THE UNHEARD VOICES OF OUR RESPONSES TO STUDENTS' WRITING

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There has been a sort of "bushwacker mentality" in many teachers' responses to student writings. The teacher sits quietly (intentions hidden behind smiles and exercises) waiting with finger on the trigger for that culprit (the student paper) to raise its ugly head so that it can be blasted from here to kingdom come. . . . Students need teachers who are not booing baseball fans, not facetious film critics, not condescending correctors, and not judgmental jurists, but rather helpers, guides, mutual searchers, and ones who share in the process of writing, nurture it, direct it, and attempt to believe in it (Koch, 469-470).

Seven years ago, I listened as Dr. Millie Orenstein, a guest in a research methods course I was taking, talked about a study she had done on grading. She had taped herself grading aloud a difficult essay then taped its writer as he read his paper aloud, responding to her comments. The dramatic gaps between her sense of her comments and his reactions to them suggested to her that she needed to rethink the act of commenting on student essays, for her remarks and her motivations to make them were thoughtful and accurate, but so were the student's frustration and anger. Orenstein's talk, a painful catalyst for me, sent me home to face 177 essays and find myself unable to get my pencil down on their pages. I felt unsure of how I sounded, shaken from any confidence that I knew how to talk to students

about their writing. I had not really listened to the voice I thought I heard as I wrote.

Recovery was not immediate. My grades that semester were high enough to attract my department chair's attention. In fact, recovery may never be complete, which is fine nowadays, for finding my way back into essay margins has led me to study closely the nature of our conversations with students in margins, to explore successes and failures of those interactions, and to generate portraits of teachers responding. Representations of teachers like Koch's, with finger on the trigger, are sadly common in the minds of students and former students and to some extent in the literature of our profession. Though not always as vivid as Koch's bushwacker, many depictions of response imply, even if unconsciously, that as responders we teachers need remediating, which, amongst other reactions, can compel us to change without understanding our responses more fully.

Studies of margin comments have produced healthy concern about ownership, about students' anxieties, and about clarity of written comments. But these comments offer only slight traces of far more complex activity. They risk being misunderstood by students and by those of us who study response practices when commentary alone is the data. Brannon and Knoblauch (1981) observe that the "habitual focus of these studies on types or modes of commentary . . . has led researchers to expect too much from isolated marginal remarks on essays and to reflect too little on the larger conversation between teacher and student to which they only contribute" (1). (Though in a later study of forty teachers grading the same text, they report that all measured the paper against an "Ideal Text" rather than considering the writer's intentions.) Charles Bazerman (1989) notes that "the truths of how we read student papers have remained secret and obscure, hidden in unexamined private existence" (139). In this essay I describe three teachers in the act of creating margin comments, highlight some hidden complexities, and offer thoughts on how such exploration of our own response behaviors can inform our work with student writers.

In an effort to get behind the margins, I asked three teachers—Ernest, Emily, and Jamie—to tape grade-aloud protocols of the same paper. I acknowledge that protocols leave more visible than invisible and that while they are useful for interviewing, they are unnatural and can put pressures on sub-

jects. My goals with these protocols were simply to begin "opening up" the text of margin comments and to see if evidence existed to support a stereotype of teachers as hostile graders. I found no such evidence. There were a few less than cordial statements, most bitten off or directed towards me as a colleague; there were grammar rules cited and assertions about what college-level writers should be able to do. But what I observed most was the variety of personas or voices involved in the teachers' evaluation processes, voices which debated with each other, like an internalized team of arbitrators—social scientist, cultural anthropologist, counselor, critic, teacher, historian, person—all negotiating with text and author for meaning and an assessment of that meaning's presentation. Clearly, a researcher's reliance on in-text commentary and questionnaires alone would misrepresent the teachers through deafness to these many voices.

In "Anatomy of the Teacher as Reader" (1984), Purves identifies categories of readers within which a teacher might assume certain roles. He observes that "a good teacher would consciously adopt each of these roles or a combination" (263). In my view, a concept of "voice" more accurately describes what Purves gets at with "role." He speaks of a role being "consciously adopted"; my transcripts suggest something less assumable and neatly coordinated. "Voice" connotes a spontaneous transactionality that "role" lacks. Thus I listened to the teachers' protocols and studied their transcripts to isolate voices in order to make sense of what I was seeing. The voice categories in Table I are the result of my study.

