

Paley investigated events of art education that most people in our field would not acknowledge as such – ones framed by goals, taxonomies, outcomes, assessments, or categorical systems. His book is itself an art work in the sense of “thinking against the grain,” of criticism and documentation that proposes the idea of art (education) as redemption.

Ann E. Calvert
Department of Art
The University of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Corcoran, B., Hayhoe, M., & Pradl, G.M. (Eds.). (1994). *Knowledge in the making: Challenging the text in the classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Boynton-Cook, 303 pp. (Hardcover).

Situated broadly in the transformative orientation to curriculum, *Knowledge in the Making* overcomes a charge often levelled at critical theorists: it not only finds fault with the ways schooling replicates society but it offers a good deal of practical classroom advice on how to resist it. More narrowly, the editors' aim is to challenge English teachers to reexamine their goals for teaching literature:

The teacher's purpose is to help foster a critical literacy. She wants students to develop an ability to challenge a text's ideology when appropriate, to see that texts arrive with socially constructed values, even biases and prejudices, some of which may not be supportive of the reader's best interests. (p. x)

The most provocative chapters in *Knowledge in the Making* explore ways in which literature perpetuates cultural hegemony and how students can be taught to challenge and resist manipulative aspects of texts. Some of these essays are based on textual analysis: Ray Mission demonstrates how teenage magazines “very powerfully construct a specific view of what it is to be a girl, and especially what it is to be a girl in a relationship with a boy” (p. 82); Judith Parker presents strategies to help students explore the ideologies of romance novels (e.g., unpacking gender stereotypes); J. Yellowlees Douglas analyses the concept of the author's intention, illustrating with problematic texts and interactive narratives.

The bulk of the volume, however, reports classroom-based research. Annette Patterson, Bronwyn Mellor, and Marnie O'Neill describe various strategies which force students to question dominant readings of a text (e.g., changing the protagonist in a short story from a man to a woman to a child to confront stereotypes). Other topics include the discourses about literature that students learn to value (Ruth Vinz), the use of unconventional writing to confront textual ideologies (Wendy Morgan), and contrasts among students, teachers, and researchers, readings of poetry (Alison Lee).

Theoretical Underpinnings

Although most chapters are not grounded in extensive literature reviews, discussions of the theoretical foundations of critical literacy are sprinkled throughout the text. Bill Corcoran's opening chapter outlines seven theoretical approaches to the teaching of literature and the practices which grow out of each. Subsequent chapters note in passing such concepts as open and closed texts and readings (Peter Hunt), "readerly" and "writerly" texts (Elaine Millard), poststructuralist theory (Alison Lee), poststructuralist readings (Annette Patterson, Bronwyn Mellor and Marnie O'Neill), navigating hypertext (J. Yellowlees Douglas), and framing (Brenton Doecke and Ian Reid).

Challenges to Reader Response

Knowledge in the Making addresses a number of theoretical and practical difficulties with reader response. Nancy McCracken, for example, uses an incident from her freshman English class (her students interpreted a gang rape as just another boyish prank) to demonstrate that group interpretations can mislead and that a teacher's guidance may be required to force students to refocus their discussions. Peter Hunt, an author and critic of children's books, explores reading for literary meaning, concluding that "despite the still fashionable declaration of 'the death of the author,' this author at least isn't dead, and does intend meanings" (p. 225).

Practical Applications

On a practical level, many of the activities discussed in the book can be used directly by teachers and researchers:

- Bill Corcoran has students rewrite fairy tales from the points of view of the villains or less privileged characters to provide them with insights into the ways fairy tales teach.
- Joseph Harris facilitates class discussion by having students respond to each others' written critiques of movies.

- Robert Protherough reports the reasons students give for rereading or not rereading literature, a study which invites replication by classroom teachers or by researchers.

Criticisms and Disappointments

As might be expected, the essays are not uniformly interesting or important. Chapters by Darlene Forrest (a reading, writing, and responding workshop with teachers), Michael Williams (students viewing a film), and Jenifer Smith (book conversations with children), for example, present unreflective narratives of classroom experience which are largely out of tune with the aims of the book and are quite tedious.

There are also traces of *déjà vu*. Readers of *English Journal* may recognize Gordon Pradl's chapter on teaching literature at the point of utterance for it is a lightly revised (augmented in places) version of his 1987 article (surprisingly uncredited). John Rouse has rehashed and retitled his *College English* article from the 1980s ("Scenes from the Writing Workshop" is now "Scenes from the Reading Workshop"), keeping the same trite theme: alleged stubborn ignorance on the part of the university establishment.

For Canadian readers, a major disappointment of the book will be its lack of Canadian voices. Of the 25 contributors, ten are from Australia, eight from the United Kingdom and seven from the United States. It cannot be that the work of Patrick Dias, Deanne Bogdan, Karen Armstrong, Trevor Gambell, or David Miall is unfamiliar to the editors – indeed some of these scholars are acknowledged in the bibliography – so the omission of Canadians is a bit puzzling. In addition, since *Knowledge in the Making* presents a viewpoint which is outside of the mainstream of reader response, commentaries by two or three of the major reader response figures (James Squire, Arthur Applebee, Judith Langer, Alan Purves, Richard Beach, Louise Rosenblatt) might place some of the assertions and assumptions in the collection in a broader perspective.

Amenities

The editors provide a minimum amount of scaffolding for the reader: the introduction outlines the theoretical context and offers brief notes on each chapter; "Afterthoughts" by Gordon Pradl (a review of the themes of resistance and confidence) and by Mike Hayhoe (political realities in the United Kingdom) also present some insights into the editor's beliefs and motives. However, the grouping of the 21 chapters of the book into five sections is not helpful: the sections are not introduced by headnotes or synthesized by the editors in any other way. The book lacks an index, a

feature which I would have found particularly helpful inasmuch as many of the chapters have theoretical positions and conceptual frameworks buried within them.

Audience

English educators who cannot offer a good accounting of the concepts behind such terms as "critical literacy," "resistant readings," "hypertext," and "critical response" and scholars from other disciplines who would like to explore recent advances in reader response would put *Knowledge in the Making* at the top of their reading lists. Because it presents an alternative to the tyranny of the individual reader, *Knowledge in the Making* may well be the harbinger of the next generation of reader response: confronting, challenging, and resisting the hegemony of the text.

Joe Belanger
Department of Language Education
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada