RECONFIGURING DONALD'S LADDER: A NEW IMAGE FOR THINKING ABOUT REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN WRITING INSTRUCTION

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> In order to develop basic thinking skills, it is necessary to direct your attention to the processes and products of your own thoughts. You need to become consciously aware of the way you think and to develop the habit of examining the end products of your thought processes—the solution you've arrived at, the decision you've made, the inference that you believe to be true, or the judgment you've formulated. In short, you need to become mindful or aware of how and what you think.
>
> Diane F. Halpern

> Students' thinking about their writing serves as a direct reflection of the effect of instruction.
>
> Richard Beach

> Then she began looking about, and noticed that what could be seen from the old room was quite common and uninteresting, but that all the rest was as different as possible.
>
> Lewis Carroll

Prelude

Call it a chance assignment. Or an inspired exercise. During my first semester teaching at my graduate institution, on a day that I was being observed by my faculty advisor, I decided to ask my students, before they handed in final drafts, to comment on the drafts in my voice. They were to respond to the paper as I

would, addressing notes to themselves and signing my name. Stepping out of the role of student and into the role of teacher, they would respond to their written work from that identity.

My observer liked the exercise. And I liked the results. It was fun to see how my students attempted to copy my handwriting: the upward slant of my end notes, my illegible signature. Some even had a close approximation of what I would indeed say after reading their papers, both in terms of praise and suggestions for revision: "Great details. I felt like I was at the party with you" or "[The paper] could have been more organized. Thoughts sometimes come from nowhere and at times it is choppy." Others weren't so close, and some even resisted taking on my role, refusing to sign my name or to speak to themselves in the third person.

After the class, when my observer asked what I was hoping to accomplish by asking students to respond as I would . . . I didn't really know. I floundered about for an answer, feeling as if I had stepped in a pedagogical trap, the kind that grabs your ankle and jerks you upward, leaving you hanging from a tree branch by your leg and wishing you had a book of composition theory nearby to help you escape. Accomplish? I thought the idea was neat. Part of the impetus for the activity was no doubt the emphasis placed on reflective writing by my writing program—we were encouraged to have students not only write papers, but also "process letters" about the production of those papers. My assignment was given in such a spirit, as a new way for students to talk about what they had done with their writing. Strangely, though, I had not reflected much on my use of reflection.

At most, I had imagined that I could use some of the students' comments from the activity when I responded to their papers, saying "I agree with you about your description of the party—I felt like I was there," or "Yes, I too would enjoy more focus on organization. How might you transition between some of these thoughts?" But my thinking had not moved beyond the idea of parroting back responses with which I agreed. Nor had my thinking made much progress by the next week, when I did use

the students' comments in responding to their final drafts. I pulled out only those comments that sounded like something I would have said. The students and I didn't talk about their responses individually, nor did we discuss the idea of their taking on my voice in general. I made the least use of their work because I wasn't quite sure what else to do. My neat idea was a little lacking: as Tom Waits would say, "I got the sizzle but not the steak/I got the boat but not the lake."

So I went looking for the lake. Why was it important to me to hear what students had to say in my voice? What were the students gaining from the activity? What was I gaining? The following pages trace out my pursuit of these questions and show how I have come to reconsider this exercise of imitation. Having students write in my voice has changed from a fancy trick to impress a visitor to a highly practical assignment that facilitates conversations between students and me about their writing, and about us as writers.

Reflection and Writing

The literature regarding the value of reflection in the education process is rich with many voices (Boud, Keogh, and Walker; Dewey; Hilgers, Hussey, and Stitt-Bergh; Kusnic and Finley; Schön), as is the literature focused specifically on the use of reflection in the writing classroom (Anson, Beach, Hillocks, Miller, Waluconis, Watson, Yancey). Two of the voices that initially proved most helpful to me as I considered my classroom exercise were Dewey's and Yancey's.

