



Dancing Bodies in the Classroom: Moving toward an Embodied Pedagogy

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I have always been acutely aware of the presence of my body in those settings that, in fact, invite us to invest so deeply in a mind/body split so that, in a sense, you're almost always at odds with the existing structure, whether you are a black woman student or professor. But if you want to remain, you've got, in a sense, to remember yourself—because to remember yourself is to see yourself always as a body in a system that has not become accustomed to your presence or to your physicality.
—bell hooks

When I began training as an associate instructor at a Big Ten school, I was twenty-five years old. My mentor suggested not to announce to our students that this was our first semester teaching. She claimed students would never know we were novice teachers, as they would assume whoever was in front of the classroom was the expert. My instructor seemed to presume that the physical context of the classroom would supersede the fact that the body of the teacher and the bodies of the students weren't that different. As the teacher, I had, after all, institutional authority. I found this proclamation reassuring, as I now had one less thing to worry about in relation to my new role as teacher.

Used to being a student and not a teacher, I entered the classroom on my very first day of teaching and did what students do—I took a seat at the seminar table. Though I was wearing a cotton skirt with my sleeveless shirt,

once I sat down, I was visible only from the waist up and so looked no more formally attired than the students. With a pile of books and several folders in front of me, I sat full of anticipation, occasionally making eye contact with students, simply nodding or smiling, not talking to anyone. Some students were silent, but others chatted, asking one another various questions (*Have you heard anything about the teacher? Did you buy the books?*). Anxious, I wasn't sure if I should talk with students, letting them know "the teacher" was right there. I wondered whether I should introduce myself at this point or wait until class had started. I worried that I had already waited too long to say something, yet I continued to sit silently. With a few students present and others filing in, the atmosphere felt casual but with some nervous energy (mine as well as the students').

Just before class was supposed to begin, I remembered to put my name and course number on the board, as this was one of the handy tips I heard in teacher orientation. Concerned about doing everything *just right*, I quickly stood up to write on the board. At that moment, my body declared itself that of the teacher. As I was at the board, the bell rang to signal the official start of class. I confirmed this declaration of my body when, turning away from the board, I announced (with as much confidence as I could muster) my name and the course number and asked students to check their schedules to verify that they were in the right class.

Some students had quizzical looks on their faces; many glanced at one another, looking for some kind of guidance or confirmation—*Is she really the teacher?*, their expressions seemed to be asking. Though physically present, my body was not read as a teacher's body. I looked too young; I did not look sufficiently "other." Some students quickly reread me in light of my announcement, probably thinking, "Oh, she's not a nerdy student. She's the teacher. That makes sense." Nevertheless, some still didn't seem to think it made sense. I was already feeling awkward, as "teacher" was a new role for me, but now I felt *especially* awkward, fearful that some of them would not accept me as the teacher. Would they verbalize their rejection? Would they leave? What if I lost "control" of them? Several questions ran through my head and, frankly, I was unsure of what I would have done about any of these actions should they have occurred. To my relief, the puzzled students and the skeptical students seemed to take their cues from the students who simply settled in, checked their schedules, and directed their attention to me to find out "what the teacher wants."

In the above scenario, students' misreading of me could have had serious consequences for them. They could, for instance, have expressed

opinions and expectations *about* the course and the teacher that they would not have necessarily wanted to share *with* the teacher. If students misread the teacher or the situation, they may sacrifice individual attention from the teacher, opportunities for learning, or even their academic standing. They must constantly read and assess institutional demands in the form of “what the teacher wants.” As the person with institutional power, however, the teacher has less to risk personally if she misreads a situation and the students. Whereas students may face repercussions if they misinterpret a pedagogical moment, teachers do not seem—at least at first glance—to have as much at stake.¹ Nevertheless, in this article, I argue that teachers who *do* acknowledge embodiment—most notably the people present and the felt sense of the moment (ranging from awkwardness to passionate discoveries)—benefit from a more complex understanding of their students and their classroom. Both teachers and students can enjoy more opportunities for learning when the corporeal text of the classroom is recognized.

I did not immediately assert my status as the teacher in the opening scenario. I was able—even if only for a few minutes before the class began and I established myself as the teacher—to put students at a further disadvantage by allowing them to act without the knowledge that I was the teacher. Had I talked about students’ misreadings of me, the students and I could have learned from one another—what does *the teacher* look like? Why? What influences these judgments and why? What do *students* look like? Perhaps even more pertinent for a writing course, what do teachers sound like? What do academics sound like? What do students sound like and what *should* they sound like?

One way to understand this scenario is through the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, who attributes a “surplus of seeing” to each participant: the unique physical and epistemological positioning of each person in the scenario. The practicum teacher, physically outside the situation, and aligning herself with the “centripetal” forces of the institution,² believed my age (indeed, my physical self at all) would not matter. She also seemed to have assumed a “surplus” that surpassed mine or my students’ (a possibility Bakhtin would deny). My students, physically positioned with me at the seminar table and probably not assuming they even possessed any “surplus” in a classroom, were challenged to reenvision me as the teacher. I entered the situation perhaps more from the perspective *of* a student, the identity I more closely identified with at the time. To be recognized as the teacher, I felt I needed to move to the front of the classroom (the physical position of authority) and use language to stabilize my identity as “teacher.”

A conventional Bakhtinian reading would focus on the language used in the classroom (both mine and my students'). But when we view the body as a text, then the body becomes a Bakhtinian utterance that is reaccentuated, revealing "the speaker's individuality" (1986: 79). Through my interactions with students, I may have changed what they associated with the "genre," or stable category, of "teacher," "female," and "twentysomething," while I never extricated myself from the dialogic relationship I had with those categories or genres. And through my interactions with them, these students each reaccentuated the "genre" of student. Though genres, according to Bakhtin, are "relatively stable and normative," each utterance (and I'm saying each *body*) appears "in a particular situation, with a particular speech plan . . . already imbued with my expression" (81, 88). Focusing on the discursive text, Bakhtin says, "the utterance occupies a particular *definite* position in a given sphere of communication. It is impossible to determine its position without correlating it with other positions" (91). So it is with bodies. My young, female body, in relationship to the other, fairly similar bodies in that classroom, did not seem to conform to the genre of "teacher" but instead seemed a disruption of the genre.

While the body can be theorized in a range of ways (for example, as a text and object of social/cultural control [Bordo 1993] or as a physically active being that enacts one's identity and places one in power relations with others [hooks 1994]), I use Bakhtin as my primary lens to understand the body as a basis for epistemology that acts in dialogic relationship with other bodies. This article takes the general question of the role of the body in pedagogy and investigates it in several contexts—rhetorical situations that, though disparate, are similar in their exigencies in that bodies and physical contexts must be read and interpreted by the participants.³ These are rhetorical situations in which how, or even whether, bodies and contexts are read affects the kinds of work that can be done in the classroom.

We cannot teach effectively without theorizing the body and difference, without considering our own assumptions about our bodies and our teaching. The role of the body in our culture, and specifically in the classroom, has implications for feminism, pedagogy, and writing instruction.⁴ Most influential texts on pedagogy and in composition studies do not offer complicated notions of the body, if they offer a notion of "the body" at all. By not considering the body, such texts miss the sacrifices students and teachers are asked to make in the academy—in terms of their identity, their creation of knowledge, their constructions of texts and of themselves. As Brenda Jo Brueggemann and Debra S. Moddelmog (2002: 312) point out, "Of course,

teachers have always had bodies; with the advent of feminist, ethnic and race studies, it has been increasingly easy to acknowledge and discuss the teacher's body in the classroom." These discussions open up possibilities for students to explore their own identities—"often invisible or unreadable and frequently fluid, contingent, and conditional" (32).

