin with, that spoken dialect forms have a "correct" grammatical structure. Dixon points to the class bias behind any attempt to treat them as substandard. And while urging teachers to respect spoken dialect—with the speech community it stands for—he quotes Ralph Ellison's eloquent plea, building on that respect, to "teach me the way into the larger society." So far as written English is concerned, this implies a careful, staged introduction to reading standard English—the forms found in almost all school texts. That process is explicitly referred to in the Dartmouth report (see *Growth* 17). As for inculcating standard forms in students' writing, the Dartmouth Seminar said what it could at the time, given the limited evidence for effective practices, and drew particular attention to ongoing experiments in this area by Nelson Francis, one of the Seminar participants. Since that time, of course, Donald Graves and his collabo-

rators have transformed our understanding of the ways teachers can prompt and direct students as they actively try to internalize written norms.

The final problematic category that marred my full appreciation of Harris’s discussion occurred in his position that

there are times when a teacher must take on the role of an *adversary* as well as collaborator, must work against the habitual or intuitive moves and interpretations of her students in order to push them toward a new view of an event or text. (641; my emphasis)

It may seem quibbling to assert that the role of collaborator includes questioning “habitual or intuitive moves and interpretations.” I definitely agree that this questioning and pushing towards what Vygotsky calls the “zone of proximal development” is desirable, is, in fact, an integral part of the quintessential teaching/learning moment. However, given the power relationships already predominant in most classrooms, I am most uncomfortable with the category “teacher-as-adversary,” even if it ideally occurs only “at times.”

Finally, however, one of the most valuable contributions that Harris makes to the ongoing conversation about the Dartmouth Seminar is his observation that

the irony of Dartmouth was that the British were reacting against almost precisely the view of English that the Americans were trying to achieve. In turn, many of the Americans balked at the ideas of growth theory because they seemed so much like the very kind of progressive schooling that they had built their own sense of English against. (639)

In situating the struggle to define “What is English?” within historical as well as intellectual contexts, Harris underscores the fact that our own answers will not lie in any absolute definitions. Rather we have to respond to perceived present and future needs in the light of past epistemological positions. The 1960s were a time of world boom, with funds suddenly available for curriculum research and development. By contrast, in many English-speaking countries, the past decade has seen educational research and development starved of funds within an atmosphere of mounting debt, recession, and slump. Many politicians on both sides of the Atlantic have taken the easy way out, blaming schools and calling for a return to “rigor,” “standards,” and “the (white, Western, and male) cultural-heritage canon.” Students are inevitably facing increasingly complex social demands—and the very real possibility of unemployment.

In these circumstances, we have to steady our nerve and make our case in a new way. Whatever the outcome, I believe we have made, since Dartmouth, a start to a view of English that can be world creating, instead of merely world maintaining, and that, in Harris’s words, will enable students “not merely to meet but to question the demands their society makes upon them” (644).

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One of the many intriguing aspects of the Dartmouth Conference is that it is still the subject of intense interest and conflicting interpretations of what its message was and how much impact it has had on English teaching in this country and around the world. This symposium is just the most recent of a set of ongoing conversations which have animated English education since 1966. To get my biases out in the open, I should point out that my own participation in these discussions began in 1966 when, as a student at the University of Illinois, I began hearing stories from Jim Squire and his colleagues about Dartmouth and our group of Experienced Teacher Fellows began meeting with the people who were visiting British schools as part of the study later published by James Squire and Roger Applebee. My participation in these conversations continued with my studying with Wayne O'Neil at Harvard for the next two years—where we didn't agree at all about the meaning of Dartmouth—and on and on in other forums around the world, including my own classrooms, where Joe Harris was one of my students, until the present day.

