There's something about the act of claiming working-class experience that pisses people off. It seems especially to bother other people who wish to claim working-class experience. For the last three years, each time I've attended conference presentations about class difference in adult literacy education, I have witnessed heated confrontations between presenters and audience members. In one case, a well-known rhetoric scholar demanded from a panelist discussing strategies for teaching working-class students how she knew that her students were in fact working-class. The questioner added that her own sister was working-class but would be mortified if anyone presumed to identify her as such. On another occasion, a man in the audience angrily wanted to know how the panelists, each of whom was narrating his or her experience of being and being represented as a working-class academic, had the nerve to call themselves working-class, when his own experience was so different. I remember thinking that the scene looked for all the world like one of the more confrontational TV talk shows, on which participants give dramatic testimonials to challenge others' claims to, and interpretations of, lived experiences.

It only occurred to me later that I had, in watching these teacher-scholars produce these emotional displays in talking about their own class histories, discovered an important clue to what to do with class pedagogically. And thus the question that begins this inquiry is a rhetorical one: if we ourselves—teachers and scholars steeped in theories of literacy and social class—have such visceral responses to one another's definitions of class experience, then how can we expect students to "understand" what class is, and how class works on individual subjectivities, through the mechanisms of critical inquiry alone? Following hard on the heels of the rhetorical question is a

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more practical one: If critical inquiry can’t supply mechanisms for uncovering truths about social structures, power, and class identity, then what resources are available to teachers in this effort? The short answer is that these resources lie within the domain of the emotional: they include students’ affective experiences of class and teachers’ affective responses to these experiences. The longer answer must address the problem of how these affective responses function as work—that is, how burdens of emotional engagement are unevenly distributed in scenes of literacy learning. The scene I began this essay with suggests the inevitably affective nature of class experience and (therefore) class interpretation, but it can’t come close to describing the kind of work relationships that exist between students and teachers in classrooms where literacy instruction happens.

While my argument implies, ultimately, a reconsideration of the relationship between theoretical knowledge of literacy development and pedagogy and the performance of teaching, my goal here is not to offer a fully elaborated theory or methodology for writing teachers. Rather, it is to begin an inquiry into how teachers might perform emotional engagements that students find authentic and valuable within scenes of literacy instruction. These engagements, I believe, ultimately enable students to locate their own affectively structured experiences of class within more integrated understandings of social structures and identity formation. Such integration seems especially important for working-class students, for whom the process of acquiring academic literacy entails complex affective mediations between past experience and hopes for the future, between loyalties to the very different public constituencies of home communities and middle-class institutions. In “Manufacturing Emotions: Tactical Resistance in the Narratives of Working Class Students,” Janet Bean draws on lessons learned in teaching working-class students in Akron to argue that “emotion can function as a powerful tactic when introduced into academic discourse because it opens up a rhetorical space for ambiguity and disrupts—at least for the moment—the privileged position of rationality” (104). Learning how to position ourselves as teachers to help working-class students “disrupt” the power of rational inquiry that undermines the power of their affective experiences is, I believe, the best way to engage the critical heuristic potential of these experiences.

To situate this inquiry, I begin with a consideration of how class has largely been treated as a problem of rational inquiry in composition theory and pedagogy—a situation that not only ignores work in other disciplines that might teach us how class operates as culture, but also brackets off matters of affect in thinking about how class identifications operate relationally in the classroom. Working from the assumption that class is experienced in terms of affect, nostalgia, and desire, I then look to work in critical anthropology to argue for a more robust “working-class” pedagogy that considers the heuristic potential of emotion in helping students to
integrate their affective experiences of class into more systematic and productive understandings of social processes. This entails making room for the products of students’ emotional labor in scenes of literacy instruction, a process enabled by teachers’ willingness to render affective performances (including the performance of emotional restraint) of their own. This explicit attention to the pedagogical work of emotion—and its operation in relation to forms of work that students are called upon to produce in writing courses—amounts to a turn away from pedagogies of critique, which position teachers as honest skeptics, to a pedagogy of strategic performance, in which teachers work to tactically position themselves as conduits for students’ affective responses to the paradoxes of nostalgia and ambition in working-class experience. This approach will no doubt strike many teachers as uncomfortable, since the very pedagogical stances they feel are most ethical in projecting their political commitments may, when viewed from an emotional labor perspective, call for reassessment. Such tensions produce the “paradoxes” through which class-sensitive teaching needs not only to work “through”—beyond, but also “through”—within. Attending to these paradoxes seems critically important for literacy educators for at least three reasons: Writing teachers teach not only by describing rhetorical strategies and applying them to texts, but also by enacting them through relationships with students; literacy learning generates its own complex dramas of motive, desire, and affect—dramas scripted and staged by experiences of class difference; and only by giving more explicit attention to the performative and relational dimensions of affect in classrooms where literacy instruction happens will it be possible to disrupt the usual arrangements of student-as-emotional laborer, teacher-as-manager that are especially pernicious when teaching working-class students.

**Feeling Class Contradictions**

Paradoxically, in the professional literature on pedagogy within composition studies, class has been simultaneously everywhere and nowhere. To the extent that the field is concerned with the problems of adult literacy and access in higher education, class is implicit in everything writing instructors do. To the extent that there has been a general recognition that “class” names a social reality that indexes rhetorical practices and predicaments, it has been, until recently, all but absent in conversations about teaching and learning in composition studies. This might seem like an arrogant, even outrageous, claim to make, given the field’s saturation with cultural studies theory and its ongoing commitment to critical pedagogy. Both of these approaches understand class hierarchies as enacted through cultural forms and processes, so that the goal of literacy instruction becomes strategic intervention in the reproductive processes of culture. In Gary Tate, Amy Rupiper, and Kurt Schick’s *Guide to Composition Pedagogies*, for example, Ann George describes the aim of criti-
cal pedagogy as the creation of a democratic society, a goal enacted by asking students to analyze “the unequal power relations that produce and are produced by cultural practices and institutions” so that they might “develop the tools that will enable them to challenge this inequality” (92). In the same volume, Diana George and John Trimbur summarize the history and philosophy of cultural studies, explaining that cultural studies approaches to composition are concerned with delivering popular culture as subject matter into writing instruction, and that they do so by “imagining a wide range of social phenomena—not only the media and advertising but also malls, city streets, classrooms, work places, the rituals of everyday life and so on—as cultural texts that can be read and analyzed” (82). Though these approaches emerge from different histories and engage different sets of cultural materials, they both urge students to see how cultural products participate in processes of social structuration and train them to be skeptical of the apparent naturalness of everyday life. In general, pedagogies informed by critical and cultural theory have treated class less as a complex affective experience than as a set of social issues to be addressed through systematic analysis. Both approaches work by attempting to change students’ understandings of how class operates so that their new and improved frames of reference might position them to enjoy more control of their lives—as better consumers, as more empowered workers.