The body has received some attention from scholars in English studies, who have explored the body in literature, as evidenced in Elaine Scarry's *Literature and the Body* (1988); in *The Erotics of Instruction* (1997), edited by Regina Barreca and Deborah D. Morse; and in Daniel Punday's *Narrative Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Narratology* (2003). Despite the many scholars who write about the body, and the few theorists who write about the body in relation to education (e.g., Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 1984), only a few book-length publications have appeared on the topic of pedagogy and the body, notably two collections of essays from Australia, Erica McWilliam and Peter G. Taylor's *Pedagogy, Technology, and the Body* (1996) and *Taught Bodies* (2000), edited by Clare O'Farrell, Daphne Meadmore, Erica McWilliam, and Colin Symes; Sherry Shapiro's work in the field of dance, *Pedagogy and the Politics of the Body* (1999); and the recent collection *The Teacher's Body: Embodiment, Authority, and Identity in the Academy* (2003), edited by Diane P. Freedman and Martha Stoddard Holmes. My article joins this conversation on body theory but looks more specifically at the writing classroom, where our discursive and corporeal texts interact in the embodied pedagogical act.

Bakhtinian Bodies: Surplus of Seeing

[A] major paradox in all Bakhtin's work is that he continually seeks to generalize about uniqueness.

—Michael Holquist

Though Mikhail Bakhtin is less obviously a "body scholar," I use him as my primary theoretical lens to analyze the corporeal texts in our classrooms, because of his focus on situatedness and the body and the connections between the epistemological and the corporeal. Bakhtinian scholar Michael Holquist (1997: 218) traces an emphasis on situatedness and the body throughout Bakhtin's oeuvre: "From the prominence of bodies in his Rabelais book, from the central role of 'embodiment' in such early works as 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,' from his emphasis on the physiological bases of time and space perception in the essay on chronotopes, it is obvious that Bakhtin, whose chronic osteomyelitis was a constant personal reminder of his own corporeality, was particularly engaged by bodies."

Holquist is quick to point out that Bakhtin does not conceptualize the body as *only* physical, since “for Bakhtin, what matters about bodies is not only that they are *there*, but that they are *alive*—they manifest the deed of life in that particular place” (219). The connections among embodiment, epistemology, and dynamism are necessary to acknowledge in understanding Bakhtinian theory. Otherwise, as Holquist notes, critics misinterpret Bakhtin’s focus on embodiment as “a kind of gross and vulgar materialism underlying the theoretical sophistication,” as Ken Hirschkop (1989: 13) refers to Bakhtin’s work in the introduction to *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*. Indeed, from my perspective, it is *exactly* Bakhtin’s “gross and vulgar materialism” that makes Bakhtin appropriate for my inquiry. He is a theorist whose work is especially multilayered and nuanced—*because* of his materialism, not in spite of it.

Literary critic Ann Jefferson (1989) labels Bakhtin a “theorist of the body,” and I, too, am claiming him as a body theorist.⁵ Specifically, I draw upon the idea of the “surplus of seeing” or “surplus of vision.” Surplus, or excess, is taken from Bakhtin’s early work, most notably “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity.” Bakhtin’s surplus of seeing involves the physically situated nature of the body.⁶ Bakhtin (1990: 22–23) maintains that each person possesses a surplus of seeing, given his own unique physical positioning in a given context:

When I contemplate a whole human being who is situated outside and over against me, our concrete, actually experienced horizons [*krugozor*, meaning compass of vision] do not coincide . . . I shall always see and know something that he, from his place outside and over against me, cannot see himself: parts of his body that are inaccessible to his own gaze (his head, his face and its expression), the world behind his back, and a whole series of object and relations, which in any of our mutual relations are accessible to me but not to him. As we gaze at each other, two different worlds are reflected in the pupils of our eyes. It is possible, upon assuming an appropriate position, to reduce this difference of horizons to a minimum, but in order to annihilate this difference completely, it would be necessary to merge into one, to become one and the same person.

As Holquist (1990a: 37) defines it, a surplus of seeing involves my authoring “a unified version of the event of our joint existence from my unique place in it by means of combining the things I see which are different from (in addition to) those you see, and the things you see which are different from (in addition to) that difference.” On a literal level, if I am sitting across from you, you will see things behind me that I cannot possibly see (including my own physi-

cal self at that moment). On the other hand, just because I cannot see those things does not mean they do not exist. On a figurative level, we each offer our own perspective because, at least according to Bakhtin, we are situated in a unique space that allows us our own perspective. In other words, Holquist (164) explains, “What we see is governed by how we see, and how we see has already been determined by where we see *from*.” In fact, “everything must be approached from the point of view of—point of view. And point of view is always situated. It must first of all be situated in a physical body that occupies time and space, but time and space as embodied in a particular human at a particular time and in a particular place” (1990b: xxviii).

Bakhtin’s surplus of seeing honors difference, since for me to merge with someone else is neither possible nor desirable. Bakhtin (1990: 88) places importance not on the fact that I am interacting with another person, but on that fact that this other person “is for me a *different* person. . . . The productiveness of the event of a life does not consist in the merging of all into one.” Holquist (1990b: xxv) notes that “a first implication of recognizing that we are all unique is the paradoxical result that we are *therefore* fated to need the other if we are to consummate our selves. Far from celebrating a solipsistic ‘I,’ Bakhtin posits uniqueness of the self as precisely that condition in which the necessity of the other is born.” Contemporary thinkers like Terry Eagleton echo Bakhtin’s idea of “surplus.” The body, Eagleton (1996: 72) points out, possesses the “capacity to transform itself in the process of transforming the material bodies around it.” Because of this ability, “it is in this sense that it is anterior to those bodies, a kind of ‘surplus’ over and above them rather than an object to be reckoned up alongside them.” What I most want to emphasize about Bakhtin’s surplus of seeing is its concern with embodiment, difference, and the situated nature of perspective. Bakhtin’s surplus of seeing parallels Bordo’s (1990: 145) “metaphor of the body” as a way of understanding our own epistemological limitations, for

the appreciation of difference requires the acknowledgment of some *limit* to the dance, beyond which the dancer cannot go. If she were able to go there, there would *be* no difference, nothing which eludes. To deny the unity and stability of identity is one thing. The epistemological fantasy of *becoming* multiplicity—the dream of limitless multiple embodiments, allowing one to dance from place to place and self to self—is another. What sort of body is it that is free to change its shape and location at will, that can become anyone and travel anywhere? If the body is a metaphor for our locatedness in space and time and thus for the finitude of human perception and knowledge, then the postmodern body is no body at all.

Bordo's dance metaphor provides the perfect introduction for the next section, wherein I discuss a nonacademic example of the significance of the body to pedagogy, based on one of my experiences as a student.

The Ballroom as Classroom

One contemporary belief likely to stupefy future generations is the postmodern orthodoxy that the body is primarily, if not entirely, a linguistic and discursive construction.