TABLE I

VOICE CATEGORIES

Note: These voices are speaking to a varying combination of student, text, self, tape, and colleague/ researcher at the very least, i.e., a voice or category might focus more on the colleague who will review the tapes than the student or text.

EVALUATOR VOICES - The voices in this category are concerned with evaluating aspects of the text.

Voice I	expresses concern with the correctness of spelling, word form, sentences structure, usage.
Voice II	expresses concern with accuracy of clarity, development, focus, specifics.
Voice III	expresses concern with the correctness of expression and diction.
Voice IV	expresses concern with evaluation of writerly choices and seeming behaviors.

INSTRUCTIVE VOICES — The voices in this category are concerned with understanding and addressing the writer's needs.

Voice I	analyzes the nature and causes of errors, writerly moves and intentions, meaning and construction of meaning, the nature and causality of textual problems other than errors, the appropriateness of the text in terms of the assignment, other possibilities for the student text's shape, the appropriateness of teacher comments, grade options.
Voice II	asks about the student's knowledge, urges more thought, questions reasoning, asks for more information.
Voice III	explains margin comments, gives reasons for spoken questions or statements, calls attention to textual elements.
Voice IV	examines what the student has said as compared to what the student seems to want to say, plans conferences.

COLLEAGUE VOICES — The voices in this category are concerned with colleague understanding of and response to grading moves.

Voice I	explains personal grading processes, analyzes the nature of grading, explains specific moments during the grading, offers personal and professional priorities.
Voice II	expresses concern about accuracy in grading, finding positive comments to make, about being clear, about meanness and thoughtfulness, about time taken, about student perception and reception of comments, about being complete/thorough, about appropriation.
Voice III	compares what the grader thinks to what someone else might think.

WRITING THEORIST VOICES — The voice in this category discusses concepts underlying particular grading moves.

Voice I	expounds on the nature of error, effective and accurate communication, focus, and structure, definitions of good and bad writing.

INTERACTIVE READER VOICES - The voices in this category address the text as non-teacher readers.

Voice I	Identifies with the assignment as well as with the student.
Voice II	emotes by laughing, expressing anger at errors, concern about textual quality, concern for the writer, anger at the content.
Voice III	challenges content by questioning the writer's attitudes and meanings.
Voice IV	provides further situational details via personal experience or speculation.
Voice V	responds appreciatively, associatively, with surprise, disbelief, suspicion, with questions about the writer, with evaluation of the writer's opinions.

To conduct the study, I gave the teachers the following assignment and essay and asked them not to preview either before beginning the protocol process, during which they were to voice whatever ideas or reactions struck them as they read.

Assignment: In "Salvation," Langston Hughes tells a sad story about a time in his twelfth year when his expectations for an event were shattered by the reality of that event. Though this "loss of innocence" was very painful, it was also one of those experiences which results in a new maturity—that is, one which helps one grow.

In an essay of 500 to 600 words minimum, tell a story of your own which describes an experience in your life when your expectations conflicted strongly with reality. You need not tell a story about a religious experience. You need not tell a story that is sad. In fact, your story does not need to be about a childhood experience. Such conflicts between expectations and reality happen at all ages. Be sure to focus on one incident. Be sure to make your before (expectations) and after (reality) impressions clear. As usual, go into detail. Use specifics. Back up your claims.

Great Expectations [sic]

Everyone goes thru a loss of innocence. For Langston Hughes it took place in a small southern church. Here he was suppose to "see" Jesus Christ. However, Hughes never "saw" Him. This made Hughes uncomfortable and severely disillusioned. I can relate an experience which matured me in the same way as Hughes.

It happened last June. There was a tour of Europe which I was going on. I was excited and looking forward to this vacation. It was three weeks of no parents, no siblings, no problems. It was just me, my friends, and Europe. However, it did not take me long to realize the reality of the situation I was alone in a strange place.

It hit me as soon as I got off the plane. In the airport the first thing I noticed was the many different languages. German, French, Spanish, and even Italian. I understood some German, but we were in Belgium [sic] and their official language is French. I was confused and scared.

After the first shock, things did not get better. Our next order of business was money exchange. This was a terrible experience. We had to figure out how many Belgium [sic]

Francs were in one United States dollar, that was no easy task.

After the airport we saw the magnificent city of Brussels. We saw all the sites. However, when we wanted to return to our hotel we could not find it. We were lost. After about one hour of running franticly [sic] around and asking very simple questions we found our hotel.