Given the popularity and widespread circulation of these “pedagogies of critique,” it seems as if class has gotten a fair treatment in the field, that its place in composition pedagogy has been well theorized. Certainly it’s becoming more visible as a thematic category, as this special issue, as well as the emergence of new scholarship about class in composition studies, attests. Yet if one takes stock of the rapidly proliferating critiques of critical/cultural pedagogy that suggest that such pedagogies don’t fully consider students’ class positions, then one begins to see how class has, until recently, been absent even where it’s been the most present. If the field has been quick to recognize that writing instruction is a political process, it has been slower in attending to the complexity, particularity, and situatedness of this process. There is growing concern, as the scholarship on these pedagogies matures (see, for example, David Seitz’s review essay “Hard Lessons”), that even strategies designed to make students aware of their class positions have not always worked from a deep understanding of what is at stake for students in accepting new ways of interpreting their lives. In other words, ways of teaching that aim to help students become critical of pervasive ideologies, whether of consumerism or of easy class mobility, can be rhetorically naïve. The goal of critical pedagogy as it has been conventionally practiced is to replace faith with reason, belief with knowledge—to equip students to come to rational understandings of oppressive structures. Yet, as Amy Goodburn and more recently Lizabeth Rand have argued, this ignores the deep structure of faith that critical pedagogy itself works from. The irony is that, though the impulse
for justice is largely driven by faith in the power of moral commitments, in many forms of critical and cultural pedagogy teachers often deny students access to the very forms of affective experience that have produced the teachers’ own beliefs. As Laura Micciche so aptly notes, “[T]he political turn in composition has been slow to address the emotional contexts of teaching and learning.” Indeed, she argues, “emotion has figured only minimally in accounts of student and teacher subject formation or classroom dynamics” (436).

Recent scholarship, like the work of Bean and Micciche, demonstrates a growing recognition of the pedagogical insufficiency of the idea that class should be approached only as a critical problem, and it suggests that teachers need a much richer understanding of how affective dimensions of class experience participate in the development of actionable beliefs. Gwen Gorzelsky, for example, has recently argued for greater attention to the affective dimensions of students’ experiences with liberal education, indicating that traditional Shorian pedagogy doesn’t fully recognize the critical potential of the affective dimension. She explains that while Shor “emphasizes experiential change as an essential means of teaching students how to engage in intellectual and critical exchanges,” he nonetheless works from the problematic assumption that “ideological change is driven by argument-based, rationalist discourse rather than by affective dynamics and experiential shifts” (312–13). Along the same lines, Jennifer Seibel Trainor notes how, in her study of conservative Christian women, Linda Kintz “[argues] against the tendency in political theory to dismiss affect from considerations of political life,” suggesting that “this dismissal overlooks an important point in any discussion of political identity: the fact that politics are not only about abstract reasoning or economic interests but also about belief, which combines the rational and the irrational, the conscious and the unconscious, thought and feeling” (638). Meanwhile, Lisa Langstraat laments that these failures in addressing the political nature and potential of affect have undermined the power of cultural approaches to literacy learning, and have “contributed to the many charges that cultural studies compositionists tends to dismiss students’ feelings and values in the service of ‘imposing’ a ‘leftist’ viewpoint” (304). Micciche, Gorzelsky, Trainor, and Langstraat suggest the new lines of inquiry that composition must establish in order to develop theoretical grounding for more fully developed pedagogies of class. Their work indicates that it is not productive to continue to behave as if becoming “conscious” of class is a matter of intellect alone, and that writing pedagogies must attend to more rugged experiential textures of motive and affect. This is especially important if the goal is to teach in a way that honors working-class experience and history at the same time that it encourages students from working-class families to form new political relationships with that experience.

It would indeed be difficult for anyone who has lived class dissonance—or who has listened carefully to narratives of class conflict and displacement—to argue that
“class” is not an affective phenomenon, as much a state of memory and desire as it is a state of relational awareness. One needs only to glance at the titles of essays in C. L. Barney Dews and Carolyn Leste Law’s *This Fine Place So Far from Home* (Laurel Johnson Black’s “Stupid Rich Bastards” is a good example) to be persuaded of this. We understand class as a problem of distribution of resources, but we experience it affectively, as an *emotional* process. The “we” in this case includes working-class students themselves, who, because their education proceeds according to institutional dictates about what counts as “knowledge,” are in an affective predicament indeed. Students’ positions as members of historical cultures is complicated by their teachers’ ambitions for them as members of political cultures, so an important part of developing a more affective pedagogy of class is genuinely to treat “class culture” as a set of affective positions defined by investment in historical cultural practices, on the one hand, and social and economic aspirations, on the other. To understand “working-class” cultural membership and identity as indexing a particular set of experiences, one must recognize that “class culture” does not operate in the same ways as other forms of cultural difference. Working-class culture differs from other categories of difference. It is marked neither as an identifiable category, like gender, nor as a unified set of historical practices. It names, rather, a set of shared experiences fraught with structural tensions and contradictions.

I find the theoretical and ethnographic work of critical anthropologist Douglas Foley—work that has received little attention within composition studies—especially useful in articulating the contradictions in working-class cultural experience. In “Does the Working Class Have a Culture in the Anthropological Sense?” Foley brings ethnographic methodologies to bear on Marxist analyses of class formation to define “working-class” as experience constituted by cultural processes of structuration, on the one hand, and locates these processes as *practices* in real time, on the other. Doing so demands a dual conception of working-class experience as constituted by political culture (what is emergent, agentive, transformative) and anthropological culture (what is historical, traditional, stable). Foley contrasts the “idea of invented, emergent cultural practices” with the anthropological concept of a more stable notion of culture, a “historical cultural tradition that is passively inherited” (139). Foley goes on to point out that the process of mediating between residual and emergent forms of culture is “ceaseless, is always reflective of deeper social contradictions, and is always some unpredictable synthesis of the old and the new” (139). For Foley, working-class experience is, by definition, constituted by the struggle to place identity formation between a nostalgic, imagined authenticity and the possibility for the invention of a forward-looking, more public voice. On the one hand, “class culture” is the shared experience of political struggle. On the other, it is a set of practices that are held as all the more sacred for offering stability.¹ This means that the question teachers of working-class students must address is, as Amy Robillard
suggests, where, along this chronological axis of nostalgia and aspiration, should one locate one’s pedagogies?