In some respects the dispute about the meaning (a meaning? the meanings?) of Dartmouth derives from the many perspectives of its interpreters. Some of the differences are generational: most American graduate students in English education were powerfully influenced by John Dixon's *Growth Through English* throughout the 70s, as were James Zebroski and his cooperating teacher, and Sharon Hamilton and I, even when our mentors were not; our students, like Harris, have raised important questions about the actual effects of the effort. Some questions are historical: Harris's view resembles Dixon's critique of Dartmouth from a social vs. individual perspective in his paper at the 1986 Ottawa Conference, where I spoke on the same panel in defense of a social vision of the original growth theory. And some are determined by level of instructional focus: Harris points out the British at Dartmouth were more concerned with K-12 teaching, whereas the Americans were debating the nature of a university-based and professor-dominated discipline. Given these differences of focus, all of the participants in this discussion may be accurate in their sense that Dartmouth did (Zebroski and Hamilton) or did not (Harris) have much impact in the classroom. My own sense of the history here can be found, in part, in *Uncommon Sense* (35–45).

Harris's article reignited a key issue. In the context of *College English*, a major continuing question is the nature of English as an academic discipline within the university and the place of teaching and most importantly of *learning* within that

discipline. Like many university-based teachers of composition (and other English department members concerned with teaching), Harris reflects a continuing split between the scholars (mostly of literature) and the teachers. As Zebroski quite correctly points out in the conclusion of his response to Harris, all the power in such departments continues to reside with the literature scholars; however willing they may be to "teach the conflicts" (Graff), they are united in their sense that composition is simply a technical, not an intellectual, problem and that teaching is an unproblematic activity. Even Harris, who clearly wants to move teaching to center stage, betrays by his own language the same kind of miscomprehension that marked the American response to the British at Dartmouth. By consistently distinguishing theory from practice, Harris continues to privilege theory (hence professors' scholarship) over what teachers (mostly K-12) do and reflect upon.

What is at issue here—and was at issue at Dartmouth—is a different epistemology, not simply a different set of teaching practices. The "technical rational" tradition of American universities (the term is Donald Schön's) has vested the library and the laboratory as places where *knowledge* is made (through research) which can then be *transmitted* to students and *applied* to the field—in this case to the classroom. This vision preserves the hierarchy of the academy: what Harris calls the "high ground" is indisputably that of "the graduate seminar." By criticizing the growth theorists for "fail[ing] to contest traditional notions of literature, criticism, or culture, [so that they] ended up reinscribing the split between teaching and research" (641), Harris misses what at least I read in *Growth Through English*: a dramatically different conception of knowledge and of learning, and a dramatically different source and structure for the English curriculum. At this point I'd even go so far as to say that using "English" as the term to identify what happens both in universities and in schools is deceptive because it obscures the major differences in epistemology between them.

For the growth theorists, the learner makes knowledge in and out of classrooms. Learners' central power to use language to interpret and act on their worlds provides the heart of the growth model and makes Dixon's key sentence, "language is learnt in operation, not by dummy runs" (13), still a challenge to all of us involved in language education. This constructivist notion of knowledge (and communication) does not separate theory and research from practice but shows how practice that is not a "dummy run" enacts and engenders knowledge. The growth of interest in teacher research (see, for example, Brause and Mayher), in reflective practice (Schön), and in writing across the curriculum (at least as practiced by McCarthy and Fishman) are all consistent with this epistemological shift.

This constructivist position was developed within English studies by many of the key players at Dartmouth, including James Britton and most particularly

Douglas Barnes, whose research on the role of talk in learning continues to inform contemporary debates. *Language, the Learner, and the School* (now in its fourth edition) presented Barnes's key distinction between transmission and interpretive teaching and Britton's exposition of the role of talk in learning. These have had some influence in elementary and secondary schools, but still haven't been heard much in American higher education. Britton, Barnes, and Dixon in turn drew on the work of many earlier theorists, most centrally Vygotsky, Kelly, and Polanyi. One of the true misreadings of the British position was that personal growth was solipsistic, individual, and romantically solitary. The whole process of language use in the growth model blends the personal with the social, bringing the learner into transactions with a wider and more diverse learning community with and from which all parties would learn. A parallel misreading, which Harris repeats, has been the idea that growth education leaves no role for the teacher, since if all this "growth" happens "naturally," teachers have no right to be critics or challengers of student work. This parody of the progressive education position may have actually been enacted in some schools—and has certainly proved to be a useful straw man for Allan Bloom and E. D. Hirsch—but it is certainly not part of the carefully structured patterns of interpretive teaching described by Barnes or the similar classrooms seen in Torbe and Medway or in Creber.