Dewey has written extensively, and emphatically, on reflective thought, which he distinguishes from other types of thinking in that it "involves not simply a sequence of ideas, but a *con*-sequence--a consecutive ordering in such a way that each determines the next as its proper outcome, while each outcome in turn leans back on, or refers to, its predecessors" (*How We Think* 4). In addition, reflective thinking leads towards a conclusion: "There is a goal to be reached, and this end sets a task that

controls the sequence of ideas" (6). Reflection is purposeful, as opposed to 'stream of consciousness' or 'imagination,' two types of thinking that, for Dewey, meander. These types of thinking might make connections, might order thoughts, but they lack the structure of reflection and the drive towards a solution.

They also lack a problematic catalyst. Reflective thought moves towards a goal because it is prompted by a problem or perplexity. According to Dewey, when we reflect, each thought builds on the last and looks forward to the next, creating a line of thinking that moves from problem to solution, moving us beyond the impulsive response: "By putting the consequences of different ways and lines of action before the mind, it enables us to *know what we are about* when we act. *It converts action that is merely appetitive, blind, and impulsive into intelligent action* (17 emphasis his). Reflective thought, as defined here, is key to progress and learning: "coming into command of what is lacking." To help students come into command of their writing is precisely what I want to do in the classroom; I want them to understand the choices that they have while writing and to consider those choices when approaching their written work. I want them to have what Dewey might call a "disciplined writing mind": "To reflect is to look back over what has been done so as to extract the net meanings which are the capital stock for intelligent dealing with further experiences. It is the heart of the intellectual organization and of the disciplined mind" (*EE* 87).

Yancey builds on Dewey's work, her definition of reflection echoing his: "When we reflect, we thus *project* and *review*, often putting the projections and the reviews in *dialogue* with each other, working dialectically as we seek to *discover* what we know, what we have learned, and what we might understand" (6). Yancey's focus, though, is specifically on reflection in the writing classroom, and she distinguishes between three types of reflective processes: reflection-in-action, constructive reflection, and reflection-in-presentation (13-14). The first of these, reflection-in-action, a process of noticing what one is doing as it is being done, is the type of reflection that connects most closely with the

exercise I was asking students to perform—though they are done "composing" the paper, they are still in the middle of the academic writing process that requires submission followed by evaluation. Yancey describes three types of reflection-in-action assignments: 1) process pieces that describe the composition process of an essay; 2) companion pieces composed afterward that comment on the essay as a whole; and 3) reflective assignments that look to continue the dialogue between student work and teacher response.[1]

Primarily, my exercise falls into Yancey's second category of reflection-in-action assignments: a piece composed afterward to comment on the essay as a whole.[2] Yet given the student's attempt to respond in my voice and thus make a comment on my (perceived) response, the exercise also looks to continue the dialogue between student work and teacher response. And this is a dialogue in need of expansion: "Put simply, whatever it is that students *unpack* in our responses, it certainly doesn't seem to be what it was that we thought we had *packed*. In the place of what we understood as specific responses and recommendations, students find uncertain readings, confusing advice, and another text altogether" (Hodges, qtd. in Yancey 37). As many teachers recognize, there is a possible divide between what we say on student papers and what students understand us to be saying, and Yancey and Hodges suggest that teachers should have students "talk back" to comments, to tell us what they hear us to be saying. When I collect the responses that students have written in my voice, I can think of using them to see what they are unpacking from my previous advice and look to find other ways to pack in what I want to say. Their response might show what they understand about my response to papers and what they don't.

