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A RETURN TO RELATIONSHIP:

HOW PROPHETIC RHETORICAL STRATEGIES ENERGIZE PEDAGOGY

A DISSERTATION

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A RETURN TO RELATIONSHIP:
HOW PROPHETIC RHETORICAL STRATEGIES ENERGIZE PEDAGOGY

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BY

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, David, who represents the most profound human relationship I have ever experienced, and who shows me everyday how LOVE WINS.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my wonderful husband, David: thank you for inspiring me to return to this work that I love so much. Thank you for being such a godly father. Thank you for showing me how to be a true disciple (they are made, not born, you know). And thank you most of all for "letting me dance."

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ABSTRACT

The foundational element of the educational enterprise is the basic relationship of two human beings working collaboratively to accomplish something together that neither could accomplish alone. Faculty want to teach and students want to learn within thriving academic communities where such relationships are encouraged. This work focuses on returning foundational human relationships to the forefront of our work as educators. My premise is that the strategies enacted by the ancient Hebrew prophets give us a profound model for engaging in positive, community-creating relationships.

The ancient Hebrew prophets were models of community-building and social change. After an explication of the biblical, prophetic model, I examine three historical figures who enact prophetic rhetorical strategies: Maria W. Stewart in the era of abolition and Martin Luther King, Jr. and Myles Horton in the era of Civil Rights. From each of these personalities and eras, I present evidence that prophetic rhetorical strategies can inspire dramatic social change.

I assert that such strategies are already at work in some educational initiatives outside the confines of the traditional classroom. In the final chapter, I conclude that the collaborative, humanly interdependent work that occurs in the University of Oklahoma Writing Center and Writing Across the Curriculum initiatives, is fostering the foundational relationships I lament we have lost. I conclude by offering several prophetic rhetorical strategies that can be enacted inside and outside the classroom to return our academic work to the foundational human relationships on which it is based.

Chapter 1: Returning to Freire

The Best of Both Worlds

I am at once both an insider and an outsider in the academy. I identify myself as a composition scholar, having spent all of my adult life involved in teaching through writing, language, and literacy studies. I also identify myself as a woman of faith[1] and am well aware of the chasm that exists between the two worlds that are the primary contexts of my dual identity.

While these two roles are both central to my identity, I find in my faith the motivation for my teaching and my passionate regard for the students with whom I work [Statement of Faith Appendix]. I must quickly add that I know well and am ashamed of the evils that have been committed in the name of religion (e.g. support for slavery, oppression of women, and in more recent years, the violence perpetrated against abortion clinics and homosexual). But I also know that my decision is an informed one, made after a critical analysis of life without such belief. On the other hand, I realize that there are weaknesses in the community of faith of which I am a member (e.g. continued discrimination against and oppression of women and gays). In particular, it is clear that my academic peers are often more accepting of difference, more cognizant of the way their actions do or do not reinforce elitist positions, and more responsive to issues of oppression. While as a Christian, I try to maintain a code of conduct that emulates Jesus and his actions and behaviors as recorded in the Gospels, I am in need of my colleagues in academe. Without their work, their writing, their

[1] Throughout this work, I will use the word ~~–f~~aith" to denote a particular set of beliefs and practices: Christian belief in God and adherence to the Bible, as is maintained through an evangelical tradition. I describe this in more detail in Appendix A.

teaching, and their friendship, my life and faith would be impoverished.

The longer I am a member of academe, the more critiques of the church and organized religion[2] that I hear make sense. Much of the criticism is valid and would make Christian churches more effective if we as members would hear and respond. So, here I find myself in this middle ground: uncomfortable with evangelical religion and its history, and uncomfortable with academe and its denunciation of spirituality either. I walk, write, read, and teach in the center space between these two. In this dissertation, I endeavor to create a space for conversation between these two worlds. I am emphatically attempting to get the church to listen to what the academy has to say; I am emphatically attempting to get academe to listen to what the evangelical church has to say.

I realize that the two worlds from which I conduct this work do not often interact. In fact, for the most part, the academy has essentially divorced itself from its theological underpinnings. And the church, the community of faith, has demonized what it now calls the "secular academy" as well. But from where I stand, with one foot firmly planted in each position, I believe these two worlds desperately need one another. Regarding faith, we in the academy need to hear the essential truth that humanity is to be valued as the ultimate creation of God. With this foundational truth comes individual agency, purpose, and calling. This purpose, whatever other specifics it may entail, is ultimately achieved in service to the human communities to which we all belong. Regarding the academy, we of faith need to hear the essential truth that forces of systemized oppression are at work always and in all places. We cannot ignore

[2] I will use the terms "organized religion" and "church" synonymously, referring to the evangelical church or community, of which I am a member.

these forces nor pretend that we have not often reinforced them. We must acknowledge our mistakes and work alongside those who may not share our faith commitment, to gain ground against these forces. My unique position within these seemingly divergent streams of influence affords me an insightful perspective into how the two are informed by each other, particularly in the area of teaching. While many others have written about the intersection of composition studies and religion, such issues are not often taken up as personally reflective regarding the scholar's own position of faith. In this chapter, composition scholars such as Amy Goodburn, Beth Daniell, Jeannette Lindholm, Lizabeth Rand, and others form a firm foundation for my argument; however, none of them speaks from the first person about their own religious faith or the centrality of its role in their scholarship.

The Foundation of Relationship

I approach this argument from my place of faith and my place in the academy from a perspective that human relationship is central to the educational enterprise. This means everyone (teachers and students) involved is created by God. As such, this relationship should be collaborative, interdependent, and communal. Achieving such community with students has led me out of the classroom, but not out of education nor out of teaching. I maintain that the classroom can be reformed, but only as it grows to resemble collaborative learning models now present in Writing Centers and Writing Across the Curriculum programs: much like the ~~–t~~hirdspaces" defined by authors Rhonda C. Grego and Nancy S. Thompson (21). These spaces are environments that resemble the art studio; they foster a ~~–e~~onfiguration of relationships" that allow students to bring writing from various courses, functioning much like a Writing Center,

where students may receive instructions, but more importantly learn the process of collaboration and writing through the help of a number of other students and instructors (8).

Faith motivates my work because the idea of human relationship is so central to it. It is in my spiritual heritage that I find the focused value on human beings, including their work in the academy. Whether in the composition classroom or outside of it, writing is a spiritual[3] endeavor that demands the participation of the whole student: her body, her mind, and her soul. I do not mean to suggest that students must be converts or followers of a particular religious dogma; rather, I long for writing that is passionate, that is held close, and that comes forth from a center that is spiritually engaged, because I believe this will inspire work that is civically and socially engaged as well. As Robert Putnam writes in *Bowling Alone,* "It is, in short, among Evangelical Christians, rather than among the ideological heirs of the sixties, that we find the strongest evidence for an upwelling of civic engagement" (162). Evangelical Christianity is the soil from which many social movements have flowered: abolition, women's suffrage, the women's rights, and the civil rights movements can all be traced to profound, spiritual centers. Denying students access to their faith traditions and/or spirituality has tied our hands as instructors.

Many in the field of composition pedagogy have begun to see the value of faith commitment in our work with students as a viable motivator. Ann Berthoff was one of

[3] I will use the term "spiritual" as a more general term to refer to activity and behavior that originates from a deep respect for humanity. This work, in my opinion, may be a part of organized religion and faith, but is not necessarily associated with such. In other words, there are many secularists who are engaged in work that promotes such spiritual aspects of life, though they are not involved in organized religion.

the first in the field of composition to highlight our discipline‘s neglect of spirituality as it is related to critical pedagogy and the work of Paulo Freire. In a 1988 CCCC‘s presentation and in a subsequent essay in 1994, she pointedly asked why Freire‘s deep debt to Catholicism was never discussed when his pedagogy was analyzed. Beth Daniell describes the 300+ audience as embarrassingly quiet at the moment of Berthoff‘s question (239). Daniell writes that the question changed her entire view of Freire and consequently of critical pedagogy. She explains that the success of his theories is ultimately unexplainable in light of economic and political terms alone; the spirituality he strives for with his students is a necessary, but oft-ignored component as well. And yet, 20 years after Berthoff‘s question, new work in critical pedagogy remains silent on the importance of this spiritual motivation and the impact that may be attributed to it.

Daniell has been explicit in her writing, cautioning our discipline against the divorcing of spirituality from student learning in composition. She too places the emphasis of our acknowledgement of faith on the respect and reverence for humanity that such a perspective demands:

> What Freire offers North America is not a method of teaching literacy we can carry from the Third World to the First, but an attitude of profound love for the human beings we teach. Being treated as if one is worthy, as if one‘s life is important, as if what one has to say is significant and deserving attention, as if one is—yes—a fellow child of God, allows some people, even the most silenced, to _œome to voice,‘ to use bell hooks‘ term, and, in so doing, to see the world and themselves differently. (402)

If we want our students to become informed and active members of civic communities, we cannot neglect their spirituality, and we must offer them the freedom and support of an education that is concerned for their well-being as whole individuals, not just for their writing or for their rhetorical skill. This is the only way they can find the courage to take the risks necessary in learning; indeed, perhaps authentic learning can only happen under such conditions. Jeanette Lindholm adds her voice to Daniell's and Freire's in calling for this type of love in our classrooms: "We cannot separate ourselves from one another or the world we attempt to understand; we are all profoundly affected by our relationships with one another" (77). Lindholm concludes that we must offer a "kind of love that compels us as teachers to care deeply about the well-being of our students, to know them as human beings and not as objects for our manipulation or control" (77). When we teach from a spiritual center of love, we cultivate an environment that encourages our students to bring their whole selves into their educational experiences. We embrace a view of our students that welcomes their humanity and invites them into a dialogue and a community of learning that presents real possibilities for civic engagement, while respecting their own spirituality or lack thereof.

While Freire is widely recognized as the progenitor of critical pedagogy, these more spiritual aspects of his work have been ignored because of the academy's widespread skepticism of and refusal to engage religious and spiritual issues, thus limiting applications of critical pedagogy. Granted, as a person of faith, I am comfortable with these ideas. But I must appeal to those who stand outside that circle and yet are a part of the composition community as well. We have a responsibility to

all students from all spheres of belief. The field of composition has led the charge in the academy to accept different cultures, to embrace diverse experience, and to teach from a foundation that begins where students are. Freire and bell hooks stand as strong advocates of such engagement, as do many other scholars and pedagogues in our field. But engaging in such open relationships with students also requires that we accept them: faith or no faith. Acceptance is not blind. As teachers we may question and challenge, but always from a position of faith in the student and love for them. The problem is that our 18-year-old students never articulate their religion with the rhetorical prowess or skill of a seasoned rhetorician. Their words are not nearly so conciliatory nor do they have the ability to engage in conversations from a reflective perspective that belies their emotions and constructs a sound and logical argument that can be calmly engaged by the audience. As NPR host Krista Tippett says in her book *Speaking of Faith*, "We have had few models in our public life for religious speech that does not proselytize, exclude, anger, or offend" (140). Consequently, we cannot expect much more than that from our students. But denying the experience of faith and religion is no way to solve this dilemma. And while we may be tired of the conversion narrative and student attempts to save our souls, engaging religion and faith in the education process is invaluable to the development of our students and to the vocation of teaching.

Faith In Education: The Risks

If we are going to honor and respect the narratives our students carry with them into the classroom, their religious or faith-filled voices must be included. The religious influences they have internalized are no different than the cultural distinctions that our

discipline regularly celebrates. Bronwyn Williams in his essay ―The Book and the Truth" supports this stance as well, ―If we encourage students to write about what matters to them, to put their thoughts and ideas on the page, we have an ethical obligation to let them know that they have been heard (Elbow 2000, 31). […] If we tell students the academy values the free exchange of ideas, we cannot refuse to respond to their ideas" (108). Our reticence (at times) to engage students' ideas that differ from our own is unfair; first, because rhetoric that engages ideas of spirituality or religion is still very much rhetoric. It is unfair to ask students to lay aside a significant portion of their lives that could inform their work in our classroom. In her essay, ―Religious Freedom in the Public Square and the Composition Classroom" Kristine Hansen engages this dilemma, ―The salient point is this: If we allow free expression in the public square and on the college campus, we have to take seriously not just people's *right* to assert their beliefs. We must also take seriously their *beliefs*" (Hansen 30). Hansen cites Stephen Carter's work *A Culture of Disbelief* and his argument that there has been a societal insistence in the past decade that the religious faithful privatize their beliefs to satisfy a liberal philosophical perspective. Carter's point that extends Hansen's argument is this, ―What is needed, then, is a willingness to listen, not because the speaker has the *right voice* but because the speaker has the *right to speak*" (Hansen 29). As teachers and rhetoricians, we continually call for students' rights to freely express their feelings and their experiences. We have consistently emphasized the need to respect the diversity of our students, to celebrate their different cultures and ethnicities. This welcoming attitude has not extended to the religion of our students. Hansen continues in her essay to delineate four specific reasons why we should tolerate religious expression in the

classroom: first, because ―the classroom is an extension of the public square" (27) and as such should allow students the freedom to express themselves and express their religious preferences and ideas. Second, Hansen argues that positing student discourse on religion and faith as ―subjective" or ―private" (in the Enlightenment tradition) is no longer adequate to address the complex political and social situations our students live within. Consequently, discourse that disallows their religious expression divorces their ideas from significant historical and cultural motivations, particularly the ―rich ethical vision" that religion and faith can bring to the table (Hansen 28). Thirdly, Hansen believes that good can come from our discussions of religion and faith in the classroom. She points to the abolition of slavery and the civil rights movement as moments in our history when religious and faith-filled rhetoric were essential to political action. And finally, Hansen underscores our responsibility as teachers of rhetoric and composition. As religious discourse and its diversity is increasing, we are shirking our responsibility, to Christian and non-Christian students alike, if we do not engage them in such dialogue and help them learn to negotiate its complex dimensions (Hansen 29). Sooner or later, they will encounter religious issues and be forced to respond or counter other responses.

While I find Hansen's reasoning compelling and her logic sound, I also know the horror stories of those who have experienced student-led religious rhetoric that has alienated and offended the instructor, as well as students caught in the crossfire of the exchange (both Christian and non-Christian). The first and foremost of the risks in engaging in faith dialogue in the classroom is the fundamentalist student. We live in fear of this student, who through her classroom rhetoric alienates not only the non-

Christian, but the progressive Christian as well. Karen Carlton and Chalon Emmons, a mother (Christian) and daughter (Buddhist) who teach composition at different universities, highlight this fear in their essay "Teaching English as Spiritual Work." They write, "There are […] reasons why we, as English teachers, may hesitate to explore the transcendent dimensions of texts in the classroom […] fundamentalist movements, whose members are seen as seeking every opportunity to voice their beliefs and impose those beliefs on others" (26). Other composition instructors echo their concern; Juanita Smart in her essay "Frankenstein or Jesus Christ" writes, "While we may be willing to acknowledge that religious belief, or its absence, significantly relates to the nature of learning, we resist the voice of faith in an effort to prevent alienating and exclusionary rhetorics from dominating the discussion." She continues, "We do not want our learning communities to be disrupted by the 'one way' thinking of the student who feels that she owns a monopoly on the truth" (22). This is a well-founded fear and one that we have all experienced at one time or another, through a student-written narrative, or a student-spoken diatribe against something or someone the fundamentalist student viewed as sinful or simply different.

Sharon Crowley analyzes the effects of Christian fundamentalism on rhetoric in her work *Toward A Civil Discourse: Rhetoric and Fundamentalism*. Her research explicates the motivation behind a fundamentalist approach. She asserts that for the Christian fundamentalist there is no separation of church and state; indeed, such separation is antithetical to this subject position. All of life is seen as God's purview; therefore, each and every situation and circumstance in the life of these believers works into a larger process of Christianization, supporting Carlton and Emmons' position that

fundamentalist students see every class discussion as an opportunity to witness to unbelievers. While I agree with much of Crowley's analysis, this claim becomes conflated with her central point, which is that the perspective of the Christian right has deteriorated into *apocalypticism* (Crowley's term), and I would argue that these are two very distinct issues.[4] Basically, this deterioration into apocalypticism allows members of the Religious Right to condemn anyone who does not adhere to their narrow view. The position becomes that of a separatist movement rather than a good faith participation in civic affairs. They demand our best effort, an effort that remains rhetorical in nature, and pushes them to write and speak in ways that are rhetorically sound. Students who hail from religious, fundamentalist traditions or who adhere to such positions will present a particular set of challenges to composition instructors.

Crowley highlights these challenges in her discussion of the long-running debate about legalized abortion. She explains that when the debate is examined in light of ancient rhetorical practices of argument, "An ancient teacher of rhetoric would have realized immediately that this disagreement is not in stasis; that is, its participants do not agree on the point about which they disagree, and hence two different and incompatible arguments are being mounted" (28-9). This creates a context in which no resolution can be reached nor can any compromise position. If this cannot occur in the civic arena, then we can probably not expect any difference in the classroom. As Crowley continues, "Rhetorically speaking, if stasis is not achieved, each side may generate all the evidence in the world to support its claims and yet never engage in argument" (29). Crowley falls into generalizing fundamentalism, however. How do

[4] I will speak to other significant points of Crowley's discussion in the next chapter. For now, my analysis is limited to a review of the basic definitional issue.

we know when we are dealing with a Christian fundamentalist student? Can we identify such a student and is there then a prescribed way of dealing with such a student? I would argue that there are nuances to the Christian fundamentalist label, just as there are exceptions to any other generalization we might make about large groups or movements. Generalizations such as this one leave little room for individual differences that always exist when a single member of the group is encountered. Perhaps we are selling our instruction short in its ability to influence students in the early stages of coming to voice or coming to interrogate religious and political ideas that have been implanted in childhood.

One of the most pertinent essays on dealing with Christian fundamentalism in the classroom, because of the specific nature of the interaction between student and teacher, is Amy Goodburn's 1998 piece, "~~I~~t's A Question of Faith: Discourses of Fundamentalism and Critical Pedagogy in the Writing Classroom." Goodburn honestly examines her own critical pedagogy and the response to it of fundamentalist students. She foregrounds student work in the piece and details the perspective of one particular student, Luke. Luke was a student of Goodburn's and presented that set of challenges mentioned earlier. His belief system was very different than hers, as exemplified in the writing he did in the course and the discussions they had in conferencing times, and yet, by the end of her article, Goodburn has not only concluded that her own value system often limited her personal perspective of Luke, but she also surprisingly reveals several intersections of critical pedagogy and Christian fundamentalism: "~~t~~heir oppositional stance to the status quo…their critique of mass culture…their questioning of authority…and their examination of sources" (Goodburn

348). While Goodburn recommends exploring these avenues alongside our fundamentalist students, it is also important to remember that the fundamentalist Christian differs in many doctrinal ways from other Christians (who Goodburn learned were more supportive of her efforts in the class she chronicles). In addition, there are many internal differences in beliefs in fundamentalism that may divide students as well. Fundamentalism is not a discrete entity, and students' beliefs cannot be generalized even if they self-identify as such.

Fundamentalism is not the only risk when we begin to welcome spiritual and faith experience in education, though. Fundamentalism often promotes the responsibility to witness to the unsaved: proselytizing. Not only is it encouraged in many religious denominations or sects, it is a doctrinal requirement in the theology of many. Consequently, testimonies are part and parcel of students' living out of their religious obligations within the context of the writing classroom.[5] The written conversion narrative may not be a student's only experience of significance, it may be evidence of her identification with her community and her commitment to living a faithful life.

Susan Wells' work *Sweet Reason* is informative to this discussion when she highlights the difference in what we as teachers see as the nature of writing assignments and what students perceive as the purpose of the writing assignments. She describes the teacher as constructing an assignment in order to see and follow the student's development of writing skills. On the other hand, students may see the writing assignment as ~~"a~~n invitation to dialogue rather than cue for performance" (Wells 202). Consequently, the student responds with a narrative that invites a response from the

[5] Indeed, in chapter two I will discuss how important such testimonies are to the imagining of agency outside the confines of oppressive political structures.

teacher that is not within the confines of evaluation of rhetorical skill but that falls outside that and into the personal response realm. The teacher may simply need to clarify the purpose of assignments, particularly those often assigned early in our composition courses, those that Krista Ratcliffe describes as "road to Damascus papers" (144), essays that resemble the New Testament story of Paul's conversion to belief in Jesus after being struck blind on the "road to Damascus." Conversely, the teacher may need to exercise her own nuanced understanding of the rhetorical situation and look at the proselytizing paper as an argument and evaluate it that way, expressing the need for counter-argument or stronger appeals to pathos. The student who is trying to proselytize can certainly be understood and accepted lovingly.

Another complication of speaking of faith in the classroom arises from the risk of the fundamentalist students' use of sacred texts as proof texts. Students may use the Bible or other religious texts as "universal" evidence, as they perceive it, for their rhetoric. Jeanette Lindholm highlights this issue of intertextuality in her essay "Language of Faith." She describes situations and assignments within the classroom when students "assume readers will accept biblical authority and feel no need to justify the legitimacy of that authority" (Lindholm 64). She addresses the fact that for many students, the authority of their particular "proof text" is a given, an unexplored authority in the life of faith they live. She addresses such issues in her own classroom by conferencing with students who deploy such rhetoric and asking them to consider their claims in light of others within (and outside) the class who may not assume such authority. In this approach, she rhetorically engages the student with considerations of audience and invention, leading the student to develop a more mature and rhetorically

sound voice. While Lindholm limits her intervention, in this particular essay anyway, to audience considerations, I would suggest that there are other ways to assist students in examining such evidence. The Bible, and other texts used in such a manner, is laden with contradictions and lexical inconsistencies that go unquestioned (or ignored) by novice readers. Encouraging students to interrogate some of these deeper issues within their own proof texts may lead to a deeper sense of honesty and humility when considering such works.

As teachers we may also long to avoid the emotionalism of fervently religious students. Students with strong religious beliefs have often so internalized their beliefs and values that any question of them may lead to a decidedly emotional response. In the book *Passionate Politics*, the authors note that ~~"t~~he emotions most directly connected to moral sensibilities, such as shame, guilt, and pride, are especially pervasive as motivators of action" (Goodwin, Jasper, Polletta 10). And students who are fueled by such emotions for their religious fervor may respond in kind when their values are questioned. On the other hand, as rhetoricians we know the danger of essentialist binary oppositions, and we face one head-on when we talk about emotions in the classroom. We know the danger of associating emotionalism with irrationality or illogical thinking. Julie Lindquist discusses this fine border in her essay "~~C~~lass Affects, Classroom Affectations." Lindquist focuses on working class issues in this piece but notes that emotion is often viewed by teachers as an irrational substitute for good, sound logic, forgetting that we all bring affective dimensions of experience to the table that have influenced our decisions and our values. Ignoring or denouncing students' emotion may leave them disconnected from the moral and ethical fiber of belief. In our

pursuit of critical pedagogy, we have perhaps ignored influences that were essential to our own formation of identity (Lindquist 190-191). Are we not in need of more passionate students? Do we not in some sense long for students to be stirred by something so deeply and emotionally that they will take action? If so, then we cannot exclude all emotion from the classroom. Virginia Chappell affirms this need in her essay "Teaching-and Living-in the Meantime" when she writes, "My intention is not that the community atmosphere of my classes serve as an end in itself; rather, I mean for the experiences of shared talk, affect, and work to prepare students for participating in the larger civic community" (103). When our students exhibit emotion as part of a motivating force, we could do worse than channeling that affective demonstration into a rhetorical motivation. The writers of *Passionate Politics* agree and write:

> We see a need today not just for a historical sociology of emotions […] but rather a sociology that recognizes the ubiquity of emotions, moods, and affect in social life and which treats emotions as potential causal mechanisms, or components of such mechanisms […] More specifically, we believe that most of the key causal facts emphasized by analysts of social movements […] derive much of their causal power from the strong emotions that they embody or evoke among actors. (Goodwin, Jasper, Polletta 283)

While the risk of emotional responses is real with students of faith, it is real with students from all manner of backgrounds and cultures, (Christian and non-Christian alike) and it can often motivate students to positive moral and social action. People are often emotionally drawn into activism: the ability to work against ideas or concepts that accepted as givens by our communities. Spiritual exploration often leads to social

action, because it effectively demands something of us as human beings. It requires more than intellectual commitment, it is a wholistic investment (Grossberg 385).

The fear we have of fundamentalists who actively proselytize and unswervingly appeal to their own proof texts ultimately climaxes as a fear of students who would, rhetorically speaking anyway, return to religious historical imperialism. Not only do we long to avoid the confrontation with these students, we long to protect other students in our classes from such polarizing rhetoric. Their rhetoric sounds much like that of the Crusades and the Inquisition and ultimately our minds turn to such empirical conquest. We are right to be vigilant against such rhetoric. James Cone demands vigilance from Christianity; he sees the seeds of domination that often lie within religious rhetoric, "American white theological thought has been 'patriotic,' either by defining the theological task independently of black suffering … or by defining Christianity as compatible with white racism" (22). The foundation of imperialism and manifest destiny are held within such fundamentalist approaches to others. And we have a responsibility to engage our students who exhibit such tendencies. In fact, we would be negligent if we did not do so. But we must avoid binary thinking here as well. We must confront this type of thinking, whether in our private conferences with students who espouse such rhetorical arrogance, or tactfully but firmly before the entire classroom when inflammatory rhetoric is used against races or cultures or sexes. Cone writes, "It is impossible to confront a racist society, with the meaning of human existence grounded in commitment to the divine, without at the same time challenging the very existence of the national structure and all of its institutions, especially the established church" (108). Cone supports a prophetic approach, which is especially

useful for Christian students. These students will be aware of Old Testament prophets who decried their people's unjust dealings with the poor and the widowed. They were deplored for their elitism and their arrogance and their ignoring of social justice for the weak and the needy. Such confrontation cannot be avoided when students choose to enact a rhetoric that effectively silences others. A spiritually welcoming relationship will allow students to speak and write of their faith, but it will also, through the loving acceptance of a teacher figure, challenge them to do so with love and respect for everyone present, according to the biblical imperatives to which they allegedly subscribe.

Faith In Education: The Rewards

Beyond fundamentalism and its concomitant risks, which arguably exist in all critically engaged composition spaces, lies the potential for great rewards as well. And significant to this discussion is the possibility that students may mature in their faith or religious development as a result of collegial relationships in academe. Most discussions of faith development in the academy depend on the research of James Fowler, whose extensive work in this area has informed much of the work that centers on religion and faith during human development. Fowler introduces us to the notion of students growing into deeper stages of faith development just as they experience maturity in levels of cognition. Young adults do often gain the experience and analytical skill necessary to develop further in their faith and this move is significant for us in the academy. As with so many educational practices, the hope for a rewarding experience lies within the folds of a significant risk. Fowler writes, "The movement from Stage 3 to Stage 4…is particularly critical for it is in this transition that the late

adolescent or adult must begin to take seriously the burden of responsibility for his or her own commitments, lifestyle, beliefs and attitudes" (182). The student will begin through this process to evaluate individuality vs. group membership, subjectivity vs. objectivity that requires reflection, and self-actualization vs. service to and being for others (Fowler 182). In our educational relationships, we can hope for rhetorical work that engages students where they are and yet allows them to learn through the diversity of their peers and through the commitment we make as teachers to assist and support and encourage. But if we do not allow them to honestly express their religious beliefs, we can never hope to see them mature beyond the early stage of their development. Nor can we hope for fruitful dialogue to occur between those of different religions or between those who espouse religion and those who do not.

Still, as teachers we find ourselves in environments, in places like traditional classrooms that require us to maintain a position of authority, from which we must assign grades to work that students submit to us. This may effectively limit the collaboration and interdependence I am promoting in the teacher/student relationship. Ultimately, this authoritative position is what differentiates the spaces outside the classroom, where collaboration and interdependence are more effectively enacted.

Nevertheless, the academy can be a place of significant and positive relationships with students as well, which leads me then to the rewards we might hope to gain as we engage students of faith in the teaching of composition. First, allowing students to speak and write about religious and faith experiences fosters an exploration of the transcendent in both reading and writing. Carlton and Emmons suggest a similar imperative:

> A transforming experience of the student in response to a text is really what I aim for—a discovery by each reader of a life, a divinity in the text: in the language, the syntax, the ideas, in all their harmonies and contradictions…to develop their linguistic capabilities, their appreciation of literary subtlety, as well as their moral and spiritual sensibilities. (27)

These authors point to something beyond our allowance of students to explore their religious and faith-filled experiences: they propose a way of teaching that welcomes a spiritual response to the learning experience. While allowing them to write and speak about ideas that are expressly religious, for example regarding controversial issues within the civic realm, these teachers take another step in viewing their own teaching practices as spiritual in nature. This goes beyond consideration of students' topic selection and moves into a realm of seeing our own practice as either divorced from or imbued with a spirituality of its own. Teaching as a spiritual act asks us to see our work as endowed with a deeper calling than simply distributing information or evaluating assignments. Practicing teaching in this manner has ramifications for those students who would profess a religious faith and those who would profess anything other than that. A symbiotic relationship is foregrounded here: our practice and our students' experience. The teachers I quote and refer to in this section would agree that when we disallow students to explore the spiritual, we ignore our own spirituality, effectively dehumanizing our work in the academy.

By welcoming Christian and non-Christian students to explore the spiritual in academe, we can also hope for a deeper community than we may have perhaps yet experienced. The integration of faith into the daily life of the individual was not so hard

to fathom historically, and certainly there is historical evidence of the marriage of rhetoric and religion that supports the notion of spiritual community as well. Kathy Eden in "Koinonia and the Friendship Between Rhetoric and Religion" highlights the importance of the linkage of Christian practices to daily living in Erasmus' *koinonia*. She writes, "This common intellectual store, as Erasmus so keenly noticed in the adage that introduces his own treasury of the collective wisdom of the ancients, marks a defining feature of the long-standing friendship between Pythagorean, Platonist, and Christian as well as between rhetoric and religion" (317). Eden describes the literary form of the proverb as one that figures this cooperation. The proverb is a distinct literary form and yet it belongs to the community and is used to pass along wisdom that has been gained from experience. Erasmus used the proverb in his adages to describe the importance of religion that is tied to community, spirituality that is active. *Koinonia* is a New Testament concept that refers simply to the believer's faithful relationship to God and humble service to the community of humanity, both strands being essential for true *koinonia* to be achieved. *Koinonia* represents the best possibility of what can go right when faith intersects intellectual activity, for it focuses on an internal relationship of faith that is held responsible for concrete acts of kindness, and for rhetoric that is ultimately and equally concerned for both the upward and outward reach of faith in human potential.

Not only will a deeper community result from the welcoming of religious experience, a spiritually fostering classroom environment demands that we see all students as moral and spiritual beings, not just as learning receptacles, or as Freire might say, information "banks" (Pedagogy of the Oppressed 61). Mark R. Schwen

writes movingly of developing loving community within academe in his book *Exiles from Eden*. He begins with Aristotle's concept of friendship (*philio*) as being highest among those who are virtuous and who learn together (Schwen 62-63). He goes on to describe ancient academic communities that pursued the intellectual in concert with a compassionate concern for the health and well-being of all those within the community. He laments the fact that friendship has all but disappeared from the domain of the classroom (Schwen 63). Without this compassion, the academic community can quickly deteriorate into a skills and drills, dehumanized endeavor, where we are slaves to efficiency. A focus on students as human beings and a promotion of the spiritual identity of community works against the industrial notion of efficiency[6] in the academy. In fact, it effectively divorces education from becoming important only for our ability to train and equip the right workers for the right jobs, providing economic capital for a growing industrial machine (Chickering 25-27). It is more than unfortunate when as academic institutions we adopt the practices of business that serve to fragment our own lives and those of our students (Chickering 247).

When we foster educational experiences that honor human relationship most of all, we are enacting a redeeming aspect of spirituality. Schwen further delineates his concept of community by employing Wayne Booth's "golden rule of hermeneutics," "Read as you would have others read you; listen as you would have others listen to you" (Schwen 63), a concept now revisited in Krista Ratcliffe's book *Rhetorical Listening*. Ratcliffe also calls for a humility of spirit that listens to the other and that pursues intelligence not by deconstruction, but by a quiet respect that listens before

[6] The idea of Taylorism and the efficiency models it demands are explained further later in this chapter.

speaking (25). Furthermore, she argues that ―rhetorical listening signifies a stance of openness" that the listener assumes particularly in relationship to those who are different (Ratcliffe 1). Barbara Schneider calls this humble pursuit ―discernment" and offers this concept as a bridge to the type of love and respect we're talking about here (205). I would argue that all of these efforts call for an intellectual practice of love that grows out of respect for the individual as an eternal soul and that recognizes all humanity as invested with dignity and value.

These spiritual practices of love often have been ignored in subsequent applications of critical pedagogy in American contexts. One of the risks of failing to engage faith-based rhetoric is this inability to allow students to look at all of their experience and all of their traditions and cultural background as relevant to their intellectual pursuits. Lindholm discusses this as well when she states, ―If part of our task as educators is to help students learn to examine ideas, perspectives, and situations critically, it seems only reasonable to encourage them to reflect on the range of influences that have shaped their outlooks" (15). She offers bell hooks' work as evidence of her perspective, when hooks points to the ―dis-ease" among faculty who force students to privatize or compartmentalize parts of their experience as irrelevant to their intellectual pursuits. Peter Elbow suggests that Jesus Christ was the archetypal teacher. He notes that while He was loving and accepting of all learners, He set strict high standards for their conduct and behavior as well. Elbow's concept of love in Christ's example is a demanding one, but he insists that education is imbued with a spiritual sense of human interaction, as well as any physical or material sense (87-88).

In my own experience, I have been blessed with professors who allowed me to interrogate my faith along with the ideas presented in their classrooms. This has had a two-fold result: first, it has allowed me to mature as a person, to lay aside ideas and beliefs that were inconsistent with my new reading of the world through new concepts introduced in the classroom. And secondly, it has allowed me to be an active engager of ideas within my faith community. Much of the knowledge I have gained in academe has bearing on my faith community and could serve to further that community's socially-engaged work. This ultimately has led me to greater intellectual development than I would have experienced without integrating my faith into my learning experience. Unfortunately, as Elizabeth Vander Lei notes in her introduction to *Negotiating Faith in the Composition Classroom*:

> By excising that which they believe to be at best outside the academic realm or at worst anti-intellectual, teachers risk creating not a neutral space but a sterile place where learning is safe from ideas that are potentially community-shattering, such as those regarding gender roles or environmental responsibility. Composition classrooms become safe, true, but for some students these classrooms also become so disjointed from their lives that they would prefer not to engage the teacher or course at all. (6)

I believe my faith has great bearing on my teaching, but as I have explored that possibility, I have become aware conversely that my teaching has great bearing on my life of faith. The religious tradition with which I was raised, such as respect for others, seeing humanity as bearing the creative spirit of God, imbue my work with a depth and spirituality that I find hard to muster through secular means. Nevertheless, secular

education has taught me a great deal about how man-made systems and structures impinge upon this God-made humanity. The integration of these two streams has informed my teaching in a way that one could not have done without the other. This type of growth is possible for all students who are allowed into spiritually fostering, learning communities.

While some may retain concerns about the presence of faith and rhetoric in the classroom, Lizabeth Rand points out in her essay "Enacting Faith," that "every social group has fundamentalists;" this risk is ever present (351). Rather than ignoring students' devotion to faith, we must compassionately build relationships with them through the negotiating of how that faith is expressed in other discourse communities. Rand's essay is particularly useful in pointing out that in our rush to enact critical pedagogies we have ignored religious, particularly Christian, perspectives, because we fear the way they have been utilized in the past to oppress and subject others (353). While this is certainly true, we can enact a new approach that acknowledges that past oppression as very real and very painful and yet also chronicle, just as in numerous other cultural traditions, how much good has come from the enactment of faith as well. And if we want to promote that good, then we must negotiate this terrain along with our students. By coming alongside them and teaching them the rhetorical practices that also grow from certain religious traditions, we can encourage faith and spirituality that embraces freedom rather than oppression, that celebrates diversity while acknowledging the depth of connection, and that looks for truth in all production rather than just our own comfortable texts and practices. We engage our students as whole persons when we engage in the faithful vocation of teaching that embraces the spiritual

as well as all other dimensions of our students' lives. There will be error; there will be uncomfortable moments when students deploy their beliefs in ways that are at best uncomfortable and at worst offensive. As C. Jan Swearingen states in "Women's Ways of Writing," "Religion has always provided…images of self, of what it is to be human, of what it is to live and make a life that has meaning and purpose" (253). Welcoming religious perspectives fosters such meaning and purpose if it is respectfully and caringly enacted. More importantly, this welcoming is the first step in the building of relationships that are the ultimate honor and respect we can show to students.

Critical Pedagogy and Love

Paulo Freire, the founder of critical pedagogy, embodied the importance of this spiritual and loving impetus to education as he worked tirelessly for literacy while maintaining a connection to this theological persuasion. I was introduced to Freire as a second semester Master's student in a course on Marxism. My paper that semester focused on this South American pedagogue and his groundbreaking literacy work among Brazilian peasants. Years later, perhaps no theory in the field of composition has been more discussed or more written about than that of critical pedagogy. From highly academized theories to day-to-day classroom practices, critical pedagogy is often invoked in our discipline as the source or the means or the end pursued in the composition classroom. While many scholars and academicians work under the auspices of this oft-brandished theory, very few do so in the true spirit of Freire's work; most lack a spiritual center that motivates their research. This lack is visible in their failure to articulate holistic theories and practical approaches to critical pedagogy, their failure to define the teacher/student relationship in the light of Freire's description of

the co-intentional work of students and teachers, and finally in their failure to imbue all of their work with a love for students as human agents endowed with eternal souls. Scholars in rhetoric and composition have examined his work for its use in literacy programs; we have examined his work for its use in cultural and social change, subverting oppressive systems and hierarchies; we have examined his work for its use in our own moves of resistance to hegemony and power structures in the United States. But we have not examined his work in light of its spirituality: a center that sees each individual student as an eternal being, whose earthly work has significant human ramifications and eternal ones as well, for both inside and outside the classroom. These are human, relational concepts – not just classroom practices. This work must begin with a reconciliation of the student/teacher relationship. As Freire writes, "The man or woman who proclaims devotion to the cause of liberation yet is unable to enter into *communion* with the people, whom he or she continues to regard as totally ignorant, is grievously self-deceived" (Pedagogy of the Oppressed 61). In the theorists examined here, I find interesting ideas and practical work for the classroom, but I do not find a spiritual engagement, like the one Freire articulates, with the lives and souls of students, nothing that addresses this deep devotion and compassion for humanity.