But the key issue in all of this was taking learning and the learner seriously. This is the step that the growth theorists took and that has been steadfastly resisted throughout American higher education and, sadly, much of K-12 education as well. As I argue in *Uncommon Sense*, the "common sense" of American education is still transmission-based, still defines knowledge as external to knowers, and still defines "skills" as discretely learnable abilities. Once one takes the learner seriously, then what is at issue dramatically shifts from stuffing *our* knowledge into *them* to building on what they know so that they can become powerful learners and powerful language users. We still don't know enough about how this happens, and we are only beginning to understand what university English classrooms would look like if more of them took learning seriously, although Jane Tompkins and others have begun this dialogue in important articles in *College English*. Certainly my own university teaching has changed dramatically from the stand-up lectures, term papers, and exams of the 1970s to the teacherless small groups, learning logs, and student-defined projects of the 1990s. But I teach in a Program of English Education, which doesn't make me very credible in English departments. As Hamilton and Zebroski both point out, we do know a lot more now about language and learning than we did when Dartmouth happened, and we do so in part because of the research into the theoretical practice of language education that has been done in the past twenty-five years. Even though we keep finding out more, the prospects for impact in the mainstream of higher education seem remote.

But there is hope if we can learn to spot the evidence and encourage whatever fragile growths are occurring. Harris notes that the English Coalition Conference held in 1987 "shows that most thinking about teaching has changed little since 1966" (632). But that isn't my reading of that event at all. In the first place it was an unprecedented achievement to have brought together teachers from all levels sponsored by organizations as historically estranged as the MLA and the NCTE. What is striking about the published reports of the Coalition is that virtually all of the Americans have now adopted the position that was articulated by the British twenty years earlier. It may not be as dramatic to see Lloyd-Jones and Lunsford essentially rewriting Dixon, but no American in 1966 except Jim Moffett could have or would have done anything like it.

Furthermore, throughout Elbow's more anecdotal report of the Coalition experience, the hierarchy of prestige seems clearly to have passed to the practitioners, and most especially to the elementary practitioners, in sharp contrast to Dartmouth, where there was only one American K-12 teacher invited. While Harris may still be correct that this leaves the world of traditional literary scholarship unaffected, whose fault is that? Perhaps what we need is a way to invite our peers to join this dialogue on the issues raised by both the Dartmouth and the Coalition conferences, since the alternative seems to be continued separatism. One example of a potential path to follow was charted following the Coalition by a joint committee of the NCTE's usually divided Elementary, Secondary, and College Sections, which produced a clear and articulate joint statement of principles and practices.

So it looks to me as if the growth position has been more successful among those who take teaching and learning seriously than Harris would have us believe. And I know that he is one of those people, so the challenge he poses in the article still stands, and stands more clearly in university English departments. The important question we must all face is: how can we help learning become the central mission of our universities in a way which recognizes the constructivist nature of knowledge? The conversation continues to be an important one, and I'm grateful to Joe for pushing it one more step along. I hope that when the International Federation for the Teaching of English convenes for the next time in New York in 1995 there will be more people like him eager to be part of the next round of the dialogue.

JOSEPH HARRIS *teaches at the University of Pittsburgh:*

*When I first read James Zebroski's response to my article, I felt a little baffled. Where did I stand? I thought I had made that clear. I stood with people like Dixon and Britton (and also like Zebroski and Hamilton and Mayher) who argued*

for teaching as an integral part of the work we do as intellectuals. My aim in “After Dartmouth” was to push and revise their thinking in order to extend its influence. In particular, I wanted to show how an interest in the work of students did not need to be tied to what, despite the protests of my respondents here, still strikes me as an antinomian view of the self as something formed outside of and apart from the influences of culture. I wanted to argue, that is, that we could move away from the metaphors of growth and expressiveness favored by Dixon and Britton, and still continue their emphasis on English as a *teaching* subject.