—N. Katherine Hayles

Several years ago, I took a ballroom dancing course, offered through the local park district, with a friend of mine, Kay. I have selected this instance because it fostered my conceptualization of this project and the ways that bodies bump up against language and cultural assumptions. This ballroom dance scenario concretely depicts my theorization of the classroom and illustrates my main points: that as teachers, we enter classrooms with assumptions about our students; that reading bodies is a complicated task; but that reading these bodies is necessary for rhetorically persuasive acts—and therefore successful pedagogy. This nonacademic setting of an adult dance class presents a scenario in which one works with one's body to learn the subject matter. In his argument for a "pedagogy of exchange," David Bleich (2001: 131) shows how "the paradigm of the materiality of language and its genre elaborations suggest that exchanges of language are also pedagogical situations: teaching and learning take place for speakers and listeners, writers and readers." Such exchanges occur in literature classrooms, composition classrooms, and even ballrooms.

After registering for ballroom dancing, my friend Kay and I looked forward to taking weekly dance lessons, albeit somewhat nervously, given our concerns about coordination. In some ways, Kay and I made a good visual match on the dance floor. We are both about the same height—five feet five inches—and are both white, female academics in our thirties who grew up in working-class families. Since, unlike Kay, I frequently wear makeup, nail polish, and jewelry, I have the conventional markings of a heterosexual female and am heterosexual. Kay, on the other hand, does not share these markers, and is a lesbian. As "texts," Kay and I each display the dominant cultural signifiers of "lesbian" and "heterosexual female," respectively.

When I asked Kay if she thought she had any physical lesbian markers, she said,

I don't know how I would describe myself—haven't given it lots of thought. I would say I am comfortable and confident in my body; that I "take up space." In terms of clothes, I like to wear clothes that are comfortable, that don't restrict my movements, that I don't have to worry too much about getting dirty—I'm very into functional! You know the cliché [about lesbians]—"women in comfortable shoes." I'm not comfortable in clothes I can't run in, or that I couldn't change a tire in. I think I get read as lesbian because it is clear, by the way I dress, the way I move, and the general aura I emit, that I have blatant disregard for "the rules."⁷

Even as Kay and I present corporeal texts to be read, those readings are not easy ones to make. The description that Kay provides as a bodily "signifier" does not necessarily signify "lesbian." The following ballroom dance scenario shows how bodies lack some "essential" meaning and are embodied in particular contexts that affect interpretation.

On the first day of our dance class, Kay and I were introduced to our instructor, Abbie. Abbie is also a white woman, slightly shorter than Kay and me. In her midforties, she is petite; she has the kind of build one would expect of a dancer, with a tiny waist and small feet and hands. With her shoulder-length blond hair and fair skin, Abbie projects a kind of weightlessness that those of us with two left feet admire. Her appearance was marked as professional. Her sweater sets and cigarette pants, her dresses and skirts that flared as she demonstrated steps—these stood out in a room dominated by jeans, khakis, and simple cotton shirts. Despite her more formal wardrobe, Abbie exuded enthusiasm and playfulness from the first day of class. Kay and I, at least initially, had a serious air about us because we were nervous, a demeanor that contrasted with our casual attire.

Ballroom dance relies on strict gender roles. As two women, Kay and I presented a pedagogical problem for Abbie, as our female sex was physically apparent to everyone on the first day of our dance class. Abbie called the roll, knew that Kay and I would be dancing together and responded to us in a manner similar to how she responded to the rest of the couples. She said hello to us, welcomed us to class, and made eye contact with each dance couple as she read the roster. Next, she asked that the "men" form one line and the women form a line directly across from the "men." Kay joined the men's line, as she and I had discussed that I, a heterosexual, would benefit from learning the "woman's" role and she, a lesbian, wanted to learn the lead, as she would have occasions to use these skills. Throughout the first class, Kay was grouped in with the "men," and Abbie continued to use gendered language. During the next two classes, Kay and I noticed that we were receiving less

direct instruction from Abbie, who carefully watched every dance step and each couple's movements on the floor, offering advice to all the other individual couples that she did not offer to us. At the first class, Kay was referred to as a "man," though her physical presence subverted that language; and by the second class, Kay and I were ostracized; we were not receiving the very instruction we desired and for which we paid. After class, Kay and I would comment to each other about our exclusion from the class, wondering if the other had "noticed"—how Abbie didn't come as close to us as she did the other couples, how she didn't comment as regularly on our body positions or step sequences, and how she couldn't offer suggestions about these positions and sequences to us, as she rarely looked our way. What we noticed was that we were receiving less of an education in ballroom dance because we did not fit the traditional view our teacher had of her students.

On our fourth class, when Abbie asked the "men" to get in a line, Kay raised her eyebrows, widened her stance, and lifted her arms in a position that suggested, "Look at me." Abbie noticed—not because Kay made eye contact with Abbie (because she didn't) and not because Kay uttered a word (because she hadn't)—but because Abbie was accustomed to watching bodies and read the nonverbal message Kay sent her. This was the pivotal moment for Kay and me in the class. Kay physically made a demand. This gesture prompted Kay and me to stay after class that night and talk with Abbie about what had happened and about how she could foster our learning.

To get an understanding of how those first few weeks looked to Abbie, I interviewed Abbie after the ballroom dance course ended. When asked about her observation that we were a "couple," Abbie replied, "It was an assumption [I made about the two of you]. Nothing is what you think. You didn't care. I think that was even more hilarious. Here I've got my own drama going on. You've got your own drama going on. The class probably had its own drama going on." Bewildered by the pairing of Kay and me, Abbie reminded me that on the first day of class she had taught the basic step incorrectly and had to reverse our movement halfway through the class. I remember wondering how qualified Abbie was to teach ballroom dance if she could confuse these simple steps, having reversed the female and male stances. She recalled,

A basic thing. I went home and told my husband I was so thrown. I literally taught the man to have his hands in the wrong position. Because my energy was up here—uptight, in my neck and head. When I get uptight that's where my energy goes. I'm not in my body and I'm not able to just freely teach. I wasn't thinking of the other

students at that point because this is a schtik I thought I had down. I could feel my brain doing a shuffle. “OK, the men . . . er . . . the people, who are leading . . . er . . . this line over here.” And I was tripping over my tongue trying to say the appropriate thing.

Abbie “trips over her tongue” in order not to offend Kay and me, while sharing that she was overly concerned about what to say without enough attention to what, physically, she was doing. Ironically, I was in a similar predicament; overly concerned about each dance step and apprehensively anticipating the next one, I wasn’t yielding to the rhythm. Instead of relaxing and moving with the music, I was stiff and anxious. Both of us needed to be “in” our bodies—Abbie as teacher and me as dancer—so that we were teaching and learning through our bodies. A parallel for the composition classroom is when we talk about writing during the class but in fact are not *writing* in class. Encouraging me to dance and to refrain from overanalyzing each step, Kay had to keep reminding me that this was supposed to be “fun” and I needed to “relax.”

Abbie’s apprehension, on the other hand, came from her fear “of offending” Kay and me, because “I didn’t know what to call you. Here’s what I did. The first day, I did change my language a lot—a lot, you don’t know what I usually say. I talked with people and thought about it. I wanted something, something that wouldn’t make the two of you feel self-conscious and using [the terms] *leaders* and *followers*. . . . I didn’t like that followers stuff, anyway.” It could be that Abbie was changing her language “a lot,” but the fact that she repeats that phrase suggests defensiveness and implies she is not sure I believe her. I understand her comments to mean that she was using language different from what she normally uses, not that she was using a variety of language, altering it throughout the class period. I remember her using “women” and “men” consistently. Abbie might have changed her language that first day, as she claims, but she readily admits that only during the interview did she sense her fear of offending us (“I didn’t know that then. I only know that now.”).