Yet, having students write in my voice is not merely asking them to "talk back" to me, but to "talk as" me. (If they are talking back to anyone, they are talking back to themselves as writers.) And, the activity is asking them not only to comment on their essay as a whole, but to evaluate it. Asking them to inhabit that role of responder/evaluator is a large step, and I believe a

significantly different one than having students respond to my comments while maintaining their role(s) as students. This is not quite self-evaluation, but self-evaluation as other.[3] Ideally, taking on this other identity would help students avoid some of the uncomfortable feelings that can arise when self-evaluating (see Boud, Keogh, and Walker; Latta and Lauer; MacGregor). Of course, as Miller argues, "resistance to self-evaluation may be functional and healthy" and helps a writer keep work "open to the possibility of revision" (181). With this exercise I did not want to undercut any possibilities for revision but rather enhance them. Perhaps, though, my exercise was placing students in too awkward a position.

Finding the Ladder of Reflection

Faced both with the benefits of reflection and the possible drawbacks to self-evaluation, and still unsure exactly how to think about and best utilize my classroom exercise, I kept exploring. Then, led by references in Yancey's and others' work, I encountered Donald Schön's writings. Important in his work for me is not only the emphasis on reflection (and the idea of becoming a reflective practitioner), but also his concern with the communication between teacher and student about that reflection.

Schön describes a divide between technical rationality and reflection-in-action (he provided the term used by Yancey). Technical rationality posits that "professional activity consists in instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique" (*RP* 21). In other words, most problems can be solved by referring to already-learned knowledge. For Schön, this is "knowing-in-practice," the reliance on a store of tacit knowledge to guide a practitioner when confronted with a difficulty. Such an approach would be fine, perhaps, if all problems matched up with a theory, but they do not. Problems, according to Schön, are not "givens," but rather

they "must be constructed from the materials of problematic situations which are puzzling, troubling, and uncertain" (40). Given the uncertainty (and the prevalence) of problematic situations, Schön suggests that we learn, and practice, reflection-in-action, a process wherein we "think about doing something while doing it" (54). Such attention to the particulars of the work allows for creative solutions to uncommon problems: "When the phenomenon at hand eludes the ordinary categories of knowledge-in-practice, presenting itself as unique or unstable, the practitioner may surface and criticize his initial understanding of the phenomenon, construct a new description of it, and test the new description by an on-the-spot experiment" (62-63). Over time, reflection-in-action can lead to reflective transfer, wherein the practitioner becomes more adept at the reflective process and such an approach becomes the norm.

There is nothing much new for me here. Reflection makes us flexible and allows us to create new possibilities, specifically when we reflect on our own actions. But in *Educating the Reflective Practitioner,* Schön details the type of relationship(s) between teacher and student that he believes most conducive to helping a student become more aware of her work and her approach to that work. In his chapter on the dialogue between teacher and student, Schön talks about demonstrating and imitating. When I ask students to write like me, I have already demonstrated to them how I write (and they have had demonstrations of such writing throughout their educational careers) and I want them to imitate. The imitation, though, is *not* unconscious mimicking—in Schön's words it is "a kind of problem solving" (109). More often than not (judging from my students' reactions), writing as a teacher is not something they have done before, and they cannot automatically slip into the role of evaluator. Students have to consider the language and the form they want to use, working to solve the questions of *what I sound like* and *what I am saying*. They need to reflect on past comments they have received and work to understand how those comments function, how they represent particular reading stances. Schön believes that during this process

of imitation a student "can discover new meanings in the operations she tries to reproduce" (110).[4]

Such is the ideal situation. I have a student who responds in my voice and says something similar to what I want to say, and who, in doing so, discovers new possibilities about her writing. But it is not necessary that students exactly match what I would say—they may well (and should) have different readings. Instead, I am looking to see if students are comfortable talking about the paper *in the same manner* that I do, and that they have, as Yancey suggests, the ability to "unpack" the comments I make.

What, though, about the responses that do *not* correspond in manner to what I would say? When I have a student commenting in my voice and that comment does not align with my way of responding, then it is ridiculous for me to ignore or override the situation by simply giving my response in its place. Something about the exercise is not working for the student. Wouldn't it be more helpful to step back and talk with her about *how we talk about papers* rather than try the same responding process once again? Or, what if a student is having difficulty taking on my voice: a student who might feel intimidated or threatened by the act of evaluating her paper? Such students and I don't need to *continue* the dialogue between their work and my responses—we need to *create* one that is productive.