But, again, I thought I had made all that pretty clear. So what was bothering Zebroski? Then it occurred to me that I might be misreading his question. I was taking him as asking me where I stood in a professional debate about the competing values of teaching and research. But what if his question was more about where I stand in (for lack of a better term) the “real world”? That is, what are the practical consequences of my intellectual position? How are my ideas linked to where I choose to work and with whom? This was something I realized I had not said much about in my article. So let me try to do so here.

I am a college teacher of reading and writing. That is the center of my work—both in terms of the hours I put in on the job, and in the sense that most of what I do as a scholar is driven by a need to think through problems in my teaching. This means that I identify myself with groups like CCCC and NCTE rather than MLA. It also means that I spend most of my time teaching first-year courses, and that when I do teach graduate seminars, their focus stays on issues in teaching. In that sense, those of my colleagues who may suspect that I don’t really have a “specialty” after all are correct. I’m not very interested in adding to the professional storehouse of knowledge on eighteenth-century literature, or critical theory, or rhetoric and composition, or the like. This doesn’t mean I lack an intellectual project, but that it centers on the activity of teaching, on my attempts to help students find a place they can speak from at the university.

Like all the respondents here, I owe the growth theorists thanks for helping me see that I could do this. I’m glad that the sorts of local and personal changes described by Zebroski and Mayher have occurred. My own teaching has also been shaped strongly if perhaps less directly by Dartmouth. And I support the movements for action research, teachers as researchers, and whole language that Sharon Hamilton talks about. But I am still troubled after all that by how much things seem to have stayed the same. Perhaps I feel this way in part because I work in an English department at a research university, as John Mayher points out. But I also have to say that my past experiences as a high school teacher and my current ones as a parent of a daughter in an urban public school have offered me very little direct evidence of the sorts of changes my respondents say have occurred. And recent studies of schooling by the likes of Applebee, Powell, and Sedlak also show that the kinds of drill and memory work that Britton and his colleagues saw

and deplored in the 1960s still characterize much of what goes on in classrooms today.

Similarly, I agree with Sharon Hamilton that there are few convincing reasons for separating teaching and research. But it still gets done all the time, and I think we would be foolish to pretend that it doesn't. In saying this, I don't mean to privilege theory or to lapse into a preconstructivist epistemology. I am simply trying to describe a political fact of life in most college English departments. "Reflective practitioners" still tend to count simply as practitioners when it comes time for tenure and promotion, and despite the radical pretensions of much recent literary criticism, the class hierarchy of academic labor—with theorists and scholars at the top and teachers and students at the bottom—is still policed with as much zeal as ever. Maybe I am hoping for too much from a theory, as Zebroski argues. But I would like to see a teaching-centered view of English become not simply an alternative but a threat to this status quo.

I think the growth theorists were hampered in making such a challenge by a kind of closet intellectual conservatism—specifically, by a Leavisite valorizing of art and a romantic tendency to view learners as "born free, but . . . everywhere in chains" placed on them by their culture and schooling (Dixon, 3rd ed. 111). Zebroski is right when he says that my use of "romantic" is patronizing, since I am trying to suggest by the term precisely what I think went wrong with growth theory, why it fails to appeal more strongly to many postmodern teachers. I press the point because I think that those of us whose work centers on teaching are often in a position to advance and test the ideas of postmodern criticism in ways that mainstream scholars are not—that our work with beginning students offers us an ongoing series of chances to contest the lines drawn between elite and popular cultures, aesthetic and ordinary uses of language, masters and subalterns, that big name theorists are now routinely insulated from. What I was looking for in "After Dartmouth," then, was a way to renew the challenge to business as usual that growth theory once posed. (Though to judge from these responses, the irony is that the only people who seem to have noticed my efforts are those who are pretty much on my side already. Yet more evidence for the split between teaching and research.) I felt that to do so I needed not simply to update but to critique the views of Dixon and Britton, that in pointing out the limits of their position I could also show its continuing strengths.