Freire's spiritual engagement is evidenced in three recurring concepts or issues from his lifetime of work: the *cointentional* work of teachers with students, the *love* of teachers for students, and the *hope* of teachers for their students' futures manifest through their ability to imagine a new reality with their students.

Cointentionality is the most important idea in the earliest chapter of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and it has been one of the first casualties of our postmodern pursuit of

alternative pedagogies. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire writes, "The *raison d'etre* of libertarian education … lies in its drive towards reconciliation. Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers *and* students" (72). Elsewhere in his work, Freire identifies cointentionality as a dialogue. In *Pedagogy of Hope* he discusses the student/teacher relationship further and explains, "The real evil is not in the expository lesson," (categorically distinguishing this from what he labeled as the "banking concept" of education in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed)*, but when the educator refuses to acknowledge the dialogic nature of knowing (102). In our 21st century composition classrooms, a respect for cultural diversity masquerades as cointentionality. By focusing on literacies outside the traditional, Euro-American purview, we claim to be "diverse," and yet we are not necessarily working cointentionally with our students. Cointentionality goes deeper than simply acknowledging difference. It implies that while we may honor Freire's concept to begin with the language or experience of our students, we go much further and humble ourselves to work alongside them. This does not mean we abandon our own ideals and goals, but that we also honor those of our students, where they are. We cannot simply allow readings on diversity or from multiple perspectives, we must also respect students as individuals and honor their stories and experiences. This attitude will be evident in our commenting, in our classroom environment, in our collaboration, and in our acceptance of other voices. Freire acknowledges that often the student's view is not one he is accepting of, but he writes, "My ethical duty, as one of the subjects, one of the agents, of a practice that can never be neutral—the educational—is to express my

respect for differences in ideas and positions. I must respect even positions opposed to my own, positions that I combat earnestly and with passion" (66).

Freire articulates this notion of respect for students even further as he writes of the profound love that motivated his teaching. In *Letters to Cristina*, Freire's acceptance of and love for students is most clear. He explicates the concept as he deploys it first, by critiquing the elitism he sees active in many classrooms. He writes, "Our elitism does not allow us to perceive the lack of coherence between our liberatory discourse and our indifferent attitude toward people, who have been reduced to almost thing-like status. This is not a minor problem" (97). Even in the 21st century where we can name many of the structures that are imposing upon our students, this is a point that needs to be made and that we often ignore. We often maintain a separation from students, especially those with religious faith whom we deem as less intellectual or bright than those who share our own positions. There is an undeniable, underlying sense that students with such black and white thinking are unenlightened, unable to critically evaluate their positions. As I have already discussed in this chapter, students come to class with diverse beliefs and values and may certainly be operating from varying levels of critical ability. We must never assume, though, that they are unable or unwilling to examine their positions. A love that is well-informed will work with them even when we see the contradictions in their value systems. Freire describes it this way, "What the rejected ones need…is not our tepidity but our *warmth*, our solidarity—yes, and our love, but an unfeigned love, not a mistrustful one, not a soppy love, but an armed love" (133). This is not a description of a love that is touchy-

feely," a derogatory term often used to criticize caring teachers, but a love that is strong enough to directly encounter resistance and move on anyway.

Pedagogy of Hope is filled with love as Freire describes how he grew to be consumed by the desire for justice and freedom and democracy for everyone. His personal narratives describe incident after incident of places where these ideas have proved successful in the Third World. The intimate details of these stories give the distinct impression that Freire is not just a theorist but one who is actively and pragmatically involved in living out his theory in praxis.

Finally, the concepts of cointentionality and love coalesce into a work of imagination by the educator with the student to imagine new realities. Freire is not afraid anywhere in his work to articulate a utopian dream of possibility for those with whom he works side by side. Again in *Pedagogy of Hope* he writes, "Dream is not only a necessary political act, it is an integral part of the historicosocial manner of being a person. It is part of human nature, which, within history, is in permanent process of becoming" (77). In other words, the inevitable outcome of a life that is lived with hope and faith is an imagination of a new reality where new realities are realized.

There is no honest way to doubt Freire's spiritual center when his work is examined in light of these essential concepts. Indeed, in one of his final reflections, the book *Pedagogy of the Heart* (the original title was *A Sombra desta Mangueira*, translated "under the shade of this mango tree"), Freire records the most forceful description of his spiritual center. He writes,

> All arguments in favor of the legitimacy of my struggle for a more *people-oriented* society have their deepest roots in my faith. It sustains me, motivates

me, challenges me, and it has never allowed me to say, –Stop, settle down; things are as they are because they cannot be any other way." (104)

Clearly, Freire's faith was the essential tenet of his identity that informed his work in pedagogy. Nor did he shy away from other significant contributions to his work: liberation theology, Marxism, and political theory. All worked in concert with his faith and were the ingredients for a pedagogy that remains an integral part of our discipline decades after its inception.

Some scholars adopt the hopeful and spiritual emphasis of critical pedagogy as Freire first articulated it. David L. Wallace and Helen Rothschild Ewald speak directly to this in *Mutuality in the Rhetoric and Composition Classroom*. Their theory of *mutuality* is remarkably similar to Freire's notion of *cointentionality*. They define it as –teachers and students sharing the potential to adopt a range of subject positions and to establish reciprocal discourse relations as they negotiate meaning in the classroom" (3). But the concept differs in one significant aspect from Freire: they resist naming what goal or outcome the students may wish to pursue. They even allow for the possibility that students may deny –critical consciousness" and seek a more basic or even self-centered goal:

> We believe that those seeking mutuality in the classroom need to find ways to exercise authority so that resistance to the dominant culture isn't the only option open to students […] we think it crucial that student agency operate in a middle space between students' own experiences and the expectations of the discourse communities in which they will have to achieve voice. (5)

This is a subtle but significant difference. Critical pedagogy is a malleable theory.

Freire himself asked that it not become a ―methodology" or a pragmatic solution; he was expressly against such pragmatic approaches, because they abandon the connection to a new imagination that allows students to see beyond the status quo (Letters to Kristina 100). Wallace and Ewald are critical of critical pedagogy theories (such as Henry Giroux's) that are long on abstract conceptual thought but short on detailed analysis of how hope is accomplished in the classroom. They have adopted cointentionality but with a softer expectation, one that is left to students rather than teachers, which is more amenable to my argument, because it places even more trust in students.

Critical Pedagogy Without Love

The hallmarks of spirituality, such as mutuality and cointentionality, are missing, however, from the work of subsequent theorists who have applied Freire's pedagogy in the first world classroom. Henry Giroux was one of the early adopters of Freirian pedagogy and one of the first to endeavor to translate the concepts to a North American context. He writes in his earliest book (published in 1981), ―The concept of critical theory refers to the nature of self-conscious critique and to the need to develop a discourse of social transformation and emancipation" (*Theory and Resistance in Education* 8). He goes on to articulate a neo-Marxist, theoretical framework for what he calls ―adical pedagogy" (*Curriculum & Instruction* 400). But Giroux's work is short on practical application of lofty ideals. In fact, even his latest works written in 2006 and 2007, continue to call for critiques, ―to critically analyze the ideologies, values, and interests that inform their role as teachers and the cultural politics they promote in the classroom" (*America on the Edge* 7). And to call for critical pedagogy

that –is also invested in both the practice of self-criticism about the values that inform our teaching and a critical self-consciousness regarding what it means to equip students with analytical skills to be self-reflective about the knowledge and values they confront in classrooms" (*The University in Chains* 180). But his work even in its later iterations still fails to articulate a specific application of what this theory might look like in the classroom. He fails to convert his theories into classroom practice or more importantly, into student engagement. This failure to articulate classroom practice is compounded by the lack of student presence. There are no student voices or student papers. There are no anecdotes or experiences shared with us from everyday teaching and learning realities.

Giroux's work breaks down when we hold it next to a standard of offering imaginative possibilities, and this is surprising, considering that Giroux in fact laments this pitfall himself. If again we return to his earliest writing on radical pedagogy, he notes,

> A critical theory of pedagogy will also have to acknowledge that within certain historical contexts concepts such as cultural reproduction, social reproduction, hegemony, and resistance may belong to the logic of abstract negation. In other words, though they provide powerful analytic tools to critique the capitalist imperatives that underlie its institutions and social relations, such concepts often take a mere negative stance toward the existing social order and –fail to show that something else is possible, that changes can take place." (*Curriculum and Instruction* 423)

He's even more clear in his most recent work, when he writes,

> [Teachers] must also have a language of possibility, one that allows them to think in terms of the ‗not yet,' to speak the unrepresentable, and to imagine future social relations outside of the existing configuration of power. In this sense, they must be able to understand how power can be harnessed and produced through the poetics of imagination…Without hope, there is only the politics of cynicism. (*America on the Edge* 7)

But where is his articulation of this hopeful imagination? Missing from all of Giroux's writing is student voice, student presence. There are no students represented in his writing other than in vague generalities. His theorizing is so prevalent, practical matters of classroom instruction and practice are completely ignored. Freire articulates the pitfall of such work in *Pedagogy of Hope* when he writes, "the most critical knowledge of reality, which we acquire through the unveiling of that reality, does not of itself alone effect a change in reality" (23). Giroux's theories exhibit a deep knowledge of the fact that critical pedagogy lends itself to the possibility of change, but simply identifying the problem does not solve it. And Giroux's work is short on any evidence from classroom practice or teacher/student interaction that subverts the traditional teacher/student relationship and therefore changes the social dynamic and authoritative nature of that relationship.

This abandonment of the student focus results in a denial of student motivation for the very action Giroux is calling for. There is much talk in his work about observing and applying knowledge of social movements, but he denies students an impetus for such work by denying them access to their religious faith. He negates the Christian evangelical specifically, noting that they are a "danger" to radical pedagogies.

By speaking of Christian faith in this manner, he denies students' access to the very impetus for such social movements that he longs to see emulated in the academy. He writes,

> What makes critical pedagogy so dangerous to Christian evangelicals, neoconservatives, and right-wing nationalists in the United States is that central to its very definition is the task of educating students to become critical agents who actively question and negotiate the relationships between theory and practice, critical analysis and common sense, and learning and social change. (*The University in Chains* 180)

Giroux placed Christian evangelicals in the same list as neoconservatives and right-wing nationalists, intimating that all three belong in the same category. I would argue that the three are distinct groups and do not necessarily exhibit similar traits or behaviors. Unlike right-wing nationalists and neoconservatives, Christian evangelicals, as I hope I demonstrate, are politically diverse and represent many different spiritual perspectives, negating generalization. In addition, he asserts here that in order for a student to experience liberatory pedagogy, she must always deny a history that involves faith. This assertion dismisses historical and social movements that were central in the demise of unjust institutions such as slavery, motivated by faith and acted on by people of faith. Giroux says he wants hope, says he wants imagination and yet he then cuts off this hope when it is found in a place of faith, limits this imagination when it grows from a historically religious place.

Denying Christian faith a role in critical pedagogy also divorces faith from our labor as teachers. As a teacher, I need access to those hope-filled ideas and concepts

that give worth to my work. I find that expressly in my Christian faith. Like other theorists and academicians, I see no divide between my work and other aspects of my existence. I long to integrate both and negotiate the space between these disparate but not antithetical parts of my life. I would argue that Freire negotiated just such a stance. Giroux, however, wants to deny me access to that faith, because his worldview is antithetical to faith. I disagree; while I may not come to the conclusions he would, abolition, civil rights, and the women's rights movement were all born in such faith-filled souls. And it is there that I find hope.

Henry Giroux is not the only scholar who demands that secularity accompany critical pedagogy. Ira Shor is another of the early adopters of critical pedagogy who refuses to acknowledge this exploration of faith as a possibility for students in the composition classroom. His most telling words are in his 1980 work *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life*. In this volume Shor articulates his original work in critical teaching and the history of Open Admissions at his own university. Like Giroux, he desires a critical consciousness among students that empowers them ~~to~~ intervene in the making of history" (48). Shor's subsequent work *When Students Have Power* is a detailed account of a classroom experiment in which he seems to do just what Freire describes in his theory, beginning where the students are, with their language and experience. Shor negotiates the content of the course with the students and proceeds, throughout the entire term, to trade in his authoritative position for one more closely aligned with his students. But in the process, Shor works against cointentionality by transferring any responsibility for the success of his students and his course. He asks for a deep investment from his students in the process of taking control of their own education, but

he does not seem to be spiritually present with them or in relationship with them. He makes no corresponding investment of his own in their lives and work. On further examination, though, this experiment violates other basic Freirian concepts. For instance, Freire discusses beginning with students' knowledge in the beginning but writes in *Pedagogy of Hope*, "~~S~~*tarting out* means setting down the road, getting going, not *sticking*, or *staying*. I have never said, as it is sometimes suggested or said that I have said, that we ought to flutter spellbound around the knowledge of the educands like moths around a lamp bulb" (58). In fact, I would argue that in some parts of the description, Shor's experiment seems to put an undue burden on the students of the course. Freire never argued that the teacher/student relationship should be reduced to a place where both are identical, but rather that the teacher must never assume she is the only educator in the equation. Shor takes the day off in his experiment, relinquishing his own position in this relationship, perhaps even to the detriment of his students and their learning.

Shor also violates Freire's pedagogy when he denies the ability for critical consciousness to those who may have faith commitments. He places religion squarely in the complex of "~~p~~re-scientific irrationalism" and writes, "~~I~~t is easier to have faith than to be scientific, especially when organized religion, mass education, work and the media contain your practice of analytic reasoning, destroying your self-confidence" (62). Through this logical process, those of us who have chosen faith as a viable worldview for our daily lives are relegated to the position of the unenlightened. There is no possibility here that we may intellectually interrogate the options and choose a life of faith and belief in God. While Shor argues for a pedagogy that engages "~~w~~ith"

students (113) and that works alongside them to achieve critical consciousness (48), he cannot envision a student who after receiving such investment would choose religion or faith as an expression of their critical consciousness. Sharon Crowley describes this expertly in her work *Composition in the University*,

> Hence liberal educational theory is motivated by the metaphors of emancipation and empowerment (Bowers). Unlike conservatives, who assume that the point of education is to acquaint new generations with respected traditions, liberals assume that the point of education is to help individuals get better at whatever they want to do […] liberal teachers must insist that the effects on people of class prejudice, sexism, or racism can be overcome with sufficient individual effort. (219-20)

Crowley's clarion call to the ~~l~~liberal teacher" reminds us again of the importance of cointentional struggle. Curriculum and course objectives notwithstanding, a critical pedagogical focus demands of us an engagement with our individual students and their needs. We must invest in the humanity of our students with our own. I would argue again that the agency of human beings is indeed important, but so is a motivation from a higher and greater force that I find in God. And if students find the same impetus, they should be encouraged to do so.

Both Giroux and Shor ignore the spiritual nature of Freire's work when in reality it was one of the most central aspects of his pedagogy. Not only that, both vilify anyone who comes to the educational enterprise from the same disposition as Freire, one of faith and belief in God. How can they discount such an important aspect of Freire's work and deny critical consciousness to those who share that faith? Somehow,

the American classroom applications of critical pedagogy forsook the spiritual, stripping the original of foundational concepts absolutely essential to its success.

Richard Miller is another critical pedagogue who takes the same road as Giroux and Shor in *Writing at the End of the World*, abandoning any faith-filled approach. While he does find small reasons for hope in teaching, he is expressly critical of faith as an impetus for action and of the hopeful and imaginative nature of Freire's original work. He returns to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, where he criticizes Freire's utopian dream, while ignoring the rest of his nuanced writings that serve to explicate this dream into concrete behavior. Instead, he argues for a "pragmatic pedagogy" that helps students "acquire a fluency in the ways that the bureaucratic systems that regulate all our lives use words…a familiarity with the logics, styles of argumentation, and repositories of evidence deployed by these organizational bodies; and (3) a fuller understanding of what can and cannot be gained through discursive exchanges, with a concomitant recalibration of the horizon of expectations that is delineated by our sense of what words can and cannot do when deployed in the public sphere" (Miller 136).

Freire was expressly against such pragmatic approaches, because they abandon the connection to a new imagination that allows students to see beyond the status quo. In *Pedagogy of Hope* he writes, "This is why, from the viewpoint of dominant class interests, the less the dominated dream the *dream* of which I speak, […] and the less they practice the political apprenticeship of committing themselves to a utopia, the more open they will become to 'pragmatic' discourses, and the sounder the dominant classes will sleep" (78). These pragmatic approaches not only separate pedagogy from the hope of change; they offer little to the student who might long to see bureaucracies

change rather than learn how they work. Such pedagogies hold students in their places, teaching them that they can't really expect change from their small acts. They are hopeless. For Freire the notions of imagination and agency and the concrete reality of love are embodied in *conscientizacao*. In fact, they are necessary elements to any *praxis* by historical agents. He writes, "Imagination and conjecture about a different world than the one of oppression are as necessary to the praxis of historical 'subjects' (agents) in the process of transforming reality as it necessarily belongs to human toil that the worker or artisan first have in his or her head a design" (30). Imagining and speaking in one's own language ideas that are outside the bounds of the empire are absolutely essential to alternative pedagogies.

There are hopeful moments in Miller's book, one of the clearest in his discussion of the work of Mike Rose (*Lives on the Boundary*). Rose describes successful classrooms "as those that give students 'the *experience* of democracy'" and in these classrooms, he sees three commonalities or practices: first, the participants operate from a sense of safety, including not only a physical sense of such but also that they are safe in their expression of competing ideas and concepts as well; second, all students feel respected; Rose describes this as "an absence of intimidation and, beyond the realm of individual civility, a respect for the history, the language and culture of the peoples represented in the classroom;" and third, the teacher is respected by the students as well, due to her ethos created from the other two attributes, creating a safe place to learn and respecting the diversity represented by the students. In such classrooms, regardless of curriculum content, Rose noted "the teacher's authority was always distributed in such a way that the 'students contributed to the flow of events,

shaped the direction of discussion, became authorities on their own experience and on the work they were doing" (Miller 82-83). So how does this differ from critical pedagogy and Freire? Miller seems to argue here for ~~"h~~umble victories" instead of ~~"d~~ecisive victories." He ends the chapter with this, ~~"I~~n this fallen world, there are no stories of decisive victories; there is only movement toward and away from an ever-receding goal and the ceaseless—some might say mindless—work of building on the ruins of the past" (Miller 84). His critique of Freire's large-scale dreams are countered by his own desire for small-scale imagination, baby steps instead of giant ones. But the work he foregrounds, that of Mike Rose, absolutely exhibits the tenets that Freire would argue are essential for critical pedagogy: love, as it is demonstrated through a physically safe place to learn, a teacher who is respectful and humble, and an honoring of student experience. These may be different terms than the religious ones Miller resists, but they are conceptually equivalent to the love Freire articulated in his own spiritual work.

Miller's conclusion to his work continues to bear witness to his distaste for goals he cannot accomplish on his own. If, through this process, the students learn how to register their reservations about academic practice in ways that can be heard as reasoned arguments rather than dismissed as the plaintive bleating of sheep, if they learn to pose their questions about the work before them in ways that invite response, and if, finally, they learn how to listen to and learn from the responses they receive, they may well be in a better position to negotiate the complex social and intellectual experiences that await them just beyond the classroom's walls. There is no knowing if the students will, in fact, end up in this better position, but this is the goal. It is only the

polemical rhetoric that surrounds the discussion of pedagogical practice that would lead us to expect that any other, more definite outcome could be guaranteed (141). While I know outcomes are not "guaranteed," I worry that in the abandonment of such dreams, he abandons hope and therefore a significant engagement with students. Giving up one of Freire's predominant ideas, the entire structure crumbles.

In the end, Miller's alternative is not hopeful, and this comes from his own failure to seen anyone else's private experience as valid, particularly one of faith. Rather than explore what hope this might bring to writing, to the classroom, to life, Miller epitomizes this move during his father's funeral, "So, throughout the service, I mentally amend nearly every sentence I hear and speak: I caret in the word 'not' to negate beliefs I am meant to affirm; I substitute terms, rewrite sentences, move text from here to there. In other words, like all readers, I push back, I distort, I accommodate my own ways of thinking. I make a place for myself" (Miller 96). He's not taking for granted the public, he's negating it in his own head, through his own words and use of language, but in the end, he is hope-less. "The practice of the humanities, so defined, is not about admiration or greatness or appreciation or depth of knowledge or scholarly achievement; it's about the movement between the worlds, arms out, balancing; it's about making the connections that count" (Miller 198). It's about the status quo, not upsetting it, not hoping for any change to it, just living within it, manipulating it, learning the ropes. And those of us who have chosen to find hope in the midst of our practice through faith are again left out.

Pedagogy and Prophetic Rhetorical Strategies

Other critical theorists have begun to adapt Freire's theory using more hopeful, often romantic idealism. I want to particularly highlight the work of Kate Ronald and Hephzibah Roskelly in the book *Reason to Believe,* because this theory comes the closest to what I am endeavoring to do with Freire's originary theory. Roskelly and Ronald also endeavor to bridge the gap between theory and practice with a conceptual base they find hopeful and energizing for the teaching of writing. They use the philosophy of ~~"p~~rophetic pragmatism" as described by Cornel West as their departure point. First, the authors link West's prophetic pragmatism with Freire's notion of *praxis*. They do this by explaining West's tenets of prophetic pragmatism: 1) ~~"a~~ broad and deep analytical grasp of the present in light of the past"; 2) human empathy; 3) ~~"a~~ccenting boldly, and defiantly, the gap between principles and practice"; and 4) hope, ~~"k~~eep alive the notion…that the future is open-ended and that what we think and what we do can make a difference" (53-4). They describe pragmatism in this way:

> This discussion should suggest that pragmatism, immersed as it is in practice, is not easy theory; it is neither ahistorical nor foolishly optimistic; it is not asocial or culturally naïve, and it is not a plodding series of procedures. It is instead a set of philosophical practices that promotes a rational, experience-bound, communal basis for belief and a method for connecting individuals and the societies they operate within so that each might act on beliefs they come to hold. (90)

This link between the practical (pragmatic) and the hope of better things (romantic) is where the authors take off for later chapters of the book.

The authors turn to the deep traditions of pragmatism and romanticism, because these theories work against the forces of Taylor-ism and postmodernity, which they

describe as particularly insidious. The first is the movement founded by Frederick Taylor that introduced the concept of ―efficiency" into the industrial world. While Taylor influenced business and industry in his original work, the movement caught on in education as well:

> The connection between business and education was strengthened by the ―father" of the efficiency movement, Frederick Taylor, as he boasted that his system of ―scientific management," originally designed to increase productivity within business by getting more, and more quickly, from workers, could be applied to all institutions. Taylor's system of scientific management was based on a detailed painstaking observation and on an elitist, classist notion of the potential intelligence of workers and managers…[Taylor] believed that there was always one best method for doing anything, a method that could be discovered through research. (108)

The authors argue that the vestiges of this movement are still visible in education, where quantity and performance are now regulated and measured by standardized tests, modes of discourse, and forms in writing. These ideas work directly against a philosophy like romantic pragmatism that is often described by critics as ―fuzzy," ―emotional," or ―touchy-feely."[7] Because the work of the philosophy cannot be quantified in measurable formats, it is decried by critics. Teachers on the secondary and collegiate level are undoubtedly aware that what gets measured is what gets rewarded. The educational system is notorious for promoting such ideals, which leads to the

[7] I have a particular disdain for this final label, because it is so often used to dismiss teachers who display a more caring attitude toward students.

second issue that works against the romantic/pragmatic paradigm and as well to a more mechanistic form of education that bypasses love and care altogether.

The authors point out one of the hallmarks of postmodernity, and one of the reasons that it works against romantic pragmatism, is a totalizing of the past. While postmodernism critiques all hierarchies and establishes itself as post-system, it does just that to the past, putting everything that has gone before into this category of ―enlightenment" or ―modernism" and relegating it to a heap of iron that can no longer appeal or apply to scholars who now see the dishonesty and failure in those early systems. While some of this critique is meritorious, throwing entire systems out is not the answer either. Roskelly and Ronald endeavor to reclaim positive and helpful tenets from the two concepts they turn to: romanticism and pragmatism, to reconstitute a ―romantic/pragmatic rhetoric" that ―is a method toward the end of promoting in organic and real ways a rationale for belief, in the individual and in the community. It's a method for systematizing that belief so that it becomes continually tested and rethought and continually responsive to changing contexts" (137). Instead of only decrying the current system, writing treatises about its totalizing nature and its oppressive hierarchies, Roskelly and Ronald long to embody ―social hope" through a ―working program" (140) that they call romantic pragmatism. They not only believe in the agency of human beings (as both teachers and students), they emphasize the work of philosophers that is principled and assured. They emphasize concrete experience and even make the point (along with James), ―there can *be* no difference which doesn't *make* a difference" (92).

Roskelly and Ronald's work also approaches the tone of Freire's as they expound the concept of love. Their explanation appears at a point in the book where they are discussing how their classroom experiments have worked with their graduate students,

> This insistence on the recognition of common and reciprocal humanity through the agency of a rigorous, rather than sentimentalized, principle of love is something that students in the seminar, who are teachers themselves, found to be a thread in the work they read and in their own work as teachers. (129)

In the practical, —everyday" (as Shor would say) classroom, these students and teachers found the most reward in the enactment of love. And as teachers who were students, a situation most of us can relate to, the absence of such love is what makes the most distinct impression. When we are not cared about as students, when our whole selves (including our faith, our culture, our gender, our histories) are not welcomed and accepted in the classroom, we can immediately understand how our own students feel when placed in the same situation. But deploying critical pedagogy without a spiritual center is the cause of such an effect.

Roskelly and Ronald, while closer to the true Freirian ideals of spirituality and love, still fail to articulate teaching in a wholistic fashion: both in light of secular hierarchies and systems and in spiritual practices. In my estimation, one is inept without the other. Effective and engaged pedagogy must articulate the past with its tragic consequences and articulate a future that is hopeful and possible. While many traditional theorists have given a nod to such hope, their work has been short on substance. Freire spoke out of a deep respect and love for students in all their humanity. While spiritual and religious diversity have been almost ignored in the 21st

century classroom, Freire's model not only respects the spiritual, it uses foundational principles that honor the souls and the humanity of students. Critical pedagogy without this prophetic piece is sterile. An examination of the Hebrew prophet, the source of all we call "prophetic," reveals a very spiritual, cultural, and community-minded individual and provides a template that will be energizing to our profession. What we need is an explication of how such love can be deployed through our pedagogy and how this work becomes prophetic. Indeed, in the second chapter of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire makes this very connection:

> Problem-posing education is revolutionary futurity. Hence it is prophetic (and, as such, hopeful). Hence, it corresponds to the historical nature of humankind. Hence, it affirms women and men as beings who transcend themselves, who move forward and look ahead... (84)

Freire saw in the ancient concept of the prophetic, the ability to bring freedom – through literacy – to those who suffer under systems of government oppression. This centerpiece of his work has been all but ignored in modern and postmodern manifestations of critical pedagogy. But further investigation of the prophetic in the Hebrew scripture reveals examples like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Moses, Elijah, and Deborah who serve as models of political, civic, and community engagement outside the confines of what the oppressors long to objectify. As Freire writes, "the point of departure must always be with men and women in the here and now,' which constitutes the situation within which they are submerged, from which they emerge, and in which they intervene" (85). The prophetic connection empowers critical

pedagogy by acknowledging the spiritual nature of life and yet affirms the civic engagement that we desire as teachers.

Critical, prophetic, rhetorical strategies effectively bridge the gap between our respect for diversity and the issues of faith that many of our students bring to their work. This prophetic, pedagogical approach offers a framework to truly engage students in a way that respects their religious diversity and yet also demands that they critically and authentically assess their own place in the academy. Ultimately, the prophetic rhetorical strategy allows students access to a spiritually human center that will inspire them to learn and to act. We can in fact revive critical pedagogy, rescuing it from a detached ideology and returning it to the spiritual center that was originally articulated in Freire's *praxis*.

In the second chapter of this work, I will begin to articulate this prophetic model through a description of the Hebrew prophet and the opportunity this model provides for critical pedagogy. In chapter three, I will review how prophetic rhetoric has succeeded in past historical and social movements to achieve civic engagement and change. In chapter four, I will discuss how this prophetic rhetorical strategy is reflected in a first world application of critical pedagogy that has achieved social engagement, in the form of the Highlander Folk School, led by Myles Horton. And finally in chapter five, I imagine what writing instruction may look like when based on a prophetic center.

Chapter 2: The Prophet As Embodied Praxis

The Prophet

To make my case for using the prophet as a model for a rejuvenated critical pedagogy, I must begin with the biblical record, for it is in the pages of the Hebrew Bible, or Old Testament as it is called in the Christian tradition, that the prophets are center stage, and where we gain a basic understanding of their character, behavior, and rhetoric. They are commonly misconceived as fortune tellers, men who forecast future events based on divine guidance or visions. While some did have moments when they predicted future trends in general, this was not their central role, and it is not at all the role I wish to emphasize in this work. The word prophet translates from the original Hebrew "*navi*," from the verb "to call," in Arabic, the translation is "to utter." These were men and women who received a divine calling to speak. The first biblical characterization of a man as prophet comes in the Hebrew scripture in the book of Genesis 20:7. In this passage, God tells Alimelech, "Now therefore restore the man [his] wife; for he [is] a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live." The man in the passage is Abraham, who is traveling through Alimelech‟s country with his wife, Sarah. Later, in the book of Exodus, the office of prophet finds its premier characterization character, after the Israelites had been delivered from Egypt. The people were afraid to hear from God on their own, and so the office of prophet, in the person of Moses, was instituted. Moses became an intercessor, a mediator, between Israel and their God (Exodus 20:19), although he is only called a prophet in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy.

The Hebrew office of prophet as viewed from its ancient inception is intimately attached to community. While individuals were called into the position, they were inextricably linked to the people of Israel. Israel‟s calling, their exodus, their sojourn in the wilderness, their possession of the Promised Land - all of these events occurred in their collective life as a nation. The individual‟s actions were important only as they furthered or deterred the pursuit of the covenant God had established with the Hebrews *as a nation*. From the earliest books of the biblical narrative we read of Abraham‟s calling and God‟s promise to make him "a father of many nations," the patriarch of the Hebrew nation. The prophets who were called by God to instruct the people held a place of identification with the community, which made them politically important, but also a place of identification with God and his voice of discipline and instruction, which made them spiritually important.

I will examine these men and women as practicing leaders who identified with the community, who loved the community, and who were motivated by this identification and love to speak and write against imperial oppression, while imbuing the community with hope for a future of freedom. In chapter three, I will look at these ancient models as individuals of complex personalities, negotiating identities within the community and yet standing as leaders as well. The spiritual impetus I described in chapter one serves as more than motivation for me. The prophets of my faith provide a model for rhetorical and hope-filled work within community. The strategies they enacted provide a departure point for later generations of social activists. In addition, they characterize bold community involvement that is realistic, critical, and hopeful all at once. Writing instruction could be renewed and re-energized by an honest assessment

and application of these strategies.

The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* defines the prophet by four essential characteristics. First, the prophet is often called from a vocation outside the ecclesial ranks; he does not appear to be a person who is a capable leader or a successful candidate for the job to lead God‟s people. In fact, by all appearances, he is a simple, humble servant. There is biblical precedent for the prophet's stature as a servant. The God of the Hebrews often chose small and apparently insignificant individuals to fulfill his larger purposes. An example is the story of King David, who is chosen as king when he is the youngest of all his brothers, and when he appears to be unqualified. He has been a shepherd all his life, certainly not an experience that most would look at as adequate for leading an entire nation. God's reasoning for his choice of David is that David is a "man after his own heart," (Acts 13:22) a servant who is humble and will listen to God rather than depend on his own skill and prowess. This choice is demonstrative of the prophet as well. In these humble individuals, God finds the most appropriate instruments for his plan, and always someone who is a member of the community God is addressing. The primary audience of the prophet is not the oppressive institution or nation - but the people of his own community.

Not only does the prophet hail from humble beginnings within the community he is to serve, the prophet receives a call from God, often literally an audible voice, asking him to respond to the plight of his community. The call is significant because the prophet is not a volunteer; rather, he is summoned. Again, we can see this in the case of Moses, who was minding his own business tending flocks, when he encountered God in the wilderness of Midian. The prophet is a person who is involved in a life work

already, a vocation other than the priesthood or ecclesiastical service. He is a farmer or a shepherd or a builder who is summoned by God because of his humble nature. Secondly, the community is normally under duress from an overpowering national system of oppression. The classic example of this is the slavery of the Hebrews under Egyptian rule. The Hebrews had come to Egypt originally to escape the famine in Canaan. One of the patriarchs, Joseph, was sold into slavery and ended up as a well-respected government official in Egypt. After wisely and efficiently preparing the land for famine, he died and according to the biblical record,

> The children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them. Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel [are] more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and [so] get them up out of the land. (Exodus 1:7-10)

The Israelites were pressed into the service of the Egyptian pharaohs to build the infrastructure of the nation. When the biblical story begins, God is said to have "[heard] the cries of his people" (Exodus 2:24-25) in slavery in Egypt. The oppression of the community is the reason for the call of the prophet - in this case, Moses.

Third, the prophet protests his calling. Frequently, the prophet is reticent to respond, even though the caller is almighty God. The prophets of the Hebrew Bible were not professional ministers or priests (a notable exception is the person of Samuel).

They were men and women who held other positions, other jobs within the community. Consequently, they had not been "trained" for the job of prophet, nor did they feel prepared for the role. Indeed, God is often quite forthcoming in his calling and forecasts failure for the prophet. He often says even at the moment of calling that the people of the community will not listen to the prophet - that he will fail. God says to Jeremiah when he calls him, "And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I [am] with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee" (Jeremiah 1:19), and most significantly to Moses, He acknowledges that Pharoah will not respond to the God-given, prophetic message, "But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, [and] my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments" (Exodus 7:4). No one jumps at a job like that.

Finally, God responds to the prophet's reticence with encouragement and affirmation. God does not become angry and ask someone else; instead, the stories in the Hebrew Bible tell of God's striving with the called one. He answers each protest the prophet raises; He encourages and even makes allowances for the prophet's objections. Ultimately, the prophet relents and agrees to serve as God's voice in the community of which he is already a member.

This four-fold pattern of the prophet is demonstrated repeatedly in the Bible, but Moses is perhaps the best known example.[1] Moses' story, just as the pattern suggests, begins with the call, which he experiences in the form of a bush that burns but is not

[1] In chapter three, I will explore the story of Moses in even greater detail, particularly his dual identity as a Hebrew and an Egyptian, to argue that social activists in other eras have modeled their lives after this biblical example.

consumed. At the time of his call, Moses is herding his father-in-law's flocks in the land of Midian. He is working at a humble job that in no way seems to be a prerequisite for the role of the prophet. In the field, with the flocks, he sees a burning bush. Out of the bush, an angel speaks that seems to be a manifestation of God, "And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush" (Exodus 3:2), as Moses stops to take in the sight, the account reads, "And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here [am] I" (Exodus 3:4). Moses hears the voice of God calling him to respond to the oppression of his people in Egypt. As soon as Moses receives the call, though, even in this exotic manner, he begins to protest, "And Moses said unto God, Who [am] I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exodus 3:11). His initial protest is followed by replies from God, which still do nothing to subdue Moses' reluctance. "And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee" (Exodus 4:1). Throughout the conversation, God continues to patiently pursue Moses, to answer each excuse with a reply that reveals a steadfast confidence, not necessarily in Moses, but in his own plan to deliver the Hebrews from the oppression of Pharaoh. True to the typical pattern, God also reveals to Moses, within this conversation, that he will not be successful, that Pharaoh will not listen and will have to be forced to comply with God's plan. Moses is finally convinced and agrees to the assignment, returns to his family and begins to pack for Egypt.[2] The prophet has been called, he has voiced

[2] The story of Moses takes a strange turn in the fourth chapter of Exodus, when God attempts to

his misgivings, he has been encouraged to go, and finally he has acquiesced to the plan.[3]

Moses and the prophets of the Hebrew tradition serve as models of political, civic, and community engagement. These ancient men and women worked tirelessly for the good of their communities, lamenting oppression and speaking with words of imaginative hope and possibility for the future. The Hebrew prophets, however, have remained obscure figures we are reticent to investigate. Undoubtedly, their odd personalities and peculiar habits have deterred some of us: Isaiah, for example, who went naked for three years to draw attention to the dire plight of the Hebrew nation (Isaiah 20:3); Jeremiah who was known as the "weeping prophet" for his openly expressed grief, or Hosea who married a prostitute (Gomer) to demonstrate God‟s love for Israel, even when they continually spurned his advances "for the land hath committed great whoredom" (Hosea 1:2). Their importance to the Jewish and Christian experience and faith has probably not helped their cause either; many academic scholars do not rush to cozy up to such religious fanatics. But these scholars fail to recognize that the prophet saved his most stinging critique for the religious establishment of the day. In these individuals I find a significant confluence of ideas. The prophets were committed to community and culture, they were deeply involved in crying out against oppression as deployed by evil empires out for their own best

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kill the prophet, before he is circumcised and circumcises his sons as well. Some rabbinical commentators, particularly Rabbi Samual Davide Luzzato (1872) says the angel encountered Moses‟ firstborn son, and that it was he who God would have killed. After Zipporah circumcises the son, she then brushes the legs of Moses with the bloody foreskin, symbolic of the Passover ritual of anointing the doorposts with the blood of the sacrifice for protection from the angel of death.

[3] The confidence of God is directed at the plan itself, at his own ability to fulfill his purpose in the role of human history, rather than in the prophet or servant.

interests, as well as that perpetrated by the individuals within the community who had failed to live righteously, and they were ultimately invested in and defined by their rhetoric. At the same time that they cried out against tragic pasts, they offered vivid and imaginative metaphors of hope through a new language of a promising future for their communities.