I was relieved when we reached our hotel. I took a shower and got ready for dinner. Eating dinner was the worse experience of all. We had all French foods. We had patte [sic] which was horrible. We had other French foods which I could not (and still can not) pronounce. All I know is that none of this food tasted like my mother's roast beef.

Our evening was left for us to explore Brussels. It did not take long to see Brussels was like any other big city and it was no place for a bunch of seventeen-year-olds.

Our first cultural shock of that evening was about five minutes after we left our hotel. Prostitution was legal. There were dozens of girls on street corners, in bars, and even in windows. They tried to pick-up [sic] anything which walked the street. We all laughed it off and joked about it, but I know none of us will forget.

Another shock came when we saw all the drunks. During the day there were none, but at night they all came out. Dirty old men who sat there starring [sic] at us.

The worse event of the night was how we were treated. Everybody knew we were Americans and took advantage of the fact. They over-charged us, under charged us, and treated us rotten. They talked as we went by, and yelled strange things in French, which none of us understood.

Unfortunately, things did not get better. Every big city we went to-Breige, Koln, Salzburg, Venice-it was all the same. Different languages, different money, different food, and different cultures haunted us throughout Europe.

All of the trip was not bad. We had fun and I did enjoy my stay in Europe. However, I realize now that Europe was not everything I had dreamed. It had its problems just like the rest of the world, and now knowing that, I can go back with a better understanding of the cities, the customs, and the people.

The teachers' margin comments alone could provoke the same old stereotypes of English teachers. Ernest's are terse, with standard labels for errors. He asks few questions and does not seem interested in content until a lengthy end comment, which is flavored by words such as "problems," "faults," "errors." Jamie's clutter of comments, jumbling in the margins and between lines, offer only one positive statement. She uses editor's marks, corrects errors and phrasing, asks questions, and commands revisions. The visual impact of Emily's graded essay would be the least likely of the three to be seen as bushwhacking. In fact, it might seem the other extreme. She corrects five out of the approximately twenty-eight errors with a black pen that makes her corrections almost invisible. Ernest and Jamie, in red pen, mark or correct nearly all errors. Emily writes more positive comments and asks six questions, two of which are followed by explanatory statements. It is true that all three sets of written comments could potentially pose difficulties for the student both intellectually and/or emotionally. It is true also that the margins barely reflect the teacher/text interaction stimulating it. Though more representative of teacher/text interaction, the teachers end comments do not reflect the effort, deliberation, and concern evident in the protocols. Without a protocol record, however limited such a record might be, most likely only the actual grader could approach an accurate explanation of the comments or of the process generating them.

Ernest reads the paper pen in hand, speaking as evaluator as he goes, noting early in his protocol that he is "kinda looking at technical problems first." His process may stem from his days as a teaching assistant, a time when many feel the need to justify grades and learn that doing so is easier through tabulations of errors than through more complicated discussions of abstract writing concerns. On tape, the evaluator, he sums up sentence flaws before he begins his end comment: "Ok, a couple of fragments, a comma splice, a run-on, that usually does some bad damage to a grade." Later, writing his end comment, still the evaluator, he says, "a lot of the problems are technical, the poor concept of what a sentence is. He has run-ons, fragments, and comma splices, all three." To the student he writes, "There are too many serious problems with this essay. First you have too many sentence faults, i.e., run-on, comma splice, fragments." But even with this emphasis on error, Ernest's greater

concern with meaning is evident within the first four minutes of his twenty-three minute protocol when he explains his confusion with a passage: "I have some problems with this paragraph because he's bringing in things, talking about German when he should be worried about French. Also he talked about going with his friends but he's talking now about being alone in a strange place." Ernest continues, evaluator then writing theorist, contrasting the essay's clarity of focus with a standard he deems most crucial to narration and to good writing in general: "It's a common problem, not focusing on a small enough amount of time, not getting that focus that I think is really necessary when you're writing." The extent of his concern with content is clear in the following sentence of statements: "Again he's got a possibility for something"; "Now he's getting really off the track here"; "As a composition there is a big problem with *lack* of focus"; "Focus is really important for my students to grasp because if they don't they write essays like this one that go all over the place and don't really as coherently and cogently make the point that needs to be made."