How, though, to talk about our talk? How do teachers and students work together to discuss their descriptions of writing, and how can we describe and analyze those conversations? One way to do so is with Schön's ladder of reflection, which allows us to place writing, descriptions of writing, and reflections on the descriptions of writing on various rungs:

> The levels of action and reflection on action can be seen as the rungs of a ladder. Climbing up the ladder, one makes what has happened at the rung below into an object of reflection. . . . Climbing down the ladder, one acts on the basis of a previous reflection. (114)

We climb up to observe a certain action and consider how we are acting, after which we can descend again to the activity, engaging in it with new insights, insights we would not gain by remaining in the moment of the action.

For Schön, these are the rungs, from bottom to top:

1. Designing
2. Description of designing
3. Reflection on description of designing
4. Reflection on reflection on description of designing (115)

Although "designing," in Schön's context, is architectural, I believe we can easily substitute the term "writing" for "designing," and consider the student text (or writing process) as the base of our ladder. Beginning with the student essay on the first rung, we climb to a description of that essay (what my students are trying to imitate), then to a reflection on that description, and then a reflection on that reflection.

Usually, we have the first two rungs of the ladder in a classroom: the student stays on the first rung of the ladder, and the teacher remains on the rung above. The student writes; the teacher describes, with the description taking on the form of an evaluation. This becomes the only movement on the ladder—and it really isn't movement for either participant: the paper goes up; the evaluation comes down. But Schön envisions both teacher and student moving up and down the ladder because "one party's action triggers the other's reflection or . . . one party's reflection triggers the other's action" (115). For instance, a teacher's description of student writing can trigger revision for that writing, but in the same way, a student's reflection upon the description of a paper can trigger revision for the teacher in terms of how she responds. Neither party need remain stationary. That is, if movement is encouraged.[5]

Movement on the ladder is especially helpful to teacher and student when there appears to be disagreement. In a writing class, such disagreement often occurs over the response to a paper (a

disagreement I can better notice when students write like they think I would). Utilizing the ladder, student and teacher can reflect on and discuss the disagreement, instead of re-trying a mode of responding that has already proven ineffective.

Climbing the Ladder

Responses from students, written in my voice, can be analyzed via Schön's ladder. Students in a first-year writing course responded in my voice to their personal narratives: what would I say on their papers? (In this class, it was the first time for this exercise, and the students had already received both my written and oral feedback about earlier drafts of this paper.) As a class, we had decided on criteria of *details*, *organization*, *mechanics*, and *effort* (effort shown in terms of revision and re-thinking throughout the drafting process). The students indicated what marks they thought they deserved (check, check plus, check minus) for each of these criteria. Because the comments were written just before conferences, I could read them and chart some course of conversation for each student when she came in to talk with me.

The first response is from Nicole:

> *Nicole,*
> *Nice paper. I like the way you put personal events in your life to analyze and interpret them. Your personal life really determines the way you look at life. And you put that in the essay a lot. The only problem I had with it was that I wish you would've went more into detail. Other than that, thank you for sharing your experiences with me and your fellow classmates.*
>
> *Mike Mattison*

Nicole has taken on both the form of my notes, with a personal address and signature (although she adds my surname), and the tone. I do use "nice" and "like" and lead off with positive notes. She then shifts into a suggestion (I don't know if I would label it a "problem") with which I agree. She could use more details. And, I'm glad she mentions I am grateful for her sharing the paper, because I am. With Nicole, I think in our conference we can begin

discussing her essay and her writing in general. Because her comments and marks align with mine, she seems to understand the perspective I have from the second rung, so we can both look from there and talk about her paper. We can both describe her work through the criteria established in class and use those criteria as a base for our conversation.[6]