Exemplary Texts and Characters

The prophetic tradition is best explicated through a careful consideration of the prophets themselves, their callings, their work, and their behavior as exhibited in the Hebrew Bible. While I will consider the Hebrew archetype of the prophet, Moses, in the next chapter, let me use the example here of Isaiah, a prophet who lived in ancient Judah at the time of the reign of King Uzziah (781-740 B.C.), as an explication of the four-fold pattern of the prophet"s character.[4] The book of Isaiah in the Hebrew Bible begins by saying that God says He is tired of empty ritual; He longs for virtuous, compassionate behavior. He continues in the next five chapters to chronicle the immoral and unethical behavior of the Hebrew nation, God's chosen people. The chapters are a litany of debauchery and oppression that are significantly crystallized in God's demand that they compassionately care for the helpless in their society. The fourth verse of the first chapter reads in part, "Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption!" (Isaiah 1:4). The next several verses define exactly the meaning of corruption: the government leaders no longer seek justice but instead murder the innocent, they associate with thieves, they love bribes

[4] Most biblical scholars believe Isaiah can be divided into three distinct sections, or three distinct "Isaiahs:" Isaiah of Jerusalem, who wrote chapters 1-39, Deutero-Isaiah, who wrote chapters 40-55, and Trito-Isaiah, who wrote chapters 55-66. Consequently, I have limited my references to the first 39 chapters, to maintain a continuity of period and authorship.

and pursue those who give them such, "They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow's case does not come before them" (Isaiah 1:23). The corruption of this society is seen in the way it fails to deal justly with the widows and orphans.

Not only has Israel abandoned the needy of their society, they have done so while their own wealth has increased. The second chapter describes the wealth of the Israelites and suggests they have become so powerful that they trust in and depend upon such wealth rather than the very God who called them his chosen people; their riches are where they find power, rather than in the God who chose them in the first place. Isaiah writes, "Their land is full of silver and gold; there is no end to their treasures. Their land is full of horses; there is no end to their chariots. […] So man will be brought low and mankind humbled" (Isaiah 2:7, 9). The abandonment of the poor is exacerbated by the fact that the entire nation has wealth beyond its wildest dreams. Rather than sharing this wealth, they have instead become the consummate consumers. Their consumerism is further chronicled in the fifth chapter, where Isaiah writes, of their greed, "Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land" (Isaiah 5:8). God is displeased with the desire for more and more, with the displacement of the single family farmer who has been allowed to cultivate his land to this point but is now the victim of greed and land-grabbing.

I cannot help but identify with and relate to this description in our own cultural moment and in my own vocation. Critical pedagogy, a significant influence in our discipline, began as a response to such oppression in the third world. The original advocate, Paulo Freire, is to my mind a contemporary characterization of the ancient prophet, who worked against the oppression of the poor. Furthermore, the strategies

Freire employed are basically prophetic and could have significant effects in contemporary educational settings, if we would apply them through loving care for our fellow human beings. Returning to the foundational relationship of education, teachers with students, could energize our teaching and learning.

Finally, Isaiah writes that God has instructed him that this is all about to come to a screeching halt. The beginning of chapter six is where Isaiah documents his call; "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. […] 'Woe to me!' I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty'" (Isaiah 6:1, 5). Significantly, Isaiah's first response after seeing this vision and hearing the voice of God is to admit his own mistakes, his own unrighteousness. And his next step, after being anointed by one of the angels in the vision, is to see the need for the complete and utter repentance of his nation, his community. Without this confession, God clearly shows Isaiah that the nation will be ruined, "Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, until the Lord has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken" (Isaiah 6:11-12). The prophet has been called by God through a vision of the corrupt nature of the community, corruption centered in the mistreatment and abandonment of the poor, orphaned, and widowed in the society. Their greedy accumulation of wealth makes this sin all the more significant.

The prophet Isaiah's next job is to proclaim the judgment of God to the people of Israel. After receiving the vision and seeing the central cause of God's displeasure, his role is to be a mouthpiece, a rhetorician, who will proclaim God's disfavor and

pronounce God's judgment to the rest of the nation. Indeed, in chapter six the anointing by the angel is to the lips of Isaiah, to his mouth (Isaiah 6:7). And in the next verses, God explicitly commands Isaiah, "Go and tell this people…" (Isaiah 6:9). He is to speak and to write what he has seen and heard from God. The judgment is pronounced throughout the early chapters of the book as well, warnings of such desolation that people will have to live in holes and hide in the ground: "So man will be brought low and mankind humbled […] Go into the rocks, hide in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty! […] The arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled" (Isaiah 2:9-10, 17). In addition, God's judgment will be seen in the loss of wealth; the riches on which the Hebrews have so ardently depended will be removed. Isaiah writes,

> In that day the Lord will snatch away their finery: the bangles and headbands and crescent necklaces […] the fine robes and the capes and cloaks […] Instead of fragrance there will be a stench; instead of a sash, a rope; instead of well-dressed hair, baldness; instead of fine clothing, sackcloth […] Your men will fall by the sword, your warriors in battle. (Isaiah 3:18-22, 24-25).

The wealth is temporary for the people who have not lived according to God's principles. It is clear from this judgment that the wealth and land were given to the Israelites for specific purposes, and when they used it unwisely, it is to be taken from them dramatically, so that they will remember where their dependence must be rightly placed.

Included in Isaiah's judgment is a stinging critique of the empty celebrations and rituals of the community. In the very first chapter of the book, Isaiah chronicles God's

demand for righteousness and clearly notes that their religious observances have done nothing to assuage the blood on their hands from their daily dealings within the community. Isaiah records God's lament:

> I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals […] Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations--I cannot bear your evil assemblies […] When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; […] Your hands are full of blood. (Isaiah 1:11-13, 15)

And immediately, Isaiah records God's demand for this people who have assumed that these rituals in and of themselves atone for the character they display in their community activities. In verse 17, he writes, "Learn to do right!/Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow" (Isaiah 1:17). Again, the message is clear - your religious rituals do not suffice when they are not buttressed by behavior that defends the defenseless, that embraces the poor, and that cares for the needy.

The implications for us as teachers are similar. Our responsibility to students is to be in relationship with them. Our work in rhetoric and composition has no significance if it does not energize the young men and women we teach. Consequently, our success should be based on the human interdependence we develop with students. Indeed, the ultimate purpose of the prophet‟s critique and judgment is to restore the people to right relationship with God and one another. Isaiah's message moves from one of judgment to one of hope for those who will admit their greed, admit their guilt, and return to the ways in which God instructed them from the beginning through their

father Abraham. Words of hope and imagination for what could be are also found in Isaiah's message. For example, he writes, "The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth […] In that day they will say, 'Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation'" (Isaiah 25:8-9). God's mercy will be renewed when the people turn from their wickedness and from their mistreatment of the poor and needy. As they do so, they will again be encouraged and lifted above the disastrous circumstances that have befallen them. Critique from our own station as teachers should never be removed from a caring relationship with the students with whom we work.

One of the best known verses from the book of Isaiah highlights this final desire of God to be back in communion with the Israelites and restore them to community. Early in the book, Isaiah foreshadows the outcome of God's judgment and the subsequent return of the people to right relationship with him. In the first chapter of the book, Isaiah writes,

> "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the LORD has spoken. (Isaiah 1:18-20)

The voice of God castigates the people of Israel through the prophet Isaiah, and then He correspondingly welcomes them with a beautiful invitation to return to a relationship that is hopeful and honest and that cares most importantly for the needy they see

everyday.

The message Isaiah received and delivered of critique, of judgment, and of hope is prophetic trope demonstrated throughout the Hebrew scripture. In the prophetic writings of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Hosea, and Micah these three themes are repeated again and again. They each pronounce a critique of Hebrew society when it has become arrogant and enamored with its own wealth. Each calls forth judgment on greedy lifestyles that leave no room for care for the community and especially the needy. The critique and judgment in all cases include the cult or ritual observances of the community.[5] These rituals mean nothing to God in light of their oppositional behavior toward the poor. And finally, each ends with a call for hope, a call for a return to community and communion. Each writes in a different style, each hails from a unique walk of life, but each follows this same heuristic.

An Essential Conceptual Framework

The Israelite prophet serves as the essential framework for my argument in another way as well. The conceptual framework through which the prophet spoke is a model for us as teachers. The idea that the prophet worked within an oppressed community that had lost hope for change parallels our context in the 21st century. The prophet articulated hope, but only after critiquing the greedy, oppressive leadership structures, and loss of love that had precipitated the entire mess in the first place. We have already seen a similar evaluation of our educational institutions through prophetically minded theorists and critics: Freire did such work in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* describing the way Brazilian peasants were objectified by the government,

[5] The prophets and priests held distinct places in the Jewish community and culture. I will discuss this difference further in the third chapter.

"The oppressed, as objects as „things," have no purposes except those their oppressors prescribe for them" (60). Antonio Gramsci, just before Freire"s work, developed theory describing the subordination of groups to domination by others ideologically (Strinati 166). Michel Foucault has written specifically of the domination of the educational enterprise, its similarity to the prison system, and its effective policing of students by creating "docile bodies" that are subordinated to the authority of the administration and teachers, so that they are unable to work against such authorities (*Discipline & Punish*).

The prophet moved beyond this initial critique, using rhetorical methods to call forth a human response. He did not leave the people without hope or without an imagination for what could come next with the right response. I believe we too can work from a prophetic mindset to engage our students in imaginative possibilities for a future that challenges oppression. But finally and most importantly, the prophet worked from a center that was divinely engaged. In the classroom, this engagement looks like a respect and honor for every individual student who comes through the door. This engagement is motivated by love: love for our students and love for those who are not in our classrooms but who need leaders who will take up their cause in the civic realm. This conceptual framework the prophet establishes is where I find the inspiration for my entire call to action.

Imagining Justice

The call to action begins with imagination: imagination that is profoundly influenced by the concepts of justice, mercy, and kindness. In these concepts we find a refreshing vocabulary for talking about writing and the cultural work it can accomplish. But first we must imagine what those accomplishments could be. To ignite our

imagination to the possibilities, I look to the explication of justice, mercy, and love by subsequent Jewish scholars, working out of this prophetic tradition themselves.

The concept of *zedekah* is how social justice is enacted in Judaism forward from the prophetic tradition (Stillman). In this ideal, social justice outweighs all the commandments and is the central feature of Judaism"s involvement in community. Moses Maimonides, considered the single most important Jewish thinker and first person to systematically codify post-biblical Jewish law, articulated eight steps of charity or *zedekah* noting first the importance of being involved in "the marketplace of life." The ultimate charity, according to Maimonides, is the prevention of poverty in the first place: social action that prevents others from suffering is the ultimate expression of charity. *Zedekah* epitomizes the concept of justice/righteousness in the Hebrew lexicon. Justice is not only a retributive system that punishes wrongdoers, although this is part of the definition; there are also the *mishpat* - the good deeds or rules that govern all of Jewish life, but beyond these good deeds, justice is seen as the very nature of God, and therefore substantive, "concerned with the full enhancement of human and, above all, social life" (EJ Vol. 11 578). We must remember that the most dramatic act the God of the Israelites performed was in their deliverance from slavery. He "performed" justice by leading them out of Egypt in the exodus. The Israelite God is a God of justice. Walter Brueggemann explains in his book *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, "There is also no doubt that the Mosaic revolution, as remembered in Israel, has at its center the practice of justice, that is, provision for neighborly mutuality and respect" (644). According to this Hebrew concept then, all of life begins and ends with justice. Importantly, justice as the

Israelites interpreted it, leaves no room for the Greek dichotomy between individual and collective action. Justice transcends this divide, embodied in Abraham Heschel‟s words from *The Prophets*, "Few are guilty; all are responsible" (19). Justice encompasses the entire range of ethical behavior and is inextricably linked with the concepts of mercy and kindness.

Such communities rarely exist in education. Rarely do we engage in relationships with our students that promote sharing of responsibility. Instead, our efforts often focus on individual arguments, generalized discussions, and knowledge distanced from emotional connections. The academy has become a more sterilized environment, where we try to avoid controversial issues and topics, such as the religious faith of students, as I described in the first chapter. As I stated in that section, relationships will undoubtedly be messy. The educational process will endure moments of controversy and confrontation. The only way this can work collaboratively and interdependently is with the corresponding concept of mercy.

Mercy critically influences justice and is shown through acts of kindness and charity that are the essential nature of human relationships. In this view, the mother is the symbol of mercy. The word for womb in Hebrew and the word for mercy are from the same root: "r-h-m," mercy is the plural form of womb, (often in Hebrew, abstract concepts are expressed in the plural form of a noun). Mercy is defined as "a feeling of compassion tempered with love, which engenders forgiveness and forbearance in man and which stimulates him to deeds of charity and kindness" (EJ Vol. 14 62). The Jews are directly commanded by the prophets to show mercy and kindness to the orphan, the widow, the alien, indeed to every living creature. The very names of God embody this

complementary view of justice and mercy in Rabbinic Judaism. God is called *Elohim* and YHWH: the first designating justice, and the second, mercy (EJ Vol. 14 63). In Zechariah 5:9, the principle of mercy is epitomized, "…execute judgment and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother." The idea of a womb takes the idea of mercy to a level much deeper than kindness or niceties. Instead, mercy in this view symbolizes protection, the ultimate place of safety and warmth: but not only protection, nourishment as well, living in a place where we get the essential nutrition we need to grow and reach our potential.

In Heschel"s work, all of these concepts - justice, mercy, kindness, are embodied in what he called "divine pathos." Here is a Hellenistic influence we can be comfortable with in composition; a notion that comes out of a Greek history that we are all too familiar with in rhetoric. Divine pathos was the centerpiece of Heschel"s work, and I devote an entire section of this chapter to its discussion. This pathos is evident in the lives of the prophets and their conversations with God as intercessors. Abraham negotiates with God to save the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18-21-33). Moses pleads with God to relent and not destroy the Israelites after the debacle of the golden calf (Exodus 32:9-14). These men exemplify the intimacy God desires with humanity, his deep compassion for humanity even when it is acting its worst. Perhaps this is again due to the prophet"s identification with humanity. In his humility, he is well aware of his own fallibility and his own weakness. Having experienced God"s mercy for his own life, he is ready and willing to offer such mercy to the rest of his community.

Another way that the expression of hope is brought into the reality of the classroom or of the community is through the form of the testimony. Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann describes the concept of testimony in his work, *The Cadences of Home*, where he writes:

> […] the rhetorical practice among exiles given in scripture is best understood as testimony, that is, utterance by alleged first-person witnesses who offer an account of experience that depends solely upon the trustworthiness of the witnesses, but that cannot appeal for verification either to agreed-upon metaphysics or to external historical data. It is, rather, originary of new reality that was not available until uttered. […] The initial effect of such testimony is to make one uneasy with the "assured claims" of the hegemonic certitudes. But beyond that initial uneasiness, such testimony, if accepted as true, may indeed conjure an alternative world that permits alternative, lived possibilities. (44)

Brueggemann aptly describes what is going on with the writing of social activists, and I would argue, of students as well. They do not expect their testimony or their writing to be the only one offered; they know there are other witnesses to their experiences of objectification, of prejudice, of other forms of oppressive behavior toward them. Theirs is just one of many accounts that will be spoken to conjure an alternative experience, to conjure an alternative future envisioned by courageous men and women. And this speaks to pedagogical work as well, for it is exactly the alternative experience that Roskelly and Ronald articulate as the "romantic." They ask in their first chapter in fact, "Is teaching still possible" in light of the turn to postmodern critical theory in English. They find in the romantic/pragmatic rhetoric they posit "room for *belief*" (Roskelly 1-

2). This is the hope they are looking for, one that emphasizes self-reliance and community responsibility (Roskelly 59). It is also within the realm of possibility that students in a hopeful classroom, with a teacher who engages the prophetic imagination, could see outside the structure of the hierarchy and find themselves articulating their own "testimonies" or "lived experiences" that provide them with some agency of expression. Their writing could indeed articulate an alternative to the reality they have experienced.

Divine Pathos

As I already noted, Abraham Heschel was the first to articulate the prophet‟s work, between God and man, as divine pathos. He sees it as the motivating force of the prophet in all his dealings with the community. "The prophet is a person who holds God‟s love as well as God‟s anger in his soul, unraptured or unfevered" (Heschel 400). The prophet is intimately linked to a God who is passionately endeavoring to return to an intimate relationship with the entire community. And since the prophet is not only identified in an intimate relationship with God, he is equally linked to the people he addresses; his own actions must mirror this great pathos, this deep compassion for them, this deep desire that they return in obedience to a relationship that will encourage and affirm them in all their humanity.

Both Heschel and Brueggemann settle on the pathos of the prophet as the final pillar of the prophetic imagination. For Heschel, the root of the divine pathos is in God himself. God reveals His way and His desire to the prophet because of a divine impetus of love and concern for humankind as He created them. As Heschel states, "[God‟s] mind is preoccupied with man, with the concrete actualities of history rather than with

the timeless issues of thought" (6). God is intimately involved with and concerned with the activities of His creation or else He would not give a revelation to anyone, let alone a prophet. Compassion is the foundation of the prophet's emotional intimacy with God. God is speaking through the prophet, because he desires a change in his creation. If people respond obediently, they will be saved, they will return to right relationship with Almighty God. And God's ultimate desire is that his relationship with humankind be perfected and wholly restored. The prophet speaks from this impetus; while he may "begin with a message of doom, he ends with a message of hope" (Heschel 14). The resonance of hope is reiterated in other writers who analyze the prophet. Leon I. Feuer in his essay "Prophetic Religion in an Age of Revolution" points out that the function of prophecy in an age when crisis brings about significant change is to lead the people to an examination of their religion and their culpability in the light of the massive changes occurring within their society. Prophecy in these eras does not only employ rhetoric of judgment and condemnation for those outside the cult, but is to focus on those within it and their complicity in the age. The ancient prophets' focus on social righteousness comes to the fore of their work. But Feuer also notes the importance of the prophet bringing comfort to the people and a vision of hope for what can be when they return to the obedience they have neglected (188).

Hopeful imagination and compassionate care for the community is embodied in concept of the "divine pathos" (Heschel 29), and it is best seen in Heschel's words through three citations in his work *The Prophets*. First, Heschel describes the divine pathos in light of the prophet's relationship and intimacy with God:

> The fundamental experience of the prophet is a fellowship with the feelings of God, a sympathy with the divine pathos, a communion with the divine consciousness which comes about through the prophet‟s reflection of, or participation in, the divine pathos. (31)

The heart of the prophet‟s message or revelation from on high is reconciliation. We get the sense from Heschel‟s description of the prophet‟s relationship to his audience of a friend speaking with a friend, a notion of warmth and intimacy. These images are contrary to the contemporary fundamentalist who seems to spew forth wrath. We have no sense of that from the ancient prophets as Heschel describes them, and as we see them acting in Israelite history. While Moses often exhibits a frustration with the Hebrews throughout the wandering in the desert, he also exhibits dramatic moments of pathos for them as he appeals to God to save them from destruction and to remember that they are his children and his responsibility. This passionate response is not found in that of the religious fundamentalist.

Next, Heschel explicates the emotions of God and how the prophet is linked to this emotion and how this establishes a divine pathos:

> [God] does not simply command and expect obedience; He is also moved and affected by what happens in the world, and reacts accordingly. Events and human actions arouse in Him joy or sorrow, pleasure or wrath […] This notion that God can be intimately affected, that He possesses not merely intelligence and will, but also pathos, basically defines the prophetic consciousness of God. (288)

This pathos is evident in the lives of the prophets and their conversations with God as intercessors between him and the Hebrews. Abraham negotiates with God to save the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. Moses pleads with God to relent and not destroy the Israelites after the debacle of the golden calf. The "writing prophets" particularly exemplify this pathos. The prophet Joel cries, "And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he [is] gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil" (Joel 2:13). The prophet Amos writes, "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken" (Amos 5:14). And the prophet Micah declares, "But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin. Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity" (Micah 3:8-9). These prophets exemplify the idea of a messenger's intimacy with the heart of God that burns with a compassion for humanity even when it is acting its worst. Perhaps this is again due to the prophet's identification with humanity. In his humility, he is well aware of his own fallibility and his own weakness. Having experienced God's mercy for his own life, he is ready and willing to offer such mercy to the rest of his community.

Finally, Heschel articulates this pathos as motivating the prophet in all his dealings with the community. "The prophet is a person who holds God's love as well as God's anger in his soul, unraptured or unfevered" (Heschel 400). The prophet is intimately linked to a God who is passionately endeavoring to return to an intimate relationship with the entire community. And since the prophet is not only identified in

an intimate relationship with God, he is equally linked to the people he addresses, his own actions must mirror this great pathos, this deep compassion for them, this deep desire that they return in obedience to a relationship that will encourage and affirm them in all their humanity.

Intimate relationship and divine pathos cannot be adequately understood without a sense of the Spirit that acts within the prophet or *ruah* as it is articulated in Judaism. Buber explains this sense of a spiritual impetus as exemplified in the Song of Deborah in Judges 13 and 25 as "pushing on" the man of God (Buber 60), more than inspiring but causing him to act through a divine compulsion. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* refers to the *ruah ha-kodesh* in direct relation to the Hebrew prophets noting that some rabbinical writings describe the cessation of Holy Spirit-inspired activity in Israel when "the last of the prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, died" (EJ Vol. 17 365). Heschel's description is even more informative. He explains that separating this divine spirit or breath from intellectual practice is unbiblical:

> The act of thinking of an object is in itself an act of being moved by the object. In thinking we do not create an object; we are challenged by it. Thus, thought is part of emotion. […] Emotion may be defined as the consciousness of being moved. […] Emotion is inseparable from being filled with the spirit, which is above all a state of being moved. Often the spirit releases passion … (Heschel 405)

Heschel concludes this description of *ruah* with this incredibly simple and yet powerful statement, "Passion is a movement; spirit is a goal" (405). This divine spirit is the missing ingredient of the fundamentalist preacher's fervor. The link with the divine

pathos or spirit of God is completely absent. Consequently, his rhetoric becomes essentially man-made. He uses imagery he has heard and read from the past; he condemns rather than welcomes; he accuses rather than identifies. His rhetoric is humanly contrived and deployed, lacking the most significant part of the prophet‟s heart, the connection to the compassionate heart of a God who cares for humanity and longs for a right relationship with it. The spirit of *ruah* is conspicuously absent from the so-called prophetic rhetoric that deteriorates into apocalyptic fervor in moments of cultural and societal crisis. These essential elements of the Hebrew prophets are found sorely lacking in a rhetoric that is designed, not to bring back to relationship, not to restore broken intimacy, but to appropriate that brokenness for the purposes of dividing those who see themselves as chosen from those who are damned.

Ultimately, the prophet‟s compassion comes from his identification with the community, as a person who is not simply a bystander witnessing the oppression of others, but who is co-opted and dehumanized as well within the power structures of the empire. Heschel believes this identification with the community is what gives the prophet authenticity among the hearers. Brueggemann writes similarly of the compassion of the prophet:

> Compassion constitutes a radical form of criticism, for it announces that the hurt is to be taken seriously, that the hurt is not to be accepted as normal and natural but is an abnormal and unacceptable condition for humanness. […] Thus the compassion of [the prophet] is to be understood not simply as a personal emotional reaction but as a public criticism in which he dares to act upon his concern against the entire numbness of his social context. (88)

The numbness of this final phrase is prevalent in education as well, where we have become accustomed to teaching and learning without significant relationship. I believe this is exactly what Freire had in mind when he began teaching. His pedagogy was infused with a love that radicalized his methods and brought him into intimacy with the peasants of Brazil. Critical pedagogy flows from Freire"s work alongside real people whose stories he could not ignore. Roskelly and Ronald"s definition of love crystallizes the approach as one that is not sappy or warm and fuzzy or only emotional, it is a revolutionary act that destroys the status quo by acknowledging reality and that deconstructs the social and cultural hierarchies within which we all exist and work. Freire explained it best through his concept of "cointentional teaching" - the teacher working alongside the student toward a mutual humanization. The prophet"s goal is the same: to energize the oppressed in a way that promotes seeing reality for what it is, grieving over it, lamenting it, and then acting in ways that undermine that oppressive reality.

Prophetic Methods

How then does the prophet accomplish this energizing of the community toward social change and hope? I look again to the work of Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann for a description of ancient prophetic ideas that have pedagogical applications today. Brueggemann, a renowned biblical scholar at Columbia, uses the Hebrew exodus from Egypt as a matrix for a three-fold extrapolation of the prophetic tradition to postmodern society. He writes that the prophet, like Moses, always began his work with a lament, with despair, with a critique of the status quo. Without this acknowledgement of the way things are, there is no breaking from it. The very

pronouncement of what is happening and its illegitimacy is anti-imperial and pro-humanity, for it flies in the face of the powers that be who would long to keep the system as opaque as possible. Brueggemann writes:

> The real criticism begins in the capacity to grieve because that is the most visceral announcement that things are not right. Only in the empire are we pressed and urged and invited to pretend that things are all right…And as long as the empire can keep the pretense alive that things are all right, there will be no real grieving and no serious criticism. (*The Prophetic Imagination* 11)

Historical evidence proves this method accurate as well when we examine prophets of other eras.[6] Each of them begins by grieving for the way things are, lamenting the status quo and naming it as oppressive and wrong.

In our teaching circles, I would argue we have accomplished this first order of prophetic business. We have identified the systems that challenge us and our students. The work of many theorists (Marx, Althusser, Freire, Gramsci and Foucault for example) have clearly delineated for us how hierarchies force us into places of subjectivity. Louis Althusser defined "ideological state apparatuses" that turn us into subjects through their insistence that we maintain our proper place. Michel Foucault identified the panoptic structures that oppress us through regularized classroom instruction that disciplines our bodies and minds into passive receptacles for the state"s oppression. Critiques of oppression and discrimination and their concomitant dehumanization are plentiful, in our scholarship. My focus here moves beyond the critique to the significant next stage in the prophet's life.

[6] I will examine this evidence and the lives of two models of this prophetic tradition later in this dissertation: Maria W. Stewart and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Secondly, the prophet moves to introduce a reason for hope, to energize the people of the community to move toward something new. Brueggemann explains, "The royal consciousness leads people to despair about the power to move toward new life. It is the task of the prophetic imagination […] to bring people to engage the promise of newness that is at work in our history" (*The Prophetic Imagination* 60). The work of energizing hope can be traced directly to the prophetic imagination, to those men and women who spoke truth to power. Its heritage is firmly ensconced in the Hebrew tradition, an ancient culture where prophets were called as singular individuals to stand in the gap between oppressive systems and oppressed communities. The job of these men and women seems staggering: to single-handedly call out the government or imperial force that was dehumanizing the citizens of the community. More importantly, the prophet was a member of that community, experiencing the same unjust treatment. But the prophet's call was to the community to live hopeful lives that called forth change.

Brueggemann explains three actions or methodologies to enact this hope or to energize the community to whom the prophet speaks: to offer the use of symbols that remind them of the reason for hope, to bring to public expression the hope of the community, and to offer new metaphors that redefine the situation and offer the possibility of hope. As Brueggemann notes, the public expression of hope must be in language that directly counters the philosophy and discourse of the oppressor, offering language and metaphor for thinking outside the confines of the oppressor‟s accepted practices.

The word was the central instrument of the prophet. And herein lies the greatest opportunity for our pedagogy: a new literacy that offers a fresh imagination about what can happen in and through our teaching of writing, and in and through the writing of our students. This change in concepts is central to my project, because our current rhetorical paradigms, steeped as they are in the Greek tradition, work against social justice in two important ways: first, in Greek and therefore western culture, justice is exemplified by "an eye for an eye" - you may expect to reciprocate exactly as you have been hurt. And second, action can have no emotional impetus, because reason is so highly privileged over the affective in the Greek model. To overcome these weaknesses and to inspire our own work and that of our students, a turn to these Hebrew, prophetic strategies is necessary.

Pedagogical Possibilities

Practicing prophetic rhetorical strategies moves us from a teaching practice as maintenance of the status quo to teaching practice as change agent. Understanding the nuances of pedagogy that is prophetic is best seen in the move to agency and a vocabulary of hope. We can make a number of connections with pedagogical concerns here. First, the systems and hierarchies we speak to as teachers engaged in libratory practices indeed create our roles as critics. In a very real sense, they define our work, for they set the challenges that must be faced. Seeing oppressive systems as creating opportunity demands that we engage change in a very different way. Oppression becomes a call to action rather than a demoralizing and ultimately defeating state of affairs. The prophet saw the challenge as the call to engagement. A view of this nature prevents us from demonizing others or from resorting to violence as an acceptable

means of engagement. Instead, we look at the oppressive obstacles as an invitation to think and act differently and to inspire such thinking and action in our students.

A second pedagogical possibility speaks to our important engagement with the Christian student. Incorporating the prophetic model gives us as teachers a foundation from which to engage this student. I have alluded to this already but wish to elucidate the idea further here. As a Christian believer, I know that the Hebrew prophet holds a place of honor in the evangelical tradition. In fact, any reference or use of biblical figures in the classroom will appeal immediately to Christian students. They are accustomed to these models being critiqued rather than praised. But an application of prophetic imagination will allow us to critique the Christian student"s work as well. Often, the student who deploys religious rhetoric lacks the identification with the community, the primal identity of the prophet in this regard. [7] But the importance of this identification is evident from the various personalities exhibited in the Hebrew prophets and their various ways of acting or calling their own. From these decidedly unique personalities, the prophets differ markedly from the confrontational Christian. The student speaks not to his own, but to those who remain "outside." He does not speak humbly, but arrogantly, from a position not of identification, but of disassociation.[8] He does not humbly receive God"s call, but rather forthrightly takes up the leading position, calling forth God"s wrath on those who do not agree with his

[7] The concept is congruent to Kenneth Burke"s idea of identification in his work *Rhetoric of Motives*: through identification with the group through communication, we overcome our isolation as biologically separate beings.

[8] Edward P.J. Corbett writes about this distinction as well in a 1969 *College Composition and Communication* essay, "The Rhetoric of the Open Hand and the Rhetoric of the Closed Fist." In it, he describes the open hand rhetoric as characterizing discourse "that seeks to carry its point by reasoned, sustained, conciliatory discussion" (288).

particular religious persuasion. And this preaching hardly qualifies as unique -- rather the rhetoric and the sermons are consistent no matter who is delivering them, regardless of personality.

The Apocalyptic Distortion

Unfortunately, the prophet"s critique and judgment is sometimes delivered without the essential elements of hopeful imagination and divine pathos. This exclusion results in the apocalyptic distortion. Apocalyptic rhetoric qualifies as one of the particular manifestations of prophetic rhetoric in general. However, the prophets utilized apocalyptic rhetoric for calling the community, and at times those outside it, to repentance and regeneration. They did not utilize apocalyptic rhetoric for predicting a complete end to humankind. Instead, their rhetoric often followed a pattern of apocalyptic speech followed by repentance and consolation. Hailing from a religious tradition, I know that the prophetic model may be interpreted almost exclusively from a messianic perspective. Consequently, the prophet is turned into the apocalyptic preacher, calling forth judgment, yes, but mistakenly on those who are outside the community. Historical examples of such apocalyptic fervor are legion. Most importantly, this distortion of the prophetic into the apocalyptic is evidenced in the lack of any compassion or love. While perhaps no figures in history have been more rhetorically emulated than the prophets of ancient Israel, the original figures became blurred by the imitation. From the apocalyptic fervor of the 12th century to the Reformation of the 16th century to the jeremiads of the 19th century, the Hebrew prophet has been a rhetorical model for leaders who longed to establish their religious

and cultural authority. The apocalyptic distortion of the original has meant significant misrepresentations and misinterpretations.

These misrepresentations and misinterpretations originated in a distortion of the role of both the prophet[9] and the priest of the Hebrew scripture, and we have often failed to understand the role of each in light of the other, ignoring the confluence the two roles have as they both exert their influence on a generation or a community. The implications of these distortions are significant: the misrepresentation of nationhood, leading to a condemning of others as outside the circle of the chosen and a replacement of the divine pathos of the prophet with an apocalyptic damnation of those outside God‟s favor. In his book *A History of the End of the World*, Jonathan Kirsch writes that every generation has its own crisis or chaos that precipitates apocalyptic fervor. According to Kirsch, fundamentalists in each generation co-opt the images and vocabulary of Revelation and apply them to a crisis or chaotic moment that has arisen. With these deceptions, would-be prophets (read "preachers") are given a scriptural and biblical authority that is misleading and dishonest. The preacher‟s alleged prophetic rhetoric is clouded by a New Testament messianism that the original Hebrew prophets did not function within (Vawter 5). By interpreting the prophet in light of New Testament theology, we do disservice to the prophets themselves, to the Jewish tradition that is so integral to their understanding, and to the history of this movement

[9] Another contribution to the misinterpretation is the definition of the word "prophet." Though I do not have the space to explore it in this essay, many rhetoricians have defined the word as one who predicts the future or a seer. But the Hebrew word is actually "*navi*", "one who has been called", (EJ Vol. 16 1152) or a "spokesperson" (Stillman). While some ancient Hebrew prophets did speak about future events, they did not use the apocalyptic rhetoric I discuss in this work in the sense that the apocalypse was the complete end of humankind. Instead, their apocalyptic rhetoric was focused on a particular moment of renewal within the community, a call to repent and move on into God‟s blessing.

and its significance in the general history of rhetoric. Consequently, the appropriate analysis of this rhetorical practice has implications, not only to honor the ancient Jewish tradition but to appropriately categorize and evaluate current rhetorical practice as well.

Apocalyptic rhetoric is often identified as prophetic; indeed, it is a type of prophecy that we read in the Bible and shares many of the same characteristics. However, when we scrutinize apocalyptic rhetoric in light of the Hebrew depiction of the prophet, it does not meet the basic conceptual framework of the prophets that we have already discussed early on in this essay. The rhetoric does not come from a member within the community; rather, the fundamentalist rails against those outside the community who have failed to comply with the community‟s rules and regulations. The apocalypse is just that, a time when those outside the realm of acceptance are condemned to suffer what they deserve. This leads to the second misconception: the fundamentalist will not suffer along with the people, he does not speak as a member of the community that is being called out. He speaks from a position of authority outside the group, sitting as judge and jury on the behavior of a group to which he does not belong. Both of these aspects of the priestly distortion flow from a convoluted interpretation of the prophet‟s notion of being chosen. For the prophet, the concept of the chosen nation brings with it a burden of greater responsibility than any other community (EJ 1171). For the fundamentalist, the concept of the chosen is reason for celebration and arrogance. The fundamentalist often lords this status over others, using it as reason for condemning those outside the community, outside the chosen status. Third, the fundamentalist has no new revelation to speak. The rhetoric is a reissue of

the apocalyptic imagery that has been used since Revelation. The same imagery, the same vocabulary is used to condemn and damn those outside the tradition the preacher is defending. This limited interpretation of scripture and dependence on Revelation imagery flies in the face of true prophecy in the Jewish tradition. Fourth, as we have seen, this apocalyptic rhetoric focuses on the damned, on those outside the chosen community of which the fundamentalist is an integral part, which leads to a judgmental status rather than a moral and ethical stance. Morality and ethical behavior are in and of themselves inwardly focused. Because they are experiential in nature, they must be introverted. For a fundamentalist to stand as judge of the moral and ethical behavior of others is paradoxical, impossible to enact. History is replete with these distortions, present in our own era as well. These distortions plant the seeds of what today is a fundamentalist favoritism and fervor.

Particularly here in the Bible Belt where I teach, ample evidence for this revivalist and apocalyptic tradition exists. This tradition was and is an integral part of many denominations. However, it cannot be deployed without intellectual fervor as well. The prophet in this scenario loses his ability to objectively testify against the failures of the cult. The priest, the one whose job it is to maintain the status quo, becomes a critic of society but unable to see the disobedience within his own congregation. The failure of both roles results in the character of the preacher who cries out, but against a community he has no part of and no compassion for. This distortion is what allows the priest to become the preacher who condemns all others. Rabbi Jacob B. Agus points out the extreme fallability of this position in his lecture "The Prophet in Modern Hebrew Literature:"

> The prophet is not a futurist, seeking to rush mankind by forced marches to the ideal goal. Unlike a revolutionary reformer, he is humble enough to wait for God‟s own time and unlike a pseudo-Messianist he holds that the drama of redemption takes place within the human heart […] Their vision of a redeemed humanity is to be achieved neither by universal conquest, nor by the infectious enthusiasm of a world-wide preaching tour, but in quietude and resignation. (49)

This danger is displayed in the preacher‟s role, which grows from a complete misinterpretation of the role of the prophet, when the role becomes subsumed to an apocalyptic mindset that condemns all other communities outside the chosen state of his own.

In the modern practice of religion, Rabbinic Judaism avoids this apocalyptic distortion through its dependence on exegesis that centers on maintaining the cult without the temple. The rabbis resist the function of interpreting Scripture loosely or solely in the light of contemporary events (*Encyclopedia of Judaism* 1308). Additionally and importantly, Judaism does not interpret the prophet as precursor of Jesus Christ. This is just the problem with the priestly distortion. Because the roles of both prophet and priest are not given due proportion in light of their joint responsibilities, the priestly role becomes one of interpreting scripture through contemporary signs that point to apocalypse or an uncovering of God‟s activity. When the ancient prophecies are taken out of their Hebrew context and out of this expressly Jewish way of interpreting them, the tendency is to use them as prooftexts for whatever rhetoric the church desires to promulgate. The rhetoric of such moments may be called

prophetic by those deploying it, but it does not meet the criteria that we have already established as expressly Hebrew. Interpreting the use of all apocalyptic rhetoric as prophetic limits our understanding of the other aspects of the prophets‟ message, of their absolute identification with the communities to which they belong, and their ultimate concern that God‟s loving relationship with humanity be restored.

The Christian church is not the only institution that distorts the prophet into the apocalyptic preacher, however. We in the academic community have our own branch of fundamentalism, and we too can become so focused on critique and judgment that we leave no room for hopeful imagination either. Informal discussions with colleagues can deteriorate into generalizations about undergraduates and unfounded judgments about their intellectual ability or prowess. Classrooms full of students can become nameless faces for us with no history or experiences of value or worth. Our lore is full of judgments that are an accepted part of the way we talk about students. In the model I just employed to look at the prophet in contrast with the priest, the professoriate could easily be placed in the priestly position. We are the maintainers of our institutions and the status quo of tenure-track positions within them. We too look at students from an apocalyptic perspective, looking at them as outsiders, not as full members of our community. We have reached our rewards in the professoriate, dare I say, our "heaven?" And often, we are not all that different from the apocalyptic preacher who condemns the outsider, because he is not, like the prophet, motivated by true desire for restoration. Instead, the preacher would often, as would we in academe, be just as happy if the outsiders are condemned to eternal damnation. Another biblical example would perhaps enlighten my argument.