And first among those strengths is their concern with listening to what students have to say. My worry is, though, that in their eagerness to hear their students' stories and experiences, the growth theorists seem often to have failed to ask them to attempt what strikes me as the key act of criticism—which is to place what you have to say about an issue or text or experience *in relation* to what others have said about it. What I'd like to do here, then, is to shift my focus to the classroom, to try to show how a more adversarial or critical style of teaching

might both build on and differ from the approach of the growth theorists—and thus maybe also to suggest “where I stand” in somewhat more practical ways than I did before.

I want to do so by tracing a series of exchanges between a student and her teacher in a basic writing class that I taught at Pitt in 1990 with my colleague Rashmi Bhatnagar. In them I think we can see our student, Heather, coming to a stronger sense not only of the story she has to tell, but of the language she wants to tell it in, and also of its possible relations to the work of the course as a whole. She does so with the help of a teacher, Rashmi, who pushes her not simply to render her experience more fully, or to make her language somehow more vivid or personal or correct, but to show how what she has to say responds to issues the class has been reading and talking about together.

Rashmi and I had decided to center the class we were teaching on the uses of literacy both in and outside of school. We began that term by reading and talking about Mike Rose’s *Lives on the Boundary*, and then by asking students to write about an event in their lives that they felt had somehow shaped who they now were as readers and writers. But we also wanted them to go beyond a simple account of what had happened to them. As we put it in our assignment:

We want you to try to make the “move outward” that Rose talks about, and to do so in this case by showing how your story relates to the ones he tells about himself and his students. Would your story fit in with those you’ve read in *Lives on the Boundary*? Or does it suggest things about reading, writing, and schooling that Rose has missed or that he wants to downplay? In either case, you will need to refer to specific passages from *Lives* in order to show how your narrative supports or argues against what Rose has to say.

As might be guessed, most of our students found it easier to tell their stories than to relate them to their reading of Rose. Heather’s response was in many ways typical:

In my senior year of high school I came to the realization that my career in life would be journalism. The idea of writing for a newspaper was not a temporary thought passing through the transom of my mind. I have always found writing for a newspaper exciting. I devour the feeling of anticipation that comes over me when someone is reading my work. The feeling gets so great sometimes I have to leave the room. Though after they have read it and have told me their opinions I suddenly get a sense of relief. So I knew before I could feel this gratification, I had to get on the newspaper staff at my school.

It was fairly easy to join the newspaper staff. All I had to do was get a recommendation from my English teacher and write a biography about myself. The teacher read my work and then decided to take me on as a reporter. He knew that I had a passion for writing hard hitting news stories. The only real problem he thought I had was I got slightly bias and my news story would slowly turn into an editorial.

I started on the newspaper staff at the beginning of my senior year and my writing style was wild and unruly. So, my newspaper teacher basically gave me articles of not much importance. As time pressed on, I started to get control over my writing. My articles began to sound more like news stories and less like editorials. My teacher eventually saw I had potential and by the end of the year I had the best topic for a news story—Toxic Waste. Toxic waste was perfect for me since I am a big environmentalist. . . .

At this point follow several paragraphs on how Heather researched and composed her story on toxic waste. She then concludes by writing:

I was hesitant when I turned in the article. I was not sure it was good enough. I actually thought for a moment that maybe I should say it wasn't finished; so I could make more revisions. But I knew I could not make anymore. When I turned it in, I felt like I was turning in part of myself. When the newspaper came out, my story was on the front page and at the moment I really felt like I had accomplished something. Needless to say I went home with ten copies of the newspaper.

In Mike Rose's book, *Lives on the Boundary*, I could parallel many of his success stories with mine. A story that especially stood out in my mind was his tale of the literary magazine at Loyola, El Playano (Rose, pg 61). When he became the faculty advisor, I could feel his excitement as he made decisions about which poems and stories should be submitted (pg. 61). Also, when I read about Rose and his editors riding to the printers to pick up their work it made me remember all the times I would smell the newly printed papers as I passed them out to the student body. I know the excitement he was feeling at that moment.

By reading the stories in *Lives on the Boundary* and by writing my own story, I have learned that to get what you want you must try very hard. To get the writing skills I want I must go through many revisions before I get my story right. I believe my story, of my first front page article, would definitely be in Rose's book, because it shows how I struggled to overcome my obstacles to achieve what I wanted.