In her response, Marda also focuses on specifics in a manner similar to mine:

> *You would probably ask me to write about how my father felt when he found out that I was going to live with him. To elaborate a little bit more on how my grandmother felt and how she was going to live without me around. The mechanic is probably not as strong as it should have been so read your paper again and see what you think could be changed for better.*

I do think Marda can elaborate in places, and we do need to talk some about mechanics. In step on those issues, we could talk about the text. What is compelling in Marda's response, though, is how she at first avoids taking on my identity--I remain "You" and my comments are "probably"--but then, as the note progresses, Marda does assume my role--the "you" at the end is Marda, not me. I think it's a fascinating switch. In this short stretch of sentences, Marda moves between roles, between rungs. By the end of the note, she comes to voice the description of her essay in my voice, although it seems as though she has lost some of the specificity that she maintained when she spoke as herself. She talks about elaborating on her grandmother's feelings, but she has me wanting her to find things that can "change for the better."

Certainly Marda and I can begin our conference by talking about her paper in terms of elaboration and discuss some mechanical issues. But given that she shifted positions within the note, it might also be productive to jump up the ladder to the third rung, reflection on description, and talk about other descriptions she's received, and how her writing has been talked about: What comments has she received? How has she revised papers in light of those comments? Which comments motivate her the most? And, specifically for me: What comments in class have

been most helpful? Where am I being unclear about my position as a reader and evaluator? What does she mean, and think I mean, by "better"? Working through those questions will allow our conversations about her papers to be more productive.[7]

Reflecting on descriptions of their writing helps all writers talk about and improve their writing. Ideally, every writing class would encourage third-rung reflection. I am fairly confident that Nicole and Marda are capable of receiving and understanding my responses regarding their writing, and are able to do so when receiving feedback from others as well.

What, though, of others in the class? For instance, this is Sharon's response:

> *This essay did a great job describing your experience moving to a new town. The details and organizational technique made this essay powerful. The effort that went into this production is evident to me. Thank you for sharing your story with me.*
>
> *Mike Mattison*

Sharon has touched on the criteria: details, organization, and effort and has recognized my appreciation for her work. Yet, I don't think Sharon is describing in my voice so much as trying to convince me of her essay's value. She's still on the first rung, reaching up to me on the second; her comment is pure imitation of an imagined voice, not imitation as "problem solving" or "inventing." In conference with Sharon, we should begin by talking about the description she wrote--what does she mean by details and organizational technique? Where does she find the powerful moments in the essay? With that conversation, she has to leap up the ladder, reflecting on her description, thinking about how she views writing. We can begin our conference on the third rung, looking to move from a general to a more specific description of this paper.

This, of course, is not a one-way ladder, with Sharon justifying and clarifying her comments. Going back to my remarks, I need to reflect on what I have said to her throughout the writing process.

Have I been specific? Is there another way I can talk about organization? Sharon and I are not far apart on marks--she has done a lot of good work. (The same holds true for Nicole and Marda. All gave themselves marks similar to those I would give their work--another factor, obviously, that influences my thoughts about climbing to the third rung.) But it is important that Sharon not only do good work, but describe that work and recognize how it is being valued. By doing so, she will become a more able practitioner and be better able to respond if she ever encounters a situation where her expectations of her marks do not match the reader's.

The last example is Kyle's:

> *Well, Kyle I see things went well for you in high school and what you were writing about meant a lot to you. Good job!*

Although I may begin a comment this way, I tend to elaborate more. Unlike the previous four students, Kyle and I differ in terms of his marks—he has given himself higher marks than I have. Before we approach his paper, we need to talk about what I expect and how he understands those expectations. I especially want to look back at how I have been responding to him. Kyle has noticed I take an interest in students' stories—but is he seeing me only as a non-invested reader rather than reader/evaluator? I try to prompt student revisions with a lot of questions—I want to be, and am, very curious about their papers. Have I been too indirect with Kyle? With comments like "you *might* consider" or "you *probably* want to," I don't want to take over his writing process, but perhaps I need to say "you *need* to address these issues for a reader." Then we can work towards doing that.