In the classic Hebrew tale of Jonah the prophet, the problem with the prophet‟s love is born out. Jonah is commissioned by God to take a message of judgment to the people of Nineveh. In the narrative, Jonah is so reluctant to respond to God that he goes in the opposite direction, taking a ship from his home port of Joppa to the city of Tarsus. On the way, though, the ship encounters a fierce storm. The captain, well-aware of the spiritual dimensions of his imperiled voyage, tells the passengers that obviously, God is angry, else the storm would not be so fierce. The crew casts lots to determine who has displeased the Almighty, and sure enough, the lot falls on Jonah. The crew then throws him overboard, and the sea is immediately calmed. Jonah, meanwhile, is swallowed, according to the Bible, by "a great fish" (Jonah 1:17). Two days later, after Jonah has repented for his neglect of God‟s command, the fish vomits onto a beach, and Jonah proceeds to Nineveh.

Once in Nineveh, the reluctant prophet gives the message of God, and the entire city, led by their leader, repents. They are restored to communion with God, and all is well, right? Wrong. Jonah, after succeeding at his God-given mission, wants nothing more than for God to keep his promise to destroy the Ninevites. He finds a hill overlooking the city and prepares to watch God destroy them, just as he said he would if they did not repent. Of course, they did repent, and Jonah is frustrated with the compassionate God who allows them to live. Jonah has become apocalyptic. His role as prophet has become one of the apocalyptic fundamentalist. He would rather see the Ninevites receive their condemnation, rather than turn from their evil deeds and experience God‟s love.

The apocalyptic fundamentalists of our present day religious right and our university elite bear a striking resemblance to Jonah. The motivation of both of these groups is not truly the divine pathos exhibited by the prophet; it is more like the divine retribution that Jonah longed for. In academe, retribution is manifest not only in our dealings with first-year students, whom we relegate to the courses taught by adjuncts and graduate students, but also in our dealings with these adjuncts and graduate students as well. The apocalyptic fundamentalists of the academic elite have no desire to share the reward they have received for their ascension to the ranks of the academic elite. There is no prophetic hope offered to those laboring in oppressive hierarchies with 4/4 or 5/5 loads (depending on the particular university), because this would mean a true empathic concern for them and a subsequent willingness to share the reward with them - much as fundamentalist preachers simply want to condemn outsiders to hell, with no real desire to see them become part of the community the preacher represents. That would upset the status quo all together.

Pedagogy engaged with the prophetic mindset also gives us firm footing to counter the apocalyptic fervor we encounter in religious fundamentalism, in academic fundamentalism, and in student writing. These prophetic rhetorical strategies offer a way to care for students and engage in relationship with them, while still critiquing work that is rhetorically flawed. Students are allowed access to their faith tradition, but those traditions are challenged within the context of that relationship, from a stance of collaboration and cointentionality, rather than in accusatory fashion. Furthermore, a pedagogy based on the Hebrew prophet offers the clearest and most appropriate model for 21st century rhetoric and pedagogy that is politically engaged and yet socially

responsible and compassionately centered. This model has much to teach us about engaging our culture while maintaining a love for humanity that disavows reactions motivated by raw emotion and fundamentalism. Prophetic pedagogy introduces teachers and students of rhetoric to a responsible approach that is politically engaged and yet socially responsible.

Historical Precedent for Prophetic Practice

Paulo Freire called for prophetic work in education some 40 years ago by calling for a humanization of the educational process. Freire's connection of critical pedagogy to prophetic work begins here. He practices prophetic work through the humanization of men and women who have been dehumanized through institutional oppression. Prophetic work allows human beings to transcend themselves and the social circumstances in which they live as well. For Freire, dehumanization is the oppression against which critical pedagogy must constantly work.

One of the complicated discussions of Freire's work that arises in composition circles is whether critical pedagogy is possible in classrooms of the first world, where middle class students who dominate our class rosters could hardly be considered "oppressed." It is possible, and necessary, precisely because of Freire's explanation of oppression as "dehumanization." *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is dedicated to his exposition of oppression as the dehumanizing work of oppressors: as teachers (in the banking concept of education) and as governments (seeing humans as "things") (60). Not only does government dehumanize us in our own historical context by its actions, so do multi-national corporations, and educational institutions as well. Critical pedagogy is a fight against dehumanization. From students as things to students as only

receptacles, the revolution that Freire initiated was a change in the way we look at this relationship as teachers. His goal was "mutual humanization" for both the teacher and the student (Freire 75). Mutual humanization is directly applicable to the first world context, and it is achievable through the prophetic model.

The character of the Hebrew prophet is empowering, one whose very rhetoric allows us as teachers to more truly adhere to critical pedagogy as Freire first envisioned and practiced it. It also is a pedagogy that enables and encourages social engagements whether they be political or communal. Prophetic pedagogy allows us to: first, lament the cultural, social, and economic dehumanization of our students. Second, prophetic pedagogy allows us to offer hope for student/human agency as a true possibility. Third, prophetic pedagogy allows us to focus on language and student writing through testimony and experience that invites perspectives that challenge the status quo. Prophetic pedagogy allows us to cointentionally identify with our students and engage them in a way that loves them and works side by side with them to offer real possibilities for action. Prophetic pedagogy gives us a new language for talking about composition and rhetoric and how social change can occur. Finally, prophetic pedagogy gives us a storehouse of examples for our religious students of figures who engaged in civic affairs at the behest of divine impetus. These examples, from a Bible that our believing students often use as a proof text, give ample evidence of individuals who were engaged in the political and civic processes of their day. And their actions serve as rich models for our actions as well as those of our students.

Within the prophetic historical precedent for such work (in the work of Friere, in the social activism of Stewart, King, and Heschel), those involved embodied faith

and values in lives that were integrally involved with organized religion. However, they did not occupy those positions without critique. Instead, they used the Hebrew prophet as a model that demonstrated how to interrogate the work of those structures: the ecclesiastical as well as the secular. Next, they came to terms with a pathos that empowered them to act. Perhaps we would like to avoid this pathos because it so often takes an emotional or spiritual turn. I would argue that this pathos must not be abandoned if we are truly to engage our students in the composition classroom in ways that promote social engagement and responsibility. But if we are to successfully deploy this prophetic imagination, we will have to: first, allow students to find their own motivation for social activism even if it differs from our own, acknowledging their search may lead them to religious or spiritual experiences; and second, relinquish our dependence on a Greek conceptual base for our ideas of writing pedagogy that focus on retribution and argument as essential binaries of accordance and opposition.

In the third chapter of this work, I utilize the examples of two figures: first, the ancient Hebrew prophet Moses, and second, abolitionist Maria W. Stewart. Critical to the success of their prophetic rhetoric was their prophetic identity. In the next chapter, I analyze the identities of these two prophets. While remaining spiritually, communally, and culturally engaged, they deployed a rhetoric that effectively forwarded significant social movements of their day. In chapter four, I will discuss how the prophetic model was the impetus for the socially significant work of the Highlander Folk School, led by Myles Horton. And in the final chapter of the dissertation, I endeavor to apply my own "prophetic imagination" to composition-teaching possibilities.

Chapter 3: Prophetic Streams in the Era of Abolition

Prophetic Discourse & Grand Narratives

In order to promote prophetic rhetorical strategies as a viable alternative to critical pedagogy as it has been enacted in the west, I now move to an example of a more recent prophet to show how our lives can be engaged in the art of loving and working and teaching for social change. Maria W. Stewart, an abolitionist and rhetorician of the early and mid-19th century embodied the prophets I described in the previous chapter. In addition, a description of her work and her life serves to demonstrate how the prophetic mindset and lifestyle can be appropriated by composition and literacy studies and dismissed as one of the ―grand narratives" Lyotard describes in his theoretical work, because they are seen, as Feuerbach noted, as a ―legitimation" of norms rather than an ―explanation" (Essence of Christianity). Stewart and other recent prophets are often examined as rhetorical giants, legitimized, but the spiritual impetus of their work is often correspondingly ignored as invalid. In this chapter, I utilize the framework of Beth Daniell's ―Narratives of Literacy: Connecting Composition to Culture" as the departure point for my discussion of Stewart, her role as prophet, and the issues surrounding spiritual narratives like hers in our postmodern milieu. I will argue that Stewart's work is more accurately cast in the model of Daniell's ―little narratives": literacy in a ―particular local setting […] multiple, contextual, and ideological" (403). Of particular relevance to my argument about Stewart is Daniell's focus on ―little narratives" as negotiating the space ―between Foucauldian determinism and human agency, showing the power of institutions to control people by controlling their literacy and the power of individuals and groups to

use literacy to act either in concert with or in opposition to this power" (406). Furthermore, I will show how Stewart's work has been cast in the tradition of generalized prophetic rhetoric, and therefore, abandoned as a singular, grand narrative that no longer has relevance or deserves emulation in a culture that consistently subverts the spiritual in favor of the secular in academe. Utilizing Daniell's work as the basis for this chapter, I then turn to other theorists who have described Stewart only in terms of rhetorical means of persuasion, lauded it for its historical significance, and yet have failed to notice the application of it to the postmodern classroom and composition's need for a hopeful and inspired offer to teachers and students alike. These theoretical analyses of Stewart's rhetoric have focused primarily on her speeches, her role as an early feminist rhetorician, and the literacy practice of her early rhetoric. What is neglected, however, is her primary audience, which was not the men and women, blacks and whites, to whom she spoke, but rather the God whom she followed. Her embodiment of the prophet and her life of writing and teaching that followed her very brief sojourn in the spotlight are testament to a conscientious decision to please an Audience of One, a testimony to the power of the prophetic word to motivate and energize a life that is lived for others.[1]

Daniell wrote in her 1999 essay of ~~"g~~rand narratives," Lyotard's term for the totalizing and generalizing stories that get told over and over in society to legitimate the ~~"w~~ay things are." Daniell argues that it is the nature of our work to look for such

[1]The Audience of One is a term coined by Os Guinness, an evangelical author, in his 2000 work *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*, a popular reference book in Christian evangelical circles. His description is described in the Latin phrase *coram Deo*, meaning that as Christians we live before the ~~"h~~eart of God," pleasing only him in the work we undertake.

overarching schemes, even in the field of composition, where we apply Lyotard's notion to the work of critical pedagogy as practiced by Paulo Freire. We have made Freire's work one of our ~~–~~grand narratives," according to Daniell, looking for a way of totalizing our educational experience, liberating the downtrodden. Instead, Daniell argues that we should seek to apply Freire's practice of ~~–~~profound love for the human beings we teach" (402). By so doing, we acknowledge Freire's work as a ~~–~~little narrative" that is practice in a particular context, for a particular time and place, with outcomes that are specific to that locale and that situation. Our goal is not the outcome, but the practice, in this case, of profound love. But Daniell asserts that this task of labeling narratives as ~~–~~little" and as having a viable conceptual base is difficult to perform, because of our desire to keep the sacred and the spiritual divorced from one another, making it nearly impossible to connect composition to culture, as her title suggests (403). The work of the prophet, Maria W. Stewart has suffered from this very situation. In the fields of composition and rhetoric, Stewart's work has been analyzed as a ~~–~~grand narrative," a legitimation of what Stewart achieved as a rhetor in the nineteenth century, rather than a good faith response to Stewart's claim of conversion and a dedication of her life to the encouragement and liberation of her community. Divorcing her life from her rhetoric, turning her rhetoric into a ~~–~~grand narrative" subsumed under the generalized category of persuasion, effectively ignores a lifestyle that is the very center of her identity as a woman of faith and a follower of God.

In the discipline of rhetoric and composition studies, examinations of religious rhetoric are governed by the foundational work of Kenneth Burke. In Burke's analysis of the rhetoric of religion, he identifies religion as purely persuasion:

> The subject of religion falls under the head of rhetoric in the sense that rhetoric is the art of persuasion, and religious cosmogonies are designed, in the last analysis, as exceptionally thoroughgoing modes of persuasion. To persuade men toward certain acts, religions would form the kinds of attitude which prepare men for such acts. (v)

This foundational work has defined our discipline's focus when it comes to the analysis of religion and religious rhetoric. Rather than assuming a validity or authenticity of religious experience, the academic analysis shifts to the "means of persuasion." Burke's definition serves to silence any idea of experience and to distill religion to purely rhetorical appeal. But such a move effectively mutes those with religious experience who would argue that their conversion has ramifications in action outside persuasion only. Certainly I am not arguing that religious rhetoric is not a valid study; however, issues of faith and spirituality may reach beyond the boundaries of rhetorical concepts and indeed must if we are to respect them in good faith. For many, their faith commitment results in choices and actions pursued in emulation of ideals proclaimed in sacred texts as handed down through centuries of practice. These commitments go beyond rhetorical choices to the other material aspects of their lives.

Analyses of prophetic discourse then, also function inside this realm of religious rhetoric as persuasion. David Tracy complicates the idea of Burke's generalized religious rhetoric "by introducing the more specific and contrasting rhetorics of the two classic religious types – the prophet and the mystic" (184). But in his analysis, Tracy confirms Burke's assessment of religious rhetoric as a "grand narrative" writing that, "We turn every insight, every creative activity, into a total system" (185). Before Tracy

even embarks on the hallmarks of prophetic rhetoric, he begins with Burke's analysis of the rhetoric of religion and reasserts that it begins from a presumption of religious rhetoric as persuasion. His description of the prophet then, focuses on the subsuming of the role to the voice of an Other:

> The prophet hears a word that is not his or her own. It is Other. It disrupts consciousness, actions, deliberations. It demands expression through the prophet. The prophet is not his own person; something else speaks here. Only on behalf of that Other may the prophet presume to speak his or her warnings, interruptive proclamations, predictions, and promises…The others ordinarily do not want to listen. (Tracy 188)

Tracy's analysis completely removes the prophet from the context of community. The prophet becomes a singular individual who is overtaken by an Other and forced to speak words that are foreign, words from outside. There is no sense in this description of any identification of the prophet with those to whom she would speak. There is no offering of love and redemption, only a voice ventriloquized through a human being who has no choice but to serve as mouthpiece. But the ancient Israelite prophet, on whom all of our discussions of prophetic rhetoric depend, was not a separate entity from the community. And in each case of prophetic calling, the human personalities were maintained. Individual prophets lived out their preferences and identities within the broader context of a Jewish community that included all areas of life: civic, religious, and political. Tracy's analysis of the prophet as only a speaker, and Burke's before him of religion as only another form of persuasion, are inadequate when

measured against the lives of the Hebrew prophets themselves and their modern manifestations as well.

In the context of this chapter, my analysis of Maria Stewart will extend beyond her rhetorical appeals, and therefore beyond these assumptions of religious rhetoric as pure performance. For it is in Stewart's identification as a prophet, not solely in her prophetic rhetoric, that I find the acts that inform my own practice as a teacher. She practiced her faith in other ways outside of her rhetoric in attending church regularly, in maintaining a place in this larger community of faith. Her writing clearly identifies her as a highly moral woman who practiced regular prayer, who studied the Bible diligently, who cared for others, and who applied the principles of the Bible to her daily life and activities. Failing to examine her Christian conversion forces the exclusion of her true prophetic character and cheapens her own account of the impetus of her entire body of work.

Prophetic Discourse

The life of Maria W. Stewart is a stellar example of the prophetic pattern I described in chapter two, but also a profound example of rhetorical triumph, undoubtedly the reason it has been examined by many in the composition/rhetorical tradition. Stewart hailed from humble circumstances that would not seem to have prepared her for the life of a rhetorician on the front lines of the abolition battle. She was orphaned at the age of five in Hartford, Connecticut and bound out to a minister's family, where she served until her teenage years. After leaving their home, she remained an indentured servant but still attended Sabbath School and evidently learned to read and write solely from the Bible (Stewart 3-4). At the age of 23, she was married

to a merchant and ship outfitter by the name of James W. Stewart. He was much older than she, and together they became part of a growing number of African-Americans in the city of Boston. They were married in the African Meeting Hall by Rev. Thomas Paul, who was the founder of Boston's African Baptist Church, evidence that their lives were integrally involved with this activist movement (Richardson 25). At the time, the African-American community of Boston had grown to almost 2,000, then three percent of Boston's population (Cromwell 15). The community thrived around the meeting hall and bred an outspoken abolitionist movement, but Stewart was not an outspoken critic of white oppression, nor a leader of the movement in any sense, until life circumstances humbled her again in the deaths of her husband, James, and then her mentor David Walker. Walker was one of the central figures of the abolition movement in the Northeast, contributing frequently to *Freedom's Journal* and other publications in the early days of the movement.

Stewart's life story has been the fodder for a good deal of rhetorical analysis. Shirley Wilson Logan uses Stewart as a featured figure in her work on black women's rhetoric in her book *"We Are Coming": The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Black Women*. Logan focuses solely on Stewart's work as prophetic discourse and on her prophetic discourse as persuasion. She more particularly examines Stewart's appropriation of "Ethiopia rising" as a trope for inciting her audiences to claim their rightful place in American culture outside of slavery. Logan's singular focus is on the rhetorical means Stewart utilized as a speaker. She views Stewart's public work as a "classical loc[us]" (28); a way that Stewart chose to "account for the various conditions and struggles of black people in America" in the 19th century (29). And certainly,

evidence of this abounds in Stewart's speaking.

Logan notes that it was not unusual for speakers of the era to use the Bible extensively in their rhetoric; what was unusual was Stewart's use of the Bible in commenting on political issues. She writes, "Although black and white women were generally accepted as evangelists, preachers, and missionaries in most church denominations by the early nineteenth century, they were not expected to speak publicly on political matters" (Logan 33). Logan's argument comes up short in my opinion, for she fails to connect Stewart's prophetic discourse with the prophetic activity of her life. If we retain the sole focus on Stewart's rhetoric, Logan is correct. However, if we look at Stewart as embodying the prophet of the Hebrew Bible, then we see a direct correlation with her identification as a prophet, for the Hebrew prophets were nothing if not political. Their rhetoric was an outflow of lives lived in honor of a God who called them to an identification with a community that was at once spiritual, civic, and political. Their rhetoric was not divorced from their engagement in other activity. For the purposes of her analysis, Logan examines Stewart's life by focusing solely on a rhetorical style that is designed to persuade. My argument hinges on a different claim: that Stewart's lifestyle was one of identification with the prophets, not based purely on a rhetorical style used to move an audience.

Jacqueline Jones Royster's work goes further than Logan's in analyzing beyond the rhetorical appeals utilized in Stewart's speaking and writing. Royster's work in *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women* begins to assert the significance of African American women's work as activists, rather than as solely rhetoricians. She writes, "Not only did they envision wide-ranging

possibilities for the worlds around them, they also quite successfully put that thinking into language and action" (Royster 110). Royster's work gives African American women of this period (the nineteenth century) a deeper look, beyond specific appeals and phraseologies, to the very impetus behind their literacy work. At the outset of her chapter on the education of African American women, she acknowledges that our work in composition and rhetoric has, thus far, failed to particularize the work of these women as we have other historical figures and agents of social change. ~~–~~Quite predictably, however, we are yet to bring full meaning to the women's stories," she asserts (Royster 109). Stewart's story is no different. The few analyses of it have merely scratched the surface of her activism. By making her conversion and life of faith a central focus, I believe we can not only gain insight into her rhetoric, as Logan and others already have, but I believe we can gain insight into a way of being in the world that engages and encourages social change.

Stewart embodied the prophet and therefore serves to exemplify the intricacies of the prophetic stance in modern day social movements for a number of reasons. First, her writing and her civic activity give ample evidence of her desire to be a woman of faith rather than simply a persuader of whites about abolition. Her work in the abolition movement was an effect of her faith decision. Her cultural engagement flowed out of a life dedicated to following God; her rhetorical choices were subservient to this decision. Second, her faith decision pushed her into public view; it did not wall her off from it. Her speaking and writing were effects of her conversion - a decision that significantly occurred after a number of complex influences. And finally, her life as a prophet engaged her in the work of community development, serving as a

foundational figure for her own community.

Stewart serves as a historical example of the ancient prophetic strategies. She was part of a community that suffered under oppression. She knew well the pain of it through her own experience. But she also came to a faith that gave her hope beyond it. She employed prophetic rhetorical strategies and engaged her community in a dialogue of hope and imagination for a future of freedom. This historical example lends further credence to the enactment of such strategies in the 21st century.

Conversion

Stewart's life emulated that of the prophets, because it was a life lived wholly for the God she served: her primary audience was this Audience of One. Henry Louis Gates describes this conversion phenomenon in the introduction to his book *Spiritual Narratives*. Here he explains that African-American women writers often proceed on the same course before gaining repute as authors. First, they reevaluate the past circumstances of their lives and are overcome by remorse. Stewart's remorse is evident in her description of her husband's death, a death she witnessed firsthand. In the tenth meditation of her collection, written toward the end of her public ministry, she describes this death scene and the torment it caused her,

> And he had no God to look to! Heart-rending scene! Who can describe it! O, my soul, thou has wiped the sweat of death from off his cold forehead, and his eyes has thou seen glazed in death, and those eyes were fixed upon thee! […] O, my soul, forget not that awful scene; forget not that awful moment. (Stewart 41)

From this impetus, Stewart began a journey toward a life lived solely for God's purposes and committed to His cause. Gates chronicles the second stage of the spiritual

narrative after conversion as feeling enlightened by God with certain insight or truths; sometimes those converted describe a sense that they have received a gift from the Creator, endowing them with a special talent or calling. Finally, they are so profoundly affected or ―transformed" by the experience, they feel compelled to act solely within the ―godly will" (Gates xxxiv). It is at this moment that the woman often becomes the warrior for the cause rather than the passive supporter. Stewart wrote,

> From the moment I experienced the change, I felt a strong desire, with the help and assistance of God, to devote the remainder of my days to piety and virtue, and now possess that spirit of independence that, were I called upon, I would willingly sacrifice my life for the cause of God and my brethren. (*Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality* Stewart 4)

―The change" in this quote is a direct reference to her conversion experience, to her decision to become wholly committed to God and to follow His ways. Her words suggest that she was compelled to act only by God -- that it was His decision whether she would pursue the cause of abolition. Elsewhere, she is equally humble in her response to the call of God. In an address she delivered to the African-American Female Intelligence Society of America, she made the impetus for her work clear: ―I believe that God has fired my soul with a holy zeal for his cause. It was God alone who inspired my heart to publish the meditations thereof" (Stewart 52). She takes no credit for setting out to become a public figure in the cause of abolition; indeed, she begins many of her speeches and essays with humility and contrition. But nowhere is she clearer about her desire to avoid the public side of her work than in her farewell address to her Boston friends and peers in 1833. In this address, she spells out in no uncertain

terms the reticence she experienced when she first felt the call to speak out against slavery:

> Soon after I made this profession, The Spirit of God came before me, and I spake before many. When going home, reflecting on what I had said, I felt ashamed, and knew not where I should hide myself. A something said within my breast, —Press forward, I will be with thee." And my heart made this reply, Lord, if thou wilt be with me, then I will speak for thee as long as I live. And thus far I have every reason to believe that it is the divine influence of the Holy Spirit operating upon my heart that could possibly induce me to make the feeble and unworthy efforts that I have. (Stewart 67)

Stewart consistently speaks and writes in her essays and speeches of the spirit that moved her. She takes no credit for the work she performs and offers no other reason for her rhetoric than the motivation of Almighty God and the call she experienced to see slavery abolished in her lifetime. This is a Christian experience familiar to all who identify themselves as members of this community. Conversion is elucidated by the New Testament passage often quoted by believers when they make a profession of faith found in 2 Corinthians 5:17; —I am a new creation in Christ; old things have passed away, all things have become new." From the moment of conversion onward, life is to be lived based on a scriptural foundation. Decisions will be based on biblical truths, everyday activities will be judged by biblical principles, and the judgment of right and wrong will be made according to biblical injunctions. In this sense, in this experience of conversion, the only audience that matters is the Audience of One. Presumably, once this decision is made, other audiences will be affected. Family will witness this change,

friends will notice a difference in attitude and action, but these are simply byproducts of a decision to live solely before the heart and eyes of God.

The conversion and audience issues inextricably tied to it are reminiscent of the issues of testimony discussed earlier in the work of Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann.[2] Brueggemann describes the character of testimony as one of the foremost methods that the prophet utilized in communicating to people who were living ~~in~~ exile," under oppression, outside the blessings and provision they had been promised by God. Stewart's speaking functioned as part of this larger tradition. Her testimony was a spoken way to conjure a new reality for those who heard her. It was not intended to function outside of community; rather, its purpose was to bear witness to her own conversion and profession of faith and to give hope to others who could experience the same rejuvenation in their own lives.

Prophetic Identification

This turn to prophetic identification as opposed to simply a deployment of prophetic rhetoric is subtle and yet crucial to my point that our own lives can embody the social change we long to see in the work of our teaching. For my purposes then, a more thorough description of prophecy is necessary. George Shulman accentuates my purposes with his work in *American Prophecy: Race and Redemption in American Political Culture*. Shulman's work elucidates the concept of prophecy, not only in its Hebrew and biblical iterations, but also as it has come to be applied in historical contexts as an American idiom and as an object of American studies. In describing the Hebrew prophetic voice, he writes,

[2]Further explanation of the concept of testimony is given in chapter two of this work.

> Prophecy is thus a performance to incite audiences to self-reflection and action. Not only a rhetorical act, prophecy is an embodied form of symbolic action: Hosea marries a prostitute to symbolize God's sense of betrayal by people who "love" other gods; Isaiah walks around Jerusalem wearing a heavy yoke to signify the danger of allying with another state. Students who sit in at segregated lunch counters assume the office of those who bear bodily witness to their testimony in speech. (Shulman 6)

Action is the pivotal word in Shulman's description, not persuasion. The prophet embodies the prophetic life that acts to show God's love, that acts to show God's displeasure with injustice and oppression, that acts to demonstrate what has been said in speeches and written in books. Shulman's description goes beyond the mere means of persuasion; prophecy becomes social action, community action, political action that is informed by a spiritual encounter, but that moves beyond that encounter and extrapolates that experience to the pragmatic details of life lived among the community. In this sense, it does become a political act; it becomes a way of life.

Marilyn Richardson, the foremost biographer and scholar of Stewart's life and work, confirms this larger perspective of Stewart as a spiritually motivated and centered person. As a biographer, Richardson has the luxury of offering a larger perspective than simply a focus on Stewart's rhetoric. And her analysis takes as its cornerstone Stewart's religious experience. For Richardson, this profession of faith is what launched Stewart into political activism, and then into her life of teaching and education after her public life had ended. She writes that Stewart's religious vision was what propelled her into public life. In fact, Richardson writes, "From the start, her religious vision and her

socio-political agenda were intrinsically bound together, defined one by the other" (17). She continues, "Religion and social justice are so closely allied in her analysis that, to her mind, one could not be properly served without a clear commitment to the other" (Richardson 18).

Shawn Madigan argues similarly, in *Mystics, Visionaries, and Prophets: A Historical Anthology of Women's Spiritual Writings*, for Stewart's spiritual conversion and experience as central to her very identity. She goes even further in fact, describing Stewart's relationship with the Almighty as one of intimacy. She writes, "[Their] faith stories, personal stance, and visionary writings illustrate how deeply women's intimacy with God has entailed prophetic social witness" (3). As she describes Stewart's work following her initial conversion in 1831, she writes, "This profession [of faith] was her response to the mission to which she felt called, namely, to preach the word of God to her people" (Madigan 310). Madigan's perspective is one of acceptance and acknowledgement that an identity may truly change and be infused from a spiritual center that then emboldens a particular style of rhetoric. But this initial conversion and profession is seen as forging a legitimate identity, one that serves then as a source for the subsequent rhetoric, not the other way around. Madigan goes on to say, "Stewart has seized authority in her own life and wants that Spirit to continue empowering her hearers to do the same" (310). Her identification with God, her identity as a Christian woman, is what drove her to follow the precedent of biblical models and to emulate them in her life: attending Sabbath School, being a contributing member of a community of faith or church, and following other biblical mandates.

Prophetic Predecessors

Upon her conversion, Stewart chose the life of a prophet because the political issues of the day were as much a part of her spiritual life as Sunday School. For her and the Hebrew prophets she emulated, there was no division between the sacred and the secular; they were inextricably linked. Deborah was a judge; Esther was the wife of the king; Moses was the law-giver, judge, and often jury of the entire Hebrew nation; Jeremiah not only called the Hebrews to repentance but rebuilt an entire city during his tenure. These central figures of the biblical narrative were not priests by calling; they were God's voices, called to speak for Him through their political activity. Maria W. Stewart followed in these ancient footsteps by accepting the same call. The ultimate test of a prophet in the Old Testament was not the response of his or her tribe, but the obedience of his or her heart to the calling of Almighty God.

Stewart's rhetoric indeed exhibits a deep knowledge of Hebrew women who served as prophets as well. Just as Brueggemann talks of the importance of the metaphors and images the prophets utilized, Stewart used the stories she had learned in Sabbath School to call her people to the work of improvement and restoration: another clear embodiment of the Hebrew prophet. Two of the Hebrew women she often invoked were Deborah and Esther. These choices were obvious ones for Stewart. Christine Krueger notes in her book *The Reader's Repentance: Women Preachers, Women Writers, and Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse* that "Christian women pointed to the Hebrew judge Deborah, Queen Esther, or Sarah – who laughed at God – as precedents for divinely sanctioned female speech, in opposition to patriarchal authority" (7). Stewart found in Deborah a prophet whose work within the Jewish tribe of the Old Testament is chronicled in the book of Judges. In chapters four and five of

this ancient narrative, Deborah is described as one who arose as "a mother in Israel" (Judges 5:7). In fact, in Stewart's first published essay, a small tract that was published by William Lloyd Garrison, the owner and editor of a small abolitionist newspaper called *The Liberator*, Stewart uses this quote from Judges verbatim in this plea, "Could I but see mothers in Israel, chaste, keepers at home, not busy bodies, meddlers in other men's matters, whose adorning is of the inward man, possessing a meek and quiet spirit, whose sons were like olive-plants, and whose daughters were as polished corner-stones…" (Richardson 33). But perhaps the most direct correlation of Deborah to Stewart is her undaunted faithfulness to the Hebrew God, who called her into service to prevail with them to leave their corruption and worship of idols. The full two chapters of text in the biblical book of Judges which discuss Deborah's work in ancient Jewish history, focus on her faithfulness, her undying devotion to God, and her special position as a female messenger of God to her community.

In this Jewish prophet, Stewart found a worthy role model for her work in her own community. The historical details of Deborah's generation are remarkably similar to those Stewart faced in the Nineteenth Century. The first four verses of the fourth chapter of Judges chronicle this similarity:

> And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, when Ehud was dead. And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host [was] Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles. And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel. And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged

Israel at that time. (Judges 4:1-4)

The children of Israel found themselves enslaved at the hands of the Canaanite king; African-Americans of the Nineteenth Century found themselves in the same situation. Whether Stewart thought slavery was the result of their own sin, she does not say. But it is clear from her writing and speaking that she saw in Deborah her own calling: to address the group of which she was already a member, not the society outside that group. The story of Deborah was clearly an inspiration to Stewart, particularly because of her position as a military adviser and woman of strength within her community. Stewart worked her entire public life to do the same in the 19th century. While at times she addresses white, dominant culture, she returns again and again to call her own to account.

Another important biblical influence for Stewart, as well as fodder for her prophetic imagination, was the Hebrew queen Esther. Esther is the second woman Stewart referred to directly in her "Farewell Address." While Esther does not qualify as a prophet by Judaic definitions or by her actions, she did embody the complex identity Stewart negotiated: a member of an oppressed people who finds an audience with the oppressors. Esther's story is therefore thoroughly informative to the persona Stewart espoused. Esther was a young Jewish girl chosen to occupy the harem of King Xerxes and later chosen as queen. Her story is chronicled in the book named for her in the Old Testament. Esther found herself in the midst of a struggle for survival when the evil advisor to King Xerxes, Haman, tricked the King into signing a decree to destroy the Jews of his kingdom. Esther's uncle, Mordecai, discovered the plot and pleaded with Esther to use her influence with the King to intercede for her people the Jews.

Esther agreed after much pleading from Mordecai and perhaps to save herself. But before she ever bowed before the King to make her request for the freedom of the Jews, she called her own people to their task,

> Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which [is] not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish. So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him. (Esther 4:15-16)

After Esther called her own people to do their part in securing their salvation from the King, then and only then did she make her request. The book of Esther records her plea: "Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish" (Esther 7:4-5).

A close reading of Stewart's published works clearly reveals how she would identify with this ancient queen. She undoubtedly felt that the stories of Deborah and Esther empowered her to speak and act. Krueger explains that Christian evangelicals of this period, as they still do, saw scripture as wholly accessible, available to be interpreted and applied to the practical experiences and circumstances of everyday life; "Indeed, scripture itself imposed on the individual a duty to attend to that Word, the authority to interpret it, and the duty to spread it – to speak for God" (8). Stewart most assuredly felt a calling to speak and write in the manner she did at the time in which she lived. And her application of these ancient Hebrew stories to her own historical context

and social situation is evident throughout her writing and speaking. Stewart's application of the story of Esther is central for its description of Esther's placement in history for a particular, God-defined purpose. Esther is told by her uncle, in the Hebrew narrative, that she too will be destroyed if she fails to approach the King. He speculates that perhaps God has allowed her to inhabit Xerxes' kingdom and the palace, "and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). Mordecai looked at Esther as having a divine appointment and therefore, a divine responsibility, to intercede for the Jews at this point in history. Stewart too saw herself as the intercessor for her people, the one who would plead at times with the powers that oppressed to release them, to save them from destruction, and to return their dignity to them. But just as Deborah had called for her people to humble themselves, so Esther called her people to fasting in sackcloth and ashes for God's deliverance, and so Stewart called her people to purify themselves before assailing those who enslaved them.

Stewart's prolific use of Hebrew biblical metaphors extended to the archetypal prophet, Moses as well. The story of the exodus of the Hebrew people from their captivity in Egypt is a well-known story and one I chronicled earlier in this chapter. Moses grew up in the palace but also grew to hate the oppression of his adoptive grandfather on the slaves who were his own race. He fled the palace after killing an Egyptian and returned after his own conversion experience to demand the release of the Hebrews. Of course Pharaoh would not think of releasing his labor force; consequently, Moses the prophet called for the Hebrew God to visit his awful power on the sinful oppressors (after being instructed directly by God to do so and being assured

of the failure of the enterprise), which according to the narrative in the book of Exodus, he did. After each of these plagues was visited on Egypt, Moses returned to Pharaoh to make his appeal, "Let my people go." But in each case, Pharaoh relented during the plague and then recanted when the plague was stopped. By drawing on this familiar Sabbath School story, Stewart places the American white man on a par with the biblical Egyptian Pharaoh. She makes herself the Moses figure and pleads with America to "let her people go." But she knew the story too well to know that her pleading would result in victory. Just as Moses' return trips to Pharaoh proved unfruitful, Stewart calls upon the God of Israel to do for her what He had done for the Jews. She calls forth the power of the plague-giving authority of the heavens to rain the same pestilence on white America, her and her people's oppressors.

Stewart utilizes the Moses analogy many times in her writing in speaking to her oppressors. Another of its inferences is found in her essay, "Cause for Encouragement." It was published in *The Liberator* in July of 1832. She writes,

> O, America, America! Thou land of my birth! I love and admire thy virtues as much as I abhor and detest thy vices; and I am in hopes that thy stains will soon be wiped away, and thy cruelties forgotten. O, ye southern slaveholders! We will no longer curse you for your wrongs; but we will implore the Almighty to soften your hard hearts towards our brethren, and to send them a speedy deliverance. (Richardson 43-4)

In the Hebrew book of Exodus, when Moses pleads with Pharaoh for the release of the Jews, each successive plague begins with the words, "and Pharaoh's heart was hardened…"(Exodus 7:22-23, 8:15, 8:32, 9:12). Stewart's reference in this text is once

again a direct inference to the biblical account of a prophet, Moses, appealing to an oppressor, Pharaoh, to release those he and his minions are oppressing. Beyond this direct prophetic appeal, Stewart is also following the model of the prophet in aligning herself with the very community she is critiquing. She refers to herself in this passage first and foremost as an American, even more significantly as American born. She expresses a love for her country, but after identifying with the community and placing herself wholly inside it, she decries its sin and unrighteousness that do not match up to biblical standards.

Stewart makes an even more direct reference to Pharaoh in one of her first speeches, delivered in February of 1833 at the African Masonic Hall. In this speech she addressed the movement afoot that encouraged blacks to return to the land of their origin, to the country of Liberia. Many colonization societies thought this move would free Americans from the complicated issues of dealing with blacks and would allow blacks to practice their own way of life on the continent of their origin. Stewart ably defied this request and announced:

> But, ah, methinks their hearts are so frozen toward us they had rather their money should be sunk in the ocean than to administer it to our relief: and I fear, if they dared, like Pharaoh, king of Egypt, they would order every male child among us to be drowned. But the most high God is still as able to subdue the lofty pride of these white Americans as He was the heart of that ancient rebel. (Richardson 61)

Again, she refers to the ―hard heartedness" of white America and likened the white man to the ―ancient rebel" Pharaoh. In addition, she points to the death of the male child as

Pharoah's last gasp against the Hebrews. This is perhaps an allusion to the loss of the significant men of her life. She undoubtedly understands how the death of the men of her community would impact the future. Of course, Pharaoh is again in violation of the commands of the Almighty God, whose 19th-century mouthpiece is the black woman, Maria Stewart.

The story of the exodus was a pivotal passage used by many preachers and speakers during the nineteenth century. Logan explicates this in her work; "Two texts served as the 'classical loci' for interpreting black history in the nineteenth century: the book of Exodus and Psalm 68:31" (28). She explains:

> Speakers explored one of these two "places" when seeking to account for the various conditions and struggles of black people in America. The locale shifted from the Exodus story of delivery from bondage, when slavery was foremost, to Psalms, when post-slavery oppression continued. (Logan 28-29)

Stewart likewise emphasized the exodus narrative found in Hebrew scripture undoubtedly because of the similarities between the plight of the Israelites and that of her own people at the time. But her usage of this narrative goes even further by identifying who is whom in the story told in a new context. In all of these references, Stewart compares American whites with the ancient Pharoah. In her appeals to the whites, she obviously places them on the same plane as those outside Jewish tradition, and therefore, outside the chosen race. While in her appeals to her own, she consistently employs the rhetoric of one speaking from within the chosen tribe. Hebrew prophets, who Stewart obviously admired and emulated, habitually and continually spoke to Hebrew society, not those outside of it. While they longed to see

political change, they believed this change would come from within, either through their conversion of the culture they occupied (as in the case of Esther) or through their destruction of the culture militarily (as in the case of Deborah and Moses). They expended no energy proclaiming their truth to society or culture at large; —..the prophet is specially called to critique and challenge the people of God when they have forgotten or betrayed their original calling […] the purpose of prophetic critique is restoration, not dismissal" (Guinness 49). While Stewart likened America to a Pharoah-led Egypt, she saw her own as the chosen people she could lead into restoration and salvation.

The references to Egypt are numerous in the work of Stewart and many others, because it is in this act of the exodus that God is seen at his most active. The exodus symbolizes for the oppressed a God working for redemption and restoration of an entire group. Shulman describes the importance of this event and its re-telling to the oppressed, "as messengers, witnesses, watchmen, and singers – these heirs speak to elicit affect, provoke self-reflection, and incite action" (13). Stewart worked to provoke all these responses in the people to whom she spoke and wrote. But whether or not they responded, she was resolute in her decision to follow the God she proclaimed.

Stewart's Call to Community

In the midst of her call and response, Stewart also exhibits the primary identification of the prophet with the community to whom she spoke and wrote. While her audience was often a mixed one (both men and women and whites and blacks), Stewart saw in her own community the primary recipient of her work and her rhetoric. This stance, while prophetic, is also further explained by Royster in her significant

work on the writing of African American women. Royster's work shows the diverse communicative ability of African-American women, and how their efforts were engaged in community building. In *Traces of a Stream*, Royster writes:

> African American women came out of 200 years of legal oppression with a sense of self-worth as capable, tenacious, and self-reliant. They were confident in their abilities to work hard and to hold themselves and others together in the face of opposition […] they were able to sustain a "wholeness" […] forged at great cost but in the interest of the health and prosperity of a community for which they felt responsible. Hard-won strengths of spirit became a well-spring for activism, advocacy, and action. (113)

This strength of spirit is so clear in Stewart's life, a life marked by tragedy and crisis at so many turns and yet so wholly committed to the liberation of her entire community. Her conversion undoubtedly served to strengthen her and empower her; indeed, she identifies this as the reason she could act and speak as confidently as she did. While Royster does not offer this explanation directly, we could assume that the wholeness to which she refers concerns physical and spiritual strength as well. Stewart's ability to rise above her circumstances is also testament to her Christian faith, and a belief that is understood among believers that "all things work together for good" (Romans 8:28), a promise written by Paul to the believers in Rome, which has become a staple of the Christian tradition. This passage is often invoked as a belief in the providence of God, who will allow what He will allow and who will redeem all experience for use in the prophetic purposes of life. I examine this perspective in more detail in the final section of this chapter on "moral harmony."

Again, Stewart's own writing and speaking give ample evidence for her identification with the Christian concept of providence and her demand for righteous and ethical behavior. In fact, nowhere was the cry to her own race to live lives of sanctity more prevalent and more unequivocal than in her "Meditations." These fourteen short, devotional essays were written by Stewart in the 1830s, but were re-published in 1879 (Richardson 79). The meditations vary in their purpose: some are written as accolades to God, others as exhortations to her fellow Christians. Each meditation ends with a prayer calling forth the Almighty to bless her efforts to encourage her fellow man in returning to the God she serves. And in these writings, Stewart makes clear demands of her generation as a Nineteenth Century prophet. She begins in Meditation I, "My friends, I have been sorely troubled in my mind; and why? It is because I have seen that many, who have professed the name of Christ, are not careful to discharge their duty faithfully to their dying fellow immortals around them" (Stewart 25). In other words, her colleagues and fellow believers were not sharing their faith or convictions with those who were dying in their sin all around them. Meditation IV begins, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? […] Have just returned from church-meeting. Did not perceive that Christian spirit of fellowship which ought to exist. […] Is there a Jonah among us, who has refused to obey thy will?" (Stewart 29). And finally, in Meditation IX she writes:

> I have been impressed in my mind […] with the awful idea that God is about to execute upon us the fierceness of his anger, and to pour forth heavy judgments upon this people. And why? Because your sins have reached unto heaven, and your iniquities unto the clouds. (Stewart 38)

Just as Moses heard a divine call to return to the Hebrews as deliverer, Stewart answered the same call after her conversion experience to raise her community's awareness of sin within their ranks. Her message was not primarily to white America; it was primarily to an audience of her own community and race who were living, in her opinion, well below the abundance offered them by God. Her rhetoric is filled with cries to her community to repent from their laziness, from their sin, and from their own mistakes to be men and women of honor and high moral character. Her writing and speaking are full of direct pleas and impassioned demands of those she knew from her church, from her neighborhood, and from her community.[3] As a prophet, she directly addressed this group, because the Hebrew prophets she invoked were called predominantly to speak to their own people as well, and they did so throughout the scriptures Stewart studied.

Stewart's calls to her community not only invoked the prophets, she used the Old Testament for her metaphors and critiques. The prophet Jeremiah was one such example she used to address the "daughters of Africa." I return to Stewart's first published tract of 1831, a small pamphlet that laid out her appeal to her own generation for repentance and ensuing virtue. She begins, "O ye daughters of Africa, awake! Awake! Arise! No longer sleep nor slumber, but distinguish yourselves" (Stewart 6). She continues,

> When I consider how little improvement has been made the last eight years; the apparent cold and indifferent state of the children of God; […] when I see the greater part of our community following the vain bubbles of life with so much

[3] Richard and Madigan both note that Stewart was at various times a member of various mainline denominations of the Nineteenth Century including Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian.

> eagerness, which will only prove to them like the serpent's sting upon the bed of death, I really think we are in as wretched and miserable a state as was the house of Israel in the days of Jeremiah. (Stewart 8)

A foundational knowledge of the book of Jeremiah and his pleadings with the people of Israel is necessary here to understand Stewart's reference. Jeremiah was a prophet of the "thirteenth year of Josiah" (Jeremiah 1:2) or 626 B.C. According to the biblical narrative, Jeremiah was called by God to speak to the people of Israel about their iniquities. He writes in Jeremiah 2:5, "Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?" Jeremiah, like Stewart, returns the Jews to their heritage by calling to their remembrance their exodus from Egypt. He writes in Jeremiah 2:6, "Neither said they, Where [is] the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?" After their deliverance and their removal, they turned to the idols of their new land and worshiped images made by their own hands, rather than the one true God, the *Yahweh* of Israel. Stewart expresses the same holy indignation as Jeremiah as she appeals to her own to turn from what she saw as wickedness and serve the true God to whom she had given her allegiance. Her work is full of such references to her own to leave behind what she sees as lives of sin and shame. In her "Lecture Delivered at Franklin Hall" in September of 1832, she states, "Let our girls possess whatever amiable qualities of soul they may; let their characters be fair and spotless as innocence itself…" (Richardson 46). Again in "An Address Delivered Before the African

American Female Intelligence Society of America," Stewart exhorted the women present, "Ah, methinks I see this people lying in wickedness; and as the Lord liveth, and as your souls live, were it not for the few righteous that are to be found among us, we should become as Sodom, and like unto Gomorrah" (Richardson 51). She did not spare her own countrymen from her rhetoric. She believed that to be delivered from their slavery, God required of them lives of purity and chastity, or to be more blunt, lives that were lived like hers, according to the Bible. She had experienced a life-changing conversion that had called her into action. She demanded this same response and action from those around her.

It is from the prophet Jeremiah that we get the term "jeremiad." The jeremiad has served as a descriptor for prophetic rhetoric in its most generalized form. Indeed, Logan asserts in her work that Stewart's rhetoric supports a "jeremiadic theme" (31). But Joycelyn Moody in her work *Sentimental Confessions: Spiritual Narratives of Nineteenth Century African American Women* argues against this description. She writes that Stewart's speaking is not so clearly cast in the mode of the jeremiad, because the jeremiad itself "assumes the power of the patriarch […] Stewart does not write or speak with absolute patriarchal authority" (Moody 30). Moody confirms the positioning of Stewart as prophet rather than as purveyor of prophetic rhetoric in the form of the jeremiad when she writes, "Stewart takes on the mantle of the prophet as well in her self-effacing manner, pointing to God's greatness and her own unworthiness" (41). Stewart also speaks continually of hope and possibility of change, another direct connection to the prophets. Shulman's work is also informative here, for he argues that the jeremiad is just one of the rhetorical forms the prophet used in the

Hebrew tradition. Beyond this oft-applied form, prophets spoke in the forms of theodicy and lament as well. In the first form, theodicy, the prophet —links agency, punishment, and forgiveness" (Shulman 6). Because the community can act otherwise, they will be punished for actions disobedient to God. The lament is the cry for the sins of the people that the prophet often makes directly to God. Stewart's rhetoric evinces all three of these forms and again reminds us that she did not use one form only, but lived a life that embodied the prophet in its various forms.

This point is clearly evidenced in Stewart's farewell address. Stewart uses the prophet's rhetoric again saving her harshest criticism for her own people, she states: —Wherefore, my respected friends, let us no longer talk of prejudice, till prejudice becomes extinct at home. Let us no longer talk of opposition, till we cease to oppose our own. For while these evils exist, to talk is like giving breath to the air, and labor to the wind" (Richardson 71). Here at the end of her renown as a political speaker and activist, when last words would be remembered like those on the lips of a departing friend, Stewart returned to the focus of her call, the chastity and purity of her own people, particularly women and men living righteously, identified by outward acts of piety, and symbolic of lives given to private prayer and Bible study. Certainly she would want to leave her audience with a final word that contained her most essential message. This message was that change had to begin at home, or within one's own heart, as she saw it.

Prophetic Roots in the Black Church

Stewart's prophetic lifestyle, and those of many other African-Americans in the Abolition and Civil Rights movements is not unusual in light of black churches and

their ability to meld their roles of institutions of faith and of social change. The black Christian church has effectively remained part of the social fabric of the black community, while predominantly white, churches have distanced themselves physically and figuratively from the social and civic struggles of their poorest members. One of the simplest explanations for this difference is the physical location of white churches. Since the mid-20th century, mainline denominations have been part of an exodus from inner city communities that have become increasingly bastions of poor, ethnic minority groups. Their flight has taken them to the suburbs, where there is an equally strong representation of white, middle class professionals. The physical relocation of churches has meant a change in focus that has occurred for almost fifty years. White churches are no longer central to the discussion of poverty, health care, and other social issues, because in many cases, they are simply not close enough to the people who struggle with these issues daily. The geographic trend to buy property and build institutions in suburbs that are removed from the life of the oppressed means white Christians (particularly the middle to upper class) also have the privilege of remaining detached from and ignorant of the everyday struggles of the poor. Furthermore, suburban locations allow the white church to also contribute to the looming oil and energy crises that plague our nation. For example, in urban centers like the Dallas/Ft. Worth metroplex, members of churches often drive 100 miles round-trip to and from church on a given Sunday. Their failure to be generous with their wealth and of their property calls to mind Isaiah's stunning rebuke to the Hebrews.

In addition to their physical removal from social engagement, white congregations have also failed to inspire their members to civic action because of a

history as the oppressors rather than the oppressed. The black church found in slavery and oppression the soil for a deep faith that was born in the heat of the battle. Slaves found in the church the one place where they could express themselves completely. Cornel West describes black Christianity in this way: "The African appropriation of Euro-American Christianity was, in part, the result of the black encounter with the absurd; that is, an attempt to make sense out of a meaningless and senseless predicament" (West *Prophetic Fragments* 43). He notes that blacks overwhelmingly adopted the "Baptist polity," meaning they could control their own churches: who could join, who could preach, etc. "This setting served as the crucible for not simply distinctive Afro-American cultural products but also for much of the unique American cultural contributions to the world—including the spirituals, blues, and jazz" (West 43). The black church has found a clear connection to the prophets because of their own oppression and the obvious parallels between the exodus of the Hebrews and the Euro-American imposed slavery they endured for so long.

West perhaps best articulates his vision of the prophetic in his 1988 work *Prophetic Fragments: Illuminations of the Crisis in American Religion & Culture*. In this book, West specifically outlines the role of prophetic Christianity writing, "Therefore the distinctive features of prophetic activity are Pascalian leaps of faith in the capacity of human beings to transform their circumstances, engage in relentless criticism and self-criticism, and project visions, analyses, and practices of social freedom" (West 38). West emphasizes the ideas of the agency of human effort, the "entrepreneurial ethic" that abounds in American history (38). But he goes on to describe the importance of the prophetic, "Black prophetic practices can be generally

characterized by three basic features: *a deep-seated moralism, an inescapable opportunism,* and *an aggressive pessimism*" (West 41). The first two of these features may be generally accepted or recognizable. Certainly we expect an ideology rooted in Christianity to include a deep moralism. We can also trace the prophetic efforts of the Afro-American tradition to clear historical moments of opportunism. But this final idea of ~~"a~~ggressive pessimism" is shocking I think, especially in light of West's ties to pragmatism and its inherent and understood action for change. But West does not expect the prophetic movement to make great strides or achieve great victories. In fact, he advances the very notion of a utopian vision in his work. I utilize a lengthy citation here to elucidate this important idea:

> [I]f prophetic practices radically call into question the orthodoxy of American-style liberalism they are either repudiated or repressed; and if they accept the perimeters of this orthodoxy they are effectively domesticated and absorbed by the powers that be. This clever American way of dealing with prophetic critiques has produced a marvelously stable society; it also has reduced the capacity of this society to grow and develop. (West 40)

West acknowledges in stark reality here the impossibility of the task of bringing about change that is radical and revolutionary in a country like the United States, where most change that is deemed acceptable is co-opted into the next capitalist, hegemonic maneuver. Instead, West seems to be returning to the traditional, Old Testament, biblical tradition of the Hebrew prophet. By appealing to this tradition, we see that wholesale change is not the measure of success for the prophet, rather an obedience to the inward call, doing what he has been called to do. These biblical characters whom

we often envision as crazy-looking old men with long white beards were not graded on the response to their messages, rather they were judged by their giving of the message to those to whom they were sent.

The prophet's role is obviously one of messenger, not one of great leader. West points to this when he writes, "Black prophetic practices best exemplify the truncated content and character of American prophetic practices; they reveal the strengths and shortcomings, the importance and impotence, of prophetic activities in recalcitrant America" (West 41). He seems to understand that the failure of the mission is possible, even probable. But it is still a mission worth undertaking. West describes the prophetic black tradition as one of important political involvement:

> Although prophetic black Christians shunned religious language to couch their public concerns, they refused to trivialize their Christian faith by relegating it to mere private affairs. Instead they knew that their role as public Christians in a pluralistic capitalist democracy required a language of rights that permitted and protected other life-styles as well as their own. Far better than the most visible interlocutors in the present public conversation, prophetic black Christians have understood that to be religious, especially Christian, is to be political; and to be political in modern nations is to be moralistic in rhetoric, legalistic in impact. And the empowerment of the downtrodden has been at the center of their vision. (24)

The prophetic nature of the ideology West proposes takes pragmatism to the Afro-American community through the Christian movement. It adds to the philosophy of an everyday working out of our democracy, a divinely-inspired impetus that sees all

people as children of God and created beings. West's black, prophetic stance creates an environment that allows for the salvation of souls in real, materialistic terms, beyond the spiritual salvation he adheres to as a believing Christian.

Quite simply, there has been no need for such civic engagement, for such prophetic activity in the white church because of its hegemonic status. The middle to upper class, white church, for the most part, has not experienced such oppression. Instead, members of white congregations have enjoyed relatively smooth sailing. The predominantly white church has had no reason to band together against oppression. With government complicity and strong representation, the church has lost its need for the prophetic voice and imagination the black church has found so compelling. As West notes, "The more culturally grounded political plane must be deeply rooted in the everyday lives of ordinary people—people who have the ability and capacity to change the world and govern themselves under circumstances not of their own choosing" (West 49). Members of white churches have no need to delve into the biblically prophetic, because their lives have been conducted under white governmental institutions that have supported their lifestyles, lined their pockets with wealth, and kept the rest of the world at bay.

The difference in the black and white church has therefore caused a great divide in the way each exists and works in the everyday world. Unfortunately, for those of us who are members of the white church, this presents a barrier to our own good faith civic engagement.[4] In many ways, due to our literally, *rich* history, we have no

[4] I expressly use the phrase "good faith civic engagement," because the religious right and some other extremist fundamentalists have engaged in a form of civic action that alienates those

precedent from which to operate. We have very few models of activism or even engagement with the social and civic communities in which we all live. Unfortunately, we are the oppressors, we are the institutions, and we have not recognized our compromised positions to the point of critiquing them. The prophetic witness is necessary, but it has never been utilized in the white religious community to the degree of our black brothers and sisters. West notes the decay of our religion and our culture when we ignore both in light of wealth. His caution is that we in the white community ignore religion —to ouperil" (68).

Indeed, my lament is the same. As I have described from the beginning of this work, a failure to engage ourselves and our students in spiritual issues has left us with hopeless classrooms and few possibilities for human agency inside or outside the academy. My desire to see us move to a prophetic pedagogy does not require a Christian conversion experience. Stewart's engagement flowed from more than this experience alone. And we must not forget that the Hebrew prophets themselves were not Christian. However, such experiences, in prophetic teaching, are welcomed as authentic and viable motivations for speaking and writing. I am asking that our pedagogy honor the spirituality of students and ourselves by acknowledging the humanity of all, embracing a compassionate response, and using this as our impetus to foster an environment that sees all experience as informing possibility. In such a pedagogy, we will see our work as that of coming alongside students and working with them. Rather than erecting barriers of elitism that wall us off from our students, we will be unafraid to learn from them and alongside them, even if their political or religious

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outside their community, demonizing the left as well as any other group that does not bow to their terms.

choices have been decidedly different from our own. This pedagogy will ultimately embrace humanity as created beings who have purpose and worth – inherently. It will see the work of composition (the learning and the teaching) as preparation for a life invested in the human condition. And instead of teaching composition as argumentative strategy, it will focus on collegial writing that fosters dialogue, that respects others, and that invites conversation. It will advocate a civil life, conscious of all decisions as they affect humanity. It will abandon the tendency of religious fundamentalism to demonize the other and retreat into an ~~"u~~s against them" position. It will abandon the tendency of academic fundamentalism to ignore the student (other) and retreat into a self-promoting or self-centered ~~"i~~vory tower" position.

Prophetic Possibilities

A historical precursor to West's prophetic pragmatism is the social activist and Civil Rights demonstrator, Abraham Heschel. In his foundational work *The Prophets*, Heschel spends an entire chapter talking about the prophet's inspiration and wrestling with the various inner thrusts that could have moved prophets to respond the way they did. One of the possibilities he offers is that inspiration may be a persistent paying attention including, ~~"m~~ental alertness and breadth, ethical depth and religious exaltation" (Heschel 531). There is certainly some truth to this claim in light of the calling of Moses. When Moses is tending his father-in-law's flocks, the Hebrew scripture states explicitly, ~~"S~~o Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.' When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him…" (Exodus 3:3-4). Apparently, God waited for Moses' response to his sign, for Moses' attention to the matter of the burning bush,

before proceeding with the call. Could our own inspiration as teachers and humans be impaired by our lack of attention to the humanity and experience of our students?

The prophet gives us an ideal model of a person who is engaged socially, spiritually, and communally. Upon his call as leader, the prophet maintained identification with the community. The prophet never ceased being a member of the community, unlike some tenured professors, who decry the oppressive and hierarchical institutional structures in which their lifelong membership in the academy is maintained. Their subsequent elitism ensures the perpetuating of a cycle that effectively silences first-year students, with whom they often refuse to interact. Remarkably, these academic elites have forgotten that they are not part of the educational community simply by virtue of their teaching status; they remain a part of the educational community because they too rose through the ranks of student to professor. While they often assert their authority in the hierarchy, they lose their identification with the student, when it is as student that they entered the community in the first place. Prophetic rhetorical strategies demand an authentic interaction between student and teacher and return to Freire's original demand: that the student/teacher dichotomy be converted into a reciprocal, collaborative, cointentional relationship.

Second, the prophet worked out of and was motivated by love – love for the community with whom he identified. Divine pathos energized his identification, motivated his every action, and inspired his patient exhortation. Results were secondary to the primary call of identification through love. And he did not love at a distance. He did not identify in name only. He lived with the community and worked for their betterment through his rhetorical activity and his physical behavior as well.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, all maintained identification within the Hebrew community. They lived within the community, worked within the community, critiqued the community, but remained members of the community.

Third, methods were important only in the sense that they demonstrated the prophet's identification with and love for the community. Curricular decisions must be made in the context of a change in attitude and environment. Methodologies, course materials, and pragmatic decisions must be made from a pathos-centered love. I will acknowledge that I find it, as a believer, much easier to work from this center. At the same time, I have many colleagues who are not Christians, and yet who do operate in a way that honors students and values their experience and identify as peer scholars. Prophetic pedagogy is nothing less than a revolution in the student/teacher relationship. However, it is not a new revolution, it is a return to the original reformation Freire articulated decades ago, and the Hebrew prophets before him.

Moral Harmony in the Prophet's Life & Work

Before I leave this chapter to pursue an application of prophetic pedagogy in the Highlander Folk School, I must emphasize one final conceptual framework that is important in understanding the prophet: moral harmony. In both Moses and Stewart, complex influences and complicated identities are of critical importance to their work. In both, we see past decisions, diverse experiences, and even oppressive institutions playing critical roles in their lives as prophets. Jewish scholar Ahad Ha'am borrowed the premise of "moral harmony" from the ancient Greeks (Ahad Ha'am 128). In his 1912 publication *Selected Essays*, Ahad Ha-am described the significance of moral harmony to the prophet – the complexity that he described of a life lived in the face of

various oppositional forces serves as a back drop for both Moses and Stewart. The concept is described in his essay on "Priest and Prophet" where he describes the centrifugal forces at work in the lives of all human beings as they live. According to Ahad Ha'am, forces are at work in the soul of every human that affect everyday actions. These forces may be described in essentialist terms as good and evil, neither giving an inch, neither willing to compromise, each working for its own purposes. In some traditions, these forces are not dualistically described, but are rather multivalent; they are "communities" of influence still maintaining the same intensity as those just described, unwilling to give in, unwilling to compromise, exerting their particular direction of influence without consideration of any other (Ahad Ha'am 125-128). Diverse influences, whether viewed as dual or as multi-faceted, are significant for their application to society as a whole. Since as individuals we are susceptible to such forces, so are society, culture, and religion. Effects grow from the interaction of these forces pushing against one another, and they are felt in all of our lives. The actions of any society work similarly, as those who support and those who oppose certain laws or actions continue to hold to their positions. Working against one another, bumping up against one another, results in actions, in movements, in cultural crises, in progress, or in reformation.

The concept of moral harmony would seem to suggest that the evil or negative influence or status quo is as important in any particular religious or social movement as the Grand Idea (for which the prophet works) itself. Without its counter, without the opposition, the movement or "Idea", as Ahad Ha'am continually refers to it, would not gain the place in society or culture that it does; it would not gain any effect without an

alternate counter-force. The synergy of the idea and its antithesis suggests more than an oppositional relationship; it suggests a mutual dependence. Certainly there is no hope of ever living in a state where the oppositional force does not exist at all. This leads to an equally interesting notion of the prophet's identity itself. Without oppositional forces, what would the identity of the prophet be? The prophet is in a sense created out of these negative influences as much as out of the positive, for without the opposition, against what would he speak?

The Hebrew Bible is replete with examples of such opposition. Each time the prophets spoke, they spoke out against forces or behaviors whose ultimate acceptance would mean the demise of the nation. They were the moral authorities of their times and found themselves in a dynamic tension between hearing from God above, getting his word, and then giving that word to humankind, or the nation they too were a part of (Stillman). But the threat to the community of faith for the Israelites was not an outside nation or religion, it was the disobedience of the chosen ones themselves. The prophets particularly spoke out against any activity of the Israelite faithful that served as an obstacle to their particularized mission on earth: bearing witness to the one, true God. The writings of the prophet Isaiah confirm the internal focus of the prophet:

> I the LORD, in My grace, have summoned you, And I have grasped you by the hand. I created you, and appointed you a covenant people, a light of nations – Opening eyes deprived of light, Rescuing prisoners from confinement, From the dungeon those who sit in darkness. (Isaiah 42:6-7)

The prophet spoke out against anything that was considered unrighteous, anything that would stand between the people and the Almighty God. Significantly, the prophet's

word focused on the community's behavior. People were either holy and righteous or deceived, and this was evidenced through outward activity. He did not speak out against those who would overtake the nation from without; the greatest threat was the disobedience and idolatry within, idolatry defined as any behavior or activity that was given priority over the maintenance of the cult.

The prophet was so convinced of the community's need for repentance and restoration that he became a primal force on the nation and its members. The quintessence of this primal force is the prophet's identification with the very community to whom he is called to speak. He speaks and acts as a member of the nation; he is not only a deliverer of God's message, he is also one of those to whom the message is sent: "The prophet is both a recipient and a participant" (EJ 1152). Since the prophet does function in both roles, he loses neither his personality nor his identity in the role: "The divine message is refracted through the human prism. […] The divine revelation is delivered by a human agent" (EJ 1152). Unlike the mystic tradition, where the mystic becomes absorbed in the presence of God or loses his identity in the personality of the divine, the prophet maintains a unique personality. Heschel in his work *The Prophets* describes the prophet's role as one of "identification" with his people (7). And he importantly points out that this identification is not a momentary one, it is a lifetime commitment to a people of whom he is a member already. The classical prophets in particular demonstrate this primal force of which Ahad Ha'am speaks.

Both Moses and Stewart exhibit identities that first are crucial to the adoption of the Idea, in Ahad Ha'am's terms. Their lives are testaments to single-minded, focused

persistence to the idea of exodus and freedom for their respective communities from oppressive societies. Both prophets were born in the midst of circumstances that could be considered negative but served to propel them into positions of leadership within their communities. Both identified intimately with the communities they inhabited and the communities that served as oppressors. And both spoke out of hopeful possibilities to their people to create possibilities for futures of freedom and promise.

The Call of the Teacher

The call of the Hebrew prophet and its application to composition pedagogy goes well beyond simply deploying a particular style of rhetoric. While prophetic rhetoric is an accepted style of rhetorical engagement, in this chapter I have focused on a prophetic identity: an embodied praxis that is engaged on a daily basis in a style of teaching that is enmeshed in the humanity of students and teachers. My argument depends on a character who embodies a particular way of teaching rather than simply deploys a certain style of persuasion. In this chapter, my goal has been to give evidence of individuals who embodied the prophetic model, engaging in the public sphere rather than withdrawing from it, focusing on their own communities rather than condemning those outside of them, and creating hopeful imagination and possibilities through their praxis. If we are to call for such engagement in our students, and if we are to have models of such engagement from which to pattern our own teaching, we need to see such faith and work in action. Certainly we have enough models of spiritual and academic apocalypticists who withdraw from the civic realm after determining they alone are the good faith participants, marking everyone else off as infidels. I want no part of such a stance. My faith demands an absolutely invested effort in the realm of

the public sphere. We need models of men and women whose lives mirror a conflation of influences. The foundation of my description has been an examination of Maria W. Stewart, who indeed ended her life as a teacher. After her public life was over as a speaker and writer, she retired from the spotlight but became a teacher and founded her own school for black children.[5] We have evidence of Stewart's teaching but very little detailed information about her work (Gardner 156). The pedagogy I am promoting takes the grist of all influences and uses them as the fodder for the ongoing discourse and work of the teacher/student relationship. A prophetic pedagogy encompasses all of the influences and experiences that we bring into these relationships, as well as those our students offer. Prophetic pedagogy is about more than just a type of rhetoric, it is about a holistic approach to teaching and learning and living.

As Daniell astutely discovers in "Narratives of Literacy: Connecting Composition to Culture," we are willing to make "leap(s) of faith" with every other system we study: culture, ethnicity, gender, and lifestyle. We avoid essentializing the rhetor. We respect her experience and honor her subject position as valid, even though we ourselves are other. But we often take a very different stance when it comes to the rhetoric of religion and spirituality. Here, we draw a line. Religion is to remain private, personal. And once it is revealed as motivation or as foundation for thought, it is questioned as inauthentic; it is examined as "persuasion" rather than seen as a viable choice. I have often been encouraged to keep my own faith private; as long as it remains there, everyone is assured of no controversy, no uncomfortable conversations, no dialogue. Religious viewpoints and spiritual matters have become in our time the

[5] Stewart also continued to write. We now have evidence, as published in the January 2008 issue of *PMLA* of publications Stewart was responsible for as late as 1879.

content of the inner life. When such issues are brought into public forums, discomfort ensues, or worse, dogmatic confrontations. But Stewart's example clearly indicates that the spiritual life can be a source of civic engagement. For her, and for many like her (myself included), the division between sacred and secular is a false binary. Stewart's faith informed everything she did and everything she was. However, the converse was true for her as well: the secular influence of her day was just as influential as her spiritual awakening. Stewart's loss of the two most significant individuals in her life, which led to her conversion experience, motivated her to enter the public milieu and the very intense work of abolition.

In order to ground this discussion in a manner that is accessible to our field and discipline, I have turned to the issue of audience, for it is in this concept I feel I can most clearly elucidate the gap I see in our scholarship of Stewart and her practice as prophet. Stewart was first and foremost a follower. She lived for an Audience of One. Her rhetoric was first and foremost to please God and no one else. In this sense, she was not primarily a persuader, but a follower and pleaser of God Almighty. In all the descriptions and analyses of Stewart's rhetoric, this primary position is completely overlooked. No theorist, no author looks at this primary focus of her life and work. By so doing, I hope to extend the argument that as composition teachers, we too can embody such an agent of change, enacting a pedagogy that is based on an investment in our own and our students' humanity, honestly acknowledging the experiences of everyone in the classroom, and encouraging our students toward hope-filled agency, even in light of the dehumanization they experience in the oppressive structures of our society and our institutions.

In the next chapter, I will extend this argument by examining an example of prophetic embodiment in an educational setting: the Highlander Folk School led by Myles Horton.

Chapter 4: Prophecy & Civil Rights

A Look Back

The era of abolition provides a number of examples of prophetic speeches that motivated audiences to rethink their attitudes toward slavery. While many of these examples were simply persuasive choices, rhetorical choices that would move an audience familiar with biblical prophecy and the Hebrew prophets themselves, some individuals chose to enact the very nature of the prophet. Maria W. Stewart was such a woman. Her faith motivated her to act, not only through her prolific writing and speaking, but also through her teaching at the end of her life. Here she found the way to influence future generations and to work within her community to bring about the social change she so longed for in the abolition of slavery. Her faith did not move her to withdraw from her community or from society in general, like a monk or hermit. Rather, she was even more deeply engaged with the community after her conversion. Faith motivated her to civically engage with her time, her culture, and her community: embracing the role of prophetic rhetor, calling out her own peers to embrace an identity of strong ethics and morality, calling out the religious whites of the period to treat all people equally, and then withdrawing into a quieter and yet even more powerful role of teacher.

Was Stewart simply a woman possessed who rose to prominence at a *kairotic* moment in history? I will argue throughout this chapter that Stewart's example is one of many. Indeed, in the Civil Rights movement, additional prophetic models stand out as examples of engaging the public in real dialogue and motivating citizens for genuine change. The achievements of these two eras are not coincidental; rather they provide

evidence of a way of engaging the public sphere that brings about change that upsets hierarchies and flies in the face of oppressive systems. Prophetic work, through rhetoric and action, can change the world. In this chapter, I extend my examination of prophetic principles into the Twentieth Century.

The authors on whom I depend in this chapter provide ample evidence for the application of prophetic rhetorical strategies to Twenty-First Century contexts. Education is fundamentally a relationship between teachers and students. This foundational human interaction can be complicated and explicated from a number of perspectives, but essentially we must return to a focus on the work that occurs between two human beings. The prophetic rhetorical principles that I develop in this chapter shed light on how our stance as teachers can be utilized in a way that honors students and yet demands their best investment in our collaborative work of teaching and learning. The prophetic model has been applied in many historical moments and is appropriate for ours as well. The same prophetic impetus that compelled the ancient prophets and abolitionist activists, like Stewart, were also at work in the lives of those who lead the Civil Rights Movement. An analysis of this era and the prophetic framework of the Civil Rights movement leads me to an even deeper belief that prophetic principles can serve as a sure foundation for engaged pedagogy.

Forward to Civil Rights

The same prophetic impetus that compelled Maria Stewart to speak and write on behalf of the cause of abolition can be seen in the following century as well, when the Civil Rights movement grew out of the soil of the black church. In the 1950s, the black church became the motivating force behind the Civil Rights movement. An examination

of the impetus for action that grew out of this church sheds light on how the social change that was so needed in that era would have been impossible without the religious fervor and motivating energy of the church. This example affirms that prophetic principles are essential to the enactment of significant social change.

The Civil Rights movement stands as an historical monument of social change. In the history of the world, perhaps no other social movement has accomplished so much. As David Chappell writes in the introduction to his work *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow*, "The peculiar racial institution of the twentieth-century South was destroyed by means considerably short of civil war. That makes its destruction in many ways a more rather than a less impressive achievement than the destruction of slavery" (8). In the center of this most significant historical, cultural, and political movement was the black church. And it was from the church that the movement coalesced and finally achieved the purpose for which it began. In this chapter, I analyze the essential influence of the Christian church as faith and spirituality fundamentally empowered the Civil Rights movement. For my analysis, I will use Chappell extensively, as his recent work sheds important light on the deeply spiritual connection between the leaders and grassroots supporters of the movement. Before explicating Chappell's work however, I depend heavily on George Shulman and his 2008 book *American Prophecy: Race & Redemption in American Political Culture*. Shulman's work offers a prophetic heuristic that I believe can be applied to the work of teaching and learning in the Twenty-First Century. His prophetic principles not only ring true for the American political landscape, but also for the significant work of education in our time as well. Ultimately then, Shulman's hypothesis that prophetic principles and ideas have direct implication for

American political culture correspondingly supports my belief that prophetic principles can indeed invigorate critical pedagogy. In the context of my definition, prophetic invigoration means critiquing oppression of our students as defined by Freire as dehumanization; prophetic invigoration would mean infusing our teaching with a love for our students that works alongside them for their good; prophetic invigoration would offer them hopeful inspiration for expectant futures and possibilities in their communities of influence. The three-fold scheme that Shulman describes has direct application to what I envision as our prophetic work in education. Questions of authority, ideas of community and individual responsibility, and issues of agency in light of past oppression are taken directly from the pages of our curriculum as we strive to facilitate positive change in the postmodern era. Consequently, Shulman's work in the area of political culture corroborates the notion that a prophetic approach is not only possible but is perhaps the best prospect of the future of education that makes a difference.

The work of both Shulman and Chappell, the lives of Stewart and King, give material, historical evidence to the fact that prophetic rhetorical strategies can foster social change. These are not abstract approaches that are based only in theory; prophetic rhetorical strategies have been used throughout history to bring about significant change in American society and culture. The common thread among all of them is their spiritual connection to community and therefore relationship. The ancient prophets were relational; they were connected to the community. Those who used the prophets as the models for their own social engagement have lived out the same relational principles in their community action. Since the foundational element of the educational enterprise is the basic relationship of two human beings working collaboratively to accomplish

something together that neither could accomplish alone, the prophetic model offers a profound opportunity for us as educators to restore human interdependence to education. Social change at its most basic occurs between two people; this is the change I am longing to enact with the prophetic rhetorical model.

Shulman writes to connect prophecies and their ancient iterations in the Bible to American history and these real, material demonstrations of this ancient tradition in American history and particularly political history. The Hebrew prophets –were the first to argue, nations (or groups) are formed by forgetting" (Shulman 90). The prophets revealed the division between what the group was and what it said it was in actuality, in its behavior and actions. Consequently, Shulman claims that political use of the prophets was a way to inspire –action from principle" and to separate what America had become from its founding documents that described a country that was something very different (Shulman 91). But his most striking contribution to my work is that prophetic speaking and writing is the basis of much of American political theory, and we can learn from this theory to give energy and vitality to our own action in the postmodern world. My argument is substantiated then by Shulman's tripartite conceptual base of the prophetic: –first, how we conceive the meaning of authority and the practice of judgment" (28). From this point spring questions of authority that we are often, particularly in academe, reticent to answer but that are nonetheless clearly articulated in our way of life and in our way of teaching. These questions include: –What gods do you already serve? What is your animating faith?" (29). While in many academic circles we long to avoid such questions, the truth is that our lives demonstrate our service and our gods on a daily basis. We often disdainfully refuse to allow our students to answer such questions in their

writing (e.g. the issues I raised in chapter one regarding student writing), while we live out an answer to the question moment by moment, as do they. The gods we serve are evident in the way we describe what we value, what we spend our time attending to, what we give our wealth too. These decisions reveal the gods that we serve; describing them in writing is simply a matter of honesty and authenticity.

Secondly, Shulman's prophetic conceptual base includes "how we conceive the meaning of political identification and community" (28). In this area, Shulman asserts, "Prophets ask not whether we identify with others, but with whom and on what basis. As with authority, we can defer the question, but we always answer it in our speech and action" (32). Shulman's idea of identification is especially productive for my discussion here. The Civil Rights movement came to life in a community that was already cohesive: the black church. The network was already established and put to good use by the leaders of the movement. What the Civil Rights movement proves is that civic education occurs in places outside the classroom. And that if we are to encourage and stimulate our students to such activity, we must relinquish the notion that it will have to occur within the confines of our courses. Scholarship of service learning and civic action projects from the classroom have succeeded and failed to varying degrees. What I want to emphasize in this work is that students bring with them built-in communities where such action can take place; our teaching only need encourage the agency they are exercising in the communities to which they already belong. Many of our students, like the grassroots supporters of the Civil Rights movement, are already actively engaged in faith communities that will also provide the avenues of social and civic engagement that we long to see grow out of their work in our classes. We can encourage their action in these

communities, without being members ourselves and without having to construct a ready-made community from our courses. Perhaps one of the reasons we lament students who remain disengaged from politics or service learning is because we are attempting to build a community out of a group of diverse students in a semester-long period. What the Civil Rights movement demonstrated is that the communities that are already cohesive, which already have active members, stand ready to provide the action we seek. Certainly our students are in many cases already participating in such communities.[1] Our encouragement could be just the impetus to strengthen their resolve and move them to act.

Later in this chapter, I will provide historical evidence of education that is prophetic and that occurs outside a traditional classroom: the Highlander Folk School. Highlander shows how identification with a community can occur and how education can provide an impetus for action. I could have used any number of other historical examples: from Sabbath schools in the Nineteenth Century to Jane Addams and Hull House. In describing these alternative educational communities, Nicholas V. Longo writes: "[These cases] reveal a subterranean tradition of outstanding civic education that is rooted in communities" (3). His book, *Why Community Matters: Connecting Education with Civic Life*, is an argument for civic education that looks beyond the classroom, that looks beyond a "restricted view" of education to a more organic model that allows for educational opportunities outside the traditional scope of "schooling" (Longo 3). I want to use his work, that of Shulman and others to argue that our students are already connected to communities, not necessarily the ones that we as instructors find our place

[1] Students already belong to a number of communities (religious, social, cultural, ethnic) that are active in social and political structures.

in, but strong communities nonetheless. By our teaching in the traditional classroom, we can encourage agency and engagement in ways that foster and honor community connections that already exist.

Before I explicate Shulman's third category of prophetic engagement, let me also provide a note from the biblical prophetic perspective on the important notion of community identification, for an obvious danger exists when we speak of identification within community. My religious community has a history of disallowing certain types and categories into its number in the name of God. We are very comfortable excluding homosexuals, excluding women, excluding people of other races, because of an interpretation of God's work and Word in exclusivist terms. I see no hint of this in the prophetic perspective, nor does Walter Brueggemann, the Old Testament scholar on whose research I utilize in this work. In fact, his chapter on community in *Deep Memory, Exuberant Hope: Contested Truth in a Post-Christian World* is based on a passage from Isaiah 56 that ends:

> And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord/to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord,/and to be his servants,/all who keep the Sabbath, and do not profane it,/and hold fast my covenant--/these I will bring to my holy mountain,/and make them joyful in my house of prayer…Thus says the Lord God,/who gathers the outcasts of Israel,/I will gather others to them,/besides those already gathered. (vv. 5-8)

The "Lord God who gathers" is anything but exclusionary in this passage. He sets no boundaries as He identifies who will be allowed to worship him and who He will join to himself. Our identification with a particular community must never preclude the honor

and love of other communities; otherwise, we run the risk of the worst possibilities of group dysfunction in racism and genocide. Just as the Hebrew God originally prophesied to the Israelites that all other nations will be blessed through them and that the ―foreigners" among them will be welcomed just as readily into God's work as those who were born into it, a love of all humanity is essential to this prophetic perspective. Through a motivating and energizing prophetic love, our classrooms should serve as inviting communities where all are gathered and valued. In these spaces, none should be excluded from voice, and the spiritual should be as welcome to write as the atheist.

Finally, Shulman's third connection of the prophetic to our political culture is, ―how we conceive the power and meaning of the past" (28). Here we are forced to answer, ―How do we imagine the constitutive power of *the past*, and how do we *come to terms with it* as a condition of our agency?" (35). We live in a world and teach in a classroom of histories: ours and our students. Both we and they bring narratives of lives lived in ways that objectify us. How do we deal with the dehumanization we all experience, for example, as consumers who are assaulted for our buying power and objectified in the arenas of advertising and marketing? And do we deal with it in such a way that provides opportunities and energy for agency, while many of us (and them) remain in contexts where the power is still held by others? I would turn again to Brueggemann and his work in the Old Testament with regard to the prophetic possibility. Brueggemann speaks to just such issues in his book *Deep Memory, Exuberant Hope: Contested Faith in a Post-Christian World*. In the second chapter of this work, Brueggemann posits that spirituality and allowance for emotion and feeling must replace our over-intellectualized pursuit of wholeness. His desire is that our pasts be brought to

the surface through our testimony and through our often emotional narratives of how we have confronted dehumanization in our own lived experience (Brueggemann *Deep Memory* 19).

The concept of testimony is one I have already visited in this work, in chapter two, regarding the characteristics of prophetic speech. The testimony returns to the forefront here, because again I believe it is a critical piece to the classroom context. Through the use of testimony, students can be allowed to give voice to the past. Brueggemann gives the example of Elie Weisel, Holocaust survivor, who continues to testify of the atrocities he and others endured during this dark history. The memory of this tragedy, according to Weisel, is completely dependent on the testimony of survivors. The tellers are credible, based on their witness and accounts of suffering (Brueggemann *Deep Memory* 20). The same is true of ancient Israel, and of modern-day Jews, who continue to tell the story of the Exodus, who testify to its authenticity and its ramifications. In a particularly stirring account of how the story of the past is testified to future generations, Brueggemann writes:

> So we will tell our sons and daughters—and all those who will listen—that life under the demanding quotas and insistences of the empire is not the only way to have life.[…]We will tell our children about the darkness of Passover, so that they may know another life is possible in the world. The children will be astonished when they realize that the second book of our sacred canon is named ~~"D~~eparture." The dominant version of reality is undermined and subverted by the conviction that staying is not our only option. (19)

The tellers are credible because of their continued witness; they use the past as paving stones for the future. The story is fragile and dependent on each new generation of witnesses. As we will see in later parts of this chapter, these stories continue to motivate through their testimony. The past, its successes and its failures, can motivate, just as it did for the Civil Rights movement, but only if the testimony of credible witnesses continues. And indeed, our students are the same witnesses to tragedy, to beauty, to spirituality, to culture, and their testimonies can flourish in a classroom that values and embraces their authenticity, whether it is a testimony we personally adhere to or not.

Applications of Shulman's Prophetic Scaffold

I will use the American prophetic base that Shulman establishes as a base for a scaffolding of ideas that continue to corroborate the idea of prophetic engagement as a real and material alternative in education and in our daily work with students, because he so clearly establishes the use of the prophetic as an American phenomenon, based on the Hebrew example. This application of the prophetic is also spiritual in nature, born from a substantial spiritual tradition. The fervor of the tradition includes an intellectual component certainly, but an affective one as well. The prophetic is by nature a holistic approach to life and faith, as opposed to the dichotomous identity in current fashion. My next level of engagement then, is with the idea that people, including young people such as the university undergraduates with whom we consistently work, are often living more integrated lives than we academics are; consequently, their desire to serve or to engage in social critique is often born in an emotional rather than an intellectual response; they are often emotionally drawn into activism. For example, students may be drawn into a cause by images of suffering, never making the intellectual connection to their own habits of

consumerism as connected to worldwide economic factors that may cause such suffering. However, the initial, emotional response may lead to deeper consideration of intellectual concepts. An emotional response to oppression or injustice often leads to spiritual exploration as well, to ideas of truth and ethical behavior that are present in many religious traditions. Spiritual exploration can also serve as motivation to social action, because it effectively demands something of us as human beings. It requires more than intellectual commitment, it is a holistic investment of not only our minds, but our emotions as well (Grossberg 385). And indeed this promise is significant for marginalized groups particularly who often find their voice in social movements (Herndl Bauer 559).

The integration of affective and intellectual elements of faith into the daily life of the individual was not so hard to fathom historically, and certainly there is ample evidence of the marriage of rhetoric and religion that supports this as well. Kathy Eden in —Koinonia and the Friendship Between Rhetoric and Religion" highlights the importance of the linkage of Christian practices to daily living in Erasmus' *koinonia*. She writes, —This common intellectual store, as Erasmus so keenly noticed in the adage that introduces his own treasury of the collective wisdom of the ancients, marks a defining feature of the long-standing friendship between Pythagorean, Platonist, and Christian as well as between rhetoric and religion" (317). Eden describes the literary form of the proverb as one that figures this cooperation. The proverb is a distinct literary form and yet it belongs to the community and is used to pass along wisdom that has been gained from experience. Erasmus used the proverb in his adages to describe the importance of religion that is tied to community, spirituality that is active. *Koinonia* is a New

Testament concept that refers simply to the believer's faithful relationship to God and humble service to the community of humanity, both strands being essential for true *koinonia* to be achieved. *Koinonia* represents the best possibility of what can go right when faith intersects intellectual activity, for it focuses on an internal relationship of faith that is held responsible for concrete acts of kindness, and for rhetoric that is ultimately and equally concerned for both the upward and outward reach of faith.

Many social justice movements have developed from such seeds of faith: abolitionism in the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries and the Catholic Worker movement of the 20th century are just two examples. Numerous activists from these movements rose from religious traditions to engage their culture in significant social issues of their day. Perhaps nowhere is this engagement more visible than in the Civil Rights movement of the 20th century. In *Rhetoric, Religion and the Civil Rights Movement 1954-1965*, Editors Davis Houck and David Dixon offer a compilation of rhetorical performances that clearly portray the significant connection of the Christian faithful to the work of social change. As Benjamin Mays explains, speaking to the World Council of Churches, "The struggles of the colored people everywhere for freedom, and a new emphasis on the meaning of the Gospel in our time have made us embarrassedly aware of the wide gulf that frequently exists between our Gospel and our practice" (56). J.R. Brockhoff speaking at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Atlanta, Georgia, "Through the church today Christ is disturbing our society for its social evils. Are we brave enough today to face these issues in the light of Christ's teaching and example?" (69). Rev. Duncan Howlett speaking at All Souls church in Washington, D.C., "the civil rights movement is a moral movement […] It is also religious. It grows straight out of

the Judeo-Christian tradition, as have we all" (884). We perhaps risk not only stunting the intellectual and spiritual development of our students when we forbid their religious experience to be part of our classroom work, we may very well be limiting the social justice and activism that may occur through the rhetorical and civic engagement of our students as they grow into mature citizens of our democracy. It is no coincidence that the Civil Rights movement grew to full flower in the greenhouse of the black church: a religious institution that is known for its integration of political, social, cultural, educational, and ecclesiastical dimensions. We in the academy should take note of this model of integration and reflect on the implications of methodologies that do or do not embrace such cooperation of influences and ideas.

Why does academe disallow the motivation of religion so often? Why are we not free as scholars who are religious to use our religion as a similar motivation to that of culture or ethnicity or gender? I am not the first writer to raise such questions. In fact, in March of 1982, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend raised the issue in a *Washington Post* editorial entitled "Why Are Liberals Afraid of God?" She takes her readers to task for leaving religion to right-wingers, adding the interesting point that "liberals who mock the idea of sin and punishment and find evangelists particularly odious are often able to tolerate and even applaud this type of religiosity among blacks." Perhaps one of the reasons for this is a fear of emotional fervor. Our academic history valorizes the intellectual pursuit over the emotional. In addition, as bell hooks has significantly described, affective response is often seen as an inappropriate response in the classroom (REF). We could be fearful of emotion in our classrooms and our work with students as well. As I noted in chapter one, we have also seen the negative response of other students

to the overly passionate religious outburst from students who are emotionally invested in their rhetoric. New work by Lynn Worsham in this area is significant. Worsham argues that none of us work in a vacuum where we are governed only by logic. Indeed, prejudice often begins from an emotional dislike of the other, rather than from a logical evaluation (Worsham 105). Consequently, we must acknowledge the emotional impetus of much of our work and much of our feeling. We must also honor this in our students. While we can balance our emotions with our ways of thinking and the influence of ideas, we must acknowledge both as motivation. The movement that I examine in this chapter was indeed an emotional one. The Civil Rights struggle was far from a purely intellectual pursuit. In his significant work on the movement, historian David Chappell dispels this myth:

> It is hard to imagine masses of people lining up for years of excruciating risk against southern sheriffs, fire hoses, and attack dogs without some transcendent or millennial faith to sustain them. It is hard to imagine such faith being sustained without emotional mass rituals – without something extreme and extraordinary to link the masses' spirits. It is impossible to ignore how often the participants carried their movement out in prophetic, ecstatic biblical tones. In this age of declining faith in revolution, the tradition of revivalist religion – commonly understood to be opposite of revolution, indeed the most potent form of the opiate of the masses – might supply the raw materials of successful social change in the future. (102)

For Chappell, the movement was not primarily a political movement that was fed by the fire of the religious; instead, he argues that the movement was not expressly a political

movement, but rather a religious one. Shulman bases much of his work on applying the prophetic to American political culture on these findings.

The prophetic principles of imperial critique, anguished grief by the oppressed of society, and an energized hope for a future imagined differently are at the center of Chappell's historical analysis of the Civil Rights Movement. In the face of additional evidence of social change enacted by ordinary citizens energized by love for humanity, my promotion of a prophetically inspired pedagogy is reinforced. Here again, in the Civil Rights Movement, the biblical foundation of prophetic action becomes the cornerstone of social change.

Chappell makes a unique contribution to scholarship on the Civil Rights Movement through his willingness to assert that the movement depended absolutely on its religious and spiritual nature. He writes:

> It may be misleading to view the civil rights movement as a social and political event that had religious overtones. The words of many participants suggest that it was, for them, primarily a religious event, whose social and political aspects were, in their minds, secondary or incidental. To take the testimony of intense religious transformation seriously is to consider the civil rights movement as part of the historical tradition of religious revivals, such as the so-called First and Second Great Awakenings, as much as it is part of the tradition of protest movements such as abolitionism, populism, feminism, and the labor movement. (Chappell 87)

Chappell endeavors, throughout his work, to build a case for the spiritual foundation of the entire Civil Rights movement. And significant aspects of his research are enlightening to my argument that critical pedagogy suffers from the lack of a spiritual center. His 2004

book *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* is based on a conceptual foundation that I would like to apply to the support of a prophetic stance in critical pedagogy. Chappell's work has been described as one of the three or four best works on the Civil Rights movement (Atlantic Monthly). Chappell's work is central to my argument because he expressly defines the Civil Rights movement as religious and describes it in terms of a ~~p~~rophetic history."

The Prophetic History of Civil Rights

What Chappell's history demonstrates is the multi-faceted nature of the prophetic stance: how it served as the motivation for key leaders of the movement and worked through the black church without requiring adherence to any religious dogma, how it provided an essential complement to the liberal progressive work of the period, and finally how it ensured a realistic/pragmatic outlook for those working within the movement. This framework corresponds to the work of my previous chapters that describes the Hebrew prophets and the keys to understanding their stance in the community. But an analysis of Chappell's work goes a step further in applying these keys to a modern, cultural movement, portending I believe, that such a stance can be applied to other cultural aspects of our material lives. I will examine each of these keys in turn then.

The first application Chappell makes is to the motivation of key leaders. Clearly, the best example of this is in the writing and speaking of Martin Luther King, Jr. King significantly depended on the Old Testament prophetic teachings for his own approach to oppression. Highly educated, unlike many blacks of the day, King entered Crozer Theological Seminary in 1948 (after undergraduate study at Morehouse College) and then graduate school beginning in 1951 at Boston University (*Autobiography* King). In

both academic settings, he was able to add to the basic Baptist roots of his faith a stirring intellectual tradition as well. Much of this is documented by Clayborne Carson in one of his essays for the ~~"~~King Papers Project," ~~"~~Martin Luther King, Jr., and the African-American Social Gospel." In this essay, Carson documents King's religious and intellectual tradition and notes the way that King was able to integrate the two into a holistic view of society and the fight for equality. In his documentation, Carson articulates the delicate balance King negotiated between his Baptist, fundamentalist upbringing and his academic, intellectual pursuits. King did not want to fall into the fundamentalism of his upbringing, and yet at the same time, he did not want to lose the energizing force of his Baptist tradition's personalized God, a God who was righteous and active in history. Carson writes,

> Forging an eclectic synthesis from such diverse sources as personalism, theological liberalism, neo-orthodox theology, and the activist, Bible-centered religion of his heritage, King affirmed his abiding faith in a God who was both a comforting personal presence and a powerful spiritual force acting in history for righteousness. (8)

According to King's own work throughout his undergraduate and graduate school experiences, he consistently worked to synthesize the Baptist faith he had grown up with as a child with the intellectual traditions he was exposed to as an academic. And his model for such work was the Hebrew prophet fulfilled in ~~"~~the suffering servant."

From Judaism to Christianity

An explication of the suffering servant is significant, because it is through this image and others like it, that the Jewish tradition of the Hebrew prophet becomes a

powerful impetus for the Christian faith and for Christian believers (like Stewart, King, Freire, and others) who participate in this tradition. Without the New Testament fulfillment of the concept of the suffering servant from the Old Testament, the Hebrew prophet remains an ancient figure relegated to Jewish history. But through the suffering servant, the prophet is brought into the New Testament, into contemporary applications of the prophetic by Christian believers throughout history, and finally into the postmodern manifestations of prophetic rhetoric and prophetic pedagogy that I make in this work. The suffering servant is a biblical model used in the Hebrew scripture to characterize the One who would come to rescue the Hebrew race from the constant oppression of dominating governments. The scriptural reference to the suffering servant can be found in the Hebrew book of Isaiah, chapter 53. It is here that we are told of a man who will come to serve the Jews, the Chosen People, who will suffer vicariously for them:

> He was despised and rejected by men, /a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces/he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities/and carried our sorrows, /yet we considered him stricken by God,/smitten by him, and afflicted./But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; /the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:3-5)

Through this servant, the prophet Isaiah says, the nation will be blessed and will be saved from oppression. Christians believe that the fulfillment of this foretelling or prophecy is

made in the coming of Jesus Christ. The Baptist faith of King's youth honored this belief as well.

The point must be made that Christianity is a belief system that encompasses all of the biblical record and stands in stark contrast to Judaism in this regard. Christianity embraces not only the Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament as it is called in Christian circles), but the New Testament as well. The Old Testament is not excluded from Christian practice and is in fact still believed to be the divinely inspired Word of God. To be sure, the Old Testament is interpreted, by Christians, in light of New Testament revelation, meaning that much of the Old Testament scripture is seen through a messianic lens, just as the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is seen as foretelling the arrival of the Messiah. Christians believe that in Jesus Christ that messianic promise is fulfilled. Therefore, much of the book of Isaiah is interpreted in light of what Christians feel is a foretelling that has already occurred. Christians then believe that applications of the prophetic principles and ideals exemplified in the prophets themselves in the Old Testament come to their perfect end in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Christianity not only embraces Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the messianic promise of the Hebrew scripture, but also as the epitome of the Hebrew prophet figure. In Christ, all of the Hebrew features of the prophet find their ultimate expression. The Hebrew prophet was one who lived within the community, as Christ who was born Jewish in the very real town of Bethlehem and lived his entire life in the Hebrew/Jewish world. The Hebrew prophet was energized by a deep connection to God, who spoke through him to the people of the community. Christ, as the Son of God, is seen by Christians as God in human form, born of a woman, experiencing life as every other

human through material existence and circumstances. Christ is to the Christian believer the epitome of the prophetic mouthpiece: God speaking through a human being to the rest of humanity, just like the Hebrew prophets of old. The Hebrew prophet was motivated by a deep love for the community to whom he spoke. Christ is portrayed throughout the New Testament as a man who empathized with the humanity to whom He had been sent; the affective characteristics of His life and personality are highlighted throughout the New Testament. In the Gospel of John, chapter 11, His relationship with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus is shown in its most human and affective terms. In this same chapter in John, He weeps for the city of Jerusalem and the community that has failed to acknowledge His teaching. Again in the Gospel of John, chapter 13, as He prepares for his crucifixion, He demonstrates His absolute submission to those He has come to serve, as He washes the feet of His disciples. Throughout the New Testament, Christ's love for humanity, His compassionate reach, and His unfettered humility and service are highlighted by writers who served with Him (e.g. Matthew, John, and Peter) and by testimonials of those who followed closely behind as part of the first century church (e.g. Mark, Luke, and Paul).

Martin Luther King, Jr., Maria W. Stewart before him, and Cornel West in contemporary applications, all looked to Jesus Christ as the ultimate example of the prophet and therefore as the ultimate characterization of the prophetic principles I have described. Consequently, their actions, while clearly explainable in light of the Old Testament prophet, are more perfectly seen in Christian messianism as Christ-like.

Walter Brueggemann discusses this in his book *Texts That Linger, Words That Explode: Listening to Prophetic Voices*. His work enlightens us in two ways: first in describing how Jesus is understood in the light of the Hebrew prophet, and secondly in

describing the delicate balance between impossibility and possibility in the prophetic perspective. I will explore the latter of these momentarily. For now, let me focus on this first important issue, for it is a critical link between the Hebrew prophet and the man Jesus Christ, important in the sense that without this connection, the Hebrew prophet remains a purely Jewish figure, attached only to that tradition. But indeed, as we have already seen, the Hebrew prophet is a significant and central influence on Christianity as well. Brueggemann writes that it is through the miraculous works of Christ that Jesus is connected to the Hebrew prophet. —The church has gone further to confess that Jesus is not only an *utterer* of the word, but is himself the *uttered* word. That is, Jesus' own person is God's word of life, which shatters all idolatrous forms of life and makes new community possible" (Brueggemann *Texts* 18). Jesus is the embodiment of the prophecy fulfilled. In this sense, he becomes –the word made flesh" (John 1:14). What the prophets foretold in Isaiah and other Hebrew writings is embodied in the man Jesus Christ. Brueggemann continues, –Christians affirm therefore that Jesus' life is indeed a human utterance, an utterance of the very word, will, purpose, and intent of God" (*Texts* 18). As such, we as Christians remain connected to the reality of history, to the materiality of culture, because, –God's abiding intention for creation becomes operative precisely in the midst of suffering, and visible primarily in the hope-filled emergence of public newness" (*Texts* 18). The prophetic perspective culminates in the life of Jesus, a prophet and more, the embodiment of God's action in the world: love-filled, patient, suffering servant who is for others.

King, in one of the answers for his general examination, wrote specifically that that the suffering servant is —one of the 'most noble' teachings of the Old Testament"

(Carson 6). He believed concretely that the crucifixion of Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the Isaiah prophecy. His writings are filled with references to his personalized connection to this Christ. In one of the more poignant chronicles of his own fear and weakness, King writes of fearing that he had put his entire family in danger. At this very low point in his life and work, King writes:

> I was ready to give up…when my courage had all but gone. I decided to take my problem to God…I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left…At that moment I experienced the presence of the Divine as I had never experienced Him before. It seemed as though I could hear the quiet assurance of an inner voice saying: –Stand up for righteousness, stand up for truth; and God will be at your side forever." Almost at once my fears began to go. My uncertainty disappeared. I was ready to face anything. (Chappell 91)

Clearly, King was motivated by a deep and abiding faith in God that was a consistent part of his youth and adult life. This passage in particular calls to mind the conversion narratives that we read in Stewart's work, and the descriptions of traditional conversion stories that W.E.B. DuBois describes. King was not only a believer in the faith of the ancient Jews, he was a Christian, who was personally committed to a life patterned after the epitome of the prophet: Jesus Christ. This faith was challenged and changed by his intellectual pursuits, but it was still very personal and highly motivating. He did not abandon the faith after his education, but rather looked for ways that the two intersected and complemented one another, ways the two informed one another.

In addition to King's connection to the prophetic tradition through the notion of the suffering servant found in Isaiah, he also depended on his liberal education to add

nuances to his prophetic lifestyle. Perhaps the single greatest influence on his work during his education was Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr was a significant figure to King, as well as to Myles Horton, who I will discuss in the final chapter of this work. As a professor at Union Theological Seminary, Niebuhr's lectures became the food for thought for many would-be activists. He was an influential theologian whose writing became foundational to much Christian thought. Niebuhr is essential to King's thought not because he was the first to apply prophetic teachings to historical situations, but because ~~he~~ codified its teachings and expressed them for his contemporaries in vivid, arresting language that King understood—indeed understood better than most liberals" (Chappell 47). Perhaps the most significant contribution of Niebuhr's thinking that took hold in King's mind and heart was his interpretation of the New Testament Christian idea of *agape* or divine love. King ~~fa~~shions a language of _love,'" defining it as *agape*…love names an energy, a relationship to others, and an arduous engagement across difference…'love' is a redemptive practice" (Shulman 94). ~~"~~'Love' names an energy of solidarity that has enabled black people to survive in America, but it also names an engagement with adversaries who cannot simply be defined as enemies. Love names a transforming energy and a practice of mediating part and whole by speech and action" (Shulman 94). The concept of *agape* was foundational to King's life and is perhaps best demonstrated in his consistent, non-violent approach. How else could he patiently withstand such suffering?

King saw the suffering and oppression that he and the black community experienced as sacrifice for the cause of equality: sacrifice that like that experienced by the suffering servant, was both vicarious and redemptive. This way of talking about

suffering was another prophetic element that was essential to the movement's success. By persuading people to accept suffering and sacrifice as a way of bringing about God's righteousness, King was able to effectively mobilize the black church for the cause. His deep connection to the black community recalls the ancient prophet whose first responsibility was to his own community, rather than as a critic of the oppressor. As Shulman explains:

> But we should not assume a simple identification between King and *the* black community compared to strategic negotiation with a monolithic white society. Hebrew prophets do not enact a simple identity with the oppressed; they criticize those they stand with and endure a kind of distance or estrangement even where they seem most at home. (Shulman 98)

King consistently preached to his own community the need for patience, for bearing these burdens non-violently, and for responding to their enemies in love. Just as Maria Stewart in the era of abolition, and the prophets of Hebrew times, the focus of their initial rhetoric was on the community to which they belonged. Of utmost importance to all prophetic witness and action was the righteousness and loving-kindness of the oppressed toward everyone, including those who oppressed them.

This mobilization behind the idea of suffering for the cause did not necessitate an adherence to any particular religious dogma. Indeed, many of those who were integrally involved in the movement did not follow the ideals of Christianity at all, and certainly not the Baptist doctrine King did. As Chappell notes,

> I am not arguing that there was any coherent intellectual influence binding all the motive forces in the movement together. The key thinkers resembled the Hebrew

> Prophets, in their condemnation of the normal course of society as corrupt and sinful, and in their belief that society would not yield to mild-mannered meliorism. Beyond that, it is difficult to find a common theological or philosophical thread. (85)

Chappell argues that many of the Civil Rights thinkers along with King were not at all invested in the Christian prophetic tradition. Bob Moses, for example, was motivated by a "secular, rather militantly atheist thinker, Albert Camus" (Chappell 182). But the prophetic Christian tradition has much in common with other spiritual traditions and can still be used as a methodology and mode of operation without any adherence to the biblical and Christian principles that motivated the principles. Christians are not the only people in the world who honor the humanity of others, and believing such a thing is central to the withdrawal from society that many religious groups encourage. Indeed, King took his non-violent stance from Gandhi, a Hindu, as well. But there is no evidence of this withdrawal in the prophetic experience.

Prophetic Voices

Christian activists, like King in the period of the Civil Rights movement, have often found their voice in the form of the ancient prophet. Cornel West describes this connection so well in his work, where he links his philosophy of prophetic pragmatism to the Hebrew scripture, while maintaining a sense of hope and future possibility. It is just this mix of the ancient and tragic with the resurrection and hope of the New Testament that provides the ideal foundation for his work. He explains his use of the term "prophetic" as, "hark[ing] back to the Jewish and Christian tradition of prophets who brought urgent and compassionate critique to bear on the evils of their day. The mark of

the prophet is to speak the truth in love with courage—come what may. […] It neither requires a religious foundation nor entails a religious perspective, yet prophetic pragmatism is compatible with certain religious outlooks" (*American Evasion* 233). It is in this integration of critique and love that the prophetic inheres and that the black church found its biblical foundation and energy. And it is also where West finds and those before him found their own individual energy and compassion as well. West notes, also in *The American Evasion of Philosophy* that for him the prophetic biblical foundation gave him a personal impetus for hope, as well as a realistic look at what the outcome may be for his community: failure. The prophetic offers both sides of this essential equation: an honest appraisal of a tragic past and a realistic hope for a resurrection future. From this biblical perspective that was fearless in critique and wholly moved by hope for the future and love for humanity.

Spiritual Fervor

Beyond the prophetic perspective essential to the leadership and motivation of the Civil Rights movement, prophetic energy also brought a key ingredient to the other, liberal/progressive side of the movement. A central premise of Chappell's work is that southern Afro-Americans were central to the Civil Rights movement because of their spiritual and religious fervor. According to Chappell, liberal progressives did not have the energy necessary to propel civil rights justice to success, precisely because the liberals lacked the spiritual impetus that empowered southern blacks. He describes the weakness of liberalism in the early Twentieth Century to effectively provoke integrate American society. He argues that even in the decades leading up to the Civil Rights movement, liberals maintained that ~~–p~~rogress" was under way, that eventually ~~–t~~he power of human

reason" would overcome prejudice, racism, and therefore, segregation (Chappell 3). But what the movement could never muster was anything like the energy exhibited by religious faith. Chappell looks to the writing of William James and John Dewey for evidence of progressivism's lack of force. Both James and Dewey lamented the fact that liberalism lacked the fervor and inspiration they saw in religious movements. As Chappell writes: "Faith drove people to great sacrifice and effort. The willingness to lose oneself in a cause, to sacrifice self-interest and bind together with others" -- these were attributes that Dewey and other liberals longed for in their own work for social change (17). Certainly they wanted the religious impulses without the dogma and creeds, but they longed for that sense of common purpose and lives lived from a passionate center in defense of others. Chappell finally summarizes,

> Even in their confident days, the most sensitive and articulate liberals sensed that something was missing from their method and program. They always understood their method and program to be based on faith that human reason could solve the "problems" of human society. Yet the deepest believers in reason perceived that reason was not enough. (13)

The religious faithful submitted their methodologies and programs to a divine call that inspired them to act. Their actions grew out of hearts and lives that were devoted to an Audience of One, a divine God who inspired them to act through His words recorded in Scripture and through the voices of His servants, preachers, and prophets in modern times. By supplementing their love of humanity with their divine calling, they worked not based on results, but on commitments that were purposefully based on sacred texts.

Consequently, like others (such as Maria W. Stewart) before them, attaining success was secondary to their obedience to a divine cause and calling.

Chappell compares the liberal progressives to their counterparts in southern African-American churches who placed their faith in God rather than in the progress of man. And their greatest inspiration was found in the Hebrew prophets. Chappell writes:

> Specifically, they drew from a prophetic tradition that runs from David and Isaiah in the Old Testament through Augustine and Martin Luther to Reinhold Niebuhr in the twentieth century. […] Like the Hebrew Prophets, these thinkers [who were active in the black movement] believed that they could not expect [the] world and [its] institutions to improve. Nor could they be passive bystanders. (3)

They believed that the idea of evolutionary progress was a myth and that the only way society would change was the way it had changed in the Hebrew scripture, as prophetic leaders stood ~~–a~~part from society and insult[ed] it with skepticism about its pretension to justice and truth" (Chappell 3). Southern blacks believed that it was in these ancient examples that the model of change was expressly and divinely presented. They believed theirs was a divine cause that was supported by scripture, and these were the models they chose to emulate in their struggle to break the back of segregation.

Their divine cause was equality for all people, no matter the color of their skin. While I do not believe that prophetic rhetorical strategies will always result in such dramatic social change, I do believe that honoring the basic humanity of all people and building collaborative relationships as the foundation of education is a divine cause as well. I too believe that loving students is a divine imperative. While I believe other teachers engage in this work without such an impetus, for me, it is the force behind my

teaching and living. If I believe in this divine Creator, then any work (whether by Christ-followers or any others) that honors people, that stands with them against oppression, and that works to imagine a hopeful future with them, is then the true work of calling and ultimate vocation.

A Realistic Perspective

Finally, the prophetic perspective that allows me to see education through a lens of loving and caring relationships, allowed King and others involved in the Civil Rights movement to realistically approach their striving. The confluence of Niebuhr's agape ―possibility/impossibility" perhaps most clearly puts into perspective the approach that those in the movement took. They were not, like their liberal brothers and sisters, enamored with the possibility that humanity would do better. They had the proof of the Hebrew scripture to foretell the continuous struggles that humanity has dealt with since the beginning of time. A cursory reading of Old Testament stories powerfully demonstrates the struggles of common men and women to deal with issues of culture and equality that were much like the struggles of the 1950s and 60s. These stories are replete with failures, missteps, conflict, and repentance. The prophetic approach, much as it had done for the black church for centuries, gave voice to the struggle, and it did not give utopian answers or solutions to the dilemmas they faced. Instead, the outcome was always in question; failure was always as much of a possibility as success. Those involved in the movement had hope, but as Vaclav Havel states in Chappell's opening epigraph, ―Hope […] is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, no matter how it turns out." From the foot soldiers to those in the highest leadership of the Civil Rights movement, success was never

assured; the prophetic perspective made it very clear, they did what they were doing, because it was the right thing to do, not because success was inevitable or even attainable.

Brueggemann characterizes this aspect of prophetic faith as essential to the connection to Jesus Christ as well. In the prophetic tradition are a number of men and women who saw the possible in the context of impossibility. Brueggemann uses the biblical example of Abraham as his first example of this motif. Abraham, married to Sarah, was the first of the patriarchs of the Jewish tradition. He and his wife are visited by three strangers and told that Sarah will become pregnant and bear a son who will be the promise of their entire nation. In their old age, this promise is seen as an impossibility, a *pela'* in the Hebrew, ~~–a~~n emergent occurrence that they and their world had defined as impossible" (Brueggemann *Texts* 18). Nonetheless, the couple had a son; the same holds true in a prophetic rhetorical strategy enacted in the context of education. While it may be impossible to foresee social change or social movements growing from a simple student/teacher relationship, there is always the possibility that more may come from our work of love.

The Need for Prophetic Motivation

The missing component of liberalism's force in the Civil Rights movement is identical to that of critical pedagogy's deployment in education. Much has been written since Freire's foray into the third world on how to apply his work to the first world. As I noted in chapter two, the work of pedagogues like Ira Shor and Henry Giroux have accomplished a great deal in the American classroom environment, but indeed these methods are still lamented as not meeting the remarkable expectations associated with

Freire‘s originary work. Two gaps prevent us from achieving what Freire did originally. First, our classrooms remain hierarchical environments where teachers give grades and students work for such marks. No matter how this context is re-worked under the auspices of critical education, nothing significant will change if that traditional relationship of grade-giver and grade-receiver is maintained. The teacher holds all of the power and must, in the end, evaluate the work that has been produced with a judgment in the form of a grade. Secondly, we have abandoned the energy of the spiritual nature of Freire‘s original work. Critical pedagogy in its myriad first world iterations suffers from the same malaise that Chappell identifies in the 1950s Progressives. This lack has been identified within the field of composition already. As I chronicled in my first chapter, numerous authors in the discipline of composition have described the significant gaps created by our neglect of the spiritual issues our students bring to their writing and our failure to acknowledge the centrality of spirituality to Freirian pedagogy (Berthoff, Goodburn, Williams, etc.). I want to emphasize this point by arguing that without a spiritual impetus, such as the one that energized the Civil Rights movement, we have effectively divorced Freire‘s originary work from the very engine that powered it. We have assumed in academe that a deployment of critical pedagogy will tear down barriers and revolutionize oppressive systems, as it did in the third world when it was originally enacted. It will not…unless it is accompanied and infused by the radical love for humanity that energized it in the first place. The marriage that we must oversee in our very human effort of teaching is that between liberal critiques of social injustice and the spiritual motivation of love for humanity. One is impotent without the other. It is in this marriage that the Civil Rights movement found its sure foundation. It is in this marriage

that the movement found its motivating force for change. And it is in this marriage that the movement found its motivational force for the thousands of ~~n~~onviolent soldiers" who made change possible through their prophetic action (Chappell 3). Like the Civil Rights leaders Chappell outlines, not all of us will be motivated by religion, or faith, or spirituality, but certainly we must use this impetus of a deep love for humanity to drive us, to energize us.

Critical Evidence

The spiritual impetus to change society is not limited to these movements. Indeed, a 2000 qualitative study supports the principle that emancipatory (critical) educators are often motivated by their own spirituality and/or religion of origin. The study focused on a group of multicultural women adult educators working in adult, higher education and community-based learning initiatives. The group was predominantly motivated by their spirituality to invest in social change for the groups they identified with. The women interviewed, while not maintaining direct links to the faith communities of their youth, continued to be motivated by spiritual principles and ideals that were part of their faith traditions and/or religions of origin. The women saw their spiritual lives as directly correlated with their material existence outside those religions. In the words of the author of the study, Elizabeth J. Tisdell:

> A primary finding of this study is that these participants saw their spirituality and their social justice efforts as an integrated way of life and as a way of thinking and being in the world. They had a strong sense of mission, fueled by their spirituality, of challenging systems of oppression based on race, class, gender, ability, and sexual orientation in their adult educational practices. But their

involvement in social action efforts also called them back to their spirituality. (328)

The women who were subjects of this study, also saw their spirituality, and that of their students, as a manifestation of cultural identity. They referred often to the idea that spirituality issues arose in classroom discussions and in their private, one-on-one moments with individual students. During these discussions, they felt that a neglect of the spirituality of themselves and their students would have been a negation of their cultural identities. One participant noted specifically, "Culture is a way to express spirituality; they're interwoven" (326). For these women, education for critical engagement in society was part and parcel of a spiritual existence. Their spirituality led them to engage their classrooms and students in ways of thinking and knowing that moved beyond the purely rational to the affective domains of spirituality.[2] At the same time, this way of teaching led to a deeper acknowledgement in their personal lives of the part that spirituality played in all aspects of life. They found deeper fulfillment and more engaged ideas of living outside of work because their spirituality was interwoven in all areas of their identities.

What Shulman, Chappell, and West describe is an application of prophetic principles to modern contexts: political, social, and cultural. I believe we can apply the same principles to education through a similar prophetic motivation. The tragic critique of the past has been achieved, and we continue to work in concert with this as we appraise hierarchies and structures that have oppressed and marginalized people groups throughout history. Our work in composition that points out the weaknesses of capitalism, its oppression of the poor and its seeming never-ending spiral of the rich are

[2] For the purposes of Tisdell's study, spirituality centered on three main themes: "further development of self-awareness, a sense of interconnectedness, and a relationship to a higher power" (309-10).

good examples of such abuses. When we add to this, a deep compassion and love for our students as human beings, we foster an educational environment that allows them to see the intersection of the critique with a hopeful agency that will inspire them to act.

Highlander Folk School

The Civil Rights movement was empowered by the faith of its leaders in a power greater than themselves, and it was also served through action based in educational relationships. In the next section of this chapter, I will examine Myles Horton's Highlander Folk School as an early example of prophetic pedagogy: identification with his students and their communities, an absolute investment in ending the oppressive dehumanization they faced, and an energized, divine love that embraced the students through compassionate care and imagined with them a hopeful future. Highlander stands as a testament to education serving as a prophetic endeavor without descending into religious oppression or elitism. Horton first leveled a critique at the gap between what America said it was and what it was in actuality during both labor movements and the Civil Rights movement of the sixties. Particularly in his work in the Civil Rights movement, Horton did not stop with a critique of society and its oppressive nature; instead, he continued to act through a love for the people of his community that motivated him on their behalf and in concert with their efforts to precipitate change.