Ernest's other major concern is development. The writer never describes the expectations shattered by the trip and thus allows readers no basis for comparison. "Again this confrontation between his morality and the different morality, he doesn't get enough of it, doesn't build enough from it"; "I don't think he develops what his expectations were. What was he hoping would happen in Europe? Why does it come as such a giant shock to him that ah the Europeans speak different languages, that the cultures are somewhat different?" Ernest's use of "again" in the first comment in this sequence suggests that nine minutes into his protocol, though he has not yet named this problem, it has already caught his attention. In his end comment he writes, "Because you tried to discuss your whole trip, you do not develop any part of it very well. To improve this essay, I think you need to develop what your "great expectations" were. You give only two general sentences that don't mention Europe." Though Ernest's margin comments suggest his major concern is correctness, his protocol indicates that his editing is an efficient habit and that he values focus and development much more. And though he clearly has a standard he measures against, he does not read in terms of an ideal text like Brannon and Knoblauch describe. Several times, in instructive voices, he

suggests possible shapes that the essay may have taken, but he favors none and his suggestions come from his concerns for content: "This running around frantically for an hour could have been enough to build the whole essay on"; "Again he's got a possibility for something. This story of being lost could make a more humorous essay. He just spends three sentences on it."

In his protocol, Ernest says very little in voices of an interactive reader, a fault, perhaps, of the protocol as a research tool, a product of grading another teacher's student, a result of efficient grading practices from teaching while working full-time, or a sign that the essay offers him little stimulus for interactive response. Yet, of the three, Ernest seems the least interactive reader, the terse, possibly indifferent tone of his written comments is not the tone of his protocol.

Most notable in Emily's protocol is the extent to which she *does* read interactively. Of her 99 responses, 29 are interactive in contrast to 9 of Ernest's 86 responses and 25 of Jamie's 181 responses. Some of Emily's interactive comments come from her own experience in Europe. She sympathizes with the student's confusion and communication problems, saying, "I know what that feels like. Every time I go to a different country I feel that way." When the student complains about food, Emily responds, "That's too bad" and laughs. When the student claims, "They over-charged us, under-charged us, and treated us rotten," Emily responds, "Poor kids." But not all of her interactive voices are sympathetic. The writer's complaints become less reasonable to Emily; midway through her thirty-eight minute protocol, she gets impatient with the writer's grievance that the food was not "like Mom's": "It irritates me that people go abroad and expect to find their home there." She writes, "Did you expect to find your mother's roast beef in Belgium? Is that why you went?" Immediately, Emily shifts voices to speak as a colleague and then evaluator, saying, "Actually, this may be kinda mean because this is not badly put. It's pretty nicely expressed. I mean that's what he's expecting," She adds to her the written comment, "Nicely expressed." That Emily considers her comments' fairness and tone is further evident when she says, "Maybe it's hard for me to put myself back into the seventeen-year-old position. I didn't go to Europe until I was what, twenty, so maybe I'm being too harsh on this student, expecting him or her to be wise beyond their years." This voice

is one I call a colleague voice, though there are reasons to classify it as interactive. It assesses a part of her end note which addresses one of the problems Ernest emphasized—the never described great expectations. Emily writes, "This leads me to wonder just what it was you expected-that everyone would speak English, eat mom's pot roast, use American dollars? I find it hard to believe that at age 17 you actually expected Europe to be the same as America."

Emily's protocol reveals a response process quite different from Ernest's. She reads the entire essay making no marks, voicing little beyond neutral responses about the story the student narrates, noting, as does Jamie, that such penless reading is a difficult habit to cultivate. "It is hard for me to keep my pen off the page." This approach to reading, like her initial responses, demonstrates concern for giving the writer an uninterrupted chance to communicate. When she does pick up a pen, she quickly rereads in search of the few errors she wants to mark, describing the marking in carefully chosen words: "I'm changing . . . I'm offering an alternative." She does not name errors in writing or on tape. Moving from interactive reader voices to instructive voices, always deliberate in her articulation of both written and spoken comments, she focuses on content and the clarity with which the writer develops ideas. Her end comment deals solely with content development, and near the end of her protocol, she speaks as writing theorist, defining good writing as much more a matter of competent communication than "mechanical things."

Emily acts out a grading process likely influenced by ideals coming out of then current writing research and teaching theories. At the time of this study, Emily was finishing a doctorate in composition and was actively aware of current trends, unlike Ernest who, studying no writing pedagogy beyond his MA practicum, learned to teach through teaching and writing.