Nonetheless, after the introductory class, Abbie determined that *women* and *men* were still viable language choices. She reports,

I thought about it and decided I shouldn’t change my language and should do it the same way I always did. So I didn’t change it. I came back the next week and did it my usual way. But it didn’t feel right. I was doing it without looking at Kay, I think—this is interesting to go through the process—because I think I was doing it and never

making eye contact with Kay. I stayed with my own vocabulary and didn't look at the two of you.

That Abbie was not looking at us was obvious to Kay and me. After dance classes, Kay and I went for Thai food. When Kay and I chatted over spring rolls about the dance class, we raised the concern that we wouldn't learn very much, as Abbie wasn't going to engage with us as fully as she did with the other students. When Abbie assumes, "You didn't care" about what was going on in class, she is mistaken. The statement itself can be read as implicitly homophobic, as it suggests not only that Kay and I would have some "issue" about being lesbians, but that we in fact *should*. Furthermore, Abbie singles me out, implying that *I* in particular should be disturbed by this association. In other words, she takes as a given that a heterosexual should protest when read as homosexual.

What I *was* concerned about was learning ballroom dancing. Kay and I, perhaps naively, presupposed that in a community with a fairly significant gay and lesbian population, we could take a dance class through the park district and not "stand out." Our main concern was with each other—that Kay felt comfortable learning the "men's role" and that we would both be relaxed dancing together. Whatever our individual concerns and effort, students alone cannot make for a productive class, and neither can teachers. If a classroom is to be a place "of transformative pedagogy," as hooks (1994: 39) argues it should be, then a classroom must be "a democratic setting where everyone feels a responsibility to contribute." As we continued our discussion over dinner, Kay and I concurred that we could only contribute so much to the class and would perhaps be limited by our instructor's lack of involvement. But, during each of these early weeks of the course, by the time Kay and I would conclude our dinner with a glass of plum wine, we always agreed to meet each other at the next class, resolving to "have fun," even though I still suffered from the fear that I didn't want to do anything at which I didn't excel.

After a few dance classes, Abbie says she herself recognized that she needed to acknowledge us more fully. It was Kay, however, who initiated the change. Abbie recalls,

Then, around the third or fourth class, I was making corrections. I deal with people, not just steps. And so once I made that human contact again, Kay was open to [telling me] something was wrong. *The men's line*—it wasn't working this week. Kay and I probably came to the same place at the same time. Then she made that gesture [using her body to say, "Look at me."]. This was another instance of the teacher

wanting to stay in control. You think you have to put up that wall—I'm not going to let that in. I'm going to look competent. OK, I've got control; I'm the teacher. But I do remember Kay doing that very well [using her body to say, "Look at me."]. It was a relief. We could deal with it . . . I reach out for honest movement and love it when I see it. Because it's safety. It's like having a conversation with someone and they're not bullshitting you. You feel safe with them. When people are physically honest, it makes you feel safe.

Abbie claims that she "puts up a wall" so that she can retain control of the situation. But at the same time, that wall tumbles down as Abbie and Kay find a way to connect. Abbie maintains that she was searching for language that would make Kay and me not feel "self-conscious," which suggests she needed discursive text to interact with our corporeal texts. Though Abbie assumes that she and Kay "came to the same place at the same time," Kay and I had identified a problem from the first day of class, a problem important enough to us that it arose during our weekly dinner conversations. Rather than discuss it only between us, we would have preferred to have talked with Abbie, but clearly neither of us felt ready to initiate the conversation. What none of us perhaps realized, however, was that we were having an embodied conversation from the first day of class, as corporeal texts interacted (and ignored one another) in the ballroom.

It wasn't until I discussed the class at length with Abbie that I appreciated the extent to which other students may have felt uncomfortable with our presence in the classroom. While Abbie noticed some tension in class on the first day, I was oblivious to how others were feeling because I was so fearful of learning ballroom dance. Abbie said,

I'm sure that if somebody was feeling uncomfortable, they would have looked for something to come through my body language or my tone that I was also uncomfortable with the two of you. Obviously if I had had negative feelings, I don't think I would have been able to hide it. Especially in a situation where I had to partner [dance] with each of you. That's part of the teaching of it. I didn't partner with each of you until that week when Kay was late. I thought, "Now I take the man's part. Tina's still learning." I thought, "This is what I *do*."

From my "surplus" of vision, I think there *was* something coming across in Abbie's body language and tone that suggested she was uncomfortable. But my central point here is that Abbie had to alter *how* she did what she does because our physical presence in that ballroom dance class made it impossible for her to simply go in and "do" what she does. *Whom* she was teaching,

at least initially, did not transform *how* she was teaching. Abbie had been struggling with language for us from that first day of class. She had indeed seen us; she just was unsure of what to do *about* us. Her inability to name us and to accommodate the subject matter to us led to benign neglect.

Abbie came into this pedagogical moment without being able to “read” dancing as anything other than gendered. Her way of maintaining control was to reside in the realm of language. By pretending her language and attention were adequate, Abbie could not teach all of her students effectively. She could not make a space for her subject matter when particular bodies—Kay’s body and my body—did not fit her model. To quote Abbie, she “decided I shouldn’t change my language and should do it the same way I always did.” By not changing her language, Abbie remained in what Kristie Fleckenstein (1999) terms “discursive textuality.” In “Writing Bodies,” Fleckenstein (1999: 285) maintains, “If we are only and always framed discursively, then like prisoners in Foucault’s Panopticon we become complicit in our own subjugation, defining ourselves (*seeing* ourselves) in terms of disembodied linguistic practices that carry power in our culture” (emphasis in original). Fleckenstein argues for a dialogic relationship between the discursive and the corporeal. Abbie attempted to use discursive text to negate Kay’s corporeal text, as if the bodily text—ironically, given that we were dancing—had no place in this classroom. But it didn’t work because, as Abbie declares, she deals with people. Abbie does not teach dancing; she teaches dancers, bodies who aspire to dance. Composition instructors may say we teach writing, but we actually teach writers, bodies who aspire to write (we hope).

This scenario problematizes Bakhtin’s metaphor of sight, since our identities are not written only on/in our bodies. When one looks at Kay, her identity as a female is self-evident, even though she does not conform to dominant cultural constructions of “femininity.” Her identity as a *white* woman can be judged by cultural categories of skin color. Her sexuality, however, is a more complicated identity. In fact, my own sexual identity was misinterpreted by Abbie, who read me as lesbian because she assumed adult couples who take her course are romantically involved. This scenario thus highlights the ways that context influences our reading. Bodies are always *embodied* in a particular situation, giving further credence to the idea that there is no “essential” body. I have several cultural markers of feminine heterosexuality, but the ballroom dance classroom, a heterosexually gendered, even heterosexist space, compelled Abbie to read my body in a specific way, as outside the “norm.” As instructors, we must consider how classroom spaces may encourage us to do the opposite: make assumptions about students as hetero-

sexual or as middle-class or as able-bodied because the context presupposes those participants.

While ultimately this ballroom dance experience became a source of humor for Abbie, Kay, and me, it did not begin as such, even though Abbie described it as “hilarious.” Abbie needed to find other ways of talking about her course content so that all the students present could more fully participate—could be legitimate participants in this classroom. And the other students had to accept us as participants as well. When Kay and I enrolled in her class, Abbie had encountered an audience she had not anticipated. Abbie acknowledged, “I’ve never had a situation where there was a same-sex couple in the class. Not knowing whether this is a couple or not, that is how it was read by people in the class. That’s how it was read by me. I’m sure the students still think you and Kay are a couple.” When bodies other than the ones she had expected arrived, Abbie did not alter her rhetorical strategies but persisted, however unsuccessfully, to use the same language and approach she had always used. These approaches, including her surplus of vision and interactivity, were equally significant, or maybe even more significant, in determining what kind of instruction Kay and I would receive. In terms of the corporeal text of the classroom, Abbie’s avoidance decreased our opportunities for learning. But because Abbie is a committed teacher who wants an inclusive classroom, she eventually adopted the stance of “learner,” asking Kay and me what we wanted her to do.