It seems clear that Heather crafted this piece with some real care and intelligence. She has read Rose as saying something about the value and excitement of literacy, and tries here to offer a parallel story that shows (rather than simply tells about) her own growing sense of herself as a writer. Even those points in her piece that seem strained ("a temporary thought passing through the transom of my mind," "a passion for writing hard hitting news stories") can be read as signs that she is trying to do something with her language, to give some lift to her prose. The problem is of course that her story is a very familiar one and thus hard to energize. Heather is retelling here one of the key narratives of American culture. The rookie comes off the bench to save the game; the understudy steps in for the lead and brings down the house; Heather gets her piece on the front page. This makes it hard for her to deal with Rose, who fails to offer such a straightforward narrative of success, whose stories are instead often about people who try very hard but *don't* get ahead. So Heather does what many beginning writers do: she hunts around in *Lives* until she can isolate a passage that comes close to what she

already wants to say, and quotes that. Her use of Rose is thus of the weakest possible sort, since it doesn't add to or change her story but merely repeats it. The quotation tells us little about either her experience or his book.

And so for all the work she seems to have put into this draft, Heather really only manages to give a sense of herself in it as a kind of typical good kid and good student—who has already taken to heart much of the advice about writing her high school teacher gave her, but who is still eager to learn more. What she hasn't come up with yet is anything of much interest to say about Rose or her own experiences on the school paper—with anything, that is, that would mark what she has to say as distinctively her own. This is what Rashmi wrote back to Heather:

I like the way you have expanded here on the paper you wrote on the first day of class. My problem as a reader is this: in both drafts, I feel as if I'm sitting in front of this story-teller who tells me a success story, and I can only say, "Well, I'm glad it worked out so well for you," and then get up and leave, because as a listener there seems nothing more for me to say. I'm glad that you got what you wanted, and that's that.

But there is another story that seems to emerge at points in your paper that asks me to become a different sort of reader. I've marked these moments in your text with asterisks. In listening to this story, readers can connect what you are saying to their own experience with writing. As you speak, your reader thinks, "Something like this happened to me, I know what she's talking about," and so she feels able to speak back to this story.

Now you decide whether you want to stick to revising the success story, or revising the second story, or combining the two. If you plan to combine the two, then you need to show the reader how your experience with journalism is similar to Mike Rose's editorship of the literary magazine. At the moment, all you seem to be saying is "Rose did X, and so did I." But suppose your reader disagreed and said, "He was in college, you were in school, he was big time, you were a fledgling contributor. For all the similarities you point to, I can show you the differences between Rose and you." Now, how would you respond to this reader, how would you explain your sense that the similarities are more important than the differences?

Also, in revising, see if you can avoid tagging Rose to the end of your paper. Don't drag him in at the end of the party, when everything is almost over.

I find this a striking way to talk to a student about her work. For Rashmi does not so much give Heather advice as define a problem and possibility in her writing. The problem is that Rashmi is bored with the success story that Heather has given us. What she suggests is possible instead is a different and more interesting kind of story—one that deals more directly with how Heather's own experiences with writing relate to what Rose and her classmates have been talking about. In effect, Rashmi is urging Heather to change her stance towards her material, to use her story about journalism to make a point about writing. But note that she does not tell Heather what she thinks her point about writing is or should be. She gives no specific directions for how Heather might recast her

paper. But she does speak as though she thinks Heather can write such a new paper, that she has not just a story to tell but a point to make. That is, her comments call for a *response* from Heather and not simply for a set of corrections or additions to her text. And this is what Heather wrote in reply:

I feel very strong about the way I write, whether it be an essay, a letter, or a news story. Whatever I write on that piece of paper you know it's me. My news articles are the equivalent to my picture or my signature. My writing is my identity. When I give someone my article to read I get a feeling of anticipation, because I want to hear what they have to say about it. Whatever they say, good or bad, will affect me deeply. That's how important writing is to me.

