

Academic Matters

THE JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION
LA REVUE D'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR

The Seductive Educator

Denis Jeffrey

Séduction pédagogique

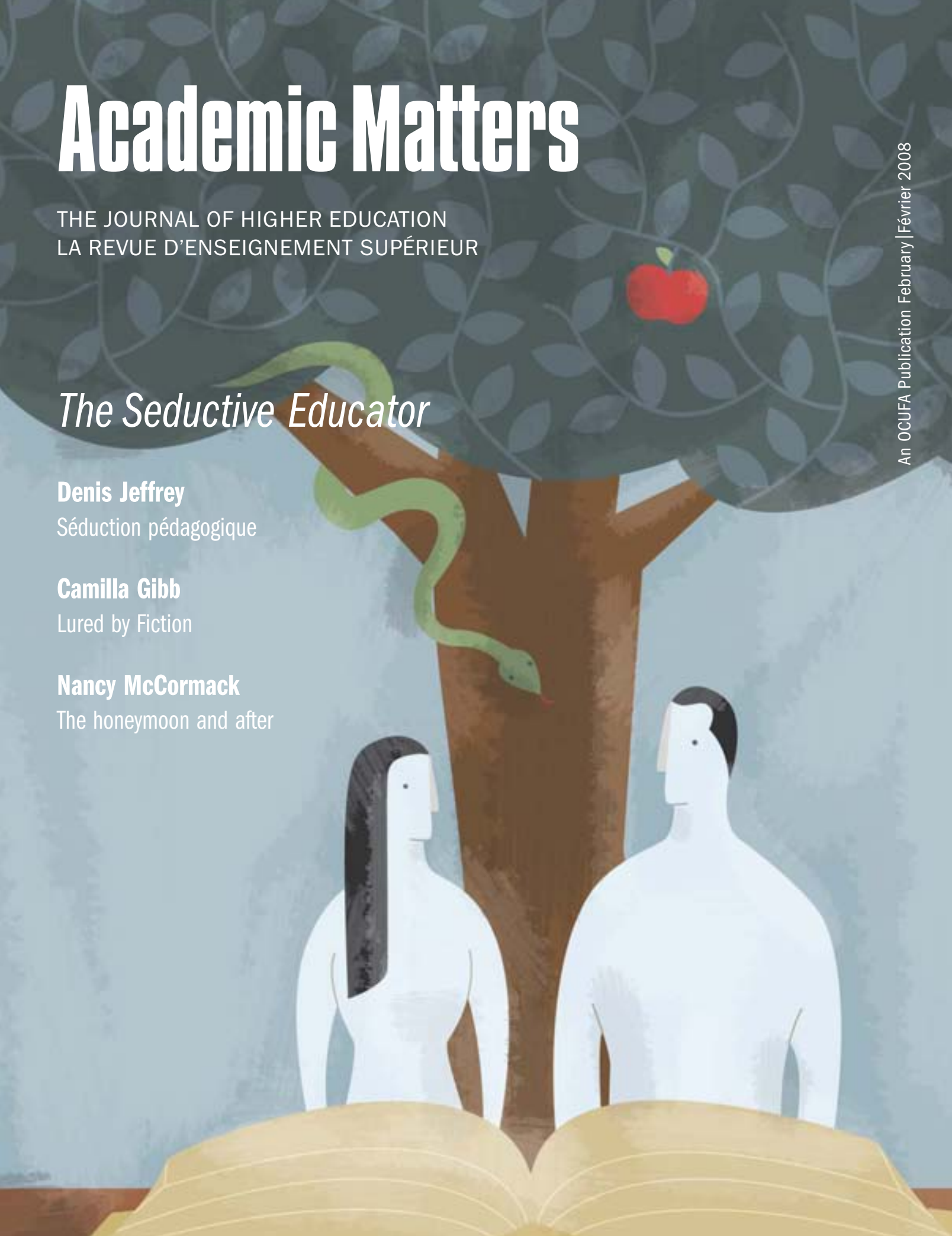
Camilla Gibb

Lured by Fiction

Nancy McCormack

The honeymoon and after

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Denis Jeffrey

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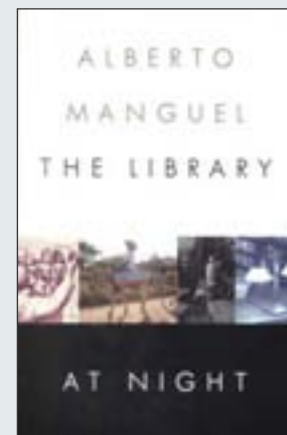
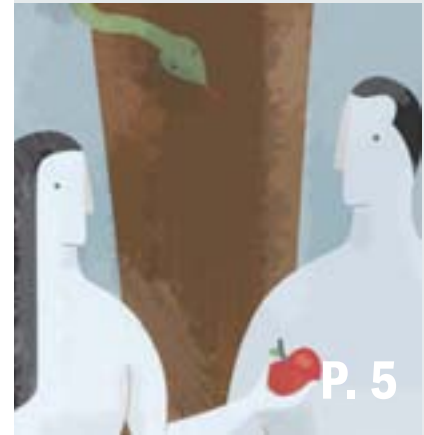
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Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
Union des Associations des Professeurs des Universités de l'Ontario



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5 Séduction pédagogique

Denis Jeffrey

Denis Jeffrey de l'Université Laval écrit que même si le concept de la séduction a une mauvaise réputation, inspirant crainte et fascination, la 'séduction pédagogique' peut donner lieu à d'extraordinaires possibilités d'apprentissage. Si elle est bien canalisée, elle permet aux étudiants d'être autonomes et responsables du perfectionnement de leur propre apprentissage.

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Academic Matters is published four times a year by OCUFA, and is received by 24,000 professors, academic librarians and others interested in higher education issues across Canada. The journal explores issues of relevance to higher education in Ontario, other provinces in Canada, and globally. It is intended to be a forum for thoughtful and thought-provoking, original and engaging discussion of current trends in post secondary education and consideration of academe's future direction.

Readers are encouraged to contribute their views, ideas and talents. Letters to the editor (maximum 250 words) are welcome and may be edited for length. To provide an article or artwork for Academic Matters, please send your query to Editor-in-Chief Mark Rosenfeld at mrosenfeld@ocufa.on.ca.

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Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

I read with interest your issue of December 2007 devoted to the important theme of "God on Campus". Unfortunately, the article by Martin Lockshin was not really devoted to that theme at all, but was mainly a defense of the State of Israel and its foreign policy. Dr. Lockshin is of course entitled to his opinion on that controversial subject, but at least two of his arguments (neither of which is original) should NOT be allowed to go unchallenged.

First, his argument that Israel is "the only true democracy in the Middle East" is problematical, depending on how one defines both "democracy" and "the Middle East". But even if it is true, it does not entitle Israel to invade and occupy land belonging to its neighbours and to build permanent settlements there to house Israeli citizens, many of whom were imported from the former USSR for this very purpose. Democracies should be subject to the same rules of international law as any other state.

Second, his argument that Arab citizens of Israel "have more rights and freedoms" than Arabs living in neighbouring countries is irrelevant even apart from the fact that it fails to mention the non-citizen Arabs in the occupied territories. African-Americans living in Alabama in 1964 may have had "more rights and freedoms" than people in many African countries at the time, but they did not enjoy the same rights as Euro-Americans and that was the real issue.

GARTH STEVENSON, PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, BROCK UNIVERSITY

Dear Editor:

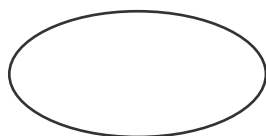
I would like to congratulate you for publishing Martin Lockshin's article on Jewish studies. This represents a brave attempt to combat anti-Semitism disguised as anti-Zionism and/or anti Israel or its government's policies. One would expect that within the sophisticated left-wing liberal climate of academia, the fine line between disagreeing with one's point of view and preaching hatred towards another group could be taken for granted. As the article reports—this is clearly not the case. The bold display of the Israeli flag in "Academic Matters" and the large font statement that "There are professors on Canadian campuses who take advantage of their positions to bash Israel in their classrooms" are a breath of fresh air. Within our current academic climate, Jewish students are increasingly afraid to speak up and present their views in class, let alone display the Israeli flag, which proudly includes the Star of David—the same symbol that has been used by the Nazi regime to identify Jews for humiliation, discrimination, deportation and murder.

STUART B. KAMENETSKY, PH.D, UNDERGRADUATE DIRECTOR AND FACULTY ADVISOR
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO AT MISSISSAUGA

Dear Editor:

In his article on Jewish Studies, Martin Lockshin decries what he sees as gratuitous criticism of the State of Israel on Canadian university campuses. Such "Israel-bashing," he suggests, reflects "the problem of anti-Semitism in Canada and in academia." Yet while writing about Jewish Studies, Professor Lockshin himself offers gratuitous criticism of Arab countries, stripped of context and off-subject. Sounds like "Arab-bashing" to me. What problem does it reflect? And why did your magazine publish such remarks?

JAMES A. REILLY, PROFESSOR, MODERN MIDDLE EAST HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



Denis Jeffrey de l'Université Laval étudie les possibilités d'apprentissage extraordinaires que présente la pédagogie séductrice.



La séduction pédagogique

Denis Jeffrey

S'il est un domaine où la séduction a mauvaise réputation, c'est bien celui de l'éducation. Les craintes proviennent du lourd sémantisme moral dont le mot séduction s'est encombré en Occident chrétien au fil de l'histoire, et dont il convient de le libérer. Il n'est pas sans intérêt de présenter une conception déculpabilisante de la séduction et de montrer le rôle irremplaçable qu'elle peut jouer dans l'enseignement. Avant de discuter de la séduction pédagogique, voyons pourquoi la séduction semble si rébarbative.

En fait, la séduction fascine autant qu'elle effraie. Elle fascine, car elle évoque des grandes histoires d'amour qui ont connu un retentissement remarquable. On se souvient de Tristan et Iseult, mais aussi de Roméo et Juliette ou d'Abélard et Héloïse, qui se sont rencontrés, séduits et aimés. La séduction effraie parce qu'on l'associe à la tromperie, à la manigance et à la corruption. Comment ne pas associer la séduction à Don Juan de Molière ou à cet inquiétant comte de Valmont dans *Les liaisons dangereuses* de Laclos ! Ces séducteurs ont légué à l'Occident une image bien triste de la séduction. Plus monstrueux encore est le mythe adamique

dans lequel Ève séduit le premier homme. Dans le récit biblique, la séduction détourne de Dieu. Cette scène primitive de la séduction, plus précisément d'une séduction diabolique, hante encore aujourd'hui l'imaginaire chrétien. À cet égard, la séduction est associée aux manigances machiavéliques d'individus qui n'hésitent pas à utiliser la tromperie, le mensonge et la manipulation pour mystifier leurs victimes. La littérature, sans conteste, est généreuse en séducteurs et en séductrices, quelquefois romantiques, quelquefois odieusement fourbes.

Dans un article fort éclairant, le *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* nous apprend que le mot séduction entre dans la langue au XII^e siècle. Il est emprunté au latin classique *seductio*, issu lui-même du verbe *seducere*, qui signifiait « emmener à part, à l'écart », « séparer ». Virgile a pu écrire par exemple : *Mors anima seduxit artu*, « La mort a séparé le corps de l'âme ». Dans le latin ecclésiastique du Moyen Âge, le mot *seduction* prend l'acception morale de corruption et tromperie. Avec l'idée de tromperie, le mot est passé au domaine amoureux durant la Renaissance et, aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles, il a pris le sens d'« entreprise de charme

visant à entraîner une femme à des relations sexuelles ». La connotation morale négative du mot *séduction* est donc un héritage de la langue des clercs de l'Église catholique médiévale. La figure à la source de cette image pernicieuse est le Serpent diabolique qui, en séduisant Ève, a entraîné l'humanité dans le mal, la souffrance et la mort.

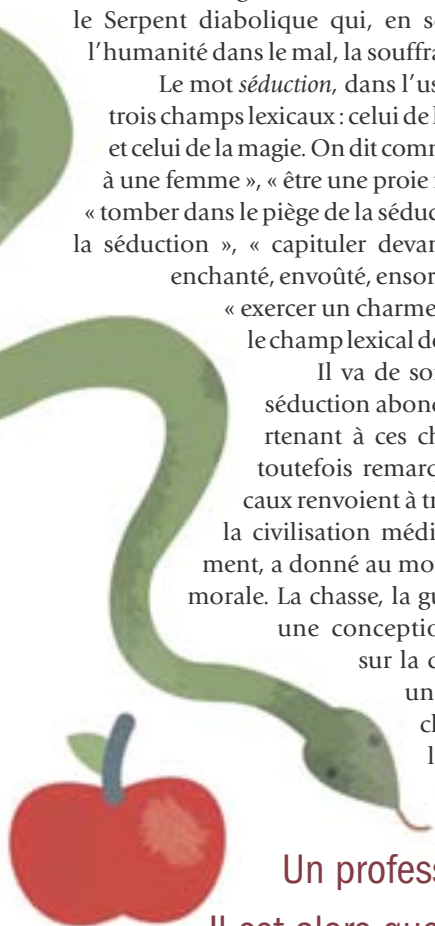
Le mot *séduction*, dans l'usage courant, se rattache à trois champs lexicaux : celui de la chasse, celui de la guerre et celui de la magie. On dit communément « Faire la chasse à une femme », « être une proie facile pour un séducteur », « tomber dans le piège de la séduction », « user des armes de la séduction », « capituler devant un séducteur », « être enchanté, envoûté, ensorcelé par un séducteur » ou « exercer un charme irrésistible ». On voit que le champ lexical de la séduction est très vaste.

Il va de soi que les grands récits de séduction abondent en expressions appartenant à ces champs lexicaux. On aura toutefois remarqué que ces champs lexicaux renvoient à trois univers importants de la civilisation médiévale, époque qui, justement, a donné au mot *séduction* sa connotation morale. La chasse, la guerre et la magie reflètent une conception de la séduction axée sur la domination d'un être par un autre, du chassé par le chasseur, de l'agressé par l'agresseur, de l'ensorcelé par l'ensorceleur.

intervient dans l'enseignement, elle sert avant tout aux apprentissages. On parlera alors de séduction pédagogique pour parler des différentes stratégies utilisées par un professeur pour motiver les étudiants, pour soutenir leur attention, pour éveiller leur curiosité intellectuelle, pour entretenir leur persévérance, mais surtout pour les rendre autonomes dans leurs apprentissages. L'éros de la séduction pédagogique, pour faire un clin d'œil aux thèses de Platon défendues dans son *Banquet*, vise le savoir.

Contrairement à l'idée de domination qu'elle évoque habituellement, la séduction pédagogique implique l'intention d'amener les étudiants à s'engager dans leurs apprentissages d'une manière autonome. La séduction pédagogique ne vise pas à enchaîner à soi les étudiants, mais bien à les libérer du professeur. En ce sens, la valeur de la séduction pédagogique ne découle pas des moyens utilisés, mais de l'intention sous-jacente, du but visé. Une opération de séduction en éducation qui n'aboutirait qu'à renforcer les liens de dépendance entre le professeur et les étudiants ne relèverait que de la séduction amoureuse et n'aurait guère d'effet sur le plan pédagogique. Pour produire son plein effet, la séduction pédagogique doit être dirigée avant tout vers le savoir. Il s'agit bien du désir, pour l'étudiant, d'être responsable de ses apprentissages. Par son action séductrice, le professeur pas d'attacher les étudiants à sa personne, mais de leur donner l'envie de s'approprier, de leur propre initiative, la connaissance.

Dans un cours universitaire, ce qui séduit un étudiant peut avoir peu d'effet sur un autre. Le succès d'une stratégie



Un professeur peut séduire par des qualités personnelles.

Il est alors question de traits psychologiques ou professionnels tels que le charisme, l'empathie, la souplesse, la compétence

Vue à travers ces métaphores, la séduction désigne l'action de quelqu'un qui essaie, par des moyens insidieux comme à la chasse et à la guerre, ou maléfiques comme en magie, d'attirer et de soumettre une autre personne sans que celle-ci le veuille. La séduction réfère alors à une situation lors de laquelle un individu profite de sa position de pouvoir pour contrôler, pour manipuler ou pour soumettre un autre individu. Le séducteur possède le pouvoir de tromper et de corrompre. C'est sans doute à cause de cette idée de sujétion obtenue déloyalement qui lui est accolée depuis longtemps que la séduction a si mauvaise presse et suscite tant de défiance.

Les mécanismes de la séduction ne se ramènent pas forcément à une relation fondée sur un rapport de domination et d'abus. La prise en compte de la séduction dans le domaine de l'éducation demande d'abord qu'on lui donne une plus grande extension. Habituellement, la séduction renvoie à la vie amoureuse et sexuelle qui, depuis des millénaires, est stigmatisée par la domination. Or, élevons la relation de séduction à l'acte pédagogique. Quand la séduction

pour séduire n'est jamais assuré. Dans l'art de la séduction pédagogique, les trucs et les ruses, improvisés ou préparés à l'avance, ne font jamais l'unanimité. La séduction pédagogique demande des efforts constants de la part du professeur pour mener les étudiants vers ce qu'elle vise. La séduction pédagogique couvre un large champ de pratiques enseignantes ; allons-y de quelques exemples.

Un professeur peut séduire par des qualités personnelles. Il est alors question de traits psychologiques ou professionnels tels que le charisme, l'empathie, la souplesse, le sens de l'humour, la compétence. Chacun ira de ses propres qualités professionnelles qu'il aura apprises, par essais et erreurs, à mettre en scène à sa façon. J'ai connu un professeur qui commençait son cours par quelques citations, quelquefois originales, quelquefois loufoques, de quelques grands savants. Cela était devenu un véritable rituel qui marquait le début du cours. Nous avions bien hâte d'assister à ce cours pour connaître le choix judicieux de nouvelles citations. Je me souviens des visages réjouis et allumés de mes collègues. Ce

petit moment d'enchantement nous préparait à participer à ce cours de philosophie qui était d'un niveau de difficulté très élevé.

Comme en amour, le corps exerce une influence indéniable dans l'action pédagogique. Le regard du professeur, son sourire, sa posture, ses déplacements dans la classe, sa physionomie, ses mimiques, sa voix, ses gestes, son style vestimentaire sont continuellement observés et scrutés par les étudiants. Le corps transmet une foule d'impressions et d'informations qui ne laissent pas les étudiants insensibles et qui peuvent faire la différence entre un cours intéressant et un cours ennuyant.

En plus du corps, la séduction pédagogique peut s'opérer par le langage. Le verbe possède un pouvoir de séduction considérable. L'enseignant peut séduire par l'aisance de son élocution, par la richesse et la précision de son vocabulaire, par la fluidité et la clarté de son propos, par la finesse de ses analyses, par la force de persuasion de ses stratégies langagières. L'éducation, autant sinon plus que la politique et le droit, exige une maîtrise assurée de la langue : l'enseignement étant avant tout un acte de communication et d'interaction.

Un professeur peut également séduire ses étudiants par sa capacité de synthèse, par la variété de ses activités pédagogiques, par ses questions, par le choix de ses exemples, par son utilisation de nouvelles technologies, par son écoute de la classe, par une judicieuse sélection d'articles et de textes à lire, par son aptitude à découper les contenus d'apprentissage ou par ses travaux d'évaluation.

Enfin, le professeur peut séduire ses étudiants en leur donnant à penser et en leur offrant une meilleure compréhension des contenus d'apprentissage. Le savoir que le professeur tente de transmettre à ses étudiants, les explications qu'il leur fournit, toute son activité intellectuelle d'enseignement, en somme, possède en soi un potentiel de séduction dans la mesure où l'entreprise pédagogique qu'il mène est vouée à faire acquérir des outils conceptuels et des clés d'entendement les ouvrant à des interprétations stimulantes et éclairées. Un contenu d'enseignement peut engendrer l'ennui et l'indifférence s'il est présenté d'une manière rigide et inerte. Au contraire, il peut être source d'émerveillement intellectuel si le professeur sait s'adresser à ses étudiants avec esprit, ludisme et intelligence.

Ainsi qu'il a été mentionné plus haut, la séduction pédagogique ne doit pas avoir pour objet les personnes en tant que telles, mais bien les connaissances. Quand, dans l'action pédagogique, la séduction n'agit que sur le plan interpersonnel, on ne peut parler que de séduction sentimentale et non de séduction pédagogique.

Une dérive possible de la séduction est l'endoctrinement. Même si le professeur oriente ses stratégies séductrices vers l'acquisition du savoir, il peut en même temps chercher à enfermer les étudiants dans son seul cadre épistémique et les assujettir à ses vues. Ceux-ci se trouvent alors empêchés de penser par eux-mêmes et perdent la liberté de la critique. Ils ne peuvent qu'endosser les positions du professeur sans les discuter et sont incités à les propager intégralement. Dans ces

conditions, il n'est moins question du désir d'apprendre, avec ce que cela implique de doutes et de questionnements, que de soumission à des prêts à penser.

Le problème du dogmatisme nous ramène à un des traits essentiels de la séduction pédagogique, soit la liberté des étudiants. La séduction en pédagogie, c'est tout à la fois répondre aux exigences de l'institution éducative, concourir à ses grandes finalités, et établir avec les étudiants une relation où chacun, dans le respect des règles, conserve sa liberté. La séduction pédagogique fonctionne à son meilleur quand les étudiants prennent plaisir à apprendre, lorsqu'ils ont hâte d'assister au cours, lorsqu'ils se sentent motivés et pleins d'entrain durant la classe, lorsque, en fait, leurs résistances à l'égard des apprentissages sont surmontées.

Il y a certes, dans la séduction pédagogique, toujours un risque de dérapage, mais quelle que soit la stratégie pédagogique utilisée, le risque de glisser dans le prosélytisme, dans l'ennui, dans la démotivation, dans la sévérité abusive, dans l'autoritarisme ou dans le laxisme sont toujours présents.

Assumer le risque de la séduction pédagogique, c'est accepter de devenir autre au contact d'autrui. C'est accepter l'étonnement devant l'inédit d'une situation d'enseignement. C'est mettre un peu d'âme, un peu d'esprit dans la monotonie de la routine. C'est résister à toutes les crispations institutionnelles. C'est refuser la répétition pour s'ouvrir à des nouvelles manières de penser et de faire. C'est tenter d'assumer sa position de maître en montrant le plaisir de faire ce que l'on fait. C'est dans cet espace de la séduction pédagogique que chaque professeur expérimente son rôle de pédagogue.

La séduction, dans le sens développé ici, n'est qu'une manière de dire l'importance de stratégies pédagogiques pour mettre en scène son enseignement, et pourrait-on dire, pour se mettre en scène comme professeur. À bien des égards, la pédagogie universitaire est une technique et un art qui s'apprennent bien sûr par expérience, mais aussi par une formation appropriée.

En somme, la séduction pédagogique ouvre des perspectives inouïes en enseignement. Il s'agit parfois de stratégies très personnelles et d'autres fois de stratégies qui ont fait leurs preuves. Le professeur, par son style intrigant, par ses conduites inattendues, par sa capacité d'étonner, par des habiletés à théâtraliser ses contenus de cours, par sa maîtrise d'activités d'apprentissage innovatrices, par la création d'une atmosphère sympathique, par ses questions appropriées, par ses connaissances ou simplement par son sérieux ou par sa sévérité, arrive à conserver l'attention et même à transmettre aux étudiants le goût de se former. Or, ce qui séduit les étudiants une année sera perçu comme ennuyant une autre année. La séduction pédagogique tient parfois à bien peu de chose. Toutefois, on voit que la séduction pédagogique déborde largement les seules relations amoureuses. C'est pourquoi il est juste de dire qu'elle tient une place primordiale dans l'enseignement. **AM**

Denis Jeffrey est Professeur titulaire et Directeur du département d'Études sur l'Enseignement et l'Apprentissage, Faculté des sciences de l'éducation, Université Laval.



Lured by Fiction

TRANSITIONING

from

Academic to Novelist

by Camilla Gibb

Award-winning novelist Camilla Gibb reveals why she gave up a promising career in academia for an uncertain future as a novelist in this excerpt from her Research and Society Lecture to the 2007 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences.

In 1997, in the months between finishing my PhD [at Oxford] and taking up a post doc in 1998, I wrote my first novel. It was more by accident than design. I *had* been writing short stories, and it so happened that one of these short stories caught fire. It simply went on and on and on, to the point where I thought: this is looking suspiciously like a novel. Perhaps if I wrote an ending it might be one.

That turned out to be the case. Eight years ago that novel was published by a tiny press, which paid me an advance which might have bought me a week's worth of groceries. And a year after that, in 2000, upon completing my post doc, I made a choice, a permanent, life-altering choice.

Here I was, a newly minted anthropologist with that rare and elusive thing of an actual proper job offer in front of me, choosing to give it all up in order to do something that I'd never even studied and embark on a profession that probably has the least chance of success or of generating income than any other profession I could have possibly chosen, except perhaps that of poet. People naturally assumed I must be having some kind of breakdown.

Why did I do it? Two related reasons: First, the simple one: I had a burning, irrepressible desire to write fiction, and writing one novel didn't satisfy me, it only fuelled that desire. Apparently I had more of that in me. And second, and very much related to this, is that fact that I seemed to be having something of a problem with anthropology. One I didn't understand and felt rather ashamed about. Something about the way I felt—the way I wanted to write—didn't seem compatible with the discipline, at least as I had come to understand it. And that left me feeling fraudulent, and no matter how much my contemporaries could reassure me that we all feel like impostors to some degree, they seemed much better to be able to reconcile whatever it was, where I couldn't.

Mary Louise Pratt, who wrote the essay "Fieldwork in Common Places" that appears in the Clifford and Marcus' collection *Writing Culture* (1986), articulated part of that problem for me. She writes:

"There are strong reasons why field ethnographers so often lament that their ethnographic writings leave out or hopelessly impoverish some of the most important knowledge they have achieved, including the self-knowledge. For the lay person, such as myself, the main evidence of a problem is the simple fact that ethnographic writing tends to be surprisingly boring. How, one asks, constantly, could such interesting people doing such interesting things produce such dull books? What did they have to do to themselves?"

I remember reading that and thinking: ouch, harsh! And not entirely true—I have read some beautiful ethnography. But at the same time, I recognized something in the question. The beautiful ethnography was an exception. What indeed had so many anthropologists, including me, had to do to ourselves to produce this work that while, I suppose, reasonably competent, was undeniably boring.

I didn't know how it could be otherwise, though. This is what I was trained to do. The language in which I was educated. The language that I, for the most part, read. And it seemed to be what was rewarded.

In hindsight, it might be partly that finding another way of expressing things, engaging in fiction, shook my confidence in the ideals I'd always held on to—ideals that the academic world was a place where free and radical thinking took place, where conventions were constantly challenged—this is, after all, what had attracted me to this world in the first place, yet what I see now is that that very environment had engendered in me quite the opposite: a profound conformity, a rigidity, a conservatism and an internalization of the hierarchy of this universe which resulted in a duty-bound performance that simply took me, very safely, from one stage to the next.

The thing about Mary Louise Pratt's article that struck me hardest though, was the word "lament." I thought that's it—it's that lament she speaks about. That's what I feel and I've never heard anyone say it, or at least say it that way. For me it was the compounded *lament* of not only having to leave the field and

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lose the intimacy of that connection to people and place, but having to reconceive and abandon so much that was vital about that experience in the service of something academic.

As Pratt observes, there is a:

"contradiction between the engagement called for in fieldwork and the self-effacement called for in formal ethnographic description... Fieldwork produces a kind of authority that is anchored to a large extent in subjective, sensuous experience... But the professional text to result from such an encounter is supposed to conform to the norms of scientific discourse whose authority resides in the absolute effacement of the speaking and experiencing subject."

What happens then to your sense of what it feels like to be in a place, to your relationships to people in the field, people you care about? To the intimate experience of having been there? The sensory memory of it. What do you do with all that?

My fieldwork experience was, if I'm honest about it, much less defined in the end by the more formal aspects of my research than by my relationships with people in the field.

I lived for a year with a Muslim family with nine children in their household compound in the middle of the small walled Muslim city of Harar in the eastern highlands of Ethiopia. The mother, daughters and I slept on raised red earth platforms in one room, and the men and sons in another room on the other side of the courtyard. I dressed very modestly, like the women around me, wearing a veil and trousers under my skirts. Every morning we rose with the call to prayer, and passed a water jug between us in order to bathe. Every day, three times a day, we ate the same watery

stew out of the same bowl with our hands. Every day was a battle against rats and cockroaches and intestinal parasites.

I submitted to the rhythm of the place and my presence became more ordinary. After a month there was no longer any meat in our daily supper, and I had to fight like everyone else had to fight for whose turn it was to suck out the marrow from the one bone floating there.

My relationships with certain members of the family deepened, there was the growth of friendships with people outside the family that still exist today, there were superficial acquaintanceships to be managed, along with those who were suspicious of me, and maintained the belief that I was a spy. There was the habitual use of the mild narcotic qat leaf socially amongst my friends, there were people I knew dying of that unnameable disease AIDS, women begging me to adopt their children, lies to parents so that teenagers could carry on their clandestine affairs, visits to friends in prison, shotgun weddings, suicides, merciless gossip, the curse of the evil eye, and mounting political tension resulting in a curfew

of 6 pm, not to mention the colours, the textures the smells of the place, all the visceral responses to it, and ultimately, the utter heart-break of having to leave it.

Fieldwork is a total experience, not just an intellectual experience, and while nobody denies this, what's required at the other end doesn't necessarily reflect the extent to which this is true or offer you a way of dealing with it.

Of course everyone undergoes some degree of challenge re-entering life at home after a period of fieldwork, some degree of reverse culture shock. Most people move through it, as



uncomfortable as it is, and get on with their lives. And getting on with your life as anthropologist involves coming to terms with what you have to leave behind, or omit, or in Pratt's words—impoverish—in order to produce ethnography.

What I felt forced to dispense with was people. I had to put people I cared about—people whose place and culture I was writing about—at a distance.

And what I never sat comfortably with was the fact that these people couldn't read my thesis—not because it was written in English, but because it wasn't written for them. It was theoretically driven and written in an academic jargon that serves the purpose of advancing argument amongst a group of likewise fluent and initiated.

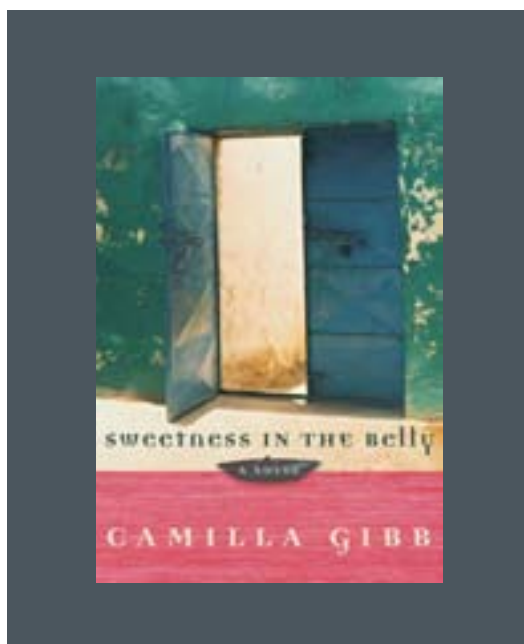
... [T]here is no doubt, that Mary Louise Pratt's article had the effect on me that it did, because I had been doing such old-fashioned work. A lot of interesting, innovative writing was happening as a consequence of the *Writing Culture* debates. But at Oxford, there was some resistance and a fair amount of disdain for writing about subjectivity, because it has resulted in what a lot of people have dismissed as narcissistic, navel-gazing drivel.

But even if I had been writing a more modern, let alone post-modern kind of thesis, I was still up to no good in an academic sense—I was writing fiction.

Which made me an emerging academic with a secret and possibly dirty passion. A liberating and dangerous indulgence that provoked in me a battle—as if two languages were talking at once—this sophisticated, acquired language and a raw, untrained, native tongue.

I had been taught to value the former; I believed in education, I dismissed the worth of the creative writing because it was just something "instinctive," not something I had been taught and therefore, to my mind, not of comparable value.

And this was reinforced by a piece of advice a professor gave me while I was a post doc and applying for academic jobs: don't tell anyone you're writing fiction, because no one will take



you seriously as an academic.

I understood what was being said: because it was derived from a proud tradition that I had inherited myself. How to value art? Because no matter how much, within a post-modern framework anthropology's image of itself as a discipline rooted in scientific detachment and objectivity was collapsing, no matter how much

we moved toward reflexivity—self examination and critique, and the acknowledgment of subjective interpretations and positioning, no matter how we asked questions about authority and authorship, we were still academics, not artists.

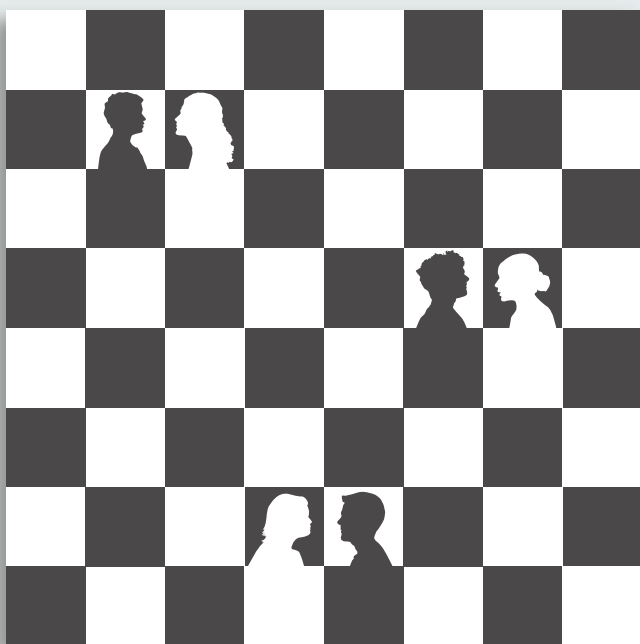
And for all the talk about the boundaries between anthropology and fiction being blurry, and for all we were encouraged to seek new ways of representing cultural experiences—to consider ethnography as text, as narrative, as allegory, or as "true fiction"—fiction "proper" is still seen to lack the authority or prestige of academic writing.

And it seems to me, furthermore, that no matter how much we raise issues about accessibility, we do so while being fully complicit in deeming work that is "popular," work that reaches a larger audience as lacking in intellectual rigour—the very thing that makes what we do, as academics, distinct and valuable.

So: there was every reason for me to not write fiction. In fact, there was not a single reason why I *should* write fiction. Not the least of which was the fact that those early stories I was writing about African men in prisons and lust on North African beaches? They were absolutely terrible. Not a single one of them—thankfully—was ever published. But I carried on because I simply couldn't stop. If you ask most writers why they write? The answer is usually that simple. **AM**

Camilla Gibb has a Ph.D in social anthropology from Oxford University and is the author of three award-winning novels: Mouthing the Words, The Petty Details of So-and-so's Life and Sweetness in the Belly. "Telling Tales Out of School," from which this excerpt is drawn, has been published in ESC: English Studies in Canada, Issue 32.2-3.

Jeu de la séduction universitaire



Clermont Gauthier

de l'Université Laval et

Stéphane Martineau

de l'Université du Québec

explorent le jeu de la
séduction pédagogique
entre le professeur et
l'étudiant.

ENSEIGNER, C'EST JOUER

Le travail enseignant, comme toute relation sociale, ressemble à un jeu. En effet, dans les rapports interpersonnels « *les individus emploient ce qu'on pourrait appeler des stratégies de gain* » (Goffman, 1988, p. 100). Ainsi, l'interaction sociale peut être vue « *comme une série de feintes et de contre-feintes entre joueurs professionnels.* » (Idem, p. 67). Chaque geste, chaque parole, chaque attitude est comme un coup joué sur l'échiquier de la relation sociale. Or, tout jeu, et l'enseignement en est un, comporte une série de caractéristiques : des règles, des protagonistes, des enjeux, des rapports de force, une dynamique complexe.

Des règles. Les contraintes de la situation pédagogique imposent une certaine organisation du travail enseignant. Celles-ci agissent comme des règles et structurent les comportements du professeur. Par exemple, des textes officiels définissent des programmes d'enseignement, organisés la plupart du temps autour des disciplines scientifiques, et dont la réussite est sanctionnée par des travaux ou examens. Le temps imparti à ces divers champs du savoir est minuté précisément. L'enseignement se déroule dans un espace, un local, où les étudiants sont regroupés. Cette arène détermine également le comportement des acteurs qui s'y retrouvent, tant par sa délimitation fermée que par les objets matériels qu'elle contient.

La séduction en pédagogie universitaire ? La question étonne et scandalise même. Comment peut-on croire que dans nos classes à l'université se trame en sourdine un jeu aussi pervers ? La séduction rend mal à l'aise, car elle est à quelque part associée à la tromperie, au mal, à l'immoralité et évidemment à la culpabilité. Mais la séduction c'est aussi une nécessité, voire un passage obligé car il n'y a pas d'être totalement hors-séduction. Les premières résistances passées, chacun reconnaît bien que, oui, il y a recours dans son propre enseignement.

L'objectif de ce texte est de réfléchir à ce problème controversé. De manière pragmatique, nous prenons acte de sa présence incontournable dans les relations humaines, et partant, dans l'enseignement universitaire. Ce texte tente de répondre à une question trop longtemps occultée : est-il possible de penser la séduction comme une stratégie professionnelle légitime dans la relation pédagogique ?

Des protagonistes. Dans ce contexte, les acteurs, étudiants et professeur, entrent dans une sorte de dynamique que Cherradi désigne sous l'appellation de « travail interactif » et qui se caractérise par le fait de mettre « en relation des individus-travailleurs ou des groupes de travailleurs avec un objet de travail qui est fait non pas de matière inerte mais d'autres individus-usagers ou d'autres groupes humains » (1990, p. 4). Ce genre de travail présente la particularité de s'exercer directement sur l'humain. Cherradi a identifié trois types de travail interactif. Le premier renvoie aux interactions de soutien qui caractérise notamment le travail médical où la rationalité instrumentale est la plus forte. L'interaction y est réduite au minimum et l'utilisateur, ramené à l'état de quasi-objet, est particulièrement dépendant. Dans le second type, la tâche se ramène principalement à un ensemble de transactions qui interviennent entre un travailleur interactif, un usager et son dossier à traiter. Dans ce type d'interaction, l'utilisateur devient à son tour un quasi-objet, c'est-à-dire un « dossier à traiter ». Enfin, dans le troisième type, l'interaction de transformation, la visée est de changer l'état d'un usager afin d'améliorer son bien-être ou son fonctionnement social. Dans ce cas, l'utilisateur n'est pas réduit à l'état d'objet comme dans les deux premiers types, il conserve son dynamisme propre, son pouvoir d'initiative, voire sa capacité de résistance. L'enseignement renvoie plus particulièrement à cette troisième catégorie et, en ce sens, peut être qualifié de travail interactif de transformation des élèves. Comme dans tout jeu, une dynamique complexe, un chassé-croisé de regards, de gestes, de paroles s'instaure alors entre les protagonistes, professeur et étudiants, dans ce théâtre qu'est la salle de classe. Le professeur, transmet sa matière à un public, les étudiants, qui loin d'être passifs, cherche à comprendre, résiste, négocie, s'absente, demande des rencontres particulières, etc.

Des enjeux. Pour le professeur, en vertu du mandat qui lui est confié par la société, l'enjeu est de réussir à agir de telle manière qu'il puisse « façonner » les étudiants qu'il a sous sa gouverne. C'est ainsi qu'il pourra gagner la joute de l'enseignement par l'apprentissage des étudiants. Par contre, pour les élèves, l'enjeu peut être différent. Ils peuvent être animés par d'autres motifs comme, par exemple, faire le minimum de lectures, suivre le cours non par intérêt mais parce qu'il est obligatoire, etc. Gagner le jeu pour les étudiants, peut donc signifier autre chose que pour le professeur. Ils peuvent donner—et ils le font souvent—l'illusion à l'enseignant qu'il a la victoire en main (qu'ils maîtrisent la matière) alors qu'en réalité ils sauvent les apparences, font semblant, travaillent seulement pour la note ou encore trichent. Joueur lui aussi, l'étudiant ne fait pas que réagir aux actions, aux « coups » de l'enseignant, c'est un joueur interactif qui agit, émet à son tour des coups en tentant d'anticiper la réaction du professeur.

On ne sait donc pas qui des enseignants ou des élèves va gagner la joute, ni comment se jouera la partie, ni quel sera le pointage, ni qui seront les « blessés » et pour combien de temps. Comme dans tout jeu, une forme d'incertitude prévaut quant au dénouement final.

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Un rapport de force. Puisque les joueurs en présence ont des intérêts différents dont la satisfaction peut se réaliser aux dépens de l'adversaire, ils s'inscrivent donc dans un rapport de force. On aurait tort d'assigner à l'enseignant le rôle de meneur absolu du jeu et aux élèves celui de répondants passifs. Si cela pouvait être naguère le cas dans une organisation sociale hiérarchique fondée sur l'autorité quasi-divine du maître, ce n'est cependant plus la même chose aujourd'hui. Alors qu'autrefois l'enseignant était le maître incontesté du jeu, un nouveau rapport de force est maintenant à l'œuvre dans la classe. Le maître ne peut plus se présenter comme figure autoritaire, distante, grave, dépositaire d'un savoir incontestable qu'il transmet rationnellement et objectivement; il doit désormais se rapprocher davantage de ses élèves, décoder leurs silences, écouter leurs résistances, voire négocier avec eux.

Ces changements fondamentaux ont modifié considérablement le rapport de force entre le professeur et les élèves, ils ont engendré un fonctionnement beaucoup plus imprévisible, dynamique et d'autant moins linéaire. En ce sens, la relation pédagogique est, comme toute interaction en face à face, « un jeu constant de dissimulation (de soi) et de fouille (de l'autre) » (Goffman, 1988, p. 67). En fait, les acteurs en présence se livrent à un exercice complexe où entre une part importante de ruse autant dans la présentation de soi que dans la capacité à deviner l'autre. Ainsi s'élabore dans la classe entre le professeur et les étudiants un véritable jeu de « feintes et de contre-feintes », de stratégies réciproques et de ruses. Dans cette partie aux innombrables coups, on aurait tort de croire que la séduction est l'apanage du professeur seul, les élèves ne sont en rien innocents et se livrent aussi à des manœuvres semblables. On aurait tort aussi de penser qu'elle ne concerne que les ordres d'enseignement inférieurs (école primaire ou secondaire). Elle trône également à l'université : qu'on observe un instant les citations savantes lancées, la gestuelle, les mots d'humour, la tenue vestimentaire, des professeurs pour se rendre compte qu'ils y déploient tout un arsenal de stratégies afin de gagner la joute, avec leurs étudiants.

Une dynamique complexe. Ce nouveau rapport de force a complexifié le jeu qui se déroule dans la classe. Nombre d'événements se produisent simultanément dans les classes et portent sur des dimensions diverses (physiques, affectives, intellectuelle, sociales, morales). Le rythme est rapide et le

maître est souvent obligé de prendre des décisions en situation d'urgence dont les effets sont souvent imprévisibles. Les coups joués par le professeur et les étudiants sont publics, c'est-à-dire devant témoins, et ont un impact sur les événements à venir dans la classe car dans une partie, tous les coups comptent. C'est donc à l'intérieur de cette enceinte qu'est la classe que professeur et étudiants se rencontrent et échangent leurs coups tour à tour afin de gagner la joute.

POUR JOUER À ENSEIGNER IL FAUT RUSER, C'EST-À-DIRE SÉDUIRE

S'il y a de la ruse dans toute forme d'interaction sociale, celle-ci prendra un contour particulier en enseignement : la persuasion. En effet, l'étudiant ne peut être traité comme une matière inerte, il « *possède des habiletés et des capacités pour contrer, fausser, retarder et déplacer l'effet de la technologie interactive qui a pour but de le transformer ou de transformer certains de ses attributs* » (Cherradi, 1990, p. 58). C'est précisément pourquoi la persuasion apparaît comme la stratégie la plus utile pour le travailleur interactif. Persuader, c'est séduire, c'est exercer une influence non seulement cognitive mais aussi affective pour contrer la résistance de l'autre. C'est influencer par la parole et le geste, c'est séduire à la fois l'esprit et le cœur. En ce sens, le travail enseignant est aussi un véritable travail émotionnel (« emotional labor »).

Justement, ce type de travail a été analysé dans un ouvrage surprenant mais fort intéressant qui porte sur les hôtesse de l'air. « *The work done by the boy in the wallpaper factory called for a coordination of mind and arm, mind and finger, and mind and shoulder. We refer to it simply as physical labor. The flight attendant does physical labor when she pushes heavy meal carts through aisles, and she does mental work when she prepares for and actually organizes emergency landing and evacuations. But in the course of doing this physical and mental labor, she is also doing something more, something I define as "emotional labor."* This labor requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to obtain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others—in this case, the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place. This kind of labor calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality. » (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7).

On peut penser que la relation pédagogique présente des caractéristiques comparables à celles de l'hôtesse de l'air :

« *La séduction pédagogique vise donc à conduire, mais par des chemins détournés, ces chemins empruntant la voie de l'affectif dans la relation maître-élèves.* » (Lafon, 1992, p. 136). Le professeur porte lui aussi attention à ses attitudes, à ses paroles et à ses gestes à l'endroit des étudiants. Il sait que tout ce qu'il dit et fait est interprété et contribue ou non à atteindre ses objectifs.

Le cadre d'exercice du travail pose également des limites aux formes de séduction jugées acceptables. Pensons notamment aux normes sociales régissant les relations entre adultes et jeunes. De plus, la séduction est sollicitée par la clientèle elle-même. Imaginons un instant un professeur dont l'attitude arrogante lui dicterait des paroles méprisantes à l'endroit de ses étudiants. À n'en pas douter, il serait incapable d'établir une relation « séduisante » qui lui permettrait d'obtenir autrement que par la contrainte leur consentement pour réaliser les tâches d'apprentissage. Enfin, la relation entre le professeur et ses étudiants, comme celle entre l'hôtesse de l'air et les passagers, se déroule

dans un temps et un espace limité. Par contre, le travail de l'enseignant est beaucoup plus complexe que celui de l'hôtesse de l'air car il a pour mandat de transformer les étudiants qu'il a sous sa responsabilité. De ce fait, il rencontre forcément des résistances qu'il cherche à sur-

monter. Pour y arriver, il doit les persuader. Il doit les séduire, c'est-à-dire *courtiser leur consentement*. En somme, la séduction est consubstantielle à la relation pédagogique et au travail de l'enseignant.

LA SÉDUCTION COMME STRATÉGIE PROFESSIONNELLE EN ENSEIGNEMENT UNIVERSITAIRE

L'analyse de propos recueillis par Lafon auprès d'enseignants confirme l'impossibilité pour eux de faire l'économie de la séduction dans leurs transactions quotidiennes avec les étudiants : « *Dans ces entretiens qui ne sont que des "propos" sur la séduction, et les attitudes de séduction des enseignants, on ne peut constater qu'une chose : elle est dans la relation pédagogique à une place de choix, incontournable.* » (1992, p. 163). Tous les maîtres qu'elle a interrogés ont admis avoir recours à certaines stratégies de séduction dans leur pratique professionnelle. « *Comment exercer ce pouvoir de séduction dans la relation pédagogique? Par les mêmes "chemins détournés" de toute séduction, disons classique. Au moyen de "stratégies" qui sont autant de "manipulations," de "procédés" pouvant aller jusqu'aux "ficelles" de "mises en scène," qui relèvent du*



Il y a nécessité pour le maître de reconnaître les dangers inhérents à sa position de pouvoir, comme son narcissisme et sa tendance à la manipulation des élèves

“théâtre,” du “cirque,” de “l’acteur,” de la “démagogie” sans oublier le “corps” même s’il est plus discrètement signalé ici, mais pas oublié pour autant... » (Lafon, 1992, p. 167-168). Cependant, s’ils ne peuvent s’en passer, ils adoptent néanmoins une position morale ambivalente à son égard. Lafon rapporte ainsi que des douze entrevues qu’elle a menées auprès de professeurs, trois la jugent franchement positive, quatre y sont farouchement opposés et cinq ont un point de vue partagé. Cela lui fera dire que : « On peut d’autre part constater que quand on parle de la séduction dans un échange, le positif et le négatif se conjuguent avec plus ou moins d’ambiguïté pour chacun, avec une marge importante de « mais » que l’on soit « pour » ou que l’on soit « contre » par principe. En bref, « Je suis pour mais il y a danger », quels que soient d’ailleurs les dangers évoqués : « Je suis contre mais il est difficile de s’en passer ». Quelles que soient les raisons avancées, dans un cas comme dans l’autre, la prise de position de départ s’alourdit ou s’allège pour justifier la trahison que l’on fait à soi-même en avançant dans sa réflexion. On se trouve ici pris dans le jeu entre principe et pratique, entre éthique et réalité du terrain. Et une fois encore, qu’on soit pour ou qu’on soit contre, la séduction séduit ! » (Lafon, 1992, p. 163).

Il devient donc essentiel de se poser la question suivante : est-il possible de penser la séduction comme stratégie professionnelle légitime dans la relation pédagogique ? « Ce qui suppose que le maître, dès le premier contact avec le groupe, doit savoir que, quels que soient les avatars de la rencontre, il ne devra jamais perdre de vue qu’il ne peut être qu’un « objet transitionnel » vers le savoir, qu’il n’est que de passage. Il ne devra jamais oublier que doit se mettre en place un travail de deuil sur sa personne et non pas sur les savoirs qu’il détient, qu’il doit réellement abandonner son désir d’omnipotence—son fantasme d’omnipotence. » (Lafon, p. 291).

Ainsi, dans cette perspective, la séduction pédagogique diffère de celle d’un séducteur célèbre comme Don Juan en ce qu’elle exige le deuil de son propre narcissisme. En effet, les professeurs enseignent à leurs élèves à se passer d’eux : ils doivent « assumer le caractère le plus paradoxal de leur entreprise : instituer dans leur action même, le principe de leur disparition. En ce sens, leur utilité sociale se fonde sur leur capacité à accepter de devenir inutile. Il leur faut effectivement savoir mourir continuellement à l’élève, à l’étudiant, au formé. L’autonomie des partenaires est à ce prix. » (Ardoïno, 1980, p. 136).

C’est ainsi que les étudiants pourront détourner progressivement leur regard du maître et le porter plutôt sur les objets de connaissance. « La réalité de la relation maître-élève commence au-delà de la séduction première, le plaisir de l’élève se devant être d’acquiescer pour lui, de s’approprier,

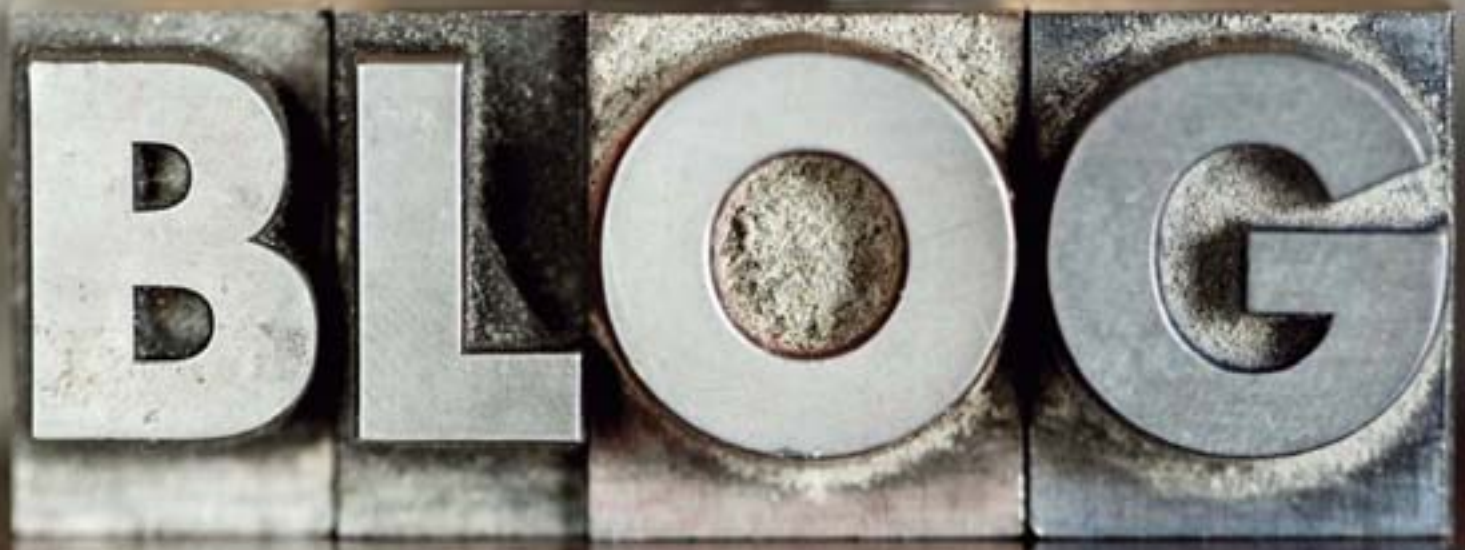
de faire sien, et non pas de faire plaisir à l’autre. Le plaisir devient alors la victoire du « non-su » surmonté, et non pas seulement le regard de l’autre qui approuve. » (Lafon, p. 291). Il en va ainsi de la survie de l’un et de l’autre, l’enseignant en tant que professionnel centré sur l’apprentissage (et non sur lui-même) et l’élève comme apprenant en processus d’autonomie, chacun donnant ainsi sens à sa présence en classe.

CONCLUSION

Il est important en milieu universitaire de ne pas laisser la séduction dans l’impensé, dans l’entre-deux de la conscience. Il y a nécessité pour le maître de reconnaître les dangers inhérents à sa position de pouvoir, comme son narcissisme et sa tendance à la manipulation des élèves. Il y a aussi avantage pour le professeur d’exploiter les énormes possibilités qu’elle recèle. C’est en ce sens que nous parlons de la séduction comme outil de gestion du rapport à autrui dans le contexte professionnel de l’enseignement. On aurait tort de refuser la séduction en pédagogie et de la réduire à la manipulation et au mensonge en brandissant l’image de la belle âme au nom d’une soi-disant pureté des relations. On se tromperait tout autant en croyant qu’elle ne joue pas un rôle dans l’enseignement universitaire. L’analyse de son rapport à autrui dans son travail permettra à l’enseignant universitaire de mieux gérer ses stratégies de séduction afin d’en faire non pas des outils d’asservissement et de destruction de l’autre mais bien de nécessaires instruments de libération.

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Blogging in Academe

Dale Kirby and Mary Cameron

Memorial University's Dale Kirby and Mary Cameron explore the value of blogging in university teaching and research.

New developments, discoveries and a diversity of ideas are encountered daily by those of us engaged in academic work. The explosion in on-line publishing, the growing popularity of downloadable media, and advances in wireless technology and mobile reading devices virtually assure that such new information may be accessed on-line. Given the appropriate tool, this Internet-based information environment allows us to easily share knowledge with others regardless of their location. As 21st century professors, we chose to utilize and explore the use of blogs in our university teaching and creative expression. We took up this initiative separately and with differing pedagogical strategies, but our purpose for entering the blogosphere has been similar in intention: to reach the 'digital natives,' namely our students and to add to the public sphere of knowledge as scholars and teachers in higher education.

ONTARIO University Report



THE ONTARIO CONFEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY FACULTY ASSOCIATIONS

OCUFA

Budget 2008: Making government aware of the issues facing higher education in Ontario

The upcoming 2008 budget provides a significant opportunity for academic staff across Ontario to make the government aware of the critical situation facing our universities and their students. Without this pressure, it is unlikely that the government will undertake the significant initiatives required to ensure that universities receive the additional funding that is required to provide quality education.



To give you the opportunity to take direct action, OCUFA has created the web site, <http://www.quality-matters.ca>. This web site includes background information and research but, perhaps most importantly, it has an action centre which will automatically put you in contact with your MPP. You will find a draft letter that you are encouraged to amend to reflect your own experience.

Governments sometimes move on the basis of doing what is right, what is good for the long term benefit of the province. However, in most instances, governments respond to what they see as public demand. Right now that means spending money on health, education and the environment. All these areas are important in their own right. However, ultimately they all depend on a quality university system that provides the people and research to sustain work in these important areas.

In 2005, the government introduced a significant increase in operating funding for universities. The stated desire was to rectify the problems created by previous governments and to increase the participation in undergraduate and graduate education. To a large extent, the government and the universities are victims of the success of these initiatives. More students are seeking access to university education. This growth has only increased the need for more full time faculty and space to ensure that these students obtain a quality education.

OCUFA works with government and opposition parties, the bureaucracy and media to make all our concerns known. But, at this time, more is needed. The government and opposition parties need to know that quality education is important to the more than 15,000 academic staff, students and support staff in Ontario's universities. Simply put, we need you to get involved.

The government feels that it is heading towards an economic slowdown, which will reduce its budgetary flexibility and require tough decisions. Furthermore, it feels that universities have already received significant investments, sometimes at the expense of other ministries that receive considerably more support from the public.

It is time to let the government and opposition know that providing universities with the operating and capital funding that they require is not only the right thing to do but also the politically wise course of action.

We're all depending on you. Thank you for your support.

Professor Brian E. Brown, OCUFA President

Ontario University Report is your best way to keep up with Ontario faculty news!

Ontario University Report is OCUFA's electronic publication. It will keep you informed about developments, trends and ideas that affect faculty association members in Ontario. It is published 10 times a year. Subscribe to the Ontario University Report! It's free to all members of OCUFA affiliated faculty associations.

Go to OCUFA's website: www.ocufa.on.ca and follow the link to the Ontario University Report.



The Honourable John Milloy on his new role as the Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities

Q OCUFA estimates that the Ontario government must invest an additional \$1.6 billion each year for the next three years to address both the capital and operating funding shortfall in higher education. How do you hope to address this funding shortfall?

For Ontario to be at its best, we need all Ontarians at their best.

The McGuinty government wants Ontario's students to have access to the best postsecondary education in Canada. The future of our province depends on it.

We've invested \$6.2 billion through our Reaching Higher Plan - the most significant multi-year investment in Ontario's higher education system in 40 years. Our government has consistently increased funding to ensure that our goals of increased quality and access to postsecondary education are achieved.

The McGuinty government increased base operating grants to \$4.2 billion in 2007-08.

We've provided an additional \$390 million to help with classroom space, higher enrolments and training. This includes \$50 million in new capital investments.

Our government made postsecondary education accessible on the basis of ability to learn, not ability to pay and we invested more than \$580 million in student assistance this fiscal year. I've also asked my federal counterpart to help students by continuing to fund the Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

Q How would you describe your agenda for your next four years in office, what do you hope to accomplish?

The McGuinty government will continue to build on our successes to ensure Ontario's students have access to quality post-secondary education.

In the next four years, we will:

- Introduce a special distance grant for students from remote areas
- Provide a new textbook and technology grant of \$300 per student to help them get started each year at school
- Provide parents with a grant at the beginning of the school year instead of making them wait for the post-secondary education tax credit payable at the end of the year

- Work with the federal government to give students twice the amount of time before they must start repaying their student loans, so they have a chance to get established in their new careers
- Work with the college sector and non-profit groups to design and deliver an adult literacy curriculum
- Increase new apprenticeships by a full 25%

Since 2003, the McGuinty government has created 86,000 new spaces in universities and colleges, doubled student aid and provided grants to 120,000 needy students every year. At the same time, we've created 6,000 new apprenticeships.

Our colleges and universities are moving forward again. Higher education is more accessible than it has been in decades. Over the next four years, we need to keep working to make it affordable for everyone.

Q What do you foresee will be obstacles to accomplishing these goals and how do you plan to overcome them?

One of the challenges the post-secondary sector is facing currently is increased enrolment pressures. Universities are reporting significant increases in the number of applications, particularly in the GTA.

That's great news. It means our Reaching Higher plan is a resounding success.

We're working actively with Ontario universities to identify creative and innovative solutions and we will continue to do so.

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Rapport sur les universités ONTARIENNES



UNION DES ASSOCIATIONS DES PROFESSEURS DES UNIVERSITÉS DE L'ONTARIO

OCUFA

Budget de 2008 : Sensibiliser le gouvernement aux problèmes auxquels fait face l'enseignement supérieur en Ontario

Le prochain budget de 2008 fournit une excellente occasion pour les professeurs d'université de l'Ontario de sensibiliser le gouvernement à la situation critique à laquelle font face nos universités et nos étudiants. Sans ces pressions, il est peu probable que le gouvernement entreprendra les initiatives requises pour assurer le financement supplémentaire dont les universités ont besoin pour offrir une éducation de qualité.



Afin de vous donner l'occasion de passer directement à l'action, l'OCUFA a créé le site Web suivant : <http://www.quality-matters.ca>. Ce site Web inclut de la documentation et des recherches mais, ce qui est peut-être encore plus important, il est aussi doté d'un centre d'action qui vous mettra directement en contact avec votre député. Vous trouverez un brouillon de lettre que vous êtes encouragé à modifier pour qu'il reflète votre propre expérience.

Les gouvernements prennent souvent des décisions sur ce qui s'impose et sur ce qui est dans le meilleur intérêt de la province à long terme. Toutefois, dans la plupart des cas, les gouvernements répondent à ce qu'ils perçoivent comme étant la demande du public. En ce moment, cela signifie consacrer des fonds à la santé, à l'éducation et à l'environnement. Tous ces domaines sont importants à leur façon. Cependant, à la fin, ils dépendent tous d'un système universitaire de qualité qui fournit le personnel et les recherches nécessaires à soutenir le travail dans ces domaines importants.

En 2005, le gouvernement a introduit une hausse importante des fonds d'exploitation pour les universités. Le désir exprimé était de rectifier les problèmes créés par les gouvernements précédents et d'augmenter la participation aux études de premier cycle et des cycles supérieurs. Dans une vaste mesure, le gouvernement et les universités sont victimes du succès de ces initiatives. Des étudiants plus nombreux tentent d'obtenir une éducation universitaire. Cette expansion n'a fait qu'exacerber le besoin d'un plus grand nombre de professeurs et de plus d'espace afin que ces étudiants obtiennent une éducation de qualité.

L'OCUFA travaille en collaboration avec le gouvernement et les partis de l'opposition, la bureaucratie et les médias dans le but de faire connaître nos préoccupations. Or, en ce moment, nous avons besoin d'encre davantage. Le gouvernement et les partis de l'opposition doivent savoir qu'une éducation de qualité est importante pour les plus de 15 000 membres du corps professoral, étudiants et personnel de soutien aux universités ontariennes. En deux mots, nous devons nous impliquer.

Le gouvernement est d'avis qu'il s'oriente vers un ralentissement économique qui réduira sa souplesse budgétaire et requerra des décisions difficiles. En outre, il estime que les universités ont déjà reçu assez d'investissements, parfois aux dépens d'autres ministères qui reçoivent un appui beaucoup plus marqué du public.

Le temps est venu de faire connaître au gouvernement et à l'opposition qu'il faut non seulement fournir le financement nécessaire aux exploitations et aux immobilisations, mais que c'est également l'option politique judicieuse.

Nous comptons tous sur vous. Merci de votre soutien.

Le président de l'OCUFA, Brian E. Brown, Professeur

Rapport sur les universités Ontariennes est le meilleur moyen de vous tenir au courant des nouvelles concernant les professeurs de l'Ontario!

Rapport sur les universités Ontariennes est la publication électronique de l'OCUFA. Il vous tiendra au courant des développements, des tendances et des idées qui touchent les membres des associations de professeurs en Ontario. Il est publié 10 fois l'an. Abonnez-vous à Rapport sur les universités Ontariennes! C'est gratuit pour tous les membres des associations de professeurs associés à l'OCUFA.

Rendez-vous dans le site Web de l'OCUFA, www.ocufa.on.ca, et suivez le lien vers Rapport sur les universités Ontariennes.



L'honorable John Milloy s'entretient sur son nouveau rôle de ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités

Q L'OCUFA estime que le gouvernement de l'Ontario doit investir 1,6 milliard de dollars de plus chaque année au cours des trois prochaines années pour combler les lacunes de financement dans le domaine de l'enseignement supérieur, tant pour les immobilisations que pour les exploitations. Comment espérez-vous rectifier ces lacunes de financement?

Afin que l'Ontario soit à son meilleur, il faut que tous les Ontariens soient à leur meilleur.

Le gouvernement McGuinty veut que les étudiants de l'Ontario aient accès à la meilleure éducation postsecondaire au Canada. L'avenir de notre province en dépend.

Nous avons investi 6,2 milliards de dollars dans le cadre de notre plan d'action Vers des résultats supérieurs, l'investissement pluriannuel le plus important de l'enseignement supérieur en Ontario depuis 40 ans. Notre gouvernement n'a cessé d'augmenter le financement afin de s'assurer que sont réalisés nos objectifs pour une éducation postsecondaire de qualité accrue et d'accès facile.

Le gouvernement McGuinty a augmenté la subvention d'exploitation de base à 4,2 milliards de dollars en 2007-2008.

Nous avons fourni 390 millions de dollars de plus pour aider à l'espace de cours, à une augmentation des inscriptions et à la formation. Cette initiative inclut de nouveaux investissements en immobilisations d'une valeur de 50 millions de dollars.

Notre gouvernement a rendu l'éducation postsecondaire accessible sur la base de l'aptitude à apprendre et non de l'aptitude à payer, et nous avons investi plus de 580 millions de dollars en aide financière aux études au cours de l'exercice financier courant. J'ai aussi demandé à mon homologue fédéral d'aider les étudiants en continuant de financer la Fondation canadienne des bourses d'études du millénaire.

Q Comment décririez-vous votre programme pour les quatre prochaines années où vous exercerez vos fonctions. Qu'espérez-vous réaliser?

Le gouvernement McGuinty continuera de s'inspirer des succès réalisés pour s'assurer que les étudiants de l'Ontario ont accès à une éducation postsecondaire de qualité.

Au cours des quatre prochaines années, nous :

- introduirons une bourse d'éloignement spéciale destinée aux étudiants des régions isolées;
- fournirons une nouvelle subvention de 300 \$ par étudiant pour les manuels scolaires et la technologie afin d'aider les étudiants à commencer la nouvelle année;

- donnerons une subvention aux parents en début d'année scolaire plutôt que de les obliger à attendre le crédit d'impôt pour l'éducation postsecondaire payable à la fin de l'année;
- collaborerons avec le gouvernement fédéral pour donner aux étudiants le double du temps dont ils disposent maintenant pour commencer à rembourser leurs prêts d'études, afin qu'ils aient la chance de s'établir au sein de leur nouvelle carrière;
- travaillerons avec le secteur collégial et les organismes sans but lucratif afin de concevoir et de livrer un programme d'études pour l'alphabétisation des adultes;
- augmenterons de 25 % le nombre de places de formation d'apprenti;

Depuis 2003, le gouvernement McGuinty a créé 86 000 nouvelles places dans les universités et les collèges, a doublé l'aide financière aux études et a fourni, chaque année, des bourses à 120 000 étudiants défavorisés. En même temps, nous avons créé 6000 nouvelles places de formation d'apprenti.

Nos collèges et universités vont de nouveau de l'avant. L'enseignement supérieur est plus accessible qu'il ne l'a été depuis des décennies. Au cours des quatre prochaines années, nous devons poursuivre nos efforts afin de rendre l'enseignement supérieur abordable pour tous.

Q Quels obstacles à la réalisation de ces objectifs prévoyez-vous, et comment envisagez-vous de les surmonter?

Les pressions exercées par les hausses d'inscriptions sont l'un des défis auxquels fait présentement face le secteur postsecondaire. Les universités signalent des hausses importantes du nombre de demandes d'inscription, surtout dans la RGT.

Voilà de bonnes nouvelles. Cela signifie que le plan d'action Vers des résultats supérieurs connaît un succès retentissant.

Nous collaborons activement avec les universités ontariennes pour identifier des solutions créatives et novatrices, et nous continuerons de le faire.

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The Blogosphere: What is it?

Some would say that blogging is one of the new media technologies that remains on the margins of academe. For those who are not well acquainted with the blogosphere, a blog (short for web log) is a personal website that features information or commentary on any subject. Entries posted on a blog appear in reverse chronological order and may include any, all, or some combination of text, photos, videos, audio, as well as hyperlinks (links to websites or other Internet-based information). One of the more useful features of blogs is their interactivity—they are designed to facilitate interaction by permitting readers to comment on entries.

The computer literacy skills required to create and maintain blogs have changed a great deal since the early days of blogging in the 1990's. To publish material on the Internet, early bloggers required at least a rudimentary knowledge of

networking technologies such as text messaging. In recent years, there has also been explosive growth in creative and authoring activities by students on social networking sites and on-line communities like Facebook and MySpace. On-line social networking is now so deeply embedded in the lifestyles of young people that it has come to compete with television for their attention. A blog in a college or university program, or high school for that matter, is quite within the reach of this audience of digital natives.

Unlike these digital natives, the many digital immigrants (those over the age of 25) who make up our older student populations are at a bit of a disadvantage as a result of their differing backgrounds and experiences. We should take care though not to overstate the gap between our younger digital natives and older digital immigrants. We know that over two-thirds of adult Canadians have personal access to

Some academics use blogs to reflect on the qualities and characteristics of academic work while other blogs exist only to chronicle the personal lives of their creators

how to create webpages using Hypertext Markup Language (HTML). To make these pages accessible via the World Wide Web, the pioneers of blogging also needed to know how to upload files to a server using File Transfer Protocol (FTP).

Fast forward to today and far less technical knowledge is needed to blog because of the availability of new user-friendly blog publishing tools such as Blogger (www.blogger.com) and LiveJournal (www.livejournal.com) that are designed to help users to create and maintain blogs. We utilize Blogger's publishing tool to bring newly available information about the world of post-secondary education to our students and many interested others.

Now you might be thinking, "why not just print the material and bring it to class?" Alternatively, we could also e-mail information to our students. From time to time we still do each of these, except in cases of on-line or distance courses where that sharing of photocopied materials is not really an option after a course gets underway. On the whole, we have discovered that a blog is a timely, efficient and truly interactive way to share information with our students where they are and to keep conversations going.

Digital Natives & Digital Immigrants

As Marc Prensky noted in his article *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants*, a great many of "our students today are ... 'native speakers' of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet." This new generation of tech-savvy post-secondary students is well-acquainted with the world of podcasts, blogs, wiki writing platforms, YouTube, and social

the Internet. Further, a recent poll conducted by Ipsos Reid indicated that 34 per cent of Canadian adults have visited blogs at one time or another. This poll also found that adult Canadians with higher levels of education are more likely people to visit a blog—university graduates, 40 per cent; other post-secondary graduates, 36 per cent; and high school graduates or lower, 21 per cent. It is relatively safe to assume that the blogosphere is accessible to our older students as well, albeit to a lesser degree as compared to digital natives.

The Academic Blogosphere

The academic blogosphere is far from uniform, and not necessarily directed toward academic audiences. Some scholars blog about their research and some blog about teaching. The faculties of law at both the University of Toronto (<http://utorontolaw.typepad.com>) and the University of Alberta (<http://ualbertalaw.typepad.com>) have each instituted blogs that feature contributions from professors across their faculties. Michael Geist, Canada Research Chair of Internet and E-commerce Law at the University of Ottawa, maintains a blog that is devoted to emerging issues in his field (<http://www.michaelgeist.ca/content/blogsection>). Throughout 2007, Geist was at the forefront of the debate regarding proposed changes to Canadian copyright laws, using his blog to draw public and media attention to the issue.

In some instances academics are using blogs as a medium to reflect on and critique the qualities and characteristics of academic work while others seem to exist only to chronicle the personal lives of the authors and their families. In an

interesting example of the latter variety, a doctoral student at the University of Georgia, Michael Barbour, created a blog called Breaking into the Academy to “chronicle the trials and tribulations” of completing his doctorate and securing an academic position (<http://mkbabd.blogspot.com>).

Quite a number of academic blogs function as virtual soapboxes that professors use to share their opinions and engage others in debates concerning current events and, of course, politics. For example, Instapundit, a blog maintained by Glenn Reynolds, a law professor at the University of Tennessee, is one of the most widely read conservative political blogs (<http://www.instapundit.com>). Another popular academic blog of this type is Bitch, Ph.D. which is the creation of Tedra Osell, a former assistant professor of English at the University of Guelph (<http://bitchphd.blogspot.com>).

It is common for academic bloggers to share their insights and opinions anonymously by keeping their identities undisclosed. Examples of this include “Dean Dad” at *Confessions of a Community College Dean* (<http://suburbdad.blogspot.com>) and “New Kid” at New Kid on the Hallway (<http://newkidonthehallway.typepad.com>). It has been argued that an absence of anonymity in the academic blogosphere has been career-limiting for some. A July 2005 article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* suggested that academic job-seekers who blog can destroy chances of being offered a position by irritating or offending hiring

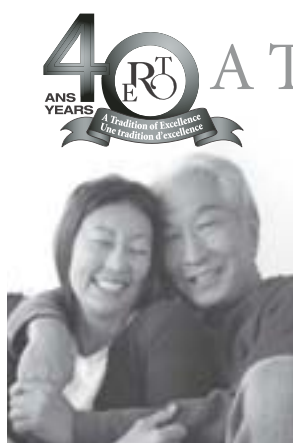
Within academe, the blogosphere
is an important new space that
can be used for the sharing of ideas
across disciplines

committee members in their on-line writing. Contrary to the notion of academic freedom, there have also been a number of instances where denial of tenure has been attributed to negative assessments of scholars’ blogging. One high-profile instance of this occurred when, in 2006, Juan Cole, a professor at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, was rejected for a tenured position in Middle Eastern history at Yale University contrary to the recommendations of both Yale’s sociology and history departments. Cole, who blogs at *Informed Comment: Thoughts on the Middle East, History, and Religion* (<http://juan-cole.com>), has often opined about his strong opposition to the war in Iraq and the rights of Palestinians.

Broadening the Public Sphere

New Media Consortium, (NMC), a not-for-profit international organization made up of hundreds of learning-focused organizations across USA, Canada, Europe, Asia, and Australia, is led by many of the elite universities of the USA and Canada. As part of its mandate, NMC researches emerging technologies for teaching, learning and creative expression and releases an annual report (http://www.nmc.org/pdf/2007_Horizon_Report.pdf). Their 2007 report clearly articulates the resistance to accepting interactive on-line scholarship, such as blogs, and NMC predicts it will take four to five years before such avenues for creative expression will be accepted by institutions of higher learning.

Of course, this is but one example of the on-going debate about the impact, real or imagined, of blogging on scholarly discourse and academic culture. Within academe, the blogosphere is an important new space that can be used for the sharing of ideas across disciplines in ways that cannot be accomplished outside of the on-line environment. Blogging also presents an opportunity to free academics from the many constraints that characterize academic work (i.e., the traditional promotional process which necessitates that we direct our writing toward a



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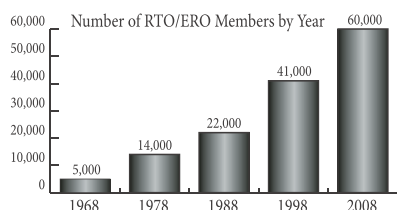
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specialized, and in many cases, small audience).

Blogs provide a mechanism for those of us who are immersed in humanities and social sciences research to disseminate our ideas in a manner that is accessible to a far broader audience than academics have been able to reach in recent times. This presents an opportunity for academics to reconfigure culture and extend it far beyond the university campus and the occasional gathering of scholars. In this way, the increasing use of blogs and other new media in academe could bring us



closer to Jürgen Habermas's ideal of the public sphere and facilitate a further democratization of intellectual discourse.

Of course, it is important to temper our expectations and to keep in mind that new Internet technologies have limitations, and that the latter goal is constrained by the fact that not everyone has access to blogs because not everyone can afford a computer and internet access. Nor does everyone possess the necessary knowledge to effectively use computer technology.

Despite their various limitations, the full educational potential of academic blogs has yet to be unlocked. Blogs present an array of possibilities both as technological tools for teaching and learning and as a communicative technique with power to invigorate and broaden public discourse. **AM**

Dale Kirby and Mary Cameron are assistant professors in the Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

PEDAGOGICAL POSSIBILITIES AND BLOGGING APPROACHES

NEW INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICT), MANY OF THEM AVAILABLE FREE OF CHARGE, PROVIDE US WITH UNTAPPED OPPORTUNITIES TO BREAK NEW GROUND AND EXPLORE NEW AVENUES IN EDUCATION. THE POTENTIAL APPLICATIONS OF THESE DIGITAL TOOLS MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO RE-EVALUATE, RETHINK AND RESHAPE TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL MODELS.

THE FOLLOWING TWO EXAMPLES ARE BUT MERE POSSIBILITIES OF BLOGGING APPROACHES IN HIGHER EDUCATION CLASSROOMS.

DALE KIRBY In my case, as a teacher in the field of post-secondary studies, I feel it is important to emphasize the practical implications of post-secondary theories and policies, and to connect course topics to current events in order to provide my students with a tangible context for course subject matter. To help accomplish these goals, I have used my blog to link to and discuss timely developments and emerging information that is relevant to the study of post-secondary education.

At the outset of all of my courses, I provide the address of my blog to students and discuss its relevance with them. I have not made a practice of requiring that students read the blog. Instead, I generally encourage them to periodically review the material that I have posted. Occasionally, when an item or issue that I have noted is directly relevant to a class discussion, I will direct students to it more specifically. In the case of on-line courses, where the discussion forum is an important, central element of the course, I frequently post hyperlinks to relevant blog posts so as to integrate the blogged items into our on-line deliberations. I have also encouraged my students to post directly on the blog but I do not require that they do so.

Over time, the content that I (and some of my visitors) have added to my blog has developed into a useful repository of local, national and international news items, research reports, podcasts, and commentaries that highlight contemporary issues and practices in post-secondary education. This provides a useful, searchable reference for my students and others who are interested in issues, policies, practices and problems in post-secondary education.

Dale Kirby's Post-Secondary Education Blog can be found at: post-secondary.blogspot.com

MARY CAMERON As a mathematics education professor in a teacher education program, I have used blogging as a pedagogical response to the needs of my students. Since 1998, I have made use of the Internet as new ground for forging possible new teaching and learning opportunities in the Canadian K-12 school system. It was not a giant leap for me, as a new academic and university teacher, to explore the use of blogs as a form of pedagogical action in my teaching.

My students are primary/elementary pre-service teachers in a first degree program; teaching them how to teach requires more than a lecture-based approach. Taking up the teaching of mathematics to children through inquiry-based teaching requires a variety of avenues for students to investi-

gate, share ideas, collaborate and use ICT as they study how to create strong pedagogical practices for mathematics learning in future classrooms. I model for them the kinds of experiences that I hope they will provide for their 21st century students, and that means including technology in ways that make sense. My class blog is targeted specifically for students in one particular course, however it serves a purpose for past students, for practicing teachers, and even former students from an institution in western Canada who are now practising teachers. The blog statistics indicate that the site is reaching an even broader audience than former math education students and local teachers.

On a very practical level the blog provides an anchor for course digital resources; I provide links to journal articles, web sites, digital videos, podcasts, java applets for mathematical demonstrations such as chaos theory and virtual mathematical manipulatives. The blog acts as an anchor for basic classroom management through postings that discuss upcoming activities, particular readings to be prepared for, and room changes. It allows me to make reflections on our face-to-face classroom experiences. This means it provides a platform to keep the conversation going. It allows for fluidity when semesters can feel chopped up due

to interruptions caused by weather, illness, and holidays.

Providing a blog that requires students to use digital technologies is just part of what I wish to have learners experience. To understand fully the idea of blogging and the power of the Internet as a way of contributing new knowledge to a broader community, I now require my students to create and maintain blogs throughout the semester as a major course assignment. I want them to feel the power and the responsibility for sharing ideas in a public sphere. My intent is that the experience of having ideas shared publicly allows them the opportunity to learn about the weightiness of such action, as well as the possible emancipation for their own future students for sharing their ideas to the world. As my blogging students have yet to become practicing teachers it is still too early to state with any certainty what impact their blogging has had on shaping their teaching practice, but I am optimistic that it will have some positive impact on their work as teachers of younger digital natives as they try to meet their students where they are.

Mary Cameron's Math Education Blog can be found at:
<http://munmatheducation.blogspot.com>

Dale Kirby and Mary Cameron

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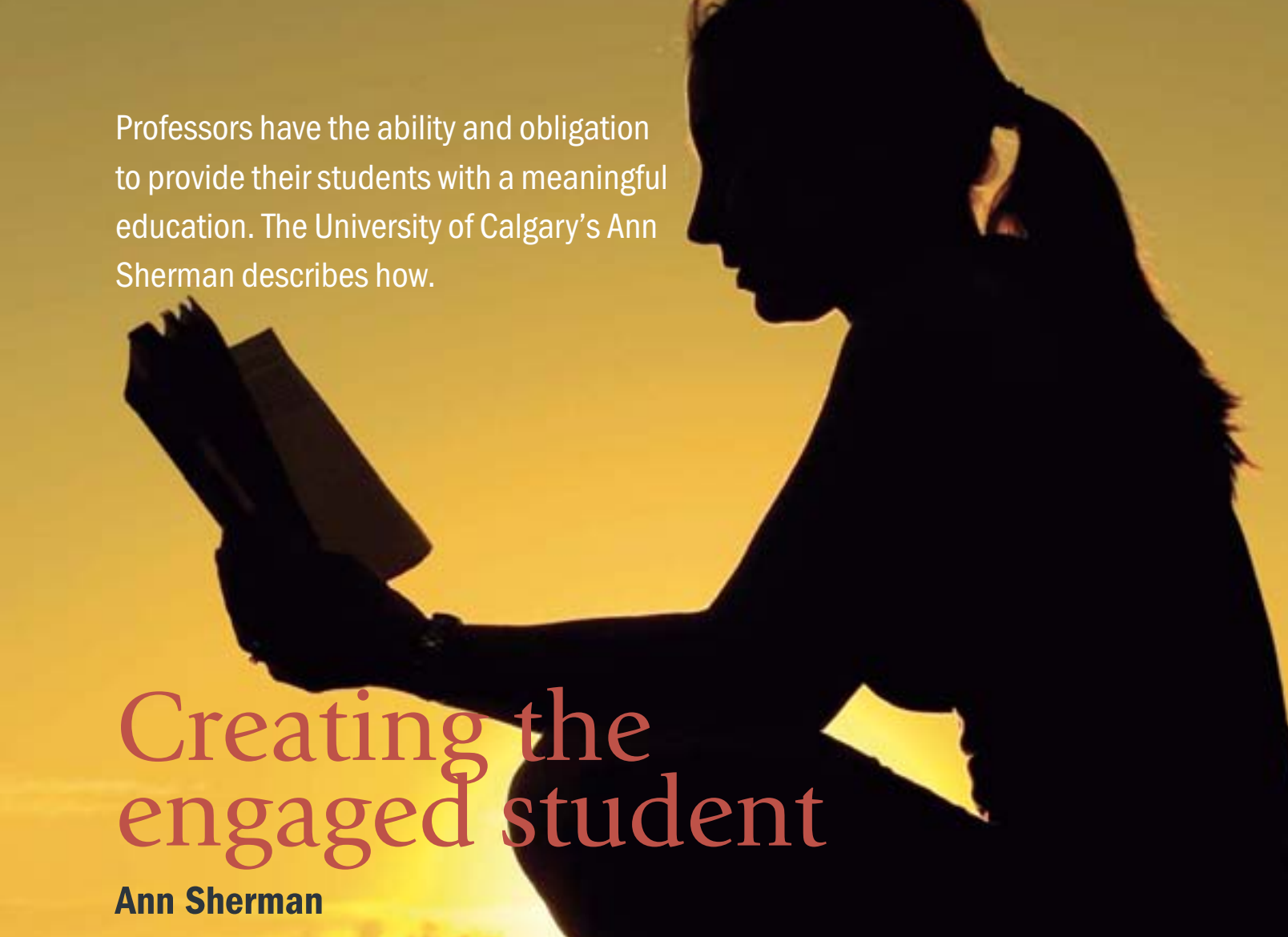
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Professors have the ability and obligation to provide their students with a meaningful education. The University of Calgary's Ann Sherman describes how.

Creating the engaged student

Ann Sherman

As university professors, many of us have very busy schedules of teaching and research. For some, the first passion is research. But for many of us, it is teaching. To have the chance to talk about our research in our field of interest and expertise is very exciting. To be able to share our knowledge with students who might some day apply or extend our work can be exhilarating. As committed teachers at the higher education level, it is important to ask ourselves, what kind of learning experience do we want for our students? Theoretical? Practical? Applied? Integrated? Meaningful? Relevant? Most of us would answer that all of these were desirable types of learning experiences for our students.

When I think about my current students, I am reminded of those teachers in my past who have inspired me and remember the excitement of learning, the thrill of discovery, the motivation to learn more. I remember my grade three teacher who took us to her house for a field trip along the side of a lake. We were all so excited! I can still describe the activi-

ties she had us involved in that day, some forty years later. I am reminded of my fourth year biology professor who took us out to local marshes to observe the ducks we were learning about in class. His enthusiasm was contagious. I used his stories throughout my own career as a high school biology teacher. My professor's interest and curiosity was evident in everything he did with us in class and I wanted to emulate that kind of teaching when I entered the classroom.

Why was what my professor did so seductive? Years later, I returned to my alma mater as a professor and he was still there teaching. His enthusiasm for what he did had not waned. I spoke to him about the way he inspired me and could repeat stories he had told us in class twenty years earlier. While flattered, he was dismayed to think that not all of my professors had provided the same kind of learning environment. We talked about what had made the difference. He had been active in the class, lively in his movements, and dramatic in his stories. He engaged us in the material. He asked for personal stories and told many of his own. He took us to the

locations he talked about in class, getting us to walk around the marsh, collecting samples, making observations of the ducks and their habitat first hand. The learning was real AND relevant to us. Even though we were twenty year old university students, our professor talked about ducks in a way that connected to our lives. We could relate to it and understand it more fully because we were more deeply engaged with it.

The fact that we saw that learning could take place outside of the classroom walls also made the learning environment more enticing to us as students. We were able to meld the theoretical and the practical because of what we experienced. Our professor facilitated our learning and provided us with information and experiences that made the learning relevant and meaningful.

OPPORTUNITY AND OWNERSHIP

Two things can help students really engage in their own learning. They need both opportunity and ownership. A system of lectures, where a professor is the provider of the knowledge and students are passive receivers, does not provide the kind of opportunities most students thrive on. Through opportunities for true engagement, student ownership of learning grows. Through an increase in autonomy, the students engage in their learning in a way that can improve critical thinking and take them beyond it as well. Student ownership and autonomy can be increased by allowing students to make some decisions in the course, such as offering choices in assignments. Also, having students lead class discussions by reading the text ahead of time, and then bringing guiding questions to class, can engage students in a deeper understanding of the material we are trying to teach.

Through a more holistic approach, which includes activities outside the classroom, we can work together to create a more integrated person in our graduates. Changing the learning format challenges the conditioning of twelve years of gradeschool. In the lecture room, one kind of student dominates. In a holistic, engaging environment beyond the classroom walls, we can take our students further than is possible within the university lecture hall. This increases opportunities for learning and helps develop the kind of ownership in learning that will help students excel.

BROADENING OUR FOCUS

In my undergraduate degree program, the focus was largely placed on intellectual achievement. I am not suggesting that we diminish this focus in any way, merely that we go the extra step. We all might agree that many students at the university level are self-absorbed, but we provide little opportunity for them to explore issues and ideas that might be crucial in their future decisions and understanding of themselves. It is a time in life when many are asking life's important questions and questioning what they will do when finished their degree. Yet, there is little time to focus on these queries.

The seductive professor is one who entices his or her students into an environment where their intellectual learning is partnered with learning of a broader kind. We need to

In a holistic, engaging environment
beyond the classroom walls, we
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lecture hall

create philosophers, biologists, and economists, but surely we also want ones who are in touch with the human condition. We want students with a sense of fairness and generosity, with determination and ingenuity, students who have wisdom mixed with practical competence. We need more students with a sense of humanity and an understanding of the issues and agendas in society. Too often personal experience is regarded as an extra, something lacking the rigor of other assignments. Instead, we need to increase the opportunity for our students to engage in the curricula in personal ways, so their personal stories increase their understanding of the material, not in a way that replaces the content they are learning, but in a way that deepens their understanding.

Learning theory shows us that we should make connections between new learning and learning discoveries we have already made. What better way to do this than to ask students to revisit their learning through personal examples and experiences, and then by giving them new experiences to add to this personal history of learning.

SERVICE LEARNING

One way students are offered a variety of relevant and meaningful experiences is through service learning. Service learning is a form of experiential education where students work with community members on local problems and where academically rigorous assignments are designed to explicitly link those experiences to specific learning outcomes. When students are challenged to use their service experiences to better understand concepts, then they can begin to understand the causes of the problems their service addresses. Their learning takes on a deeper level of relevance. Service learning can include activities that are of direct service to the public, providing administrative support, doing consulting projects, assisting with resource production and completing community-based research on behalf of an organization.

In *A Life in School*, Jane Tompkins says that "tying course content to the world outside offers a real-world site for asking theoretical questions; it answers students need to feel that their education is good for something other than a grade point average. And it begins to address the problem of the student who has no conception of what is possible after graduation..."

In service learning, students become involved in projects outside of the classroom, applying the skills and theories they are learning on campus. The students can recognize ways to use their learning in relevant and meaningful ways. Not only do they develop improved critical thinking skills through linkages to deep analysis of issues, students also gain skills not always found in lecture-based courses—i.e. needs assessments, interactive goal setting, designing and implementing evaluations. In addition, the issues are examined in a human context, with real people. In service learning experiences, students must interact with those directly affected by the issues they are studying. Service learning is an innovative way to integrate experiential learning, academic study and community service. It builds upon a tradition of social responsibility and brings a philosophy of outreach to the undergraduate academic experience.

Professors recognize the benefits to students and describe ways that student participation in service learning programs proves to be a valuable adjunct to classroom education, in addition to providing students with direct service experience which can benefit future career options. Professors have also described how having students describe their experiences for classmates can enhance everyone's learning. Service

learning provides students with an opportunity to learn the importance and impact of their learned content on people's lives and behavior. Students sincerely appreciate the opportunity service learning provides to assist and learn in their community, to share what they have learned and to feel that their work does make a difference.

Using service learning means making some changes in the approaches we use as professors. It means giving up some control/autonomy and allowing students to be more responsible for their own learning. It means less lecture time and more application of learning. We need to create a student-centered course instead of a teacher-centered course and use different types of assignments that fully harvest student learning from service learning placements.

Faculty who use student-centered approaches like service learning are the professors who say they 'teach students' not those who say they teach a specific content area. These are the professors who self-evaluate their teaching and who read student evaluations with genuine interest and concern. They focus on student interests and values when planning their

courses and classroom activities. They are the kind of professors who think about where their students are and where they want them to go. These professors want their students to be engaged in the application of learning and feel connected to the community where their learning is applied. Is service learning the only way to engage students more fully? Of course not, but it is one way to enhance the learning experiences for our students in a relevant and meaningful way.

THE INSPIRING PROFESSOR

What kind of professor ensures students are given these opportunities? It is the professor who is still learning with their students everyday who can best retain the enthusiasm that students draw on for inspiration. Professors who continue to inquire, for themselves, about their field of expertise and about the connections between their field and other relat-

ed areas, are those who can offer opportunities for students to delve into meaningful learning experiences. When we love learning, it is apparent to our students. It is evident in the way we teach, and the way we think about our role as teachers. We want to share what we know and we want others to experience the same exhilaration we feel when we discover new learning.


As professors, we have a responsibility to support our students as

they move through an important period in their life. It is a time of uncertainty for many, a time of great deliberation and thought, a time of decisions and changes. Many of these decisions and changes are personal in nature and students need a foundation of more than intellectual support. It is vital that we also engage their spirit and their conscience as well as their thinking. Too often, we fall short of providing them with the kind of opportunities that will extend their chance to learn as fully as possible.

We need to take responsibility for the development of the whole student. We each have a social obligation to produce the finest students we can. Imagine if all students were engaged in learning with enthusiastic and passionate professors. They would be involved in learning in a way that could address societal issues with the same passion and commitment their professors exhibit. Idealistic? Perhaps. But after all, that is why many of us entered teaching in the first place—to make a difference in the lives of students and in society. [AM](#)

Ann Sherman is a professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Calgary





Student perspectives on good teaching: WHAT HISTORY REVEALS

Paul Axelrod

York University's Paul Axelrod discovers the enduring continuities which define the excellent educator and then looks at the challenges of the future

What constitutes effective and engaging university pedagogy, and have student impressions of this changed through the ages? My reading of memoirs, biographies, and contemporary academic and survey literature from Canada, the United States and Britain persuades me that common elements of good teaching do transcend time, place, discipline, and institutional type.

FIRST QUALITY

Good professors are known and remembered for seven qualities. First is their **accessibility** and **approachability**. From the aging Victorian theologian to the contemporary female scholar specializing in gender studies, the accessible and approachable university teacher has been cherished and remembered.

Former students of Elanore Vaines, a Home Economics professor at the University of British Columbia in the 1960s, was described by former students as “a vivacious young woman, full of intellectual and physical vitality, enthusiastic about her subject and her students. She took pains to know [the students] individually, treated them as friends and radiated a warmth which was genuine.”

In the 1990s, higher education scholars Alexander Astin and Arthur Levine found “a positive association between [students’] academic achievement and hours per week spent talking with faculty outside of class... Despite the wide variation of the cultures of our nation’s academic institutions, the value of human connection remains important,” a conclusion underlined in 2005 by George D. Kuh’s studies on college and university student engagement.

SECOND QUALITY

The second quality is **fairness**. Students, past and present, expect to be treated fairly by instructors with respect to their personal interactions, course requirements and grading practices. They are sensitive to situations in which classmates appear to be especially favoured, and they respect faculty whose academic standards and classroom behaviour are comprehensible, civil, and consistent. They detest faculty who humiliate students.

According to early twentieth-century historian and educator W.L. Grant, in the 1880s Nathan Fellowes Dupuis, Professor of Chemistry and Natural Sciences, Queen’s University, “was the only perfect teacher I have ever known... He never discouraged students by telling them they had no brains and that they could never succeed. He was never sarcastic... He was kindly but firm with [students], and in return they gave him what he himself described as ‘all the respect any person has a right to ask for.’”

A survey of student-professor relationships in the 1990s by researchers David Walsh and Mary Jo Maffei concluded that: “...Students really do care about many of the ‘little’ things teachers do (or fail to do). Although solid course content and clear, enthusiastic communication are likely what students want from teachers first and foremost, students also want to be treated fairly, to be cared about as individuals, to be dealt with in an accommodating manner, and to have faculty they can trust and respect... And females’ educational experiences are more likely to be soured by the professor’s failure to engage in these activities than males...”

Students, past and present, expect to be treated fairly by instructors with respect to their personal interactions, course requirements and grading practices. They respect professors whose classroom behaviour is civil and detest faculty who humiliate students.

THIRD QUALITY

Third is **open-mindedness**. Students have always expected their instructors to have a point of view. But they deplore the dogmatic and intolerant professor, no matter how brilliant. Students appreciate being heard.

Political-economist and icon of Canadian satirical writing, Stephen Leacock, made a deep impression on H. Carl Goldenberg at McGill University in the 1930s. “He broadened my outlook by his lectures, by his manner of teaching, by the reading which he encouraged, and by his broad-mindedness in his teaching... He would tell us to read Karl Marx and Adam Smith... He felt that one should see both sides, even though he was convinced that one of those sides was wrong.”

And how did students in an American survey in the 1990s characterize the good teacher? A good teacher is “willing to listen to your ideas and opinions without laughing at them or making you feel stupid. Knows the subject thoroughly and can put it across well. Understanding and flexible.”

FOURTH QUALITY

Fourth—**mastery** and **delivery** of academic material. Mastery is about knowledge of the subject; delivery is about teaching technique—scarcely the same things. Furthermore, students generally are not the best judges of the breadth and depth of a professor’s knowledge. However, from the student perspective, mastery and delivery *are* linked—it is through the latter that the former is understood to be demonstrated.

With respect to teaching techniques, students respond to the professor who is sensibly organized, who explains the material clearly, and one who can sustain their interest. Delivery of material includes the use of various teaching strategies: the stimulating lecture, the Socratic method, collaborative learning, critical thinking instruction, problem-based learning, the creation of learning communities, constructive controversy, service learning, and even the use of PowerPoint. There is no single way to teach effectively, but when teaching succeeds, it is identified and remembered.

In the 1870s, Amos Noyes Currier, of the University of Iowa, impressed at least one former student, G.T.W. Patrick. “We liked the [recitation] method because it worked well in practice and we liked the teacher because we could not fool

him very much, but more because we respected him for his mastery over the subject and his mastery of the teacher's art."

A learning community project (described by education researcher Vincent Tinto in 1997) in which students had continuous access to and feedback from professors and classmates, evidently enriched the intellectual environment. As one student remarked, "So you're constantly having to think, rethink and even re-rethink what's going on in light of all the feedback you're getting from all these different points of view, and what it does is shape and mold your own point of view to a much finer degree... We not only learn more, we learn better."

And what *about* PowerPoint, now used widely in universities, businesses and government by speakers and presenters? Does it work well as a teaching tool? Views are decidedly mixed. According to Russell Craig's and Joel Amernic's 2006 study, there is "little consistent evidence to show that teaching with PowerPoint leads to significantly better learning and significantly better grades than teaching by more conventional methods." The authors contend that the effectiveness of PowerPoint will "be a function of the communication ability of the lecturer. Good presenters will most likely still be the centre of attention, using PowerPoint appropriately as a valuable communication aid to buttress their rhetoric. Poor presenters, such as nervous freshman students making their first assessable class presentation, will most likely be stagehands, with PowerPoint used as a dominating prop and their visual presence barely discernable."

Thus, the techniques—and the technology—work pedagogically only as well as the classroom instructors using them. Whatever the method, whatever the instrument, whatever the era, this appears to have always been the case.

FIFTH QUALITY

The fifth quality—**enthusiasm**—can be considered an extension of the previous category, particularly the delivery of academic material, but this quality is mentioned in memoirs and surveys so often that it merits discrete treatment.

According to William F. Blissett, a student of English Literature Professor Garnett Sedgewick at the University of British Columbia in the 1940s, "[H]e impressed on me that a lecture should be somewhat theatrical, a prepared event that is neither a bore nor a waste of time, with a clear shape but room for improvisation—and for the anxiety that attends the unpredictable."

Leap to the 1990s, and what did Joseph Lowman find in the survey literature?

"...[P]rominent in most studies is the instructor's ability to stimulate enthusiasm for the subject, a skill frequently related to the teacher's personal enthusiasm... Teaching is undeniably a performing art. Excellent teachers use their voices, gestures, and movements to elicit and maintain attention and to stimulate students' emotions. Like other performers, teachers must convey a strong sense of presence, of highly focused energy. Some teachers do this by being overtly enthusiastic, animated or witty, while others accom-

plish the same effect with a quieter, more serious and intense style. The ability to stimulate strong positive emotions in students separates the competent from the outstanding college teacher."

SIXTH QUALITY

Humour is the sixth quality. A sense of humour is neither a necessary nor a sufficient component of high quality teaching. Most professors are not skilled as stand up comedians, nor should they make forced attempts to be so. Furthermore, over the course of a term, a good sense of humour will never make up for other teaching weaknesses. But wit, cleverness, irony and satire generally are appreciated in the classroom; humour works best when it enlivens and illustrates the subject. When employed effectively, it is recalled with enthusiasm.

SEVENTH QUALITY

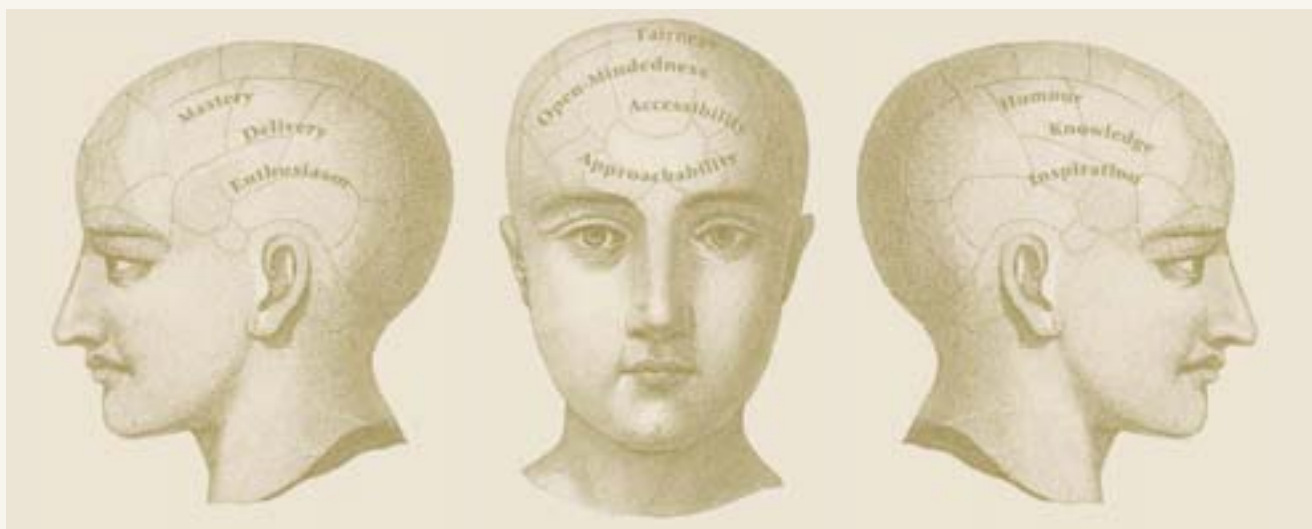
The seventh, and final quality, is **knowledge and inspiration imparted**. What do students actually learn from professors? How, specifically, do the teacher's ideas and values affect the intellectual, ethical, or even moral development of students? Contemporary surveys, which focus on teaching styles and techniques, largely omit this question, nor can such time-limited studies elicit the long-term impact of a professor's teaching. By contrast, memoirs and anecdotes are often more revealing of the intellectual substance of the university experience. Some professors were, and are, simply inspiring.

George Munro Grant who taught Theology at Queen's University, and served as Principal, in the late 19th century, deeply impressed his student, J.R. Watts. "I wish to add that he begat in us an ineradicable conviction that by the truth men are made free... Always it was the man behind the words that gave them their emphasis and made it difficult to remain petty and narrow after knowing him."

Scholar H.S. Ferns, who studied at the University of Manitoba in the 1930s, recalled the influence of H.N. Fieldhouse and, later, Cambridge historian, John Saltmarsh. "Professor Fieldhouse gave the first lecture I ever attended in a university. I was immediately fascinated by the man and what he had to say. In a few minutes he made me feel that the university was a worthwhile place to which I wanted to return. There is a mystery about a great teacher which cannot always be explained... John Saltmarsh was the greatest teacher I ever encountered. For Saltmarsh truth was not something that one already knew. Truth was what one did not know..."

What constitutes good university teaching may not astonish anyone—the qualities described here, in fact, might seem obvious. But in an era of continuous, frenetic change, perhaps it's useful, even refreshing, to remind ourselves of some enduring truths about the superior classroom experience. The past, in some important ways, can still be a guide to the future.

What are some implications for academic policy and research of this intellectual romp through the ages? In the



current era, the quality of a student's post-secondary education can be enhanced by institutional responsiveness designed to recognize, cultivate and reward good teaching. Universities need to encourage a variety of teaching strategies, and provide teaching assistants, new faculty, and veteran instructors, whether full-time or part-time, with the tools to carry them out. There are many current models of such practices in our institutions, and our universities and colleges should be able to learn a great deal from each other.

There are, however, certain impediments to enhancing the quality of teaching in post-secondary education: a hiring and promotional structure that still insufficiently assesses and rewards good teaching; continuing controversies about the meaning and value of student evaluations; a teaching culture of individualism, in which academics in the classroom either insist on total independence from their colleagues or (especially in the case of new faculty) are left to their own devices, even if they are struggling. Other obstacles: collective agreements that interpret any meaningful assessment of teaching as a violation of academic freedom; and badly conceived, externally imposed accountability systems which faculty are inclined to resist.

But in the interests of improving the quality of the teaching/learning encounter, and indeed, in their own institutional self-interest—students, after all, will take their tuition fees elsewhere—universities and colleges should make the continuous improvement of teaching a high priority. We have much to learn on this subject from our own histories.

What are some future directions for research on this subject? We should explore the complexities of teaching and learning in multicultural environments. Traditionally, for example, we reward students for their tutorial participation, but in some cultures, silence, especially of women, is the norm, and the expression of opinion is discouraged. So we need to deter-

mine if and how well learning is occurring even if the student rarely speaks, and we must find creative ways of facilitating, appreciating and even re-defining, class "participation."

We need to know more about the impact of *technology* on learning styles and results. Our students have grown up, for better or worse, in the age of video games and the Internet. Do they learn differently than previous generations? Does extended time in the frenzied world of cyberspace enhance or diminish a student's powers of concentration? Given the inevitable, and continuously increasing, age gap between students and professors, the latter need to have a clearer idea of what works in the classroom (*and* in cyberspace) and what doesn't. The more we know about what expectations and competencies students (now younger than ever in the case of Ontario) bring into first year, the less we may be inclined to lament and dismiss their intellectual immaturity, a common theme in polemics written, so regularly, by aging university professors. Our instructional responses to this challenge could and should be creative and positive. Our efforts to address such issues can be informed by the scholarship of *teaching and learning*, including emerging work on the subject of "deep" vs. "superficial" learning, in which the goal is to cultivate the former and minimize the latter.

The context in which teaching and learning takes place has unquestionably changed over time as have the instruments and technologies available for instruction. Notwithstanding these transformations, the essential elements of good teaching do appear to endure, from generation to generation. **AM**

Paul Axelrod is dean of the Faculty of Education, York University. This is an abridged version of a paper delivered to the Council of Ontario Universities where he received the 2007 David C. Smith Award for research on higher education in Canada. The full paper is available at:
<http://www.cou.on.ca/content/objects/David%20Smith%20Lecture%202007.pdf>

Reading Matters

A review essay by Nancy McCormack on Alberto Manguel's *The Library at Night* (Random House, 2006).

The honeymoon and after

MY OWN LOVE AFFAIR with libraries began, as it surely does for most book-lovers, as a child. I was lucky enough to have had a mother who carted me off once a week to the public library where, after I got over my initial awe, I soon dreamed of being able some day to read all the books in the building. Those early years were all about the romance of the library, and it continued during my undergraduate years when I fell in love with the Dana Porter Library at the University of Waterloo. I spent many summer hours reading books outside on its steps and snowy winter afternoons tucked away on a cozy upper floor. I came to know well its literature shelves, its history shelves—even its government documents and newspapers sections. Then there was the music room, where I first heard Shakespeare on vinyl, before passing on to jazz and swing and classical music. Pursuing subsequent degrees, I enjoyed every other university library I found myself in: Western, McMaster, Toronto, and York. Those buildings and their contents shaped my mind, character, interests, and psyche. Ultimately, my romance with books and libraries in general was so uncompromising that I had only one real option in terms of a career—to become a librarian.

You can understand, then, why Alberto Manguel's *The Library at Night* was a must-read for library lovers like me. It's a brilliant book, full of exotic scholarship and evocative writing. Essentially, it's a romance whose star is Manguel's private library in his home in France. It's housed in a restored building that was erected in

the fifteenth century and served at one time as a barn for the village priest. Appropriately, the architect who drew up plans for converting it into Manguel's library insisted that traditional methods be used to reconstruct the space; he hired only masons who were familiar with local stone and centuries old construction methods. Manguel recounts the fascination of watching these masons restore the structure stone by stone—and speculates over their discovery of two windows that had been bricked up in the old wall. One was a "slim embrasure from which archers perhaps defended Tristan l'Hermite's son when his angry peasants revolted; the other is a low square window protected by medieval iron bars cut roughly into stems with drooping leaves. From these windows, during the day, I can see my neighbour's chickens hurry from one corner of the compound to another, pecking at this spot and at that, driven frantic by too many offerings, like demented scholars in a library...."

At night, however, all is transformed. For Manguel, his newly completed library, "with the windows lit and the rows of books glittering" becomes a "closed space" and its own universe complete with rules that

"replace or translate those of the shapeless universe beyond."

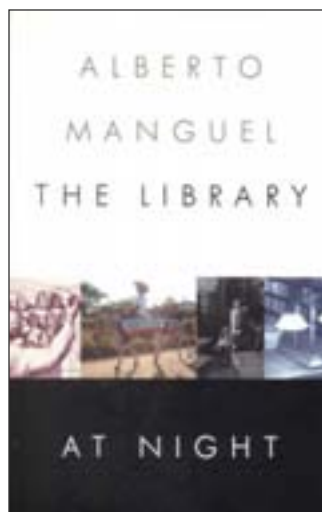
Of course, *The Library at Night* is not restricted to the place that holds the books Manguel himself spent a half century collecting. It's also about other libraries—both those that only exist now through their descriptions in books, and those which Manguel himself has actually visited in his lifetime. He was so enamoured of them that he even considered crossing the divide that separates amateur from professional: "In my foolhardy youth, when my friends were dreaming of heroic deeds in the realms of engineering and law, finance and national politics," he writes, "I dreamt of becoming a librarian. Sloth and an

ill-restrained fondness for travel decided otherwise."

If Manguel actually had become a librarian, he would certainly have had his views modified; most particularly he'd have had to confront the reality that there is more to a library than bricks and mortar and the love of books. At one point he writes: "A library is an ever-growing entity, it multiplies seemingly

unaided, it reproduces itself by purchase, theft, borrowings, gifts, by suggested gaps through association, by demanding completion of sorts." This may be true, but there's another side to the matter. Libraries also are what they are in large part because of the unseen army of people who work there, who make decisions on a daily basis on mundane things such as how to use funds and what to buy with them, or what goes—quite literally—into the garbage and what doesn't. The very future of reading and scholarship depends upon such decisions.

In my own library, for example, we recently endured a small flood



(the result of a burst pipe) which damaged a number of books. Staff spent days identifying the books that were wet and then went about the work of quarantining them to prevent a mold infestation from reaching the rest of the collection. But after that physical task was done, as we pondered shelf after sodden shelf, hard choices had to be made as to which books would (or could) be saved and which books wouldn't. These were decisions that had to be made with the faculty and the university as a whole in mind—who was doing what kinds of research, how had the faculty's research strengths changed over the last few decades, which collections should the library focus on, and which should it let go? Which books really ought a Canadian law school library like ours to have, as a matter of course, on its shelves, and what could it do without? Was there, in any case, a possibility of replacing books that were too damaged? Which of them might still be available through used book stores and which might we never find again? Such behind-the-scenes questions and considerations, not only during that day, but all the time, are as much what make a library what it is as the bricks and mortar.

Manguel, of course, is very much aware of the struggles of books to survive. "Like the Dead Sea scrolls," he notes, "like every book that has come down to us from the hands of distant readers, each of my books holds the history of its survival. From fire, water, the passage of time, neglectful readers and the hand of the censor, each of my books has escaped to tell me its story." Though, in fact, the survival stories of books are often quite unromantic. They're not about being smuggled secretly out of some country in chaos, or rescued from the Inquisition or some natural disaster. More often than not, theirs is the more commonplace tale of faulty plumbing overcome, of wise decisions reversing bad decisions, of wise careful stewardship countering years of careless direction.

Indeed, it's true that the care and attention put into a collection by one generation after another of librarians over hundreds of years can be wiped out by a group who either has no regard for books, or who might have no understanding of what, ideally, should be the nature of the collection. Against such delinquent behaviour, Manguel cites the French scholar, Gabriel Naudé who in 1627 in his *Advice for Setting Up a Library* wrote, "there exists no book, however bad or badly reviewed, that may not be sought after in some future time by a certain reader." It is a counsel that is not always heeded, and there is no librarian who has not regretted, at one time in his or her career, having thrown something out that is later needed by a patron and is no longer replaceable.

This raises an important matter in libraries today. Consider the movement to throw out print copies of journals or newspapers and subscribe to them electronically, so that they are no longer the property of the library. I don't want to get into a litany of worries here, but librarians are understandably nervous about the idea that rather than building the type of academic collections we've had in the past, we are now becoming renters rather than owners of information. Also, anyone who has ever used one of these databases knows that they are often incomplete—charts or other graphics necessary to the understanding of a piece, for example, are frequently absent. Electronic content does not always mirror the print.

Yet in Canada, academic libraries are now buying "packages" of electronic journals together as a group ("consortial purchasing") from publishers in order to save money on subscription costs. This is double-edged sword. While libraries do save money and have access to more journals than they did in the past, more and more academic libraries are beginning to look alike: the equivalent of an academic McDonald's with the same menu from town to town. Oliver

Wendell Holmes, says Manguel, suggested that, "Every library should try to be complete on something, if it were only the history of pinheads." Librarians today see just the reverse happening; the features that once made individual libraries unique and worth visiting are being filed down and replaced with one flat line across the country.

Manguel is right to conclude the computer will never replace the library, and the internet will not replace its contents. "The web," he notes, "will not be the container of our cosmopolitan past, like a book, because it is not a book, and will never be a book, in spite of the endless gadgets and guises invented to force it into that role." The web is different from a library because it stresses "velocity over reflection and brevity over complexity, preferring snippets of news and bytes of fact over lengthy discussions and elaborate dossiers, and by diluting informed opinion with reams of inane babble, ineffectual advice, inaccurate facts and trivial information..." Someone once remarked that the internet is like a library with all the books dumped on the floor. But even that is much too flattering. In a real library, such as mine, the vast majority of books have at least been written by experts; they have gone through fact-checking and editing and proofreading at a multitude of publishing houses; they are authoritative. So little of what is on the internet can claim any such pedigree.

I mentioned above that it takes an army of people to make a great or even a good library. When books are properly shelved, when new and relevant books appear on them in a timely way, when classification systems make sense, when weeding is judiciously carried out, people in that library are doing their job. Today, that job has become harder and harder to



accomplish. The financial screws in libraries are being tightened. "The love of libraries," says Manguel, "like most loves, must be learned. No one stepping for the first time into a room made of books can know instinctively how to behave, what is expected, what is promised, what is allowed. One may be overcome by horror—at the vastness, the stillness, the mocking reminder of everything one doesn't know, the surveillance—and some overwhelming feeling may cling on, even after the rituals and conventions are learned, the geography mapped, the natives found friendly."

Most academics, as well as bibliophiles like Manguel, have come to know and love libraries. But I suspect most of the former don't quite understand the threats facing these institutions today. The cuts that are being made to budgets and staffing will mean changes, and not

for the better, in how these repositories of all so much that is invaluable in a university will function in the not-too-distant future.

Not that the effects will be felt equally in all libraries. The law library I work in has nine employees (including me). At the other end of the scale, Harvard's law library has close to one hundred. Of the nine in my library, only one and a half are librarians at the moment. Harvard has more than 30. If a law librarian at Harvard is off on vacation or at home with an illness for any length of time, I can't imagine anyone would notice. At my library, any absence, either of librarians or staff, has a noticeable effect on service. I marvel at how close to the bone we are and how we can still soldier on. I also know we can't go on like this forever.

Manguel's book is a love story, a wonderful Harlequin romance for library lovers and highly recommended.

But like most romances, it has no "what happens when the honeymoon is over" stuff to spoil the mood. For professionals who work in academic libraries in Canada today, the honeymoon has been over for some time. I already have a strong foreboding that the series of cuts already underway in most libraries, is the beginning of that final "whittling away"—of staff, of resources, of dedication to the very institution itself until we become not that much different from a drive-through restaurant where the meals are pre-cooked and all that's required is a lone staff member and a computer at the kiosk. I doubt too many of those who love libraries will want to stay in the profession if things turn out that way.

Nancy McCormack is head of the law library and assistant professor of law at the Lederman Law Library, Queen's University.

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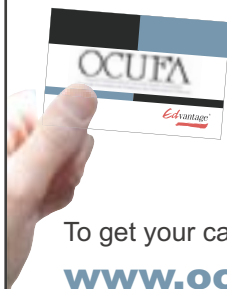


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Counter-hegemonic somnolence

RECENTLY, I SPENT about an hour parsing the distinction between sleeping and snoring. Well, at the time, technically speaking, I was delivering a seductively thrilling lecture on Marquis wheat and Canadian tariff policy at the turn of the twentieth century. This is always a big hit with undergraduate students, one of those lectures that really moves them (generally toward the door in large groups).

As the lecture progressed, an odd noise drifted forward from the audience. It sounded like loud but laboured wheezing, so as I deployed some prescient statistic on grain shipments by the bushel in 1911, I mentally reviewed my 20-year-old CPR training, learned for a long-ago summer job spent lifeguarding deformed ducks as they slowly strangled in raw lake sewage. Soon, however, the sound grew more distinct, rising out of the 300-plus audience like—well, my metaphorical abilities hardly do justice to depressing nature of these events, so let me be brutally literal—like an undergraduate snoring.

Snoring. This was surely a new career low. Any fool can induce a kind of light dozing. I've lost count of the number of times that I've produced the head-bobbing effect my Uncle Ralph calls "doing the chicken": forward-doze off, backward-wake up, forward-doze off, backward-wake up. That kind of half-asleep, half-awake condition is run of the mill stuff for a professor of my cosmic somniferous abilities. Heck, one use of the word "tariff" or "cod" or

"statistic" is enough to reduce consciousness by almost one half. Pile one on the other and you've got naptime at the day care.

But only a truly skilled somnolator could induce a snore: that requires a depth of unconsciousness that is truly out of the ordinary. I guess I should have seen it coming. The very first student evaluation I ever got—top of the pile my first year as a TA—read something like, "T.A. is insane. This is not helpful." You can almost picture the poor lad sitting there thinking I would take the first line as a compliment, so he had better clarify by adding the second. No doubt this kind of analytic precision flowed from my pedagogic focus on "critical skills."

About a year later, I ran into a major suck up of a former student in a bar. He was always one of those hyper-enthusiasts who stayed after class to talk historiography and sent email questions to clarify tiny details from the War of 1812. When he discovered that I had moved on to a course that more closely reflected my research interests, he kindly pointed out that I might be better at it. Zing!

Well, back in the lecture, the pig-like snort of a snore filled the lecture hall and I moved on to a thrilling section on resistance to railways. Just then, it occurred to me that I had this issue all wrong. My research field is awash in articles recovering and celebrating the "agency" of ordinary people, who have apparently gone about their lives since "Christ was a corporal" (Uncle Ralph again) resisting power structures, negotiating hegemony, and subverting the

dominant discourses of authority. I even have a whole lecture devoted to student resistance to 19th century compulsory education, which mainly took the form of staying home to milk the cows. The only thing more popular than critical skills in academia right now is the concept of agency.

Well, call it what you want—critical skills, student agency, counter-hegemonic somnolatory strategies, whatever—it all adds up to the same thing. A large number of students don't listen to me, and that's probably a good thing. You can't spend your career telling students to be critical and then complain when they exercise those skills by ignoring you.

Back in high school, I spent two emotionally painful years as the captain of the Rubik's Cube team, so I have a pretty thick skin. I can't imagine those hard chairs and folding half-desks are very cozy, so if students want to catch a nap in my class instead of at home in bed, it's their aches and pains, not mine. But snoring? That kind of agency is a bit too active and explicit for my tastes. It's like my Uncle Ralph used to say, "A thick skin doesn't help when you get hit by a truck."

Steve Penfold is Academic Matters' humour columnist. He moonlights as an assistant professor of history at the University of Toronto. His most recent book is The Donut: A Canadian History (University of Toronto Press, 2008).





Teaching challenges

LEARNING IS A BASIC NEED. We are born with curiosity which gives us the easy ability to learn to speak and walk, barring a physical or mental disability. Over time, we may develop obstacles to learning which impede the acquisition of knowledge and skills, or which at least make the learning process much more belaboured. Yet, the natural desire to learn remains, even if sometimes deeply buried.

Good teaching points to ways of overcoming those obstacles and taps into the natural desire to learn. Educators who achieve the greatest success with their students are able to engage them, to draw on their curiosity, and make the learning process both stimulating and meaningful.

As the articles by Denis Jeffrey, Clermont Gauthier and Stéphane Martineau affirm in this issue, “seduction” is both a telling and apt metaphor for effective teaching. It appeals to the emotional and intellectual dimensions of learning, enthraling students, making them aware of the possibilities and limitations of knowing.

Who are the truly “seductive” educators? We have all encountered at least one in our own university education. They have qualities which are enduring and transcend both place and time. Paul Axelrod’s article identifies a number of these qualities. They include knowledge and inspiration, enthusiasm, open-mindedness, humour, approachability, a masterful understanding of a subject and an accomplished ability to convey this understanding to a student audience.

Exceptional educators are likely born with a number of the qualities that allow them to excel. But, they also nurture and develop these qualities over time. For an outsider, the “teacher training” of faculty might appear a curious and somewhat antiquated process. It involves an apprenticeship of graduate education, teaching assistantships, and often a period of sessional or part-time teaching. Until relatively recently, there were few formal resources available to new faculty to allow them to develop and improve their teaching skills. All too often, graduate students and new faculty can still be left to their own devices, with the expectation that good teaching will be acquired through osmosis.

The current university teaching environment also challenges even the most talented educators. Faculty hiring has not kept pace with enrolment growth over the past two decades. The result is a dramatic growth in class size and the number of students per faculty. Large classes constrain the ability of educators to engage students both inside and outside of the lecture hall. Funding shortfalls have resulted in a strained university infrastructure, rationed student services, and inadequate hiring of non-academic staff. Undoubtedly, these pressures affect the atmosphere in which students learn.

Students are also more challenging to teach. Compared with the experience of the baby boomers, the echo generation is more likely to combine study and paid work, creating time pressures and divided

loyalties for students which faculty feel pressure to accommodate. Some blame a growing culture of disengagement and entitlement where students are interested only in credentials rather than intellectual development. The significance of this culture and the accuracy of this description of university students is certainly a debatable question.

Technology brings its own opportunities and impediments to university teaching. Faculty now face a generation which looks to cyberspace for its information needs. Professors have responded with multi-media lectures, web-linked instruction, and other technological innovations. But, as Axelrod asks, does immersion in cyberspace and video games mean that current students learn differently than those of preceding generations? Is embracing this new technology in the classroom the answer?

Added to this litany of concerns are pressures to assess both teaching and learning, in the name of accountability and quality enhancement. Quantitative performance indicators and other surveillance promise to accurately measure “learning outcomes” and gauge whether “aims and objectives” are being met. The danger is that the organic process of learning is transformed into a mechanized and standardized accounting of “inputs” and “outputs.”

Everyone in the university community loses when the conditions which foster good teaching are eroded. We may lose sight of what higher education can achieve. At its best, university teaching provides students with a sense of wonder. It encourages creativity, and gives students the confidence and independence to intelligently challenge their teachers. It speaks to our innate curiosity and need to learn. It seduces us with possibilities and the promise of new insight.

Mark Rosenfeld is editor-in-chief of Academic Matters and associate executive director of OCUFA



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