I applaud Robillard’s question, and I concur with her answer: literacy educators should direct their pedagogies to that experiential space where memory and ambition collide in the most potentially damaging, and potentially transformative, ways. It is in this affectively dangerous space that one might begin to imagine a more humane, and productive, pedagogy. Since, as Foley points out, class culture is by nature a tension, an “unpredictable synthesis” of the old and the new, a volatile mix of sacred and profane, such tensions can’t be treated as rational problems to be solved, but rather as affective positions to be engaged. If this is true, then one begins to recognize that the implications extend not only to what teachers need to do in order to engage these positions, but also to who they should be.

**Finding Class in Spaces of Affective Mediation**

If class experience is understood as a state of heart as well as a state of mind, then how do teachers learn how to access the deep knowledge of class experience that doesn’t inhabit (or only very uneasily inhabits) a discursive field, much less define explicit pedagogical standards for best practices? How can Foley’s insight about class culture as the organized experience of cultural contradiction generate practical strategies for responding to working-class students?

The answer to this question can only be articulated, again, in terms of a paradox: In order to truly understand what students need from their teachers in order to make their emotional labor productive, teachers should be prepared to stubbornly resist easy theoretical alignments, becoming, for the moment, staunchly flexible antism-ists. Recalling Foley’s description of class culture as a dynamic, unpredictable synthesis of old and new, the first step seems to be to relinquish the idea that teaching has to have a theoretical coherence that indexes practice in a way that is entirely predictable and comfortingly replicable. Decades ago, Peter Elbow recognized that good teaching is shot through with paradoxes of motive, performance, and affect. I find it ironic that Elbow’s insights into the phenomenology of teaching have been so loftily dismissed by politically minded pedagogues, given that the process of teaching about class is a matter of working through (in the sense of “working by means of”—not in the sense of “getting past”) these contradictions and paradoxes. Bean urges teachers to work within spaces of affective dissonance by paying attention to students’ emotional performances as acts of agency and resistance, arguing that “critical resistance can reside not only in the explicit cultural critiques of Marxism, feminism, and postmodernism, but also in rhetorics of everyday emotions” (23). To support and enable these critical moves, teachers must “acknowledge the ethical work [students] are already doing as they render their emotions and experiences in words”
Bean asks us, in other words, to attend carefully to the heuristic potential of student narratives that many critical teachers would dismiss as evidence of uncritical acceptance of dominant ideologies of upward mobility. To illustrate, Bean tells the story of Sarah, a white working-class student who reacted angrily to an assigned reading critical of the ideological power of the Horatio Alger tale. In class discussion, Sarah expressed her rage that the successes she had won through her hard work were implicitly cast by the author as the benefits of white privilege. Bean saw in Sarah’s response powerful testimony to “the power of emotional expression and our limited understanding of its rhetorical force,” concluding that Sarah’s anger let her, for the moment, “occupy conflicting positions within the dominant narrative of upward mobility” (7). Sarah’s anger, in other words—even though it might appear to demonstrate mere capitulation to dominant ideologies of meritocracy—was a form of resistance to the idea that the lived complexity of her class experience could be captured within the one-dimensional domain of rational critical activity.

In keeping with Bean’s suggestion that emotional performances such as these can be heuristic and persuasive, I would argue that the best teaching practices for students like Sarah are those that implicitly put affective processes at the center of students’ literacy learning by creating mediated spaces in which students can experience their learning about class as an affective process. Such practices, as Bean’s example suggests, reach down into pockets of deep experiential contradiction that are largely inaccessible to systematic inquiry—and because they proceed from an understanding that ideological positions can’t always be treated as rational processes, are deeply pragmatic. These practices move to the rhythm of the kind of rhetorical two-step Hephzibah Roskelly and Kate Ronald describe as “romantic/pragmatic rhetoric,” a rhetoric that conjoins idealism and faith with a pragmatic emphasis on kairotic practice. Such a conjoining makes sense, they argue, because “[r]omanticism and pragmatism both operate from principles of mediation” and that “pragmatism in fact offers a method of explaining how principles of romanticism [such as, I would suggest, Sarah’s response] can operate in the world” (25). With Robillard, and with other scholars such as Nancy Mack and Seitz, I believe that one way to invite working-class students to dwell in the spaces of mediation between class commitments and class ambitions is to encourage the kind of narrative theorizing that enables consciousness of the particulars of class experience. “We understand our present,” writes Robillard, “by interpreting the past, analyzing its details and selecting the plot line” (84). I don’t believe Robillard would object to my including in “understanding” a kind of affective repositioning as well as a purely intellectual awareness.

The work of scholars like Robillard and Bean teaches us that the way to develop class-conscious pedagogies is not to banish emotions from sites of literacy instruction. Rather, we need to puzzle out the implications of their presence and figure out how teachers can meet students in productive emotional space. And so the question
becomes where should teachers be in these spaces of affective mediation? How should teachers attempt to shape or regulate students’ emotional responses in class work? Patricia A. Sullivan has recently argued that the rhetorical work of students’ writing is only partly a function of the kinds of writing we ask them to produce. The personal essay may enable authoritative reflection and critique, but we enable it to do so by reading it as reflection and critique. What matters is not just what we ask students to produce, but also how we engage with the products of their labors. Sullivan wonders,

What if we viewed our students’ personal narratives as [. . .] ongoing constitutive teachings that join students and teachers in a continuous process of cultural pedagogy? What if we thought of the literacies and knowledges our students already have, when they come to us, as having the potential to teach us? What might we learn from reading our students’ personal writing if we thought of ourselves as students and scholars of their lived experiences, their literacies, their culture? (46)

Sullivan’s question is similar to the one I wish to raise with respect to working-class students: What if teachers strategically used their own rhetorical performances to open the critical affective space in the classroom that would enable their students to understand the full range of “implications”—personal, social, cultural, emotional—of their experiences? To do so would entail conscious and strategic emotional labor on the part of the teachers. It would mean, in other words, that teachers must become skilled actors, ever aware and able to negotiate tensions between control and improvisation. Paul Kameen describes the rhetorical work of teaching this way: “Teacherly identity is never simply a matter of being oneself, just as it cannot ever simply be the robotic ventriloquizing of disciplinary and institutional discourses” (254). Rather, teachers need to make these constructions of “teacherly identity” the primary focus of their energies—if, that is, they wish to truly make students the focus of their energies. Directing our attentions to how we as teachers create our own personae is not, therefore, merely narcissistic, it is appropriate and ethical.