I do not mean these last statements evaluatively. My intention is to show, through calling attention to the many voices of response and portraying individual response processes, how cautious we must be not to oversimplify what teachers do. No act of responding is without potential problems. Understanding, in rich detail, who we are and how we come across when we respond can only increase our awareness of our own habits of teacher/text interaction. All personal grading in its natural en-

vironment is woven intricately into the overall design of the whole teaching process. Ernest and Emily both refer to what this student would understand from their comments were she in their classes. Jamie demonstrates most clearly the extent to which grading is part of the larger teacher/student conversation.

Seven times during her forty-eight minute protocol, Jamie refers to discussions she would have with the student about the essay. In fact, after the first reference, her allusions are to conferences she *will* have with this student. Her end note closes with "Please be sure to set up an appointment to go over this." In her deliberation over a grade, she evaluates the student's probable progress over the semester. "I'm not sure I have a grade in mind. I know it won't be very high but I'm also thinking that if this is a remedial course the student has made definite progress in at least some type of order." Near the end of her protocol, she speaks again of progress: "assuming it's early in the year and I had covered sentence punctuation."

So far as it is exposed through protocols, Jamie's response process is the most complex of the three. She corrects or comments on almost every technical and stylistic flaw in the essay, including manuscript format. More than the others, she explains what she is and is not marking, e.g., "That's one of those kinda immature ways to start a story ah but it's not wrong. I won't write anything." She ricochets amongst responder voices, shifting attention rapidly from one textual element to another, often before she has finished with the first, though she always goes back to finish. Clearly, Jamie consciously reads a text at different levels simultaneously. She demonstrates a spontaneous massive synthesizing that seems integral to her process. Not only is Jamie's way of reading apparently the most immediately all-encompassing of the three, her process seems the most recursive. More than the others, she checks back to reconsider comments, validate interpretations, and resolve confusions, moves that are evident in her protocol but not in her written comments (the number of which would likely evoke howls of distress from anyone critiquing grading practices). One possible explanation for Jamie's rapid assimilation of text and her thoroughness of grading as they connect with her teaching environment is that at the time of this study she taught in a secondary school under scrutiny because students often graduated with below average literacy skills. Concern over this issue might easily compel a

teacher to examine student writing from every possible angle. Likewise, teaching approximately 170 students daily might stimulate her obvious multilevel, simultaneous text processing.

Sommers (1982) comments on the arbitrary, idiosyncratic nature of graders, and these protocols clearly show that personality does shape response styles. The issue of personality or subjectivity has so long been a concern that we tend to automatically perceive it is a problem and perhaps look the other way rather than getting to know ourselves and each other as graders and understanding our reasons for differences and consensus. But even with all the idiosyncratic differences evident in the protocols and margins, two important themes stand out across the three graders: all target with equal concern the same problems of weak focusing, poor development, and lack of contextualization. These emphases are clear throughout the protocols and the end comments—where all deal almost exclusively with these issues, an observation I find very satisfying. Three very different teachers are conversing very differently with the same student about the same writing issues, a fact which makes me ask of our recurring concern about subjectivity and personal grading what kinds of consensus we may expect or really want amongst evaluators of student writing.

Jamie gave the paper a D/C- or a D/D, "depending on what had been discussed" in class. Ernest gave the paper a D+, Emily a C. The three differed greatly in their reactions to various aspects of the text; Ernest and Jamie viewed one paragraph quite negatively while Emily complimented it. Ernest and Jamie found little to praise in the essay's prose while Emily began her final comment, "In general, you are using the language quite well, and you do convey fairly accurately, I believe, your impressions of Europe." The differences from protocol to protocol are as notable as differences in the margins. While grading, Emily and Jamie repeatedly express concerns about the effects of comments on students; Ernest expresses such concern once, just before he starts his end comment, saying that he "can't even begin in a real positive way" as he usually tries to. Professional teachers, Emily and Jamie perhaps think more about the craft of teaching and teacher/student interaction than Ernest, who teaches less and as an aspiring professional writer may focus more on the craft of writing, valuing criticism and rejection as a stimulus for improving his own writing. But

the *why* here is less important to my point than the *what*: these protocols do not bear out the stereotypes offered by some critics of grading. If margin comments seem "rubber stamped," the routes to those comments vary greatly, though it seems relevant to suggest that grading is, to a certain extent, standardized in its range of topics and comments, and necessarily so. Teachers and students certainly must develop shared vocabulary and habits for discussing writing, and these should, ideally, develop in the fuller contexts of teacher/student interaction, which are personalized pedagogical stances and practices. Many of the potential pitfalls signalled by the signs in the margins of essays are avoided because the larger conversation they are part of informs their interpretation.