When responding to the next paper for this class, I took a more direct approach with Kyle, based on this exercise. I said, "You *need* to." And, with his next paper, we were better able to communicate in terms of reader and writer, teacher and student.

Reconfiguration

These examples illustrate how I have been using Schön's work in my teaching, and I hope they provide some fourth-rung reflection for other teachers. Although the fourth rung does not come into play with the conferences, reflection on reflection on the description of the writing occurs after the types of conversations I have described. As Schön indicates, "The parties to the dialogue might reflect on the dialogue itself. They might ask, privately or publicly, whether they have come any closer to a shared understanding of meanings" (116). We, as teachers of writing, stand on this fourth rung when we reflect on our conversations with students and consider new ways to work towards "shared understandings": what have I learned from my students in these conversations that will be valuable in my next writing classroom?

Ideally, my students will also reflect on their dialogues with me and look for ways to take from such conversations when writing other papers and communicating with other teachers. To prompt this type of reflection over the course of a semester, I ask students to consider our work in relation to their other classes and assignments. Through such reflection students can gain knowledge about their writing habits and about their identities as writers, what Yancey calls "knowledge about what it may take to be a writer" (147). Their insights from the third and fourth rungs can improve their understanding of the descriptions given from the second rung, which will improve the writing they do on the first rung, regardless of the class.

Schön's thoughts have helped me revise the assignment I stumbled upon, and I now consider it a highly productive activity that emphasizes (and facilitates) reflection in my writing classrooms, for me and for students.

Yet, something still troubles me. Call it a fear of heights.

The fear was first articulated for me after I presented a description of Schön's ladder and my use of it at the 2000 CCCC. Another teacher who approached me said that she liked the notion

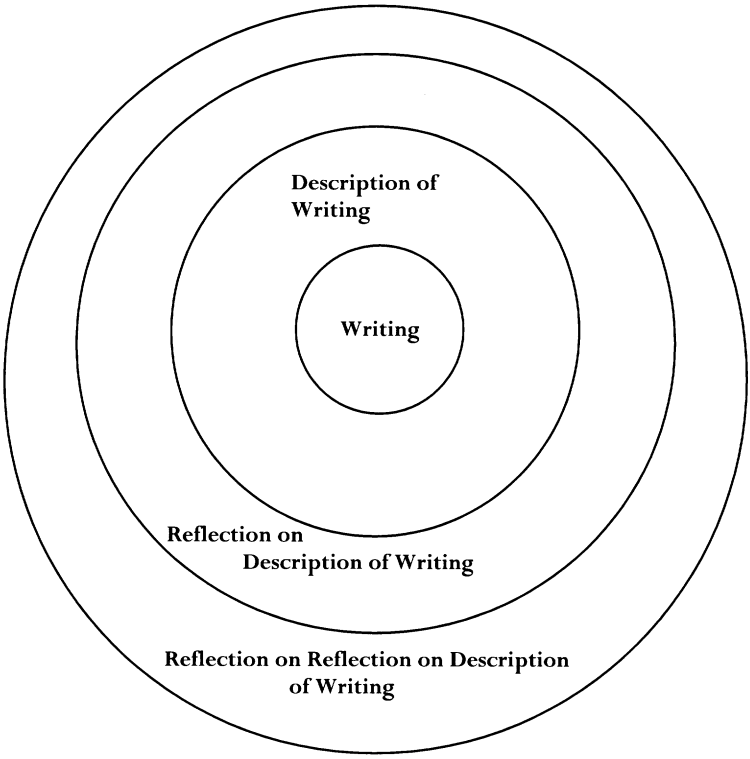
of reflecting on student writing in such a way, having students join in a discussion about response, but that she was bothered by the image of the ladder. Student writing is at the bottom of this metaphor. Teachers are standing above the students' papers when they describe, and the verticalness of the ladder emphasizes (and re-imposes) a strict hierarchy. Although teachers often have to remain evaluators, students are working to become writers themselves, and our pedagogies and our descriptions of students should avoid placing students in inherently inferior roles.