**CLASS COMMODITIES: THE PROBLEM OF THE MONEY SHOT**

To put this more directly, students need to get their emotions into play in order to interpret their class injuries, and teachers need to actively create an empathetic space for this to happen. But if class difference makes this conclusion legitimate, it also makes teaching in this way difficult and dangerous. As Megan Boler has argued, in any institutional context emotions are not free agents, but rather operate as commodities subject to control and regulation. That is, emotions are a form of work, subject to the pressures and perils of the (capitalist) marketplace. I began this paper by comparing the emotional displays of speakers at a national conference to those that are routinely delivered by guests on TV talks shows. While both conferences
and talk shows are scenes of rhetorical performance and emotional display, the difference, of course, is in the degree and effects of the institutional management of emotions as work under conditions of class inequality. It will be instructive, then, to consider the talk show as an example of the contexts within which the emotions of working-class people are routinely produced, regulated, and commodified. Laura Grindstaff’s ethnography of cultural production through the management and spectacle of working-class guests’ emotional displays on television talk shows affords useful insight to the genre as a cultural phenomenon. Grindstaff, a sociologist, spent over a year “behind the scenes” at two nationally aired television talk shows in an effort to understand how programs like Oprah and Jerry Springer participate in ideologies of cultural production and how these processes are related to class inequalities. In The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows, Grindstaff examines how displays of emotion performed by working-class “guests” are arranged and transformed into commodities by the production process. At the center of this process, she finds a paradox: emotions must be carefully managed to appear to be spontaneous and authentic enough to produce “the money shot.” Unlike the routine manipulations production staff must engage in orchestrating these emotional dramas, talk-show “guests” must deliver performances of emotion that require deep engagement with the emotions on display:

Ordinary people are expected not just to discuss personal matters but to do so in a particular way. They’re expected to deliver what I call, borrowing from film pornography, the “money shot” of the talk-show text: joy, sorrow, rage, or remorse expressed in visible, bodily terms. It is the moment when tears well up in a woman’s eyes and her voice catches in sadness and pain as she describes having lost her child to a preventable disease; when a man tells his girlfriend that he’s been sleeping with another woman and her jaw drops in rage and disbelief [. . .]. According to producers, the more emotional and volatile the guests and audience members, the more “real” [. . .] they are. (19-20)

But of course it is the working-class guests, not the middle-class producers, who are expected to serve their feelings up in this way. Grindstaff points out that in order for TV production staff to elicit the kind of emotional performances that deliver the “money shot,” they need to repress their own responses: “Ironically, then, getting guests to talk about their personal lives and express genuine emotion means that producers themselves must deliberately refrain from doing either” (135). She explains that when institutions “own” affective responses, emotion workers must produce labor that is responsive to institutional imperatives. Such workers “become actors whose roles are scripted by the exigencies of their work” (135). Though we all act in institutional contexts, there is an important distinction to be made about what the motives and effects of this acting can be. Following Arlie Russell Hochschild, Grindstaff contrasts “surface acting” with “deep acting.” The latter emerges from a
purposeful intervention in the deep structure of feelings—from, really, a willingness to call up an emotional response on demand. Quoting Hochschild, Grindstaff explains that someone is deep acting when “[he or she] does not try to seem happy or sad but rather expresses spontaneously as [Stanislavski] urged, a real feeling that has been self-induced” (qtd. in Grindstaff 135). While in either case there is an affective display brought about by purposeful work, deep acting is experienced by the actor as more authentic feeling, whereas surface acting feels disingenuous. A successful emotional performance can be produced “by either seeming empathetic or becoming so” (135). One way to understand the difference between surface acting and deep acting is in terms of control. When you’re surface acting, you remain in control of your emotions by consciously structuring the impressions you produce. When you’re deep acting, you relinquish the possibility of emotional control. When you deep act, in other words, you work, through acts of will and imagination, to open yourself to the possibility that you might persuade yourself that the emotions you are presenting are real. You risk becoming the thing you are performing. Deep acting is, paradoxically, the process of exerting control in order to relinquish control.

It goes without saying, of course, that the college writing classroom is not a talk show. The writing classroom does not engage the “public” in quite the same way as a talk show does, nor does it deliver products to secure profits in quite the same way. Yet arguably there is a parallel to be drawn to the relations between talk-show producers and guests. Teachers act as institutional agents of emotional management, while students are asked to render successful affective performances to create viable personae as middle-class critics and producers of discourse. Cultural theory within composition has shown, especially in response to the claims of “expressive” pedagogies, that writing teachers can’t invite students’ unmediated emotional responses, since in the context of the classroom—just as in the context of TV talk shows—the language and emotions of the “guests” are commodified. Soliciting emotional responses for the purposes of academic rewards becomes, for students, a matter of producing the “money shot” on demand. (I once tutored a student who confessed that the tragic account of his friends’ car accident and death that we were working on was total fiction, contrived to earn rewards from a teacher who saw emotional “authenticity” as the mark of good writing.) One response to this situation is to simply take teachers out of the position of talk-show producers by discouraging students from doing emotional work within the classroom—by, for example, banishing “personal” writing from students’ repertoire of rhetorical performances, and turning instead to text-based writing so that students are never compelled to act too deeply. But (quite apart from the question of whether it’s possible to keep scenes of writing instruction emotionally hygienic in this way) it has not been—as we are now beginning to recognize—productive to decide that since emotions in institutions and classrooms are problematic, they should be left alone. In fact, the decision
to bypass emotions has often meant that the pedagogy of critique has—if you’ll pardon the mixed metaphor—shot itself in the foot to spite its face. And yet if, as Grindstaff’s work suggests, emotions are dangerous in institutions eager to put them to instrumental uses, particularly when the affective products of class experience stand to be transformed into commodities, what power do teachers have over these processes? Let us turn to Foley once again for a clue.