When we conceive of the classroom as a rhetorical situation, we can see the importance of acknowledging that *who* says something is as important as *what* gets said and to *whom*. Our bodies are rhetorical—they enact and carry meaning. George A. Kennedy (1995: 106) suggests that rhetoric “in the most general sense may perhaps be identified with the energy inherent in communication: the emotional energy that impels the speaker to speak, the physical energy expended in the utterance, the energy level coded in the message, and the energy experienced by the recipient in decoding the message.” Similarly, Abbie says, “The body carries energy. We are animals. We read body language. We read energy. . . . We just kind of feel that.” The different energies that Kennedy articulates—emotional energy, physical energy, and energy levels—are all embodied.

Embodiment, as theorist N. Katherine Hayles (1999: 196) outlines, “is contextual, enmeshed within the specifics of place, time, physiology, and culture.” Abbie read Kay and me as a lesbian couple because two women who dance together in this situation signify “lesbian.” Judith Roof and Robyn Wiegman (1995: 193–94), the editors of *Who Can Speak?*, assert, “The out-

side confers authority to the inside to speak of (and only of) the outside, the already culturally determined matrix by which that body is read. Reading bodies that we imagine as identities actually bestows a significance to bodies that have already been interpreted, whose manner of reading has already been set according to the rules—the dualistic overdetermination—by which the body came to signify in the first place. What we read is, in short, what has already been read.” Roof and Wiegman note that reading a body does not mean that readings correspond to the body. Abbie did not recognize this problematic correlation between “reading” and “body”: a student had to challenge Abbie’s reading. Had Kay, a teacher herself, not had such a strong sense of her own authority, she might not have done anything to challenge Abbie. It is easy to imagine students who would not have said anything or done anything, students for whom it would have been too great a risk to speak or act. Indeed, I, also a teacher, didn’t challenge Abbie’s reading of me as lesbian, even though it was a misinformed reading.

Roof and Wiegman ask who can speak, but we must also ask questions about the *body* speaking. Kay made a rhetorically savvy move in that dance class. Her body spoke as she resisted cultural codes and linguistic constructions. The *can* in Roof and Wiegman’s question asks us to consider who has permission to speak and who is heard. Similarly, as teachers, we need to reflect on what bodies we give “permission” to in our classrooms and the extent to which we let those bodies speak. Had Kay and I been in a classroom other than Abbie’s, another instructor may not have let Kay’s body speak. The gesture might have been noticed but not responded to. It might not have been noticed at all.

Institutional spaces discourage us from thinking about ourselves as bodies. Teachers need to be aware of these erasures; otherwise, we condone them. Kay should not have had to tell Abbie that she was not male. Abbie already knew that and had the responsibility for factoring this into her pedagogy. Granted, we do not have the power to control how bodies are made intelligible in our culture. But we do have the power to monitor whether and how bodies are read and responded to in our classrooms and whether students are as active, vocal, and mobile as the teacher.

The Harbrace College Handbook (Hodges et al. 1998: 552) reminds us that texts with “variations in spacing . . . promote readability.” From a corporeal perspective, I am convinced that being aware of bodies, movement, and “spacing” in classrooms does make reading easier. My interpretations depend on my physical positioning in a classroom, the perspectives and expectations I entered with, and my vantage point in the situation. This literal and figura-

tive position elicits a particular reading. Spacing in time also yields better readability. We can, for instance, revisit a course through student evaluations or, prompted by what we notice in a current course, think differently about past courses. This lapse in time allows us to bring more (con)texts to the classroom and more reflections and readings to bear on these (con)texts. I do not believe that any one person can ever decode everything in a text, for a text is not static and each reader maintains a surplus that another reader cannot possibly possess. For instance, certainly Abbie perceived my body in the dance class; still, she misread me.

In moving from the ballroom to the composition classroom, the next two sections examine instances in which I embody the role of “teacher” and the body provides the substance of the pedagogical moment. While I was a student in the ballroom class, I am a teacher in the composition classroom, with a different perspective and physical positioning. With my physical and institutional position within these scenarios influencing my surplus of seeing, each scenario underscores the classroom as a rhetorical and physical space. In “Reading the Classroom: Is There a Mistake?” I examine written responses from male students that show how even though I have institutional authority as the teacher, my female body tends to be culturally read in opposition to this authoritative role. Just as the dancing curriculum presupposes that dancing bodies are *embodied* by heterosexuals, I argue that pedagogical bodies are supposed to be *embodied* by males. I contend that some students must discursively reposition me to reconcile the categories “female” and “authority.” In other words, they seem to think there’s a mistake that I’m the teacher and use written text to alter my corporeal text. Finally, in “Incorporating Our Pedagogy: At the Blackboard and on Blackboard,” I concentrate on how the discursive text (inscription) is not enough—that the corporeal text (incorporation) must enact change as well. I use this last section to demonstrate how an embodied pedagogy plays out in the classroom.

Reading My Classroom: Is There a Mistake?

What do students need to know about their teachers?

—Alice Kaplan

What do students need to know about their teachers’ bodies? Hayles (1999: 196–97), who draws upon work by Elizabeth Grosz (1994), notes that the body is always an abstraction, “always normative relative to some set of criteria.” Embodiment, by contrast, “is contextual. . . . Embodiment never coincides exactly with ‘the body.’” Because the body and embodiment cannot be

conflated and “because embodiment is individually articulated, there is also at least an incipient tension between it and hegemonic cultural constructs. Embodiment is thus inherently destabilizing with respect to the body, for at any time this tension can widen into a perceived disparity.” Hayles aligns the body and embodiment “with another binary distinction—inscription and incorporation—that partly converges and partly diverges from it” (198).

In the following scenario, I use Hayles’s terms *inscription* and *incorporation* to analyze a student’s e-mail. Hayles defines inscription as “like the body . . . normalized and abstract, in the sense that it is usually considered a system of signs operating independently of any particular manifestation” (198–99). Relying on Foucault’s examples, Hayles tells how ideas can be inscribed into text, but if one subsequently changes the font size of that text, “the original medium disappears from sight.” The importance of the text, she claims, is not its materiality, but the concept. In other words, the *words* matter, not the *matter*, provided the “words have been exactly reproduced.” She understands inscription as “a conceptual abstraction.” By contrast, incorporation, like embodiment, cannot be abstracted from “its embodied medium.” Hayles offers a good-bye wave as an illustration of incorporation. She clarifies that “it is possible, of course, to abstract a sign from the embodied gesture by representing it in a different medium.” The different medium Hayles gives as an example is a drawing of a good-bye wave. However, “in this case . . . the gesture is no longer an incorporating practice” but instead “has been transformed precisely into an inscription that functions as if it were independent of any particular instantiation.”