Beyond defusing the long-enduring stereotypes evident even in many current discussions of personal grading which offer fresh insights into grading behaviors (cf., Bleich, 1989; Probst, 1989; Anson, 1989), my intention here is to demonstrate how useful the act of making a protocol can be for any teacher. Jamie ended her protocol saying "Thank you." Asked why, she explained that reviewing her tape before giving it to me had made her more conscious of herself as a reader of student writing, slowing her process down enough for her to contemplate it. Her description of the experience had resonance with my own and with those of many of the subjects and teachers in training whom I have asked to experiment with grading protocols. The awareness and understanding we can achieve through self-monitoring can, in turn, foster greater effectiveness in our responses to student writers. We might notice rather substantial gaps between what we intend to say and what our margins communicate. Jamie noticed how she tends to account for *every* problem she sees in an essay and questioned the success of that tendency with her students. Does her thoroughness merge her many voices into the buzz of a crowd? Ernest noted that his commentary is almost completely descriptive—a naming of what he sees in the text without explaining what he wants students to make of that naming. Are the explanations present in his protocol transferable to the margins? Would it be useful for him to concentrate on developing interactive voices? Emily noted her tendency to qualify a great many of her assertions about the essay, perhaps silencing reasonable criticisms the student needs to hear. Do her efforts at granting students ownership of texts

and stimulating confidence sometimes interfere with her helping students learn to be better readers of their own writing? Do her interactive voices speak so loudly as to mute other equally relevant voices?

Experimenting on one's own with protocols can enable teachers to become more cognizant not only of what they do when they are grading but of why they might make the moves they do. Many teachers do not often have occasions to discuss their theories of writing and learning, occasions which keep them in touch with their intellectual roots. As Freedman (1987) notes, successful responders to student writing have clear and steady philosophies which directly inform their teaching. Successful teachers can voice those philosophies in various contexts in ways useful to the various people involved in a student's learning of writing (160). Self-monitoring can strengthen our awareness of philosophies easily submerged, illuminating patterns and anomalies we might never see otherwise. We talk to our students about the importance of developing the ability to hear voices in writing, their own and those they encounter in others' texts. We need just as much not to let habitual responding dull our abilities to hear our own voices as responders, to hear how we sound and how we come across, to make sure what we want to say makes it into students' margins.

NOTES

¹Sommers (1982) quotes an unemotional, blunt computer response to a weak student essay and commenting that "the sharp contrast between the teachers' comments and those of the computer highlight how arbitrary and idiosyncratic most of our teachers' comments are. Besides, the calm, reasonable language of the computer provided quite a contrast to the hostility and meanspiritedness of most of the teachers' comments" (149). In "Learning to Praise" Daiker cites studies of commentary which suggest teachers "find error more attractive than excellence" (103). Others warn us that we must be wary because our work can "lure us into thinking that we are, in fact, authorities, armed with absolute knowledge" (Probst, 77) and that "seemingly countless ceremonial repetitions and performances" can make our comments "run the risk of becoming . . . little more than elegant variations on the same (worn) themes, showing small awareness of aim, occasion, or audience" (Baumlin and Baumlin, 171).

²That some teachers may evaluate according to an ideal is certainly a strong possibility. Caywood and Overing (1987) cite typical responses from questionnaires asking teachers how they grade, and one response does imply an ideal, but it was solicited during a Writing Across the Curriculum workshop

and the teacher cited may be from a discipline in which students use writing to reiterate information, thus making an Ideal Text a more appropriate frame for grading than it might be in a writing course where students write to make their own meanings. Yet even in composition, the notion of Ideal Text is sometimes useful. Ambruster (1980) points out in response to Tierney and Lazansky's (1980) proposal of a contractual reader/writer interaction, that while creative and literary writing offer a wide range of acceptable purposes and interpretations, "the band of permissible interpretation of expository text is inherently quite restricted." (28-29). The concept of an Ideal Text may merit further thinking before it is deemed completely inappropriate for writing evaluation. Crismore (1982) reports that readers hypothesize about and predict textual meaning and sequencing and that critical readers read to evaluate as well as assimilate, often interrogating texts: "What other (better) ways could this have been written?" or "How would I have done this?" Crismore's discussion suggests that reading attuned to an Ideal Text actually results naturally from critical reading; Brannon's and Knoblauch's forty readers were asked to assess, not, it seems, to treat the essay they were given as a draft.

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