Though Foley theorizes class through Marx and Habermas, he must, in the end, turn to Erving Goffman to account for class as a lived experience and to imagine a method for gaining access to class culture. Foley finds Goffman’s symbolic interactionism a useful empirical method for studying how class is invented and maintained through expressive practice. He believes that although Goffman does not define his project as cultural critique, his work is inherently critical and attentive to how communication is determined by institutions and social processes. This is so, explains Foley, because Goffman’s dramaturgy can be read as “an ethnographic description of [. . .] ‘bad faith,’” since everyday communication would be “impossible without a good deal of fiction and self-deception” (148). Goffman’s descriptive universe is, for Foley, “the shadowy world of fleeting, temporary social orders” (149). But these social fictions are, ultimately, articulations of class relations, insofar as they dramatize deeper social divisions.

If understanding the dynamics of impression management can help us to apprehend class relations in the world of everyday communications (and I think it can), then—ironically—teachers must attend to the fact of this “bad faith” in order to operate in good faith as teachers of working-class students. To allow students to “own” the products of their emotional labor, so that they may learn from them rather than to exchange them for good grades, teachers must, ironically, mediate their production by demonstrating their own willingness to move into deep acting, to risk more, to put more of themselves and their identities into play. This kind of emotional engagement is, like writing itself, a process: deep acting is the ultimate goal, but one moves toward it through the rhetorical work of surface acting. And the movement from surface to deep acting occurs in stages. It is a process, in fact, with which ethnographers are intimately familiar.

CONTROLLING EMOTIONS TO GET BEYOND CONTROL: 
A PROCESS APPROACH

To understand how this process might look, let’s begin with the unlikely example of confidence man Frank Abnegale. The example of Abnegale serves, I believe, not only as a useful illustration of how deliberate fictions can be pedagogical, but also as a way to imagine the first “stage” in the process of moving toward empathy. (We will see, later, how a look at Abnegale’s “methods” also gets us to a place where we can
imagine the terms of deeper engagement.) Abnegale, *poseur extraordinaire* and author of the autobiographical *Catch Me if You Can*, embarked at an early age on a career as an impostor. From his teenage years until he was finally caught and imprisoned in a French jail, Abnegale posed as an airline pilot, a pediatrician, a lawyer, and a sociology professor. In each case, he accomplished his impostorship through an ingenious mixture of document forgery and dramatic artistry. In his story, Abnegale shows himself to be a brilliant and canny manager of kairos: that is, he learned what he needed to know to pull off his next performance in precisely the moment before such knowledge became necessary. He learned from cues in the conversations of airline pilots, for example, how to construct a provisional discourse that convinced his interlocutors of his authenticity—thereby authorizing him as the kind of insider who was permitted take part in other private exchanges.

Posing as a sociology professor, Abnegale operated in similar fashion. In class discussion, he invited students to summarize their knowledge—and as his students spoke, Abnegale listened and learned enough to scaffold his students’ knowledge into other forms of inquiry. By all accounts, Abnegale’s “pedagogy” was a success: he was given superlative reviews by his “students,” and the word spread quickly about his competence and compassion as a teacher. Abnegale’s teaching was successful because he listened with intent to understand subjectivity and motive and to discern possibilities for action. In pulling off his deception, he transformed himself completely into what he saw others needed him to become in order for them to give him permission to teach them. It is not, of course, Abnegale’s motives I wish to take as exemplary; it is his success in fashioning a performative self that is at once tactical and naïve. In order to manipulate his students, he submits wholly to their needs; in order to realize the arrogance of his impostorship, he makes himself humble. In essence, he convinces others to teach him things by listening to them. Like Frank Abnegale, teachers must become strategically naïve for the purposes of being the kind of listeners who can productively attend to students’ affective needs. But—and this difference is crucial—unlike Abnegale, they should also be willing to relinquish control, to move into deep acting. Unlike Abnegale, their goal should not be manipulation for self-serving purposes; it should be, rather, strategic positioning for the purposes of learning how best to serve others.

So the story of Frank Abnegale serves not as a model of ethical teaching, but as a way to imagine the rhetorical contradictions and paradoxes teachers must negotiate along the way to an effective, and affective, pedagogy. Though Abnegale maintains the kind of control over others’ emotional responses to him that he needs to sustain his deceptions, and *resists* the move into deep acting (in fact, the moment when Abnegale *does* begin to persuade himself of the authenticity of his own feelings—when he actually falls in love with a woman he’d only been pretending to love—is the moment when his carefully constructed architecture of deceptions be-
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gins to crumble, and we see the beginning of the end), what he accomplishes to such productive effect is a form of what Krista Ratcliffe has called “rhetorical listening.” In her article of the same title, Ratcliffe wonders how to recuperate listening as trope and performance. She describes the paradox of humbling oneself in order to intervene in the understanding of another as a problem of performance: “The rhetorical listening that I am promoting is a performance that occurs when listeners invoke both their capacity and their willingness [. . .] to promote an understanding of self and other that informs our culture’s politics and ethics” (204). She continues, “understanding means listening to discourse not for intent but with intent—with the intent to understand not just the claims, not just the cultural logics within which the claims function, but the rhetorical negotiations of understanding as well” (205). Ratcliffe invokes Jacqueline Jones Royster’s language to argue for the potential of such performed receptivity to function, in an age of postmodern paralysis, as a “code of cross-cultural conduct.” It can do so by allowing us to position ourselves as simultaneously empathic and critical. Ratcliffe argues that this kind of listening “may help us invent, interpret, and ultimately judge differently in that perhaps we can bear things we cannot see” (203).

Just as Ratcliffe argues for the importance of strategic listening to learn how to intervene in the meaning-making processes of others, I suggest that teachers can listen to students to know not only how, but who to be with them. They can strategically perform the role of learners, just as, perhaps, the ethnographer puts on an attitude of naïveté. In her final chapter reflecting on the ethical and performative nature of fieldwork, Laura Grindstaff draws provocative parallels between the produced performance of a TV talk show and the drama of ethnography itself. Grindstaff notes that fieldwork, like the production of talk TV, also involves surface acting: one tries to be “honest” with one’s informants, but the evolving, inductive nature of ethnographic research makes it difficult to determine where to position oneself in any given moment. Grindstaff insists that researchers hold themselves to the highest ethical standards in their work, but she recognizes that “fieldwork typically involves a wide range of behaviors involving elements and moments of deception, however small, unwitting, or provisional” (284). In the end, she sees the relationship between fieldworker and informant as “[m]ore developmental than contractual” and follows Everett Hughes in urging a view of the ethnographic relationship as “an ongoing series of research bargains” (285). And yet, as with teachers and students, the stakes are higher still: even if the terms of such “bargains” are negotiated through forms of surface acting, they must, to be productive and sustainable, be supported by much more than superficial performance:

Fieldwork depends, in a deep and fundamental way, on establishing a rapport with and forming personal attachments to one’s research subjects, just as producing a talk show depends fundamentally on the formation of emotional bonds between produc-
ers and guests. The chief difference here is that, with fieldwork, one's emotional investment is ongoing and long-standing, entails greater levels of reciprocity, and cannot easily be sustained with surface levels of acting.” (277)

The fieldworker begins, in other words, in much the same way Frank Abnegale operated, by constructing a persona for the purposes of better receiving social information—but she ends, finally, in submitting more fully to this persona as social understanding develops. She may implicitly disapprove of cultural practices, and feel emotions of anger or alienation. But she must defer these feelings of righteous indignation long enough to inhabit the subjective universe of her informants. This is the deep irony, the heart of the paradox: in order for teachers to enable students' affective work, they must begin by staging their empathy, knowing all the while that the price of successfully persuading students of their (the teachers') emotional commitments may very well be that they succeed in persuading themselves of these commitments as well. Teachers must listen even when they are not interested, must appear to care about things that bore or annoy them, in the expectation that such attentiveness will become genuine concern.

An anonymous reviewer of the first draft of this essay concluded that I was advocating self-serving posturing, mere deception. What was wrong with real empathy, she wondered? The obvious answer is that nothing is “wrong” with “real” empathy—if by “real” what is meant is empathy that is immediately, spontaneously experienced as such. The problem is, as I would venture every teacher knows, that it doesn’t always happen in quite that way. The professional literature is becoming deeply saturated with “wet” narratives, teaching stories that struggle to make sense of their authors’ vexing emotional encounters with students with whom they find it difficult to empathize (see, for example, the essays in Joseph F. Trimmer's recent collection, *Narration as Knowledge: Tales of the Teaching Life*). Teachers don’t always sympathize with their students or even like them any more than fieldworkers, as empathic as they strive to appear to their informants, always approve of the things they see and hear in the field. When middle-class teachers hear their white working-class students express rage at those who advocate affirmative action, they are as likely to feel alienation and disapproval as they are to experience empathy. And when they feel such alienation, they have a choice: they can act in response to their alienation (they can, for example, exercise their power to silence students who express such views or invoke their own moral authority to challenge such views as unethical) or they can perform empathy. Since emotions are situated and constructed, emotional responses are acts of will and social imagination rather than, as Langstraat reminds us, “those hardwired features of life that are somehow beyond the social” (304). Nor should emotional response be confused with mere unreflective disclosure. I have often heard teachers insist that, since their classrooms are in fact places for consciousness-raising, and because they wish to demonstrate that politics are in fact
present in the classroom, they are therefore obliged to “come clean” with students with their “real” political views. But I would counter that such coming clean—insofar as it means that students, who are not in a position to say what they “really” think, will no doubt experience such forthrightness from the teachers as an uncritical constraint on their own developing political identities, and inasmuch as it saves teachers themselves the trouble of negotiating complex rhetorical predicaments—is playing dirty.3

To illustrate what the pedagogical stance I’m describing might look like, let me offer an example from my own teaching experience. I introduce this anecdote not as an example of what Trimmer would call a “teacher as hero” narrative but rather in an effort to illustrate how teachers might position themselves to gather data from students in order to learn who they must become in order to enable a fuller range of experiential and affective responses. The example to follow shows, I think, how it’s possible for a teacher to begin by staging empathy in response to the rhetorical needs of students and end in deeper forms of affective engagement—how one might, in other words, move from surface to deep acting and what this process might look like in real time.

The example involves a situation that emerged in a first-year writing class I taught in the spring of 2003, when the war in Iraq was beginning. The class was titled “Writing: Women in America,” and its thematic focus was, as I’d designed it, the experiences of working women in America. When midway through the term I shared with students my feeling that, given current events (the bombing of Baghdad), it seemed odd that we were smoothly attending to class business as usual, several students voiced their own discomfort with this situation. They complained that none of their other teachers, even those who taught classes about war, were inviting them to discuss the current events in class. When I asked them whether we should discuss them in this class, the consensus was that we should make time to do so. I agreed to build this time into our class routines, despite the possibility that it might invite students (as a colleague warned) to become “too emotional.” The first problem for me in initiating this discussion was to determine what role I should take. How should I position myself? The obvious choices were either “neutrality” (taking no position) or “honesty” (communicating my real feelings about the ethics of the war directly). Having tried both of these stances in similar situations at other times, however, I was convinced that neither would yield good results. It seemed that I needed another way to be with students, one that would enable the emotional responses that discussion of this issue was likely to invite. In an effort to learn from them who they needed me to be to make the discussion both safe and productive, I told them that, given our very different positions on the war (they were generally pro, I was fervently con) and my position of relative power over them, I was having trouble imagining how to negotiate the discussion responsibility. I asked them to consider a
scenario in which they were teachers in precisely my situation, teachers trying to
figure out how to respond ethically and productively to a political issue about which
they had strong feelings—keeping in mind that they (as teachers) had the power to
silence students whose views were different from theirs.

In working through this “hypothetical” scenario, students decided, in the end,
that they would try as teachers to communicate their own views, but also to situate
these views among other possibilities. In positioning myself in such a way as to learn
from students—who knew, after all, what was at stake for them emotionally—how
to handle the discussions, I found out that they needed me, on the one hand, to “be
honest,” and on the other, to avoid “forcing my opinion” on them. What they wanted
from me, in other words, was a measured, mediated honesty: I should let them know
where I stood, but I should also work to conceal my feelings in order to allow them
to voice their views. In our first discussions of the war, students gave testimonials
about their passions and misgivings about the U.S. action in Iraq—often, they ex-
pressed sentiments that I found difficult to remain silent about. These were not at
this point “critical” positions, or even rational ones. I documented these responses,
recording them on the board as discussions progressed so that we had a record of
the rhetorical landscape our positions comprised. As this territory began to take
shape and I could see that it was formed largely by what I considered to be political
misconceptions and unreflective sentiments, I felt a growing sense of unease. With-
out my direct intervention, would students come around to a more well-informed
understanding of the events in Iraq?