Rosa Parks & Highlander Folk School

On July 6, 1955, Rosa Parks typed a letter to Mrs. Henry F. Shipherd, the Executive Secretary of Highlander Folk School. The letter was one of thanks for the scholarship she had received to attend the Desegregation Workshop at Highlander later that summer. She wrote, "I am looking forward with eager anticipation to attending the

workshop, hoping to make a contribution to the fulfillment of complete freedom for all people" (Horton Papers Box 14 Folder 4). Six months later, almost to the day, Mrs. Parks did indeed make such a contribution and in the process became the symbol of desegregation in the south. On the evening of December 1, later that same year, Mrs. Parks refused to stand. Here is an act that was prophetic, just as Shulman notes in his chapter about students sitting in at a lunch counter performing a prophetic act. This small, quiet, soft-spoken woman acted prophetically and set off a flurry of corresponding activity that turned the entire momentum of the Civil Rights movement. Her act occurred at a confluence of events, just as Maria Stewart's writing and speaking and acting in the century before her: she identified with the community, she had been educated to see there was another way (in church and at Highlander), and she acted at a critical moment.

From its inception, the Highlander Folk School was a model of the integration of faith and the material world. Myles Horton, the founder and driving force of this unique educational institution, remains one of the best known activist educators in the United States, and he was driven to this work by a foundational faith in God and the ability of human subjects to change their material existence through civic action and social engagement. Born in 1905, Horton was raised in the Cumberland Mountains of Tennessee. His family was poor, his parents both schoolteachers. This early environment was essential to his later activism for the poor. From his earliest upbringing, Horton was a part of a local church, where "love thy neighbor as thyself" was epitomized. He recounts in a 1982 interview, "When I grew up, the only social life you had was to put it on a religious basis. It was either at the church or at the school" (Horton Papers UC1271A/6). He was able to attend Cumberland College, thanks to the hard work and

saving of his parents. From there, he went on to Union Theological Seminary, where he encountered Reinhold Niebuhr, a significant influence on this activist as well. But it was after he began studying at the University of Chicago that Horton first learned of the Danish Folk schools that were so important to his thinking as well. A Danish minister introduced him to the concept, and encouraged him to visit Denmark and get firsthand experience with the schools. In 1931, Horton did just that and returned to open the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee just one year later (Horton Papers Box 54 Folder 2).

Horton began Highlander as a marriage of the liberal impetus for change he learned studying under Niebuhr and others and the spiritual impetus of religion and faith with which he was raised. His work epitomizes Chappell's theoretical framework of the Civil Rights movement. Horton's papers delineate a lineage of influence that begins with faith. Furthermore, Horton's work at Highlander is essentially and significantly prophetic. If we return to the three hallmarks Shulman lays out for American prophetic action, we can see it clearly in the way Horton set about to build a community that would foster civic engagement and action: first, "how we conceive the meaning of authority and the practice of judgment"; second, "how we conceive the meaning of political identification and community;" third, "how we conceive the power and meaning of the past" (Shulman 28). By applying these three prophetic assessments to Horton and the Highlander school, we can see a prophetic example in modernity.

The evidence for the prophetic begins in the way Horton even came to determine the need for the Highlander School, with his own life and education and consequently, the second of Shulman's categories: how Horton understood community and political

identification. In an interview in 1982, Horton delineated this early influence of his parents and his upbringing, describing life in the Cumberland Mountains as poor and hard, "My people were working people; they were poor people…I had to leave home when I was 15 because there was no school where I lived" (Horton Papers UC1271A/6). In this earliest part of his life, Horton was influenced by the simple yet powerful acts of his mother. In interviews and in his own writing, Horton recalls that his mother would take food to the workers at a nearby textile mill where the workers were treated like animals. The simple act of providing a meal for them was all his mother could do, but what she could do, she did. "I can't remember much in terms of words, things like that…but the actions made an impression" (Horton Papers UC1271A/6). Indeed, in a letter to his mother on the occasion of Mother's Day 1930, Horton writes:

> Like all appreciation for your love this is behind time, but being human I suppose nothing else is possible. It is not easy to recognize the greatest gifts we have at the time we have them given us. It is easy now for me to see where I got my interest in the social application of the teaching of Christ. My interest will have to express itself in its own way, but the interest I now have in the cotton mill situation in the South can very definitely be traced to the time you had a Sunday School class at the cotton mill at home. (Horton Papers Box 6 Folder 1)

This early application of the biblical teachings of love and service were the foundation of Horton's entire lifestyle, expressed again in his interview in 1982, when he states, "We thought if you didn't love people then there'd be no reason for trying to have a decent society. The motivation for having a decent society grows out of love for people" (Horton Papers UC1271A/6).

In his autobiography, Horton revisits this theme of love again and the essential nature of the early influence his mother made on him through her outreach to others. Even as Horton struggled with the theological teachings of his church, he writes in his autobiography of how his mother's influence returned him to the simple but profound notion of love. He recalls how after reading a particularly vexing book on the theological belief of predestination that he went to his mother and told her he would just have to quit the church, that he just could not abide by these beliefs. In response, his mother laughed and reiterated her own theological base, "Love your neighbor, that's all it's all about" (Horton *The Long Haul* 7). He continues, "Love was a religion to her, that's what she practiced" (Horton *The Long Haul* 7). From this basis of love as chronicled in the New Testament teachings of Jesus, Horton built his entire educational philosophy:

> I've taken this belief of my mother's and put it on another level […] If you believe that people are of worth, you can't treat anybody inhumanely, and that means you not only have to love and respect people, but you have to think in terms of building a society that people can profit most from, and that kind of society has to work on the principle of equality. Otherwise, somebody's going to be left out. (Horton *The Long Haul* 7)

The prophetic love that I have described earlier in this work propelled the educational action of Myles Horton. It was a simple foundation that was borne from the acts of a woman who simply saw a way to express the love she learned in the Bible to those around her. Horton took these simple acts, this simple belief in the love Jesus taught, and added to it an educational foundation that gave him the further impetus to engage with the society and culture of his time and his context.

Even though Horton had issues with the organized church, and would later distance himself even further from religion, his writing clearly points to a foundation on the works of Jesus Christ chronicled in the New Testament. In addition, he saw the connection of Jesus' activity with that of the work of the prophets as well. In his autobiography he writes, "From Jesus and the prophets I had learned about the importance of loving people, the importance of being a revolutionary, standing up and saying that this system is unjust" (Horton *The Long Haul* 27). Just as the black church connects the work of Jesus in the New Testament with the works of the prophets in the old, Horton too saw the way that Jesus in his activity with the "least of these" was fulfilling work that had already begun in the ancient Hebrew culture that existed before him. While Horton did not maintain a religious affiliation, he did maintain a deep commitment to loving humanity. Horton continues:

> Christ is one of the few examples of someone who simply did what he believed in and paid the price and would have done it again if he'd lived. […] I learned from Jesus the risks you've got to take if you're going to act. To make life worth living you have to believe in those things that will bring about justice in society, and be willing to die for them. (Horton *The Long Haul* 27)

The work of Jesus in the New Testament is the fulfillment of the prophet's cry for justice. Here is a man, believed by Christians to be in very nature God and man, who simply set about living justice. From his example, Horton takes this powerful testimony of what one life can do when it is completely surrendered to a task, to a belief.

One of Horton's earliest papers reveals the very depth of his emotion and thought about the importance of spirituality in his work. The paper is undated but perhaps most

clearly expresses Horton's ideas on the subject of love as a foundation for his work. In the paper, he writes:

> God is revealed in Christ and is partly revealed in every man. God to me is the highest and best in us. […] The best way to find God is through ~~"~~Knowing Thyself." Jesus' teachings are not logical, not based on justice. He wanted God who is love. Love, not justice made Jesus […] give his coat, turn the other cheek, and finally die on the cross. To deny ourselves is to be loving, to be like God, to be happy and finally to succeed. (Horton Papers Box 11)

The prophetic concept of love is so clearly reflected in this excerpt from Horton's writing, because the concept of justice serves that of loving-kindness, just as Brueggemann and Heschel describe in the characteristic of the prophets. Horton saw in Christ the embodiment of this notion that justice served love and that for any true justice to be enacted, love had to be the motivating force behind it.

Besides his mother, Horton was also greatly influenced by other Christians, particularly a Congregational minister with whom he lived for a period of time in Tennessee, Rev. Nightingale. In a 1959 interview, Horton talked about how this man served him as an example of the love he wanted to institute at Highlander:

> He always had an open house to people who would come and go […] We got to be good friends. He helped me finish college. […] Sometimes he'd give me a shirt or something […] But he did much more than that. When I was frustrated so there, he was the one who suggested I go to Union Theological Seminary. (Horton Papers Box 54 Folder 2)

Nightingale was another simple but profound and significant example of love to Horton. And from this example, as from that of his mother, he learned to engage society where he was with what he had.

Rather than retreating into a religious world, a world with which he could not always agree, he chose to enact that love in a way that modeled what he had seen as a young man. He would later say, in a 1982 interview, that the reason Highlander was so successful was purely and simply because of this foundation: —The motivation for having a decent society grows out of love for people" (Horton Papers Box 54 Folder 2). Just as Freire began with a basic love for students, as the prophets began with a basic love for God and for the communities of which they were a part, Horton began with a basic love of people empowered by the Christ-like love he learned as a child and that deepened as an adult. During this period, he studied many utopian communities, but rejected them altogether because of their escapist tendencies. Their spirituality attracted him, but he writes, —They had withdrawn from the larger society and had only demonstrated what you can do if you withdraw. They don't demonstrate what you can do to change society . . . To deal with injustice you had to act in the world" (Horton *The Long Haul* 30). Again Horton emphasizes the importance of engaging culture rather than simply criticizing it, of working within community to change that community rather than removing oneself from it and becoming an outsider. The prophetic principles are again clear in his approach, and this engagement prompted him to continue his education as well. To this foundation of Christ-like love, Horton added a liberal education.

Horton added significant educational experiences through his time at the University of Chicago and Union Theological Seminary. It was through his education

here that he added essential elements to his way of life that supported material methods to uplift the poor. His time at Union Theological Seminary was particularly stimulating, for it was here that he met and studied under Reinhold Niebuhr, a direct correlation with the life and influence of Martin Luther King, Jr. as well. Horton says, "He [Niebuhr] was a socialist at the time [this would have been 1929-30 when Horton studied with him]. He was non-authoritarian, either in religion or in terms of his social philosophy. He was always talking about paradoxes. I found him extremely stimulating. He not only introduced me to new ideas and concepts, but taught me to be critical and analytical" (Horton Papers Box 54 Folder 2). While this analytical approach was stimulating to Horton and important to the development of his ideas, he found Niebuhr inspirational in other ways as well, "I was drawn to Niebuhr because of his impassioned defense of working people who, at that time, were defenseless and were beat down in their efforts to organize. He seemed to me, at least, to accept the Marxian analysis of class struggle and was one of the most ardent defenders of those of us who had gotten into trouble for picket line activities" (Horton Papers Box 54 Folder 2). The influence Niebuhr had on Horton is different from that he had on King. For one thing, Niebuhr became a personal friend of Horton's. In fact, in the initial fundraising efforts that Horton employed for Highlander, Niebuhr's was the signature on the letter that was sent to potential donors. Here is an emotional connection, rather than purely an intellectual one. While King looked to Niebuhr's work as an intellectual and conceptual resource, Horton looked to him for personal direction and guidance and support. Their friendship seemed to motivate Horton more than the purely academic ideas that he took from Niebuhr's classes.

In fact, Horton tells Mary Austin in her interview that he went to Niebuhr after one of his lectures and told him he found it absolutely confusing; he could understand nothing the professor was lecturing about and asserted that he may simply withdraw from the class, because his knowledge was so limited compared to that of his learned teacher. After the incident, Niebuhr questioned the entire class about their understanding of his lectures and found that many of the students felt the same as Horton. Niebuhr proceeded from that point in a more approachable manner, as he adjusted to the needs of his students (Horton Papers UC1271A/6). Further evidence that Niebuhr and Horton worked together on a more peer-to-peer plane. Again it is clear that Horton was working from a confluence of the religious fervor of love and righteousness, while at the same time incorporating the education of ideas he learned through Marxist critique of class struggle.

There is further evidence of an emotional impetus in Horton as well. His motivation was not entirely intellectual or logical. The evidence of this emotional impetus is evident in a story he recounts in his interview with Austin in 1982. He narrates a story of being on the Cumberland train, riding through the mountains. As the train passed an old, rundown, wooden house, a little girl stood on the front porch, hanging onto the thin wooden post holding up the sagging roof. As the train went by, Horton caught a glimpse of her forlorn, wistful face. She turned and walked back into the house as the train passed. Horton cried as he watched this little girl, who would never be able to leave this shack, never experience the ride on the train, but would be forever tied to this homestead due to the poverty of her family. Horton says,

> I just decided I was going to spend my life with those people, helping if I could. I realized those problems couldn‘t be dealt with just by crying when you saw it or

> by charity…for every one, there were thousands…and that led me to say I've got to try to figure out ways to deal with this problem educationally, intelligently, instead of in just a sentimental way. (Horton Papers UC1271A/6)

His dream of a school that would educate individuals who would then be equipped to move beyond their circumstances and their class status was born from a motivation of love and compassion. This inspiration gave an energy to his work that allowed him to move beyond liberal ideals to a place where passion met action. While the Highlander School faced many challenges from local and state governments, Horton succeeded in building a permanent school that worked to educate adults for the purpose of social change. And it was at one of these early workshops in 1955 that a woman by the name of Rosa Parks received a scholarship to attend.

Rosa Parks

Horton became a well-known activist in his work with labor and then with the Civil Rights Movement. In fact, Highlander had already established itself as a force for social justice by this time. After its official establishment in 1932, the school had been active in the labor movement and in helping workers organize. By the time Rosa Parks attended the summer workshop of 1955, Highlander already had a reputation for activism. The workshop again appears to be a simple act of community that resulted in a significant impact on the civil rights struggle. The group Parks was a part of discussed ways to motivate their neighbors, ways to organize their efforts, and ideas for generating funds to do the work of both. But Parks went home and was energized to act in what she thought was an insignificant manner. In interviews subsequent to her arrest, Parks makes it clear that she had no idea her simple act of resistance would have any effect at all on

the Civil Rights movement. She simply felt she was right to do what she did. At a planning conference at Highlander in March of 1956, after her arrest in December of 1955, Horton asked Parks about her motivation:

> Horton: What you did was a very little thing, you know, to touch off such a fire. Why did you do it; what moved you not to move?
>
> Parks: Well, in the first place, I had been working all day on the job. I was quite tired after spending a full day working. I handle and work on clothing that white people wear. That didn't come in my mind but this is what I wanted to know; when and how would we ever determine our rights as human beings? […] It was an imposition as far as I was concerned.
>
> Horton: Well, had you ever moved before?
>
> Parks: I hadn't for quite a long while…
>
> Horton: You just decided that you wouldn't be moved again, is that it?
>
> Parks: That is what I felt like. (Horton Papers Box 14 Folder 4)

In a later interview, Parks was even clearer about her feelings on that day in 1955. Arguably, one of the most famous interviews she and Horton gave about the incident was conducted by Studs Terkel in 1973 for a radio program he hosted. After years of reflection, Parks was even more definitive about the act. In this radio broadcast, she chronicles the details of her arrest, noting first that she violated no city ordinance in Montgomery at the time. She was not sitting in the "white section" of the bus, but in the first row of the black section just behind it. Her arrest was due to her refusal to obey the bus driver, when he asked her and three other black passengers to get up to allow a white man to sit in their section, because no seats remained in the white section. The other three

passengers did move to accommodate the white man, but Parks did not. She was arrested for her disobedience, because the bus driver had police powers to rearrange seating when necessary. In reflecting on the incident twenty years afterwards, Parks said:

> For a long time I had been very much against…being treated a certain way because of race and because of a reason over which I had no control. […] My reason is a little hard to explain to most people but I just felt that I was being mistreated as a human being. I wanted to in this way make known that I should have the same rights and privileges as any other person. (Horton Papers Box 14 Folder 4)

And her protest did not end with her arrest. Parks was bailed out by an attorney who had been with her at the Highlander workshop, Clifford Durr. Subsequently, the bus boycott began and Parks continued to act, refusing to ride the bus, and giving her own money to the gas fund set up by the local NAACP chapter to fund rides for others who were refusing to ride the bus. In a letter dated December 23, 1955, Parks describes to a friend the continued protest of the ―colored people" in Montgomery. She describes private car pools that had sprung up to accommodate the workers who were involved in the boycott and writes at the end, ―I am still working very hard at the store and will not celebrate Christmas the usual way. My extra money is going in the transportation fund" (Horton Papers Box 14 Folder 4).

Perhaps Eleanor Roosevelt summed up Park's simply great act best in a May, 1956 newspaper story in the *New York Times*. She had just met Mrs. Parks and commented on her gentle and quiet spirit noting, ―it is difficult to imagine how she ever could take such a positive and independent stand." She goes on to say, ―I suppose we

must realize that these things do not happen all of a sudden. They grow out of feelings that have been developing over many years. Human beings reach a point when they say -- _This is as far as I can go,' and from then on it may be passive resistance, but it will be resistance" (Roosevelt May 17, 1956). Roosevelt, an advocate for integration herself, clearly understood the importance of individual actions within movements for social change. She went on to write that she hoped the attitude Mrs. Parks had demonstrated would ~~h~~appen all over our country wherever we have citizens who do not enjoy complete equality" (Roosevelt May 17, 1956).

Rosa Parks, like many others who were educated at Highlander, learned to act from the preparation she received through Horton's workshops and classrooms. She was supported by a network of others who had been schooled to organize their efforts, to join their actions, and to protest the oppression they had lived under for so long.[3] She was ready to participate in social change. As she remarked so many times, she had no idea that her singular act would precipitate such a significant effort in the Civil Rights Movement, but she did not wait for such an assurance. Rather, she acted. Regardless of the promise of success or of change, she simply acted on what she knew was the right thing to do. Her only explanation, given later at a board meeting back at Highlander, was that many of her community in Montgomery had experienced the same humiliation, and her act emboldened them to respond.

Conclusion

In *American Prophecy: Race and Redemption in American Political Culture*, Shulman writes:

[3] Eleanor Roosevelt was in fact a financial supporter of Highlander and visited the school as well. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other leaders of the Civil Rights Movement (like Septima Clark) were also visitors to Highlander and participants in their organizational workshops and courses (Horton *The Long Haul,* Horton Papers)

> Epochal change appears not by violence or apocalypse; rather, it appears as the unprecedented – equality – becomes an ordinary fact of life. Mutual acts of atonement and forgiveness – or at least organizing that compels whites to sit with those they have disavowed – make redemption not an ~~–e~~nd" to politics but its condition of possibility. (113)

It is in our ordinary, everyday, walk-around lives where we have the opportunity through mutuality and simply prophetic acts that we are able to enact the social change we so desire to see. The acts that propelled the Civil Rights movement into success were just such simple, everyday occurrences that became habitual behavior. These acts were motivated by love, prophetic love that could imagine the possibility of change. What they all have in common is their very ordinariness, their seeming insignificance in the greater scheme of things, and their profound influence on those who witnessed them: Myles Horton's mother taking food to workers at a mill, groups of teenagers and children sitting quietly at lunch counters, and Rosa Parks simply refusing to stand so that a white man could sit in a seat that rightfully belonged to her. Simple acts…profound effects.

In Chapter 5, I will argue that this is exactly what our Writing Centers can become and what many have been in the past: environments that foster such acts that upset hierarchies, that question the status quo, and that are only small in the sense that they are individual choices at critical moments. Some of these acts include: loving students through listening, honoring student voices, privileging student texts, and living in community with learners.

Chapter 5: The Possibilities of Prophetic Rhetorical Strategies for 21st Century Education

Introduction

The historical enactment of prophetic ideas is full of promise for the discipline of composition. The narratives of activities in the abolition movement and the success of the Civil Rights movement call from the past that real change can happen even in the face of tyranny and oppression. A prophetic pedagogy offers a realistic heuristic that can be applied to a critical pedagogy that has grown lifeless. It holds promise not only for the academics who work in a hopeless environment that denies even the possibility of agency for our students; it also allows those of us who are motivated and energized by faith to use that foundation as an impetus for our work. Prophetic pedagogy offers such possibility to both teachers and students alike.

My engagement in the project of defining and applying prophetic pedagogy grows not only from my background of faith, but from my academic history as well. I found my place in the academy in the world of critical pedagogy. In this activist history, I found my place to stand as a teacher. It was in the work of Freire that I saw my own faith mirrored and my own desire to enact change and make a difference in the lives of my students. My goal then is not to articulate methodologies or insist on certain curricular components. Rather, I envision a new approach to teaching that is motivated by love, the missing ingredient in the modern and postmodern iterations of critical pedagogy. As I conclude this work then, my goal is to arouse hope and love in my academic colleagues and in my like-minded, spiritual peers: first, by highlighting the hallmarks of the prophetic rhetorical approach as I have seen it manifest in select experiences in the academy.

And so I finish where I began: a woman of faith in the secular academy, striving to convince my scholarly colleagues that the prophetic tradition of my faith offers a stirring inspiration for critical pedagogy that can energize and sustain agency and cultural engagement and social action in our students. At this point in my text, I have identified my objective, defined the ancient prophetic tradition with a look at Isaiah, and argued that if this tradition could energize abolitionism and the Civil Rights Movement, then it certainly has the power to humanize education in the Twenty-First Century. But to conclude my work, I must look again at my own experience and my own journey, and from this vantage point, I must acknowledge that, while I learned the theory of the prophetic in church, I have learned the practice of the prophetic in the academy: particularly in the University of Oklahoma Writing Center. For it is in the practice of writing collaboration where I have seen the prophetic principles I have espoused thus far put into their most effective practice.

Critical pedagogy cannot fulfill its original mission when it is deployed in the traditional classroom. This traditional space is charged with authority, as the teacher remains the central figure who must ultimately assess the work of students through grades that hold a great deal of power in the future lives and work of those students. The attempts of critical pedagogues, some of whom I have discussed in earlier chapters, bears the truth about attempting Freire‘s original work in these spaces. The success is limited at best. Critical pedagogy at its very basic redefined the student/teacher relationship; indeed, it revolutionized this relationship. In the traditional classroom, this foundational concept and work is lost. Only in thirdspaces, such as Writing Centers, can critical pedagogy blossom into the revolutionary concept that Freire exemplified.

Current Prophetic Movements

In Old Testament history, we heard the prophet lament the past, realistically describe the present, and inspire hope for a new future. In the abolition era, we heard voices like Maria W. Stewart follow the same heuristic to engage her generation in pursuing actions that prepared the way for a future of freedom. And during the movement for civil rights, we heard Martin Luther King, Jr. and others rhetorically engage an entire community in powerful visions of what the future could offer in terms of equality. Here in the work of the writing center at the University of Oklahoma and in the process of collaborative community through Writing Across the Curriculum, the same significant, prophetic focus emerges. Simply put, these initiatives are prophetic because they exemplify the very foundation of community and humanistic practice in that they are foundationally and significantly collaborative.

Within the Writing Center and Writing Across the Curriculum projects at OU, simple yet powerful daily action calls to mind the prophetic. While they are both part of the established academic institution, they both resist the empirically enforced concepts of efficiency and individual performance. Just as the ancient prophets worked from a place within community through loving and worthwhile relationship, both of these initiatives do the same in their daily work. First, they both eschew the traditional disciplinary exclusivity that is the hallmark of academe. The writing center is not housed under any discipline on our campus, not even the Department of English, as many writing centers are on other campuses. Without a ~~h~~home department," the writing center can effectively work with writers from all over campus, from all disciplines, and from all courses. Indeed, in the Fall 2008 semester, students from over 50 majors and 300 courses used the

services of the writing center (Kyncl). In addition to diversity among writers and their departments, the writing center employs students from a wide array of departments as peer consultants. Graduate and undergraduates hail from the humanities as well as the hard sciences and fine arts on campus. Communication between departments is created in this cross-disciplinary environment. As this dialogue occurs, more and more appreciation between departments is fostered. This creates an environment where disciplinary knowledge is valued but not held in any higher regard than knowledge from other diverse areas on campus. Quite often, students gain a broader understanding of academe and a deeper appreciation for their peers on campus. The entire context honors everyone's voice and disregards the traditional arguments and dichotomies of discipline vs. discipline.

Prophetic practice is not exhibited in the Writing Center or Writing Across the Curriculum in large scale, "one-size-fits-all" programs or in legislated action. Rather, I see it at work on a daily basis in the simple but significant choices made by my colleagues. The prophet's ability to be influenced by the concept of divine pathos is central to the attitude exhibited in prophetic practice. There is an inherent malleability that teachers often eschew because it goes against their ideas of disciplinarity. But prophetic practice must be responsive. It is formed in and with the community and it is willing to change. In the examples I will highlight in this section of my final chapter, connections to prophetic rhetorical practice are clearly visible and manifest in these ways: the primary purpose of the activity is to create community rather than to communicate knowledge or skills, all those involved in the activity or practice are willing to learn from the others and no one takes the role of expert, and the activity occurs within the academic

hierarchies we are all part of, yet it subverts that hierarchy by operating in ways that counter the preferred practices of such systems.

The Writing Center and Writing Across the Curriculum affirm the possibility of prophetic rhetorical practice within the institutions to which we already belong and the programs and departments that make up our academic communities. Change is possible and can be significant. For example, in her book *Tactics of Hope,* Paula Mathieu makes the same assertion by arguing that academic communities can be sources for justice and social engagement. Mathieu is an assistant professor at Boston College, but for the past several years has been involved with a community development program in her city, working to write and publish street newspapers that generate income for those living in poverty. She argues that most public projects instigated by English departments or composition programs or universities in general, have operated from a "strategic logics" model, "proceeding as if the university were the controlling institution determining movements and interactions" (xiv). She argues that this is fundamentally fallacious logic; the university controls nothing outside its own ivy-covered walls. She argues for a "tactical orientation" that is "grounded in hope, not cast in naïve or passive terms, but hope as a critical, active, dialectical engagement between the insufficient present and possible, alternative futures – a dialogue composed of many voices" (xv). The work of the Writing Center and Writing Across the Curriculum at OU uses such a tactical approach. The relational collaboration of both endeavors allows students, faculty, and staff to be agents of change. It also honors the communities to which they already belong. In the Writing Center and in Writing Across the Curriculum, we honor the home

communities of our colleagues, peers, and students.

Writing Centers as Examples of Prophetic Rhetorical Practice

Prophetic practice is an everyday event in the University of Oklahoma Writing Center. Writing center work is prophetic precisely because it focuses on the human relationship at the center of this work, at the pregnant possibility inherent in every session/conversation. Every writer is valued and honored with a substantial investment of time and energy by a peer consultant. Here is where the prophetic appears again: in an honest lament of the past through empathic listening of a peer consultant, through honest awareness of the oppressive structures we all operate within as we sit inside the walls of a state institution, and yet that we disrupt by spending valuable time and effort with each writer, listening to their text word for word, and finally of a hopeful, energized expectation of the future, because this writer represents possibility. This writing center provides an environment open to prophetic practice, because it embodies the ideas of love, acceptance, and cointentionality.

It is easy to see the work of the writing center as prophetic, particularly when it is examined in light of its earliest advocates. Kenneth Bruffee established the model for writing center peer tutoring in 1971 at Brooklyn College, a part of City University of New York. His work has become the model for the subsequent proliferation of writing centers (Eodice Interview 33-34). Peer tutoring at the time, and in many corners of academe today, was a scandalous approach, because it put the power and authority in the hands of undergraduates. Bruffee worked from circumstances that demanded a unique approach. City University had just adopted an open admissions policy, and the university was suddenly flooded with under-prepared students. His colleagues in the English

Department clamored for a way to manage the influx of students who had no formal training in writing and were now required to write academic papers. Bruffee worked from necessity and established one of the first peer tutoring models in the country. He describes the situation:

> While with one hand we grappled with the needs of under-prepared students and with putting into practice what we were gradually learning about teaching them, with the other we grappled with the rapid expansion of a more familiar necessity. It was helping a hundred intelligent, willing, but insecure writing teachers deal with thousands of entering freshmen, many of whom could write—sort of—but were a long way from being college- level writers.[…] We were confronted by the deep cultural wound of writing incompetence that is still largely unhealed even in many prestigious universities today. (Eodice Interview 34-35)

Bruffee's answer to this dilemma was peer collaboration through tutoring and his development of *A Short Course in Writing*, a curriculum that focused on critical skills that every writer needs to be secure in her abilities.

Peer tutoring began as a way to serve the academy, but it has increasingly become a model for collaboration and humanity in an environment that has not always fostered such cooperation. Bruffee continues to write and speak about the importance of peer tutoring and its absolutely central nature as a humanistic endeavor. At the 2007 annual National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, Bruffee articulated the humanistic foundation for his dedication to the peer tutoring model:

> I think peer tutoring writing is a great thing to do because the educational enterprise you are engaged in as a writing peer tutor is both valuable *and*

important. It's valuable and important, because it involves collaborative learning and several other kinds of human interdependence. That is, being a writing peer tutor is related to all kinds of productive relationships among human beings. (5)

The human relationship was once the foundation of all education, and Bruffee considers it important enough to make it the centerpiece of this presentation. Perhaps because we have ignored this basic relationship in our desire to make the distinction between ~~–t~~eachers and students," education has become very concerned about authority and ensuring that everyone knows their rightful place. This is the basis of Freire's definition of oppression as dehumanization work in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (60). Bruffee basically returns us to Freire's originary concepts by returning us to the focus on human relationship in education. He emphasizes this concept again later in the presentation, ~~–B~~eing a writing peer tutor influences you because peer tutoring writing is a helping, care-taking engagement. It broadens your understanding of your own and your fellow students' value and the importance of both of you as human beings" (Bruffee 6). Bruffee's words are reminiscent of his original work on peer tutoring, *The Human Conversation*, a treatise that laid out the important nature of this focus. Referring back to his context of the time, the need for acceptance and human relationship was critical to those students who were welcomed into universities in the _60s and _70s under open admissions policies. But here in the postmodern context, Bruffee reminds us that this basic framework of human relationship and conversation are still necessary for the educational enterprise to show value and inspire agency for today's students as well.

Peer tutoring models the social constructionist idea of education: that meaning is created from the interaction of learners, that we can learn more and make more meaning together than we can individually. Bruffee summarizes the position like this:

> *Writing is a personally engaging social activity*. […] we never write alone. Writing opens doors into worlds of conversation with other writers, with readers, and with yourself. Writing is a form of civil exchange that thoughtful people engage in when they try to live reasonable lives with one another. Writing is a way of caring about people, and sometimes it's a way of caring for people too. (8)

Bruffee's description of the peer tutoring process calls to mind prophetic rhetorical practice particularly in this passage for several reasons. First, it is energized by the human component, human community of one person engaging another. Secondly, it emphasizes the value of a civil exchange that thoughtful people engage in. And third, in the community of the writing center, the voice, the personhood of each writer is honored. And from this exchange both the writer and the tutor learn. It is here where Bruffee argues that we find the best articulation of ―human interdependence" (WCJ 8), in all its facets and in its necessity for educational work.

Peer tutoring has been theorized and practiced ever since Bruffee's experiment, but the basic principles can be traced even earlier than Bruffee's work to ancient times, particularly in Greece, when wealthy aristocrats hired slaves to walk their children to school. These hand-holding servants were called ―pedagogues," because they ―walked

with" the children of the wealthy to and from the school.[1] Peer tutoring is based on this principle; indeed, it redeems this original slave practice, that students need to be accompanied through the learning process. In the case of peer tutoring, the students themselves work as leaders and guides for one another. Because of the similarities in age and experience, the learner feels comfortable with the teacher, and at any point in the process, the roles may change, as one student shares information with the other.

In the writing center, peer tutoring focuses specifically on writers. Students, graduate or undergraduate, enter with texts in various stages of progress. The consultant (or tutor) sits side-by-side with the student and reads through the text, honoring the work and worth of the student writer. In this simple process of sitting side-by-side and reading together, working on a draft, discussing a topic, revisiting professorial comments or assignment criteria, humanity is honored. As Bruffee points out, "Regionally, nationally, and globally, survival of *everyone* depends on acknowledging the necessity of human interdependence, understanding its characteristics, complexities, and satisfactions, and becoming adept in its craft" (8). Here is prophetic action at work: the honoring of a human voice by another human voice, the flattening of hierarchies as students sit side by side, and the joy of finding voice and help in articulating words, ideas, and feelings.

Peer tutoring in writing is essentially different from peer tutoring in any other subject area. It should be clear that first and foremost, peer tutoring writing focuses on a relationship between tutor and writer that is not present in other peer tutoring settings.

[1] The original Greek word is *paidagogos* meaning: "A tutor, i.e. a guardian and guide of boys. Among the Greeks and the Romans the name was applied to trustworthy slaves who were charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys belonging to the better class. The boys were not allowed so much as to step out of the house without them before arriving at the age of manhood." (Thayer's Lexicon)

This is true for a number of reasons: first, because writing differs fundamentally from other subject matters. Writing is a much more personal, intimate activity. Writing assignments, while normally articulated with specific criteria and expectations, are not math problems that have distinct right and wrong responses with no room for individual interpretation and perspective. The writing prompt can be interpreted a number of ways. Experience, culture, gender, ethnicity all influence the perspective and stance of the writer. In other subject areas, there is simply one right way to do things, anything else is interpreted as incorrect. In writing, we are free as individuals to express ourselves. Consequently, sharing our writing with others is a much riskier endeavor. In essence, we are submitting ourselves for critique. This makes the tutoring of writing a completely different prospect. The importance of honoring the individual, of co-laboring with the writer becomes of the utmost importance.

To understand the significance of writing to our selves, let me refer to James Gee's descriptions in "Literacy, Discourse, and Linguistics." Gee's work is well-suited to this discussion, because he explicates the importance of discourse as how human beings create their identities. Gee uses the term "identity kit" to describe how as people we come to be shaped by our "primary Discourse community" and then by "secondary Discourses" as we mature. He writes, "A Discourse is a sort of 'identity kit' which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize" (Gee 526). Gee notes that it is through this primary Discourse that we learn how to engage in community, how to act and interact with the world around us. It is through this primary Discourse that we become

human, who we are. Consequently, as we articulate ourselves through writing, we are literally sharing our primary identities, our selves in most instances (Gee 527).

Because identity is at the fore of writing, the tutoring process also differs in that the tutoring session focuses not on the product being created, but on the writer creating the product. In other subject matter tutoring, the focus is on getting right answers, remembering right answers, reinforcing concepts that lead to right answers. In the peer tutoring writing session, the focus is on the individual writer's process, which may differ entirely from that of every other person in the room. The tutor must be much more adept at questioning how the writer works and why. The tutor must listen carefully to hear the narrative the writer offers of how she works. The tutor may in fact use completely different styles with two different students, depending on the writing processes of each. Rather than applying a "one size fits all" model of tutoring, that can be successfully employed in other subject areas, the writing peer tutor must assess the student's process at the start of each session, and work from this basis forward. Even in other disciplines, when tutors may work with the concept of different learning styles in mind, the basic premises of knowledge do not change. However, when it comes to co-laboring with a student on a written draft, many other complicating factors influence the session. Consequently, writing tutors are more invested in the student with whom they collaborate.

The five authors of the work *The Everyday Writing Center: A Community of Practice* explain this effort in their chapter "Beat (Not) the (Poor) Clock." Here they describe how each tutoring session will differ and how each peer tutor in the center will also differ in their approach to the task at hand. They write, "At the very heart of what we

five have come to understand as we've talked about time is our belief that writing centers should be most focused on time that is relational" (Geller, Eodice, Condon, Carroll, Boquet 33). Through a focus on relational time, tutors are asked to concentrate on what this particular writer needs at this particular moment, to evaluate how best to proceed through the conversation, and then be given the freedom to work with the writer along these boundaries. The five authors describe this type of freedom as unique, "This intelligence stems from the kind of timely responsiveness required in an environment unlike any other at our institutions—an environment designed expressly to be responsive at the point of need" (Geller, Eodice, Condon, Carroll, Boquet 39). Our writing center director, Dr. Michele Eodice, is fond of saying that as tutors we practice "just-in-time" learning not "just-in-case" learning. Peer tutoring indeed meets the student writer at her point of need, fostering relationships rather than right answers.

Finally, in other subject matter tutoring sessions, the tutor's goal is ultimately to work herself out of a job, to give instruction in such a way that the student learns the problem solving method and no longer needs the tutor's assistance. This too differs from the traditional writing center approach. Collaboration in writing will always be necessary, even for the most experienced of writers. In their essay, "Learning to Take It Personally," Kate Ronald and Hephzibah Roskelly discuss the innate essence of collaboration in writing. In this essay, they describe their own collaborative process and how it has literally sustained them as academic scholars. They write, "All writers know from their own experiences as writers that ideas are engendered and transformed in conversation, in collaboration, with those around us, with books we read, with stories we hear" (264). Writing is more and more acknowledged as a socially constructed discipline;

consequently, collaboration will always be necessary for writing that is balanced and appropriate for the moment. While the ―myth of genius" creates an image of the lone writer working in a darkened room, creating a masterpiece on the first draft, writers know this is indeed a myth, a material lie. The subject area tutoring of other disciplines focuses on a very different methodology, on a deficit model: the student is in some way deficient, and therefore, needs the help of a tutor to learn the information in such a way that they will be able to apply it in new contexts following the tutoring. Peer writing tutoring does not emanate from a deficit model; instead, writers work consistently with other writers to gain new insight and different perspective. In reality, writers need other writers, need other perspectives, need help. Writers never reach a point where they are not in need of another perspective or of another reader to assist them in the writing process.

The idea of collaboration in writing is crystallized for me in the second chapter of the book *(First Person)2: A Study of Co-Authoring in the Academy*. Kami Day and Michele Eodice describe the co-authoring process and effects of several scholars interviewed for this project, but a key point functions for me as the foundation of peer tutoring and its collaborative foundation in the second chapter of their work. This chapter is devoted to definitions and descriptions of co-authoring and collaboration. The authors write:

> So, for us, there is an individual consciousness but not an autonomous author. Each person combines a multitude of voices—whether they be cultural, familial, collegial, or spiritual—in a unique way, but the multitude is still there. […] The individual author's voice is the one-made-of-many in Bakhtin's heteroglossia, the

> one-made-of-many discursive subject in Foucault's _order of discourse,' the one-made-of-many star in the constellation. (Day, Eodice 19)

We are all "one-made-of-many," and our writing is always and already collaborative as we type words on a page or scrawl words in a journal. To deny the collaborative nature of writing is to deny our very identities and subjectivities. Beyond our multi-faceted identities is our need for the other voices and other perspectives around us. It is in community that we are created, as Day and Eodice eloquently describe, and it is in these communities that our writing is supported.