Let me offer another example from Hayles to further elucidate the relationship between inscription and incorporation. Hayles maintains, “The body produces culture at the same time that culture produces the body” (200). For example, girls and boys learn to occupy space differently in our culture. Hayles notes, “These nonverbal lessons are frequently reinforced verbally: ‘boys don’t walk like that,’ or ‘girls don’t sit with their legs open.’” Here is how she differentiates inscription from incorporation in the case of bodies and space: “Showing someone how to stand is easy, but describing in words all the nuances of the desired posture is difficult. Incorporating practices perform the bodily content; inscribing practices correct and modulate the performance.” Together, inscription and incorporation “create cultural constructs.”⁸

I am applying Hayles’s terms *inscription* and *incorporation* to pedagogical moments in which male students implicitly and explicitly challenge authority figures who are *women*. Peter Elbow has pointed out that a student-

centered classroom in some ways requires *more* authority on the part of the teacher rather than less. Authority resides with the teacher rather than in the multiple texts and multiple ways of writing explored in the nontraditional classroom. Elbow (1990: 41) reasons, “Insofar as I try to set up a workshop class or discussion where there isn’t a single right or best way and where I want to produce an interplay of different readings, different ways of writing, then I really need more authority and control in managing the class and the learning.” While all teachers can claim a level of institutional authority, the way students perceive that authority depends on the student and teacher. Some instructors, for instance young females, just don’t look the part. In her review of Pamela Caughie’s book *Passing and Pedagogy*, Dale Bauer (2001: 557) acknowledges the risks that feminist teachers, “perhaps . . . all female professors,” face. Bauer asks, “Is the body perhaps the only performance that students perceive?”

Issues of authority are certainly highlighted when one is female. I bring over a decade’s worth of teaching experience into the classroom, yet just a few years ago, an Indian male student wanted to know my age. In response to the question “What questions do you have for me?,” one of various process questions I posed to students about their papers, Rashad asked my age. Rashad needed to know my age so he could determine whether it was even necessary to ask me any further questions (and perhaps whether it was necessary to *answer* any further questions). In other words, prove to me that you *are* an authority and I will trust you *as* an authority. This resistance may have to do with cultural practices of respecting only elders as teachers or may be more related to gender issues. In any case, Rashad did not do anything to change his classroom practice, or incorporation, but rather inscribed his resistance.

I want to explore these ideas further by looking at a more extended example. I contend that because my age and gender factor into students’ perception of my authority, some students attempt to discursively reposition me. Most significantly, they do so by means of inscription because changing their way of interacting with “the teacher” is an incorporated practice and therefore not only difficult to alter but often difficult to even perceive. Incorporated practices, such as where and how we sit in a classroom, confer knowledge upon us. This “incorporated knowledge,” according to Hayles, is “deeply sedimented into the body and is highly resistant to change” (1999: 205). It is also knowledge that “is partly screened from conscious view because it is habitual.” These attributes of incorporated knowledge are important to keep in mind, as I don’t think the student writer who composed the following e-mail was aware of the implications of his letter.

I received this e-mail during the first week of classes from Kimiko, a Japanese male student enrolled in English for Nonnative Speakers (ellipses in original):

Dear Tina:

I checked my record. I found myself that I have taken ESL 060 class last spring.

So don't worry, I am not going to leave from you. And I will follow you all the time, you would call me stalker soon. So I have to learn English to learn the Law cause we will fight at the court.

By the way thank you for the book. I couldn't find it at the bookstore in the English section. Is that already sold out?

Tell myself, I am not used to write in English as well as speak in English. It is really hard for me to speak in English. I quitted the Job and came to the US to go to the graduate school. But my GPA and TOEFL score was not quite good enough to enter. It has been 8 months since I came here. I think my English skill has been evaluated that first I came here. Cause when I first came to the Chicago airport, I could not order McDonalds meals . . . now I can order sandwiches, also fries (I have not tried yet . . .) But not good enough to understand or join with the native speaker. How about you? How long have you been here? Is graduate school much more harder than 6 grade? How do you feel about school? How do you feel about me? Are you single? How about a lunch or dinner next Saturday . . . Lets get married next year . . .

Well I think I should study much more harder than I thought, I felt little behind from that class. Please always have a warm corner in your heart to me, but not for grading.

See you on Wednesday.

P.S. Well, will you please revise this letter briefly, if there is a mistake?

This e-mail message is intriguing and rich for analysis. While some might find this letter playful, Kimiko's e-mail alarmed me on a number of levels. I did not find any humor in Kimiko's prediction that "you would call me stalker soon." Kimiko may have intended his comment to be amusing because of the exaggeration; maybe his references to "the Law" and "court" factored into this outrageous humor.

The underlying violence of the letter resides in the fact that Kimiko forces me into the role of "date" and "wife"—identities probably consistent with his view of women's positions. The postscript is both problematic and ironic. In this rhetorical situation, whether his e-mail has "a mistake" suggests that the error resides somewhere in the text and not in the overture he

has made to me. After one class session with me, he has already recast me into the role of potential partner, a role he layers over my function as the teacher. From this e-mail, I understand Kimiko is trying to reinscribe me, reconciling the fact that a woman his age was also his teacher. His response was to create another relationship with me that probably more closely correlated with his notions of women his age. To use Hayles's language, Kimiko's e-mail attempts to "inscript" our relationship differently, most likely with the goal of a different classroom "incorporation." To put it another way, when my body *embodied* this classroom site, this student saw the embodiment in tension with the cultural norms for the *female* body and the *pedagogical* body. He did what he thought necessary to diminish what Hayles would describe as a "perceived disparity" between my body and this embodiment, between inscription and incorporation (197).

There is not much more to say about Kimiko, as he elected to retake the ESL prerequisite and thus dropped my class. Given his goal to attend graduate school, Kimiko's e-mail may have also served to reduce his fear of attempting yet another English class. After learning he had not done well in his previous composition course, I reread his e-mail as a transformation of himself as aggressor, as the one with power. Curiously enough, even though I saw Kimiko in class during the first two weeks of the semester and in my office twice, he was always reserved and respectful in my presence. His stance in the classroom and in my office contrasted sharply with the rhetorical position he takes in the e-mail. His physical posture—reticent and hesitant—opposes the verbose and confident persona inscribed in his e-mail.

It is not a coincidence that both Kimiko and Rashad responded in writing. Male students have asked me out, always via e-mail.⁹ If, as Hayles concludes, bodies incorporate knowledge that strongly resists change, then it makes sense that students like Kimiko and Rashad choose to alter the relationship discursively. For instance, when Kimiko asks, "How about you? How long have you been here?" he makes the assumption that I, too, have immigrated to the United States and am a nonnative speaker. He could be asking how long I have been at this institution or in this city, but because the question follows his own history of arriving in the United States and struggling to learn English, I believe he has assumed that I am a nonnative speaker who is teaching nonnative students. He projects his own "difference" onto me, thus marking me as "other" and therefore similar to him. The question is not, as Stanley Fish (1980) reminds us, whether students have read us "correctly," but from what position they are reading.