One thing was clear: students’ reluctance to discuss the war critically and ratio-
nally was no indication that they weren’t eager to make sense of it. On the contrary,
they very much wanted to make sense of it, but in a way that invited their other-
than-rational responses into the process. From our initial discussions in which stu-
dents’ affective responses to the war were heavily in play, I learned how their
investments in their views were linked to their lives and circumstances (some came
from families that were politically very conservative, some had friends and boy-
friends in the military). Students, on the other hand, discovered the power and the
limitations of their affective responses when it came to situating their views within
larger domains of knowledge. We ended our initial discussions with two kinds of
questions: first, what do we now know about where our initial responses come from,
what kinds of commitments do they represent, and what it would take in order for
them to change? Second, what do we still need to know in order to make informed
decisions about the morality of U.S. actions in Iraq? Later discussions explored these
issues; in the end, we worked our way back around the question of how our explora-
tions of the issues of the war in Iraq might be understood as a research process.

What made this strategy work, I think, was my willingness to make myself stra-
 tegically naïve in two moments: first, in seeking advice about how we should conduct
discussions about the war, and then later, when (working hard against my own emo-
tional need to negatively evaluate some of the perspectives I was hearing about the war) I worked to communicate empathy for their positions as affective responses. In the end, these students gave me permission to complicate their understandings, to help them get to the kind of knowledge they now identified as necessary for greater understanding of the issues. These gains were, I believe, purchased by my own emotional labor as I struggled to mediate my own affective responses. The initial discussions of the war made me nervous, left me emotionally drained, exhausted. But if, as I've often heard teachers declare, discomfort is a sign of growth, then clearly I was learning. Less emotionally mediated forms of engagement would not, I think, have taught me how to learn from the discussions. In the end, I learned two things from my experience in this particular class: one, that it's possible to learn from students how to create the kinds of rhetorical situations that enable emotional responses; and two, that under such circumstances, deep acting must follow, if these responses are to work as something other than rhetorical currency.

To be, well, honest, the students in my course were not—with a couple of ex-
ceptions—from working-class families. The kind of emotional labor illustrated by this example is a component of effective teaching in general, but it is an ethical imperative when teaching students who are working-class. First, it's easy to imagine how much higher the emotional stakes of discussing the war would be among popu-
lations in which even more students would have friends and peers with experience in the military. Among the students I worked with when I taught in Mississippi, for example, there would inevitably have been students whose friends and neighbors were in Iraq, perhaps killed in Iraq. Second, to insist that teachers must be willing to be other than themselves, that they be willing to do risky emotion work, is no more, and no less, than the kind of emotional labor working-class students are asked to do all the time in changing characters to fit the scripts of new rhetorical situations and institutional contexts. In working with students (that is to say, in doing the kind of emotion work they routinely do), teachers are already positioning themselves as learners of class experience—which is not to say that they have full access to it!—because listening, like deep acting, is a necessary practice of the working classes, as these are obligations of the powerless. To be a working-class student is to put one's identity on the line in institutional contexts, time and time again; to be effective and responsible teachers of working-class students is to be willing to do the same. As the above example suggests, this is a process that begins in instrumental practices and ends in emotional space. There is no guarantee, of course, that the outcomes of this process will be ideal—that students will end up in critical positions that are aligned with those of their teachers—but then, there never is.

To be truly effective—and ethical—teachers have to be willing to be dishonest enough to keep themselves honest, to be committed enough to the pedagogy of their students to relinquish their public commitments when the occasion demands.
Creating the space within which a more engaged, egalitarian pedagogy can take place is partly curricular, yes. One can design curricula that make room for experiential, inductive learning, rather than designing courses that are only “about” critical reading. But it’s also phenomenological, a way of relating to students. I do not aim to provide a monolithic definition of, or a generalized prescription for, performance of affect. I am merely suggesting that the idea of deep acting as a pedagogical stance gets us into a place where we can begin to imagine how students’ experiences of class can have heuristic potential. For Kameen, what allows us to live with, and even make productive, the knot of rhetorical (moral and performative) contradictions at the heart of teaching is a kind of ironic distancing that makes commitment something other than ownership. Even as we take our jobs as teachers terribly, deadly seriously, we should not confuse this commitment with the impulse to take ourselves—that is, our power to control all the possible impressions we give off, much less all the possible outcomes of these impressions—too seriously (something, I should add, that it’s perfectly possible to do even in “dialogic” or “critical” curricula). Kameen describes his own project thus: “[I] try to imagine ‘myself’ as having a good sense of humor about the excesses of my ‘self.’ Finding a way to add this last layer of irony to the teaching [...] is, I think, the key” (237). Another paradox hides therein: the more one can call upon this protective irony, the more one can afford to call one’s emotions into play when deep acting becomes necessary.

This approach may invite comparisons with Jane Tompkins and her narrative of romantic epiphany. Tompkins learns that emotions do have a place in the classroom, and that they’re more readily available when teachers back off a little; that is, when they depart from the usual script. Yet I think Tompkins errs in attempting to conceive of teaching as something other than performance rather than recognizing that emotions are a form of labor, and that this work calls for a more explicit, a more highly developed, performative consciousness. Further, Tompkins’s late-career call for “letting go” has been rightly critiqued on the grounds that it is naïve, utopian, and (ultimately) elitist. Roskelly and Ronald, for example, point out that Tompkins does not “address the complicated and varied scenes of writing instruction or the very real theoretical issues about whose agendas are served in those settings” (7). While my argument here is a case for relinquishing certain forms of control, it is also a case for controlling other things presumed not to be subject to, or appropriate for, control. Or, more precisely, for creating highly controlled conditions so that control may ultimately be relinquished. Like Tompkins, I believe that “letting go” can be a virtue—if what you relinquish is your desire to, and confidence that you can, control the outcomes of what students learn in class. This is very different from “letting go” of the emotional life of the classroom, either by dismissing it as unimportant to learning or by assuming a position of emotional deregulation. Teachers should control their emotions—but by “control” I do not mean “repress;” I mean something more like “manage.” It is not our place to compel students to bear wit-
ness to our “personal” feelings (unless, of course, these feelings are hailed by stu-
dents themselves). It would be nice to imagine that all genuine and spontaneous
feelings have a place in an open and egalitarian learning community—and if all sites
of literacy learning, such as first-year writing classrooms, were such spaces. But, of
course, classrooms are not such spaces.