Based on that concern, I am considering a new way of envisioning Schön's levels of reflection (no more levels, for one thing). At first I tipped the ladder on its side, but that was both theoretically and aesthetically unappealing. Would the students' writing go to the right or the left? Would we still have a sort of continuum that placed the primary value somewhere other than the students' work and ideas? Even a ladder on the ground carries with it the idea of climbing, of rungs, of levels. And of what use is a flat ladder? So I scrapped the ladder.

In its place I've put circles, concentric circles that expand outward and place a student's writing (or any writing we wish to respond to) at the center. (See Image 1.) The writing is the focal point. From that point, we can move into description and reflection, but no type of response to the writing is "higher" than the writing. And, when a student and a teacher talk about a paper, they are on level footing (a much better use of the term "level").

Image 1: By reconfiguring Schön's ladder as concentric circles, we can imagine ourselves stepping "away from" and "towards." Reader and writer are on an even plane, but might be at different distances from the work. Still, the writer's work maintains the central focus in this image.

Students and teacher reflect with one another, sharing the space around a paper, and keeping the writing at the center, where it belongs.



Conclusion

If we prompt students to do reflective work, to self-evaluate and self-assess, and if we believe such work to be valuable, then we need to make it more than an assignment.

My initial request for students to write in my voice was well intentioned, but also poorly considered. Not until I bothered to reflect on what I was asking my students to do did the request become more than an exercise. Having students exchange their voices for mine now prompts an exchange of voices about that exchange, and helps me focus on the students as writers. I'm working to help students grow in relationship to their work, as Anson advises: "If we limit ourselves instructionally only to the refinement of individual products, some students may succeed at the tasks we have set them without growing in their relationship with their work . . . once they begin thinking about writing

productively, they stand a much better chance of developing expertise and working more successfully in future writing situations" (73). Developing relationships is now the focus for my classrooms: the relationship between students and their work, the relationship between students and me, and the relationship between me and my teaching.

The ever-widening circles of reflection give me a way of thinking about how I respond to papers, about how I talk with students about those responses, and about writing in general. Students too can think about writing and response: they need *not* remain motionless, awaiting a description of their writing, but can engage in reflection on that description. They can begin to see the evaluative process as Lewkowicz and Moon describe it, not as "a one-way process in which learners are judged by a teacher or outside body on the basis of externally defined criteria," but rather as a "multi-way dynamic system in which the learners are involved interactively with others in making judgements about themselves both as learners and users of the language on the basis of criteria which are defined and negotiated in terms of the learning situation" (47). Movement through the circles, by student and teacher, lets us negotiate the criteria for evaluation together, and lets students be involved as learners.

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Notes

[1] I do think a slightly sharper distinction could be made between reflection-in-action that focuses on text *in production* and reflection-in-action that focuses on the text *as a production* (between Yancey's first type of assignment and her second two). The first type of reflection-in-action, during the composing process, is often "thinking as we write" and the focus of work from Pianko, Flower and Hayes, and Perl. Writers reflect as they write. Pianko, in her study, noticed that certain students took more "pauses" while writing and did more "rescanning," and that their work received

higher evaluations. When asked what they did during pauses and rescannings, students indicated they were "specifically planning what to write next," and Pianko claims that the "behaviors [are] indicative of certain mental processes" (276). The students are reflecting on their work, and Pianko concludes that the "act of reflection during composing . . . is the single most significant aspect of the composing process revealed by this study" for it is "reflection which stimulates the growth of consciousness in students about the numerous mental and linguistic strategies they command and about the many lexical, syntactical, organizational choices they make--many of which occur simultaneously--during the act of composing" (277). As Pianko notes, though, she is talking about "the ability to reflect on what *is being* written" (277) and not necessarily on the process of writing or the rhetorical context(s) for writing. This is a fine line, perhaps, but again, I think an important distinction. In this current discussion, it is enough to note that there are different types of reflection-in-action assignments, and the focus here is on Yancey's second two categories: reflection on the text as a production.

[2] Yancey mentions several methods of prompting reflection-in-action for writers, including Writer's Memos (Sommers), Transmittal Forms and Talk-To's (Yancey 1992), open letters (Watson), and secondary texts (Anson). I would include the process letters at my institution.

[3] Instead of *self-evaluation*, Hilgers, Hussey, and Stitt-Bergh use the term *self-assessment*, which they define as a "process of thinking back on an action, recognizing an error or unexpected result, acting on this recognition, and then adjusting behavior to improve proficiency" (2). Their article traces the practice of self-assessment from that of self-observation, or self-monitoring, used primarily in social and clinical psychology as "a tool for gathering observational data" (3). Researchers in such studies noticed that "self-observation can change many kinds of behavior," especially if the observer would value a change and is motivated to make a change, and if the practice of observation is structured systematically (occurring frequently enough to maintain awareness of behavior but not so often as to be "tedious and time-consuming" (4-6). Hilgers, Hussey, and Stitt-Bergh also detail two models important to understanding how self-monitoring can change behavior: through comparison and interruption. The Kafner Model says that "self-monitoring provides an individual with feedback that allows the individuals to discriminate between his or her current level of behavior and some significant social or individual standard" (5). The model from Cavior and Marabott, and Bellack, Rozensky, and Schwartz "holds that the power of self-assessment derives in part from the way it interrupts stereotypic behavior change" (5). Rather than acting on "autopilot," an individual breaks a pattern of behavior and receives new stimuli, which can then affect a change in response. Both models are relevant when talking about having student writers engage in self-monitoring and self-assessment.

[4] For me, Schön's idea of imitation is very similar to Bartholomae's idea of "inventing": "The act of writing takes the student away from where he is and what he knows and allows him to imagine something else" (600). Here, though, the invention is not of an academic discourse, but of the evaluation of such a discourse. By inventing

the teacher's voice, the student can imagine herself not only as a different type of reader, but also perhaps as a different type of writer, or one with different options.

[5] Schön does not specify that the exchanges between student and teacher must be oral, but he is emphasizing that they are in dialogue, coordinating their movements on the ladder based on one another's actions and reflections. Yes, a solitary writer might well climb her own ladder of reflection, but Schön is envisioning a partnership.

[6] Two points can be made (or remade) here. First, though there *can* be movement from both parties on the ladder, Schön does not consider it a prerequisite for learning: "Progress in learning need not take the form of climbing up the ladder of reflection" (116). Should a teacher and student be communicating well regarding the student's work, then there may be little need to change the method of communication. So, Nicole and I might not move much on the ladder, but we can progress together. Second, as I mentioned earlier, responses do not need to exactly match mine as to the specifics noted. As long as a student and I are describing the paper in the same manner, we should be able to communicate effectively—to have a productive dialogue between student work and teacher response.

[7] I do, as I have already mentioned, sometimes have students who refuse to take on my role throughout the notes. "You would probably say... you'll tell me . . . you might think." Usually, the qualifiers are present: could, might, perhaps. My role is not welcomed. As MacGregor mentions, some of this response might be cultural: Marda is originally from Cape Verde, and the semester before a student from Vietnam also kept me at a distance. How difficult is it to imitate the teacher for these students? On the other hand, a woman who shared my background—white, upper-middle class—never did move into my role either. For all of these students, though, moving up the ladder in conference to discuss the ways we evaluate, to reflect on our description of papers, can prove helpful.

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