Incorporating Our Pedagogy: At the Blackboard and on Blackboard

To have around volumes of educational theory (however radical) that never mentions [*sic*] bodies, and their differentiation, seems to me now, slightly stupid. In a more extended emphasis, bodies may be what (who) is being schooled because by now—I hope—we cannot so easily separate minds, psyches, emotions, *off* from bodies.¹⁰

—Philip Corrigan

Like the dance instructor Abbie, composition teachers read bodies. But like Abbie, it can take us time to complicate our readings. Because “incorporated knowledge is partly screened from conscious view” (Hayles 1999: 205) and because the way we interact in the classroom is habitual, some students will resist having these discussions. Despite resistance, the inscriptions we share in class and the conversations we initiate factor into changing these incorporations. We must also foster different incorporations, different embodiments, in our classrooms. While incorporated knowledge and practices may be difficult to change, Kay’s gesture in the ballroom dance class demonstrates that corporeal changes *do* happen and can initiate larger classroom changes. Kay and I felt more comfortable after her “look at me” gesture. At that moment, we could collaborate with Abbie in a manner that seemed unobtainable before this corporeal communication. Abbie later referred to Kay’s gesture as “a relief. We could deal with it . . . I reach out for honest movement and love it when I see it. Because it’s safety . . . When people are physically honest, it makes you feel safe.” This feeling of “safety” that Kay and I also experienced after reconciling the discursive and corporeal texts in the ballroom dance class made both of us better learners. I no longer needed to be reminded to “relax,” because now I could. With all three of us more comfortable in this pedagogical relationship, more substantive learning occurred. Abbie not only benefited from this teaching opportunity, but she now brings this experience with her into her next classroom, as inscribed and incorporated knowledge. Kay and I finally achieved our “student” objectives—to have fun and fox trot.

Likewise, in our academic classrooms, students must embody a range of practices, like participating in class and leading discussions, in order to feel comfortable doing them. Whatever adjective(s) a teacher uses to characterize her pedagogy, such as “student-centered,” “liberatory,” or “feminist,” she is offering an inscription of pedagogy. But the incorporation takes place in the pedagogical practices the participants engage in every day in the classroom, which may or may not reinforce the inscribed pedagogy. As we engage in an embodied pedagogy in our classrooms, we make students more aware of their

own bodies in the classroom context. While students may be more accustomed than we are to reading bodies in the classroom, I also believe that this attention must be shifted away from the teacher and refocused on themselves as students in this institutional context. When students work in groups and have ideas and answers to share, we must get them at the board holding the chalk. This is such a simple move, yet I am always struck in first-year writing and introductory literature courses when students look at me as if I've asked them to do something for which they are unqualified. But in some cases, they *are* unqualified (or at least feel so), as holding a piece of chalk and writing on a blackboard is not the same activity as taking a pen to paper, is not the same incorporated activity.

The institution provides a physical setting that can hinder or foster our pedagogical goals. While the institution operates on the level of inscription, offering particular conceptions of power that inform our classroom and ideologically fostering the “mind/body split” that hooks identifies in the opening quotation, I focus here on institutional incorporation and how it can impede an embodied pedagogy. At my current institution, writing instruction takes place in computer classrooms, with the computers facing the walls along the perimeter of the space. At the center of the classroom are seminar tables. When students are writing on the computers, the energy of the space recalls the “writer-writes-alone” image that Linda Brodkey (1987: 396) critiqued almost twenty years ago. My classroom space demands that students turn away from one another to the periphery, physically isolating themselves to produce their work. This institutional incorporation narrowly circumscribes the “surplus” that each of us can offer, with students staring at computer screens. If I am also typing in the front of the room, at the only computer that faces toward the classroom, I am blocked from view by the computer monitor and can observe only students' backs as they type. The configuration suggests Fleckenstein's (1999: 285) point about feeling like prisoners in Foucault's Panopticon: my students will have difficulty knowing whether I am surveying them, unless they discontinue the very task they've been delegated to do. Fortunately, I can use the technology to disrupt these singular scribes and any false impressions of disembodiment by having students post their work online and respond to one another. Even if I limit the response to electronic correspondence rather than a class discussion, this activity almost immediately causes students to shift from the circumference to the center of the room. They move from these online forums eager to talk face to face, in a context that makes the corporeal text more apparent.¹¹

For a more specific example of embodied pedagogy, let me turn to a recent class session in which we read David Mamet's *Oleanna*, a play that centers on the interactions between John, a faculty member in his forties, and Carol, a twenty-year-old student who later accuses the teacher of rape. As a classroom writing activity, I used Blackboard to devise virtual office hours, assigning one student the role of "John" and one student the role of "Carol." While staying in "character," these student pairs were to enact the student/teacher interaction of the play without knowing who was playing the other role. Students were obviously impatient to find out with whom they were conversing and tried talking across the room, rather than silently typing. In fact, students were rather boisterous; a colleague observing the class identified a lot of laughter, particularly when students were getting started. In her observation notes, this colleague wrote, "This was definitely teaching in the 'contact zone.' It feels risky and uncomfortable to be in that zone with students, but you stayed in it. It's not just the intellectual contact, it's the physical contact . . . or, more accurately, the way the language use shapes the embodied response, the gut reaction. That contact can indeed provoke symbolic violence, as Mamet suggests." This activity underscored the emotional component of an embodied pedagogy, the "felt sense" of the pedagogical moment and the affective elements of the classroom. Students had animated, and sometimes contentious, discussions as John and Carol. A few students commented that the online dialogue made the sexual subtext of the play more overt for them, perhaps accounting for some of the laughter as a way to diffuse students' uncomfortable feelings. One student admitted to "looking around at the discussions" of those students seated near him and noticed that "our chat was PG . . . or PG-13, as opposed to some [other students' posts]."

When I showed the movie *Oleanna*, I moved the class to a screening room with rows of seminar tables and chairs faced forward. The visual representation of the play, combining the corporeal with the linguistic texts, made students especially unsympathetic toward Carol, the student, with even more aggressive responses than students had exhibited in class discussion and online. The physical setting made interaction difficult, and I could not have students reposition into a different configuration, as the tables were too long to move. This classroom arrangement prevented students from seeing everyone and discouraged students from sharing conflicting opinions. The discursive text was negative toward Carol; and I, at the front of the classroom, could read that at least a few female students were uncomfortable with the discussion, but other students either couldn't see or feel this discomfort or weren't responding to it. It was easy for them to ignore the corporeal text in

this classroom space. The vocal students described Carol as “irritating looking,” criticizing her for speaking “without emotion” and appearing “robotic.” Thus, Carol’s corporeal text seemed to conflict with students’ notions of the “female student.” The students who had a different reading of Carol did not speak up, though I did pose questions to address the fact that John also fails to show emotion at points and is “irritating” as well, hoping to underscore how John’s corporeal text as a male teacher caused him to be read less harshly by students.

My point is not that teachers have to select readings and writing assignments that so directly deal with the tensions between inscription and incorporation, but that the institutional incorporation must be addressed and responded to for a more successful pedagogy. While I wish I could blame the seminar tables in the screening room for silencing certain students’ perspectives, the reality is that I needed to have modeled this sensitivity for students. I certainly felt the resistance of some students to enter the conversation and needed to move from that sensation to articulating the silence. My own embodied response was one of anger that so many students condoned John’s physical attack of Carol at the end of the film. Even before the movie concluded and we moved to discussion, I could feel the hostile energy in the room. My initial, albeit naive, response was that such an atmosphere does not correspond to the kind of classroom space I want to create with my students. But reflecting on this eruption from the students, I realize that it is the very thing an embodied pedagogy welcomes—the visceral response from students that then needs to be more critically analyzed by the participants with an acknowledgment of how watching a movie in an academic context and behind rows of seminar tables affects our experience.