To suggest that teaching is largely about ethos is not to say, necessarily, that it’s
magical. Nor is it to suggest that there is no place for “theory.” Only that the appli-
cations of theory are often unpredictable, that teachers should have the good faith to
turn the skepticism we insist on in students back onto our own belief in the predic-
tive powers of theory. Rather than feeling cynical about the instrumental uses of
emotion, teachers should be hopeful about the possibilities for control this gives
them. Not, as I have said, control over ideological outcomes, but control over how
the affective space of the classroom might be heuristic, and not a distraction from
the real business of teaching students to “think critically,” on the one hand, or its
own form of oppression, on the other.

**Conclusion: Working through the Paradoxes**

“We are never who we are when we teach,” writes Paul Kameen. “Nor should we try
to be [. . .]. Teaching is in fact the means by which we may become other than our-
selves” (256). In a truly class-sensitive pedagogy, critical inquiry—whether through
critical textual interpretation, or interrogation of the everyday—is not enough. Since
students experience class as a real affective location, these experiential understand-
ings must be engaged by our pedagogies. Teachers should be willing to enable affective
learning by doing the kind of “deep acting” students do as a matter of course.
They must be willing to stage their feelings and be willing to allow for the more
risky play of identity that happens when surface acting goes deep. The paradox is
that teachers must sometimes be dishonest to be most real to students, to create the
kind of environment of trust that allows emotions to be something other than com-
modities or distractions.

As teachers, we want to be ethical in our treatment of students who come from
marginalized groups. Quite naturally, and by all means honorably, we see “honesty”
as entailed by this ethical treatment. And yet, given that these students often have
emotionally complicated relationships with schooling, it is important that we not
see an “honest”—that is, emotionally and performatively untheorized and
unstrategized—stance as a way to forgive ourselves for not becoming whomever our
students need us to become in order to engage these emotions. As we have seen, this
paradox parallels the situation of fieldworkers: ethnographers know that in order to
participate deeply in the phenomenological worlds of their research participants,
they too must learn complicated games of positioning and concealment. The terms
of performance can certainly shift as ethnographers learn from those with whom
they live and learn, but the ethnographic relationship, like any other, is a matter of performance and repositioning. “Honesty” announced as a refusal to role-shift can be an expression of class privilege, and the teacher who is unwilling to perform affective positions will communicate to students that emotion work is the job of the students and, what’s worse, that the products of this labor will likely become commodities. In order to invite students to make heuristic use of their class experiences—in order to ethically enable, that is, the kind of critique-through-emotion that Bean’s student Sarah enacted, the classroom itself cannot replicate class structures in which the managers of emotion are set apart from the laborers. Listening to and learning from students requires hard work from us as teachers—it requires, specifically, the work of staging our emotions so that others may become more aware of the scripts that motivate and constrain their own emotional responses.

It is at this point that what appears to be a purely phenomenological argument becomes a case for institutional change. Richard E. Miller rightly warned that “the tendency to focus on the individual classroom as a transformative site serves to distract our attention from the bureaucratic forces that shape all interchanges between students and teachers” (124), entreating the scholars in the field to “look beyond what happens in the individual classroom and concentrate instead on the institutional forces that bring teachers and students together in the complex, heterogeneous curricular space known as ‘first-year composition’” (124). Institutional considerations are important to Grindstaff, as well, whose analysis demonstrates that actors’ capacity to deep act is not accidental, but rather that it “depends as much on the conditions of work as on the individual worker.” She observes that “when emotional labor is highly professionalized and well remunerated, as it is for, say, therapists in private practice, genuine compassion may well be a good deal easier to muster” (135-36). Many have pointed out, and rightly so, that they don’t get paid enough to give of themselves in this way. And yet, though Miller’s call for a wider institutional view makes good sense, the need to understand wider institutional contexts in no way abolishes the equally pressing need to understand classrooms as distinctive sites of social performance. We need to understand writing instruction in ways that are deep and dense as well as expansive and architectural.

The next order of business, clearly, is to develop fully the implications of an affective working-class pedagogy at both ends: to articulate the institutional conditions that would enable such work, and to realize the forms and textures of such a pedagogy in real time. This next step would entail working toward a fuller understanding of what it means to negotiate emotions with various forms of social difference. Grindstaff’s talk-show producers often started fights between guests by managing their emotional responses. In inviting emotional responses to issues that are pressure points of affective experience, teachers will inevitably (if not deliberately, like talk-show producers) set the stage for conflicts between students with conflicting affective commitments to their experiences of difference. How then can
they manage—and manage their own emotional responses to—the conflicts that inevitably blow up under such circumstances? Once the idea that literacy teaching is—and should be—emotion work takes hold, the next step is to more fully attend to the complexities of emotional engagements with various forms of difference and experience. Bean calls for “a theory of emotion that takes into account the role the affective plays in the development of critical agency.” This call should be answered by teachers who are willing to become naïve enough to learn what these processes look like in their own classrooms.

NOTES

1. My own research in a working class bar (see Lindquist) bears this out: at the Smokehouse, it was the ritualized practice of political argument among bar regulars that served a solidarity function at the same time that it allowed them publicly to theorize the contradictions of working class identity.

2. This is precisely the stance that Stenberg and Lee recommend in their essay on the work of teaching new teachers in composition. We can only truly treat pedagogy as a process of inquiry, they argue, if we relinquish the kinds of rigid theoretical identities and alignments that prevent us from apprehending the rhetorical complexities of teaching and learning.

3. Calling for an affectively robust cultural pedagogy in a postmodern age of “miasmic” cynicism, Langstraat urges writing scholars to develop more nuanced theories of emotion as they are “imbricated in power relations.” This would mean “asking who is allowed to feel, what emotional investments are acceptable in a given context, and how ‘appropriate’ emotional expression reflects power relations in that context” (306).

4. I take seriously the admonition by James E. Porter and colleagues that critiques of classroom practice that ignore institutional conditions “make institutions seem monolithic and beyond an individual’s power for change—except in a kind of liberal, trickle-up theory of change that pins political hopes on the enlightened, active individual” (617). I don’t expect that the critique of current practice I offer will change institutional structures that ultimately constrain practice. In fact, my call could function as an appeal to institutions to recognize, and support, the forms of emotional labor writing teachers are called upon to do, so that in the end these forms of labor within the classroom become more productive. Yet, as we all know too well, institutions can be slow to change, even in the best cases. Meanwhile, there are innovative, enabling teaching practices that can help mediate students’ experiences of institutions. Whether or not individual teacher/workers can sustain best practices under less-than-ideal conditions is always a pressing question.

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