As they read my work, I watch their eyes go from line to line. I watch their facial expressions and try to read if they are good or bad. Sometimes the anticipation is so great I have to leave the room. While I am outside in the hall, I ponder about what is going through their heads and I can honestly say I have no idea. It drives me crazy! The minutes it takes them to read it seem like hours. Though after my readers give me their opinions I get a flow of relief that rushes through my body.

I take my readers opinion very seriously and very personal. Which probably is a bad trait to a certain extent. For example, when I got on the front page of my school newspaper I would hear what my readers would say about my work. There were people who really liked it, which made me feel like I did a great job; but then there were also people who didn't like it and their opinions went through my heart like a cold steal steak. They were criticizing my work, which to me was just as bad as criticizing me. True, sometimes my writing can be wild and unruly, but it still hurt. I decided that this was a problem that I had to correct. I started by trying to look at my readers not as critics, but as uninformed people who just wanted to read my work. I began to feel more relaxed and I was able to stay in the room while they read it. It was hard to correct, but this class has helped me a lot, too. By us discussing other peoples papers I found out that everyone makes mistakes. I think I can now hear what my readers have to say and not feel that they are against me, but for me and also for my writing.

A story in Rose's book that I think sort of parrallels to my story is the story of when he made the kids, who needed help in their reading and writing, look at pictures and write about them. Then he typed them out and put them on the cafeteria wall (page 96, Rose). Now I am sure that these kids were a little scared at what the other kids would say about their writing since they were thought of as the "stupid" ones. It reveals on page 96 that they were not ashamed of their work. Rose said, "The real kick came when I walked through the cafeteria a few days after our lesson and saw two of my kids showing their poster essay to a third child who was not in the group." God, I would be terrified if my work was on the cafeteria wall. I would be trying to listen to every conversation to hear what all my readers thought about my work. That is one thing these kids have over this college student, they can handle other people reading their work. To sum up this paper, the obstacle that I had to overcome was the relationship between my reader and me. And I did.

While this draft is in some ways less polished than the first, it interests me far more. The success story has turned into an essay on the relations between a writer and her reader. The narrative that makes up the whole of her first draft now

serves as an example of a larger point Heather wants to make about the intensity of her feelings about her writing and the problems this causes for her when it is read. (See paragraph three: “For example, when I got on the front page of my school newspaper . . . .”) And notice how while in her first draft Heather said her writing “*was* wild and unruly” at the start of the term, she is now willing to admit that “True, sometimes my writing *can be* wild and unruly.” And so while she still tells a success story of sorts, it is no longer as clear cut or simple as before.

But what I most like here is how Heather has changed the use she makes of Rose. Now she draws on him not merely to support but to complicate what she has to say. Rather than simply suggest, as she did in her first draft, that she and Rose have had pretty much the same experiences with writing, Heather now imagines herself as part of a scene he has described and shows how it would be different for her: “God, I would be terrified if my work was on the cafeteria wall. I would be trying to listen to every conversation to hear what all my readers thought of my work.” And so, even though Heather insists at the end of this draft that she has “overcome . . . the relationship between my reader and me,” she leaves us with a new view of the cafeteria scene that hints that the relations between writers and their readers might sometimes be far more complex and anxious than Rose suggests. Through this contrast between her own anxiety and the easy pride of the kids Rose talks about, Heather achieves a kind of critical distance and control over both her and his stories—which means that she now has something to say about each.

I like the person that emerges in this piece. I like the quiet defiance of her first paragraph, in which she repeats in several different ways how much she identifies with her writing—and which I read as implying, at least in part, that she was indeed stung by Rashmi’s response to her first draft. But I also admire how she used those remarks to revise her work in intelligent and independent ways, much as I admire Rashmi for saying what needed to be said. What I think we see here, then, is a student beginning to forge her own voice as writer through entering into an active and critical dialogue with others. It is such an emphasis on criticism, interchange, and perhaps even conflict, that I would like to hear more of in our talk about teaching. For if we want the ideas of Dartmouth to continue to shape work in our field, I think we need to show how we can use them to help students grow not simply more expressive as writers but more critical too.

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