As a first-time teacher, I worried about losing “control,” about not being “in charge.” In *Oleanna*, Mamet uses the telephone as a third character in the play/movie that frequently interrupts John and Carol’s conversation. Several students commented that Carol is “nosy” for asking about the intrusive callers, and I had to keep directing them back to the idea that Mamet constructs the play this way and deliberately uses the telephone as an invasive device. But whereas Mamet as playwright/director can control these physical disruptions, we as teachers often cannot. I’m not sure that’s necessarily a bad thing, for it demands that we be responsive as we dialogically interact with our students and our classroom spaces, creating incorporations as we go. More important, these physical and affective dimensions of the classrooms demand reflectiveness. I tried while in the moment of that *Oleanna* discussion to move students to a more critical understanding of their responses and

to open up spaces for reticent students to contribute. But only in retrospect, through this inscriptive process, do I recognize that *I* had to be willing to express my anxiety over their strong responses. I had to model ways to use my corporeal text to understand inscriptions of gender and teacher/student relationships that inform the context not only of *Oleanna*, but also of our classroom. In other words, as Hayles argues, body and embodiment, or inscription and incorporation, cannot exist as binary opposites.

Focusing on who we teach and where we teach requires a physical attention to the classroom to better facilitate how we teach. In any given space, a teacher must determine what arrangements and what position(s) for herself make sense for a given class activity. In other words, seeing myself as a body in a space with other bodies enables me to more fully engage in situated practice and to model it for students. While it can be easy to forget that we are bodies in the classroom, such an oversight never lasts long. For the wonderful thing about our bodies is that they “betray” us, meaning they remind us at what are sometimes the least opportune moments that we are not only “minds” or “thinkers” in the classroom. As a teaching body, I sneeze and hiccup. I get things caught in my contact lenses. I grow hungry and hear the sounds my stomach generates (loud enough for nearby students to hear), and sometimes I recognize too late, as my heart rate quickens and my hands seem less steady, that I should have refrained from another cup of coffee during office hours. Bodies do not let us pass as minds only, and they may or may not allow us to pass in the ways that we intend. Whether my body enables me to pass as a teaching body or not (as evidenced in my opening scenario) will depend on the other bodies and context(s) involved. But Pamela Caughie (1999) says the question is not whether I passed, but what it means to pass.

A similar distinction can be made for our students, however fixated they might be on grades and passing. We and they should be concerned with what it means for them to pass. In order to pass our courses, whom do they need to be? If our answers as teachers cannot allow for a range of being(s), then we have too narrowly defined the student body and what an educated student body “looks like.” Effective teaching requires not only that we respect that our students have a surplus of seeing, but that they also have a surplus of selves. They construct these selves discursively and corporeally.

Our students are our work and their writing is the “body of work” in our classrooms. Peter Elbow (1990: 87) explains, “It is not by their theories or premises but by their consequences that we know people: how they treat students, colleagues, even texts.” Similarly, Marshall Gregory (2001: 78) has discussed how “students don’t separate method from ethos. . . . To students,

we are what we do.” Just as bodies matter, contexts matter, and how we treat students, colleagues, and texts may vary from one context to the next, as will what we do. We teach in a culture that simultaneously obsesses about and disregards bodies and in an academic culture that still views teachers and students as “minds” and “intellects” only. We teach in a culture that exerts what Bakhtin would label “centripetal” forces on our bodies and their significations. Given this context, we must focus attentively on the bodies in our classrooms and how we read and write those bodies so that—to quote again from *The Harbrace College Handbook*—we “promote readability” and, I would add, possibility. Our theories of pedagogy cannot afford to neglect the dancing bodies in our classrooms.

Notes

I thank the two anonymous reviewers for their supportive and constructive criticism, Marcy Taylor for her keen insight, and Carrie Brecke, Dianne Chambers, and Jim Sosnoski for their feedback on previous drafts.

1. I know that some reader response theories argue that no readings of texts are misreadings. I believe that in terms of cultural texts, the consequences of not reading in a certain way can be severe. If, for instance, a white, middle-class teacher says to a student, “I encourage you to revise this paper,” the student may read this statement as an option, not a directive. See Delpit 1995.
2. Bakhtin (1981: 273) refers to these forces as “unifying” and “centralizing,” as opposed to “decentralizing, centrifugal forces.”
3. The teaching scenarios constitute what rhetorician Kenneth Burke (1945) terms a “representative anecdote.” In *A Grammar of Motives*, Burke describes a representative anecdote as “sufficiently demarcated in character to make analysis possible . . . yet sufficiently complex to defy simplistic description” (324). From a dramatic perspective, “the basic unit of action is the human body in purposive motion” (61). Similarly, I examine these scenarios as representative anecdotes in which bodies engage in purposeful activities.
4. These issues are important from a feminist perspective, given the work feminists have done in analyzing cultural influences on our bodies, particularly the pressure on women to fit cultural ideals of the female body. Susan Bordo (1993: 143) notes that female bodies, more so than male bodies, have historically been more vulnerable to cultural standards. “Perhaps,” Bordo writes, “this has something to do with the fact that women, besides *having* bodies, are also *associated* with the body, which has always been woman’s ‘sphere’ in family life, in mythology, in scientific, philosophical, and religious ideology.” Nancy Glazener writes in “Dialogic Subversion” (1989: 114), “Women . . . have an interest in integrating the body’s semantic and organic aspects in order to free themselves from *embodying* the body, symbolically, for their culture(s).” Not only do teachers, especially female teachers, need to reflect upon these issues, but

it would seem particularly important for those of us in composition studies to do so, as composition studies has a feminized cultural identity (see Miller 1991).

5. Even the phrase “body theory” may strike some readers as an oxymoron. Echoing the dilemma sociologist Bryan Turner (1996) has articulated, Terry Eagleton (1996: 70) writes, “Since I know where my left foot is at any particular moment without needing to use a compass, the body offers a mode of cognition more intimate and internal than a now much-scorned Enlightenment rationality. In this sense a *theory* of the body runs the risk of self-contradiction, recovering for the mind just what was meant to deflate it.”
6. Jefferson (1989) challenges Bakhtin’s body metaphor, for she believes it necessitates the activity of the author/self and the passivity of the hero/other. I maintain that Bakhtin’s dialogized heteroglossia could be applied to the body as well as the word. It is my contention that concepts developed later in Bakhtin’s career, specifically heteroglossia and dialogism, while philosophies linked to the word or utterance, are compatible with his earlier unit of analysis, the body.
7. All names have been changed to maintain confidentiality. This project was reviewed and granted exemption by the University of Illinois at Chicago Office for the Protection of Human Subjects under Protocol #H-98-1028. All quotations from interviews and discussions reported in this article are taken from transcripts from taped interviews and class sessions. Excerpts from students’ papers and e-mails are copied directly from the originals.
8. Hayles (1999: 201) stresses that neither inscription nor incorporation is an essentialization. That is, “just as incorporating practices are not necessarily more ‘natural’ than inscribing practices, so embodiment is not more essentialist than the body.” So while “all humans share embodiment, embodied experience is dispersed along a spectrum of possibilities.” Because “these possibilities . . . [depend] on the contexts of enactment, . . . no one position is more essential than any other.”
9. I find it hard to believe that Kimiko believes he presents his “best self” online, given his difficulties with English. Perhaps it’s that some students, however falsely, assume less of a power differential online. I do see a paradox here. These students feel “anonymous” online and more able to take the risk of propositioning me. Yet, they hope this online proposition will result in a real-life date.
10. I marked the grammatical error and refrained from deleting the commas in the first sentence. While Corrigan’s language play is in keeping with the postmodern character of his essay “The Making of the Boy: Meditations on What Grammar School Did With, To, and For My Body,” after reading this quotation, a colleague noted that grammar school did much with, to, and for Corrigan’s body, but did not seem to do much for his grammar.
11. For brevity’s sake, I am not dealing here with the corporeality of online communication. I address these issues in Kazan (forthcoming).

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