The distinctiveness of writing peer tutoring can be summed up in an analytical return to the original, ancient pedagogical model. In peer tutoring of writing, the tutor is a collaborator who walks alongside the student. From this basic relationship, all other functions emanate. As the two walk together, each offers experience and input from individual differences; each learns from the other based on this interaction; this relationship is long-lasting, permanent. The goal is not for the student to one day walk alone, but to always value the contributions of an other, who is distinct and has much to offer. Neither always knows the right answer; neither claims to be the solitary voice of reason or correctness. The two walk together and learn as they go, both gaining from the relationship, both contributing to the relationship. As Freire writes so clearly in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Pedagogy of Hope,* humanistic learning is a dialogic relationship, not deposits made into "banking receptacles" (students). Humanized education occurs in the time and space between two co-laborers.

Writing center scholarship clearly distinguishes peer tutoring as a place of prophetic rhetorical practice. One of the foundational texts of writing center theory is *The*

Allyn and Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring, 2nd Ed., by Paula Gillespie and Neal Lerner. From the beginning of this work, Gillespie and Lerner, writing center directors themselves (at Marquette and MIT), identify the work of collaboration that occurs in the writing center to be a humanizing force in the life of both the student writer and the student tutor. First and foremost, the students who use the services of the writing center are valued as individual writers. The tutor focuses on the student as writer, not on the product the student brings, but on the writer as a person in formation, in progress:

> You might have noticed that we use the term *writer* to refer to those folks whom we work with in our writing centers. We've chosen this term with specific purpose…we truly believe that it's important for you to see the people you work with as writers, just as you are…Of course, all writers are at various levels of accomplishment and experience, but all deserve the opportunity to find meaning in what they write and to share that meaning with others. All writers deserve our trust….The rapport that you can create with writers is one of your best assets as a tutor. (Gillespie and Lerner 8)

It is clear from the opening pages of the chapter that the focus Gillespie and Lerner strive for is a humanizing focus. Notice the use of words like ~~–d~~eserve," ~~–o~~pportunity," ~~–m~~eaning," ~~–t~~rust," and ~~–r~~apport." These are prophetic words that do the work of the prophet described early in chapter two: a person who values the community, who sees the worth of every individual, and who stands with the community even against the powerful forces of empire that work to silence the human voices that speak a different truth. The tutor Gillespie and Lerner describe is a human being who simply, yet profoundly, honors

the voice and words of another as they negotiate a space, physical and metaphorical, in which to work on making meaning.

The peer tutoring work that is the center of writing center practice supports the notion of social action, of social engagement, through human relationship. The writing center session becomes a place where two diverse individuals come together to practice social action. Gillespie and Lerner describe this aspect of the collaboration process in this way: "So why do we tutor? Well, what we have learned is that tutoring allows us to connect, whether it's with writers' ideas, with writers' struggle to make meaning, or simply with writers as fellow human beings sitting beside us in the writing center" (9). In the writing center at the University of Oklahoma, we have seen the reality of these connections in material ways. On a number of occasions, we are visited by students who simply "hang out." They may periodically ask a question of a tutor or refer to one of our reference books, but for the most part, they work alone, but in the company of other writers. They testify to us that they find the space a warm and welcoming one, where they are comfortable writing and interacting with other writers. The physical space of the writing center has become something of a collaboration zone in these instances. Similarly, we work with a number of student writers who enjoy the one-on-one conversation about their writing. One of our consultants commented after a session last semester when he was fairly certain the writer with whom he worked simply "wanted someone to talk to" about his paper (OU Writing Center Wiki). He had no real direction from the outset of the session except to read the work with someone else and discuss its meanings and intricacies.

What Gillespie and Lerner allude to in this section of their theoretical work that echoes Bruffee before them, is the perspective of writing as a social act, not as an individual one. For my purposes in this chapter, the link is from Bruffee's idea of conversation to the concept of collaboration as decentering authority, sharing decision making, and allowing students to discover alternative forms of social and political life. For their part, Gillespie and Lerner sum up the social process of writing in this way:

> We believe writing is a process, not a one-shot deal in a theme book…Further, writing is now recognized as a social act; it isn't learned merely through drill-and-practice (which James Berlin calls the _current-traditional' approach to teaching writing); writing isn't completed in isolation by individual geniuses or used mainly to discover personal insight (the expressivist theory of writing); instead, writing and learning to write require us to interact with others (often called the social-epistemic or social constructivist theory of writing). (13)

Here, tutoring utilizes the malleable flexibility I highlighted at the beginning of this chapter. Gillespie and Lerner make this distinction even more directly in the third chapter of their work, when they discuss the fact that tutors need not be experts in the discipline from which the student writer's assignment comes, but that they do need to be experts in knowing how to ask questions, knowing how to pursue lines of inquiry that encourage reflective work on the part of the student, knowing how to listen (Gillespie and Lerner 26). These are the skills that build the malleability in the student consultant/tutor, and they are definitely prophetic. They continually focus back on the writer, they continually honor the writer and her work, her skills, her answers. In this collaborative community of

two, authority is mutually agreed upon and divided between the two individuals involved in the process.

Finally, after describing the intrinsic worth of the student writers with whom we work in the writing center, after explicating the importance of honoring the process of writing as a social act shared by the student and tutor, Gillespie and Lerner highlight a third prophetic rhetorical concept of writing center work: the inspiration and energy to act. In the Old Testament prophet, we heard the prophet lament the past, realistically describe the present, and inspire hope for a new future. In the abolitionist era, we heard voices like Maria W. Stewart follow the same heuristic to engage her generation in pursuing actions that prepared the way for a future of freedom. And during the movement for civil rights, we heard Martin Luther King, Jr. and others rhetorically engage an entire community in powerful visions of what the future could offer in terms of equality. Here in the work of the writing center and in the process of collaborative community, the same significant focus emerges. In their pragmatic descriptions of how tutoring sessions cohere, Gillespie and Lerner encourage student tutors to be encouragers and facilitators and questioners. This method demands the engagement of the student writer, who must carry the burden of her own work, and who then is allowed to envision the future of her work and of her status as a writer in her own terms. This happens first in the beginning of writing session with the questions tutors ask, such as: "what concerns you?," "what would you like to work on?," "how do you feel about what you have written thus far?" "what would you like to change?" – this last question is such a beautiful inquiry that honors the student voice and brings their work and their worth to the forefront of the session. Next, the authors insist that the student tutor listen "to the whole thing" (p. 30),

to the whole essay the student has written. Again, the student voice is honored, their work is valued and listened to and simply accepted. Finally, the tutor prompts the student writer to see the future of this work, "what will you work on next," "how has our session influenced you," "what will you do if you revise this text." Gillespie and Lerner write, "The series of activities we engage in offer the writer repeated opportunities for reflection about the paper and about ways of talking about the draft" (33). Indeed, the activities, the dialogue, the social act of writing offers the student writer the opportunity to envision a future that is different, that is authentic and honest.

While such prophetic activity around the process of writing is significant to any writer, I have seen it give particular value to the writing and work of the writers who are traditionally marginalized in the academy. In particular, I have seen this happen with multi-lingual writers. Often, the multi-lingual writer is the most persistent in the OU Writing Center. They are most often students we see repeatedly, as they doggedly work through the process of learning to adapt their writing to the academic rigors of the American university. In my own tutorial sessions with these writers, I am often embarrassed by the instruction they have received from professors who have written inflammatory comments on their work. Invariably, these writers are well-versed in their disciplines, cognitively brilliant, and able to discuss the intricacies of their subject matter, and simply novices at articulating their knowledge in academic vernacular American English. I am absolutely conscious of honoring their voices and their value as I listen to their writing. I am also conscious of a looming shame on my part, because of my identity as a contributing member of the academy that has embarrassed them or stifled them because they cannot write standard American English. Ironically, their writing is often

completely understandable, but has been devalued by professors or instructors who simply want all the t's crossed and all i's dotted in the same way they were taught. In sessions with these bright and determined students, I am often able to enact prophetic rhetorical practice: first, by as I have already articulated, simply honoring their work by listening to it and commenting on their persistence and brilliance. But secondly, I have also begun to question with them the importance of writing in a standard English that silences the voice of their own language.

My thinking on this has been deeply influenced by the profound work of A. Suresh Canagarajah, a Sri Lankan scholar who has done extensive work on the appearance of global Englishes in our classrooms and in our writing centers and how we can best honor our disciplines and our students in the matters of written discourse. Canagarajah suggests that, "Ideally, this will approximate the Biblical experience of Pentecost—the archetypal metaphor of unity in diversity—as speakers communicate with each other without suppressing (in fact, while celebrating) their differences" (1623). His use of the metaphor of Pentecost is significant to my understanding of the work with multi-lingual learners. In the New Testament, Pentecost occurs in the book of Acts, at the outset of the early Christian church, not long after the crucifixion of Jesus. The small band of early Christ followers met in "an upper room" in Jerusalem during the traditional Jewish celebration of feast of the harvest of the first fruits (Pentecost). After much prayer, they were visited by a mighty wind that they described as the Holy Spirit of God that also was manifest in "tongues of fire" that sat on each person's head. After the manifestation of wind and fire, the group began to speak in a number of languages. As they left the place where they had met, they continued speaking in these other languages. In the streets

below, men and women from all over the empire, in Jerusalem for the festival, heard their own languages spoken. This dramatic event is still celebrated in our congregations as the birth of the Christian church, signified by the ability of diverse groups, races, and cultures being able to communicate with one another, understanding one another, hearing one another, for the first time.

This significant ideal of unity in diversity is what Canagarajah longs to experience in the composition classroom, and it is, I believe, the ideal that is often achieved in the work of the writing center. Whether the voices speak different ethnic languages, different tribal dialects, or different vernaculars, in the work we engage in on a daily basis, I see the honoring of each individual through spoken and written diversity actually happening in the way we honor students, in the way we value their work with the investment of our time and energy.

The work of the writing center is prophetic practice, because it is first and foremost lovingly relational. The peer tutors who are at the center of this work see themselves involved in such important and loving work as well. In March 2007 at the Rocky Mountain Peer Tutoring Conference, a number of students and academics identified their work as primarily ―relationalism," and as opposed to ―technification." At this conference, peer tutors and advisers worked together to discuss how tutoring is indeed humanistic work. In general, they described tutoring as relationship, while technification focuses on a predetermined script; tutoring as contextual situatedness, technification as universal rules and protocols; tutoring as a relationship of equals, technification as a superior-subordinate relationship. We can only understand a student's needs in light of the immediate context in which we work with them. In the Writing

Center, this relationship is clear. As a student sits down at a table with a peer consultant, the consultant must immediately assess the highest needs of the student writer at that moment. Of course a myriad of influences are bearing down on that meeting and on that environment. Both the student writer and the consultant are products of influences from family to society to ethnicity to culture. At that moment of meeting, they must navigate those influences and meet —in the middle," like the earliest pedagogues who travelled the —in between space" of school and home. Here again this ancient ritual is enacted, where people learn from one another, because both negotiate a meeting, a conversation, a dialogue. The relational work of the writing center is based on the context of individual circumstances. Pre-ordained outcomes or techniques are models that we use as informational only. When we approach a writing session, we have this store of information and ideas about how this may go and what we may need to negotiate this engagement. But before we implement any of these practices, we honor the student's wishes, we listen to the student, we endeavor to understand the student's desires and then we work from there alongside the student. Finally, each and every session is a place where the student is allowed to speak for herself. We endeavor to understand her on her own terms and not as we would like to see her or as we would envision her becoming. Like the critical pedagogy espoused by Freire, this work is student-focused, cointentional, and lovingly enacted, beginning where the student is, not where the teacher is.

One final note about the importance of collaboration and the investment in community: Mara Holt, whose work focuses on collaborative learning and who has participated in institutes conducted by Bruffee, significantly claims that collaboration cannot exist without dissent. In her article, —The Importance of Dissent to Collaborative

Learning," she argues for a type of collaboration and a type of community that are not exclusive or univocal. She writes,

> To succeed in scapegoating the person who is the voice of dissent is to remove responsibility from the rest of the group and thus maintain the status quo, not such a good thing in democracy building. […] Dissent is crucial to taking responsibility for one's own contributions to productive community work. (Mara 55)

Her words return me to the ideas of the ancient prophets who spoke most directly and most critically to their communities, to those who were like them. In order to maintain an authentic practice of collaboration within community, we must be willing to listen to the voices who do not sound like ours and who do not reinforce our own ideas. The prophets never wavered in their critique of the status quo that was not living up to the God-given mandates of care and love for all.

Peer tutoring is prophetic rhetorical practice. It is a loving, cointentional method for teaching. Of course, in the sense that I have described it here, and as it occurs in our writing center on a daily basis, it differs from the classroom in that both participants are students. However, on many occasions, our undergraduate consultants work side-by-side with graduate students who are much older and have much different experiences. Even in such "uneven" situations, the relationship works. As the students focus on the text, both yield to the other, both commit to the process, and both engage in teaching and learning at various points in the process. Love is on display; a love that accepts the other and offers help in return, in whatever form that may happen to be. In addition, both are changed. The tutor does not deliver information as a writing sage, nor does the student

writer sit passively while a paper is corrected and returned. Both actively engage in the process and are both teachers and learners at various moments and places within the session. The writing center session, when enacted as I have described it here, in good faith from both participants, is indeed a prophetic act.

Writing Across the Curriculum As Prophetic Rhetorical Practice

The peer tutoring, collaborative model has been extended beyond the walls of our writing center to the work of other writing programs on our campus as well, particularly that of Writing Across the Curriculum. My experience and involvement in writing at the University of Oklahoma extends to work within the WAC initiative, and here too, I find the fulfillment of prophetic practice.

National Writing Across the Curriculum initiatives (WAC or Writing In the Disciplines, WID, as they are sometimes called) are relatively young compared to other English programs and are more accurately described as grassroots movements rather than programmatic. In "WAC's Beginnings: Developing a Community of Change Agents," David R. Russell gives a brief description of the foundations of the work that now comprises writing initiatives in general education and other initiatives in higher education. He describes the history as that of a social movement, rather than as a programmatic enterprise. He posits that WAC has been a social movement because of the way it has grown on campuses worldwide and through the grassroots nature it has taken. The main impetus for this growth has been through face-to-face contact and personal change agents who have enacted change through the positions they already held in academe:

> People, not ―forces,‖ make a movement happen. These are very much personal stories, stories of intellectual interests developing out of not only institutions and books, but also personal networks, human communities. These sustained and spread the movement despite its lack of formal organizations. (Russell 5)

Administrations did not call for these movements in most cases, rather faculty and others saw the need for them in their own daily interaction with courses outside of the discipline of English. Indeed, Russell points back to Kenneth Bruffee and his foundational work in collaboration as the source for much of the energizing work of WAC.

Again, the connection to prophetic rhetorical practice is clearly expressed in the very beginnings of the WAC movement. The movement itself has been a response to the academy that has grown up through the grassroots level of institutions, rather than being imposed structurally and hierarchically from above. It is conscientiously concerned with pedagogy, with the relationship between teachers and students, and with ―a model of active student engagement with the material and with the genres of the discipline through writing, not just in English classes but in all classes across the university‖ (McLeod, Miraglia 5). Here too the prophetic connection is clear from looking at the way writing pedagogy has functioned in the past, lamenting the ways that exclusivity has arisen in many disciplines, and pursuing a community, relational-based approach that honors multiple voices and that values the experience of all. Through these tacit concerns, a future is envisioned where collaboration form a foundation for change. In its earliest history, as outlined by James Britton (and later Janet Emig), this approach was described as the ―expressive mode‖ of written language. From the beginning, some disciplines

resisted the approach because of its dependence on self-reflective writing that countered the hard sciences and their scientific approach to learning.

But this dialogic model of face-to-face interaction has been replaced on most campus WAC/WID programs. Ironically, even though the peer tutoring model is the basis for many WAC programs, many of the current models of WAC have settled on the faculty workshop as their methodology of choice. Russell calls it the ―ur-form" of WAC (11). Most often, a member of the English department faculty holds faculty workshops in other departments or disciplines, entertains discussions of student writing and then lectures on particular aspects of writing that the other disciplinary faculty asked for or that the English faculty member settled on. This methodology remains the centerpiece of WAC work across the country.

What happens in this traditional WAC program is much like the banking method of education that Freire describes in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: the teacher determines what is to be taught, e.g. the English TA or faculty member decides what other departments on campus need to know about writing; the teacher delivers this information to the students, e.g. the English TA or faculty member deposits this information in the receptacle of other faculty members on campus; the teacher tests the ability of the students by demanding they regurgitate this information in its original form, e.g. the English TA or faculty member releases the departmental faculty to go to their classes and do as she has instructed them. All is well; writing will surely improve across the campus.

My first experience in the work of writing in other disciplines did indeed follow this ―uniform." But our own WAC program at the University of Oklahoma has moved beyond this standard, following a change of direction led by Writing Center Director

Michele Eodice, to what I believe qualifies as further prophetic practice on our campus and within our writing programs. For the second year, I am working extensively in a program known as Writing Fellows. In this model, Freire's notions of critical pedagogy are more accurately applied. First, the teacher begins where the students are. In our case, at the University of Oklahoma, graduate students are linked to faculty members in various departments across campus. Their collaboration begins with an initial consultation that also involves the director of the Writing Fellows initiative. In this session, all three participants share in the discussion and the formation of the future collaboration, but the disciplinary faculty member is the center of the conversation, communicating concerns, needs, course information, syllabi, assignments, desires, and wishes for the upcoming course and semester. The director shares ideas and practices that writing fellows have facilitated within other departments. The graduate writing fellow shares points where she may intersect the course, expertise and experience she has gained in her work and study and may bring to bear on the course. This initial session serves as a foundation for an ongoing, at minimum semester-long relationship between fellow and faculty. From this initial meeting, cointentionality, the centerpiece of Freire's relationship with his students, is the key ingredient of the relationship. The process of engagement between the writing fellow and faculty is identical to that of the peer tutoring process, and consequently, prophetic practice as well. The writing fellow sits side-by-side with the faculty member. Both bring to the relationship different levels and areas of experience. The faculty member brings a knowledge of subject matter and disciplinary knowledge that has taken years of study, research, and experience to accumulate. The writing fellow intersects the faculty's disciplinary knowledge with a body of knowledge and experience

about the writing process, about commenting on student papers, about writing assignment design. The two discuss the various locations in the course where writing is needed, where written products have been ineffective, and where students exhibit a lack of writing process or genre knowledge. From these meetings, the faculty member and writing fellow agree on a course of action that honors, and even requires, the investment and commitment of both. The two hail from very different communities, but create a new interconnected community that utilizes and honors the work of each. From these meetings, the faculty and writing fellow relationship may take different courses. Perhaps the writing fellow will work primarily behind the scenes, assisting the professor with assignment design or with assessment. On the other hand, the fellow may lead class discussions, participating in the course as, in effect, a co-teacher, lecturing or leading activities on writing process or on peer evaluations. But the relationship is first and foremost a collaborative dialogue that effectively erases the distinction between teacher and student, teacher and learner. The hierarchies are again flattened, and the relationship promotes community, dialogue, and honor.

In the two years that I have been involved with this work, graduate students from departments like English, Anthropology, Education, and Meteorology have worked in concert with departmental faculty from equally diverse disciplines (Anthropology, Meteorology, Petroleum Engineering, Physics, Geology/Geophysics, and Studio Arts) across our campus to enhance and intensify the level of written engagement in various courses.

My own foray into this work has been most intense when I collaborated with a ceramics instructor charged with teaching the Studio Arts Capstone course in the School

of Fine Arts on our campus. My relationship with Professor Jane Aebersold began as a meeting in the office of our director, Dr. Michele Eodice. Professor Aebersold expressed her initial concern about teaching the capstone course in the spring semester, because of poor student written products in past courses. Our collaboration began from Professor Aebersold's desire for better capstone papers from her students.

At the outset of our relationship, Professor Aebersold invited me to visit her ceramics studio and see where and how she and her students worked. On an afternoon toward the end of our Christmas break, I drove to her studio on the outskirts of campus. We were the only two in the small, block building, and she spent over an hour describing her work for me. The focal point of our tour for me was when she explained the patience necessary in the work she does, "There is so much waiting in my work." The process begins when she forms the piece she is creating in clay or porcelain. After this initial effort, she throws the feet for the piece on the wheel and attaches them to the first piece. She must then wait for this piece to dry completely. Moisture left in the material will cause irreversible cracks in the piece when it is fired. Next, she must fire the piece in the bisq kiln. Afterwards, she must draw her design on the piece, paint the piece, and apply the glaze. Once she has applied the design, she must fire it again in the glaze kiln. Of course, the piece could crack at any point in the process, and often does during one of the kiln firings. She explained, "The patience required in the process is the hardest thing to teach." She described the material for me, in her case the clay, and noted that it has requirements that can not be avoided. You must wait for the moisture to evaporate. "You can adjust yourself to it; but you can not change the material." And sometimes, "students work too much with a piece and kill it." She tries to get students to work on more than

one piece simultaneously and tries to encourage them not to invest so much in a single piece of work, but they often cannot do it. Students sometimes need to abandon a piece or a portion of a painting, but they have a hard time doing that, she explained (Aebersold).

Within this conversation, I found the kernel of my relationship with her and of my work in the Writing Fellows initiative. As I listened to her explain her craft, I realized that I was, like her, an artist. I too was involved in a creative process: creating a relationship that would yield beauty. In my case, I wanted to create a relationship that would yield, not only better capstone papers (as she had originally asked), but also a relationship that would yield fruit in other courses, in the entire department of Studio Arts. Studio Arts encompasses the majors of: ceramics, painting, silkscreen, photography, graphic design, and film. I wanted to establish significant ideas about writing in our relationship that would result in other courses within these majors devoting time and energy in class to writing, particularly in the sophomore and junior years. (On our campus, we see a distinct drop in the quality of student writing during these middle years.) I did not only want to establish a good rapport with Prof. Aebersold and her class, I also wanted to till the soil for future plantings, to encourage a deeper and more substantial relationship with writing.

Such relationships are not natural outcomes of faculty workshops or of the traditional, standard WAC programs that I described earlier. Dare I say, traditional, workshop-focused WAC manifestations are less humane? Certainly they are according to Freire. He defines oppression in the classroom situation as the ~~–d~~ehumanization" of students, who are seen as purely as receptacles of information, of our deposits. The WAC

program that focuses solely on the faculty workshop and that purports simply to disseminate information falls into this dehumanizing category, by Freire‘s definition.

The majority of WAC programs invest significant resources in this methodology. A 2008 special edition of the on-line journal —Across the Disciplines” focused on writing fellows. But in each article published, writing fellows were defined as undergraduate students who were immersed in the course and worked almost exclusively with other students, rather than actually collaborative dialogue with the faculty in the very development of the course. For example, Joan Mullin, Susan Schorn, Tim Turner, Rachel Hertz, Derek Davidson and Amanda Baca from the University of Texas describe their use of –writing mentors” and describe their role as, –Finding out how students engage in the writing process is central to mentors' classroom work, and they are trained to recognize the formulas on which students will rely” (*Across the Disciplines*). The mentors become something of –classroom ethnographers,” servants to the students enrolled. In another article, –Theories of Specialized Discourses and Writing Fellows Programs,” Carol Severino and Mary Trachsel from the University of Iowa describe their program in much the same way, as students who are placed within courses to assist other students —to respond to writers as educated lay readers, pointing out places where they were confused in the progression of ideas as they read the draft.” While these interpretations of writing fellows work are collaborative, they focus solely on the relationship between writing fellows and students, rather than between the writing fellow and faculty members.

Indeed, the Writing Fellows initiative at OU is unusual. In peer institutions within the Big XII Conference, OU‘s program is unique. For instance, the three peer institutions identified by Prof. Aebersold for Studio Arts classes in the conference are: University of

Nebraska, University of Kansas, and University of Texas. While each of these schools maintains a Writing Across the Curriculum committee, and has a mission statement supporting the teaching of writing in disciplines of the liberal and fine arts, none have an initiative that pairs writing fellows with senior faculty members. All return to the traditional, workshop format that Russell states is the foundation of WAC programming since its inception. In addition, none of the peer institutions to Studio Arts programs support writing initiatives in all areas of the university. Most are limited to liberal arts course, or general education courses. The issue in these institutions is not one of progressive ideas.

Just as David Chappell describes in *A Stone of Hope*, these institutions have established principles that would be good for the students, were they implemented. What they lack, just as the progressive and liberal instigators of civil rights reform did, is an energizing inspiration, a spirituality that drives them. The Civil Rights Movement found this in the spiritual fervor of the black church; in WAC circles, we can find this in the humanization of our efforts, in the honoring of the other in the departments and disciplines with whom we work, in the basic caring tendencies of one individual for another, in the basic form of the human conversation. This invigoration would not negate the intellectual endeavor of our work, but would energize it.

The University of Oklahoma's Writing Fellows program returns to the very foundations of WAC, as it works in the spirit of James Britton's original work at the University of London Institute of Education. Britton favored the conversational, dialogic approach to working with other disciplines. In fact, he writes in a 1990 response, ~~–it~~ is from discrepancies in the conceptual fields of contributors that new meanings are

cooperatively discovered—an observation that goes to the heart of the meaning of dialogue itself, as Volosinov has characterized it: "In essence, meaning belongs to a word in its position between speakers" (182). I think our work at OU accomplishes Britton and his colleagues' originary ideas for writing across the curriculum. We are engaged in humanizing conversation with our colleagues across campus.

Humanization of the WAC program is a more ethical practice, because of its prophetic tendencies. In his book on moral philosophy, *Law, Love Language*, Herbert McCabe describes communication as the only context of ethics, noting, "A piece of human behavior is not simply an action that gets something *done*, it also has meaning, it gets something *said*" (92). Our behavior in extending the request for relationship to other departments says something about us, just as our demand to set the agenda says something as well. The traditional WAC program with its insistence on agenda-setting, its arrogance in knowing what every department needs, and its demand to control the material and the means of dissemination is almost colonial in nature. And McCabe notes that colonialism "is almost the exact opposite of communication between two cultures" (101). Our goal at OU, while to work effectively and collaboratively with a diversity of departments on our own campus, is to also demonstrate a WAC initiative comprised of caring professionals who learn as much as they teach, who listen as much as they speak, and who value the knowledge of others as much as they value their own expertise.

In both the peer tutoring relationship within the writing center and the writing fellow relationship within writing across the curriculum initiatives at the University of Oklahoma, the basic tenets of prophetic practice are the foundational concepts. These communities of practice depend on individuals who enact love as shown in their

acceptance and valuing of diverse experiences. These communities of practice depend on counter-cultural methods that subvert the status quo of institutional hierarchies. These communities of practice daily, simply, and significantly allow the participants to engage in dialogue, in writing, and in thinking that is inefficient in the way it ignores time constraints and efficiency models. Finally, these communities of practice occur only through basic human interdependence.

Prophetic Rhetorical Pedagogy

Prophetic rhetorical pedagogy eschews the empirical norms that have been established by academe: first, that teachers must be masters of their classrooms. Rather, the prophetic teacher will exhibit an attitude of love and care for all students. This attitude will be one of mutual care and concern, love. Prophetic teachers love their students. Loving students means honestly caring for their ideas, listening honestly to their voices, and honest appreciation of their motivation. This love could be demonstrated in an open syllabus that is created with the help of the students, or that is at the least based on their questions about the subject matter. From the outset, the voices of students could help create the course of study for the semester. Within the parameters of the content area, students could be asked to contribute ideas or the questions they have about the material could be solicited. In this manner, from the beginning of the course, they are part of the education-making process. But even without such concern for curriculum, loving teachers will show their care for students through respectful conversation and cointentional study. These two marks of caring will be noticeable in the way the teacher addresses students, in the way she responds to their questions as honest inquiry rather than as signs of stupidity, and the way she frames her characterization of them to other

teachers. Her descriptions will not objectify them, will not generalize about them, and will not insult them, even in places where they cannot hear her.

Beyond this foundation of love, the prophetic teacher will eschew the empirical notion that learning is a singular activity that must be accomplished alone. In her classroom, peer-to-peer collaboration will be a hallmark of her classroom. Through working together, students gain human interdependence and begin to build community and therefore, understanding. This interdependence and focus on collaboration can be effectively achieved through writing groups. Beverly J. Moss, Nels P. Highberg, and Melissa Nicolas discuss the manifold possibilities in their book *Writing Groups Inside and Outside the Classroom*. They write:

> Ideally, writing groups enable writers to make decisions about their personal texts with the supportive influence of readers/writers who are like-minded in their views of what it means to belong to and participate in a community of writers but who represent a diversity of perspectives, experiences, and opinions as readers and writers. In the classroom, teachers see writing groups as structures that empower students to become more thoughtful, engaged, and critical writers and readers. (Moss, Highberg, Nicolas 3)

Writing groups can be developed in the classroom and facilitated by the instructor, in order for the same notions of peer collaboration and human interdependence to be fostered. The classroom is transformed into a place of collaboration and working together instead of hierarchical structure with the sole authority lying in the instructor.

By establishing writing groups and honoring the voices of students, the prophetic teacher effectively establishes a collaborative environment for learning. Alex Gitterman, a

professor of social work who has done significant work with groups and the influence of groups on learning, describes the importance of such a classroom in this way:

> For collaborative learning to evolve, the teacher must be willing to give up the role of being the only expert in the class. […] Collaborative learning begins in the first class when the students take their seats and can see each other's faces. Collaborative learning is put into practice when the instructor invites students reactions to the course syllabus and encourages their input into course planning. […] The instructor consistently conveys her/his unshakable faith that students will be more able to learn, to think critically and to venture into new substantive areas when they have been involved in an active, cooperative educational process. (62)

A prophetic teacher is able to make this "leap of faith" into a trusting relationship with her students, because she has effectively given up the role of expert. Just as in the original iteration of Freirian critical pedagogy, Freire himself gave up the right to determine what should be learned. As the teacher exhibits a faith and trust in students, she is rewarded with a collaborative environment that fosters a positive educational experience.

Thirdly, the prophetic teacher will disavow the idea that emotion and spirituality are anti-intellectual motivations. The prophetic teacher will encourage and honor emotional and spiritual connections and motivation from other communities of influence. She will acknowledge that all students hail from diverse communities and that many of these are already significant memberships for students. She will allow students the freedom to explore how their spirituality may affect their writing and how their writing may in turn influence their communities. She will acknowledge the role of emotion and spirituality as influences in the lives of many activists and rhetoricians is proof that these

forces can be motivators for social change and community engagement. The prophetic teacher will accomplish this work by building a positive relationship with her students. She will call them by name, acknowledge their difference, and accept their culture, gender, ethnicity, and faith as significant and contributing parts of their identities. Additionally, such a teacher will shift the focus in this classroom from argument methodologies to engaging dialogue in the writing process. Instead of highlighting confrontational strategies, perhaps more conciliatory strategies can be emphasized.[2]

Next, the prophetic teacher will choose to believe that even students whose mother tongues are not English have important ideas to contribute to the academic enterprise. The prophetic teacher will honor the languages of all students. She will describe the guidelines of academic English but will honestly disclose that more than one ―academic English" exists. Consequently, students will have the choice of writing in this vernacular or in another that may be closer to syntactical marks of their mother tongue. As long as the content of the text and the thought of the student is demonstrated, ―global Englishes" (Canagarajah) will be honored and valued.

Finally, the prophetic teacher will encourage student agency. The prophetic teacher will, with her students, imagine a future that includes their voices and that is influencable by their writing and their action. Like the prophets, the prophetic teacher will understand that ―success" is not discretely defined as utopian ideals realized. Rather, the teacher utilizing prophetic rhetorical practice will honor students and their writing, because it is the right thing to do. The prophetic teacher will help students imagine ways

[2] I'm thinking particularly of methods like Rogerian argument here that emphasize the common ground among those who disagree as opposed to focusing on difference and persuasion.

they can engage society and bring their gifts and voices to cultural and civic work in the communities where they already belong. This will be success.

In his book *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*, Andy Crouch, a Christian author, describes what I ultimately strive for as a prophetic teacher:

> With whom [am I] sharing my power? How am I making it possible for others to cultivate and create culture? How can I become a steward, investing my cultural power in the dreams and plans of those with less cultural power than myself? […] [Am I] engaging in acts of service that take [me] into places of anonymity and invisibility? (Line 2110)

As teachers, we have cultural power conferred on us by degrees, by academic institutions, by professional experience. As Crouch asserts in this quote, we should humbly acknowledge that and utilize it in a way that encourages our students to seek their agency in the worlds where they live and work and find their identity. Like the Hebrew prophets, Crouch proposes that we can do make no such concessions unless we do it from lives lived in love: "Love is a fragile thing that does not scale well. It seems small beside the towers of Babel and Babylon. It is like a mustard seed, tiny and seemingly vulnerable. But it is the unseen truth of the universe, the key to the whole story" (Line 2532).

Conclusion

The fragile love Crouch asserts was absolutely the motivating foundation for the ancient prophets: love for God and love for their communities. It was the energizing force behind Maria W. Stewart's rhetoric and action on behalf of African Americans who had been enslaved for generations. It was the inspiration behind Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dreams and non-violent activism that mobilized an entire generation against

discrimination. And it was at the very heart of Freire's critical pedagogy as articulated through cointentionality. Love for those who were oppressed, love for those who deserved more. Our classrooms are populated by human beings who are no less deserving and no less valuable, and many of the practices that have become standard fare in those same classrooms are oppressive in the way Freire defined oppression: they are dehumanizing (60).

The work of a prophetic teacher simply but significantly humanizes our work. The prophetic teacher in many ways practically applies the work already on display in the OU Writing Center and Writing Fellows programs. These acts of simple human kindness expressed through listening, collaborating, valuing, and advocating are easily extended into the classroom through our purposeful acts as teachers. In so doing, we do not in any way negate past oppression or past grievances that are authentic and still painful for many. We honestly acknowledge that within the educational structure we belong to, very real offenses have been committed against many of our students. On our campus for example, the physical structures of our system sit on land that was taken by force from Native American people. This act cannot be forgotten, and prophetic pedagogy does not ask us to forget. Rather, the prophetic act perseveres through a love for all people and hopefully imagines a future where such acts are never repeated. Prophetic pedagogy does not long for utopia; in fact, we realize failure is just as possible as success, but we persist, because to do otherwise is to abandon a vision of basic human dignity and value.

Is it really that simple? Paying attention to students, loving them as though they are of ultimate worth and value? Yes, it is that simple, but of course, it is never easy. For we are cultural creations after we are God's creations. And our culture constantly

oppresses us into pursuing self-serving goals, rather than other-serving ones. Our Taylorist tendencies to efficiency incessantly remind us that we must be active, pursuing our goals, gaining tenure, writing, working. We sacrifice human relationships that do not serve our self-serving pursuits; we ignore first-year students who are not yet committed to our discipline or our department. These forces of empire continuously remind us that it is other things that matter, not the heart, soul, work, and being of the students themselves. Prophetic voices remind us that we are oppressed, that we live in the now and the not yet. Prophetic voices remind us that change can happen through our students, that in our classrooms sit valuable experiences embodied in young bodies and souls who contain seeds of change. The prophetic energizes us to see differently, to hear differently, and to work differently.

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APPENDIX: Statement of Faith

Aware that the term "Christian" has come to mean different things to different people, I relish the opportunity to explicate my particular subject position. I call myself a "Christian" in the most basic sense, as a follower of Jesus Christ. I endeavor to emulate the actions and attitudes of Jesus Christ based on the chronicle of his life written in the four Gospels of the Bible.

At the same time, I desire to separate my status from much of the work of organized religion. While I am a member of a particular denomination (the Church of the Nazarene), a community of faith, I am also uncomfortable with being included in the same category as the religious right. My values tend to be more centrist than those of my brothers and sisters in evangelical circles. I am uncomfortable with much of the rhetoric from the right as well. For example, I identify with Donald Miller in his book *Blue Like Jazz* when he says that one of the reasons he has trouble with the traditional church is the use of "war rhetoric" or "war metaphors": soldiers marching to battle, fighting the good fight of faith, etc. I have dealt with this American=Christian deception. In addition, many of the metaphors used in religious rhetoric alienate many of the women in the community. However, to abandon my faith community because of such issues would silence my more moderate voice and influence. Consequently, I remain.

I find compelling support for my position in the famous book by Dietrich Bonhoeffer *The Cost of Discipleship*, and there in his pages is this chapter entitled, "The Disciple and Unbelievers." In this part of his writing, Bonhoeffer describes the difference in the ideologies of the world and the Bible as the Word of God. He writes,

An ideology requires fanatics, who neither know nor notice opposition, and it is certainly a potent force. But the Word of God in its weakness takes the risk of meeting the scorn of men and being rejected. There are hearts which are hardened and doors which are closed to the Word. The Word recognizes opposition when it meets it, and is prepared to suffer it. It is a hard lesson, but a true one, that the gospel, unlike an ideology, reckons with impossibilities. The Word is weaker than any ideology, and this means that with only the gospel at their command the witnesses are weaker than the propagandists of an opinion. But although they are weak, they are ready to suffer with the Word and so are free from that morbid restlessness which is so characteristic of fanaticism (Bonhoeffer 207).

And there is where I make my stand, on the weakness of this position, a position that welcomes rejection as much as acceptance. Althusser was right, "the church" (little c) has absolutely and historically been an apparatus of the state. It has been used to force onto people the ideas of the religious: who is accepted, what positions they should hold, etc. It has even at times withheld the Gospel from those who were deemed unworthy. But the gospel of Jesus Christ is not to be equated with the organized apparatus of religion. The gospel, as it was communicated by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, is Good News to and for everyone. It takes all comers; it accepts all comers. It turns the governments of the world upside down, because it refuses to play by earthly rules. It was the apparatus of organized religion that justified slave-holding; it was the apparatus of organized religion that refused women the right to speak in their assemblies; it was organized religion that refused to serve communion to blacks. All of these things were the product of the apparatus of organized religion, but you would find

Jesus Christ on the opposing side of all of that. And as one of his followers, I must ensure that I am following him, not the apparatus of organized religion. The prophetic voice is a voice that calls the church to account. The prophetic voice is a voice that is empowered by an engagement with the Creator and his plan for humankind. It separates itself from the apparatus of the church, so that it can critique religion as well as other institutions.