

Martha Nochimson

WRITING INSTRUCTION ACROSS THE CURRICULUM: TWO PROGRAMS

The days of discussion about whether composition is a *bonafide* college-level subject are gone. The days of agonizing about what techniques will best improve writing performance are fading too, and the latest question is whether the job must be taken on by the institution as a whole. Proponents of this approach argue that no matter what instructional methodology is employed, carryover beyond the writing courses will not occur unless the university is committed to co-operation with the writing program. At this point, attitudinal, financial, pedagogical, logistic and bureaucratic problems coalesce, as institutions work out ways to implement a program of writing across the curriculum.

There are faculty members who just don't like the idea of teaching writing, and what to do about them will become an issue when college-wide support for the writing program is sought. Faculty members committed to such support for the writing program will be skeptical about the logistics of helping students in large lecture classes with their writing. Further, some departments teach what English teachers regard as jargon; and some departments, for example, computer science, don't seem to have much use for the English language at all. What kind of accommodation can be made with departments with these differences? Finally, there is the question of faculty skills. How much does any given faculty member know about writing and how to teach it? Many are completely baffled when they read student papers. They cannot precisely name the faults nor tell their students how to revise; and they may demoralize their students by passing along their discouragement—"This is terrible," or perhaps even, "You don't belong in college." Confronted with poor student papers, a faculty member's optimism about helping students to write is likely to fade, even if the idea had once seemed promising.

Martha Nochimson is now the coordinator of the English program for Mercy College at Yorktown Heights.

The realist tells us that the goals of university-wide cooperation are admirable but will be hard to reach, that even if we can get money and administrative cooperation, and getting those is hard enough, we will not make any real impressions on anyone. Some institutions, nevertheless, are attempting to solve the problems of college-wide support for the writing program. Accounts of these efforts do not usually conclude with the protagonists living happily ever after, but they do include successes that will transfer to other institutions.

I will write of two attempts to encourage faculty to incorporate writing instruction into their courses. The first, at the College of New Rochelle (CNR), I know intimately as I helped to design it and worked in it. Funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the CNR project was born out of a wish that the work in the writing program carry over into all the courses in the college. We knew that many students who were writing clearly at the end of the writing courses were not taking this skill with them to their other classes, but were acting as if clarity in writing was important only in a writing course. The grant was intended to remedy this situation by giving the writing faculty a forum for informing the rest of the faculty about the writing program. This much was clear to us; unfortunately, however, while the project was clearly organized, we did not know what changes we might reasonably expect to be made in the way non-English instructors approach bad student writing.

The grant was designed to involve all members of the faculty over a period of two years. Four two-week workshops were projected, two to be held in January during the winter semester break and two to be held after the spring semester. The workshops were administered by a director and an assistant; they also involved a minimum of four other staff members—three discussion seminar leaders from the CNR writing program and one principal speaker, Blanche Skurnick, of the City College Writing Program. The principal speaker was responsible for each morning's lecture to all participants which culminated in a question and answer session. The discussion section leaders were responsible for the afternoon. After lunch, the participants met in small groups for extended discussion about the material presented in the morning and for projects relevant to the morning lecture.

There were twenty participants scheduled for each of the four workshops; the budget included stipends of \$500.00 for each participant, as well as substantial salaries for the discussion leaders, administrators and principal speaker. Funds were also provided for books, Xeroxing, secretarial aid, and lunch.

Each participant in the workshop received a schedule during the first meeting. The days were planned so that by the end of the two weeks the

workshop participants had had a short course in teaching writing. We began with a general lecture which presented the thesis of the workshop: Most teachers think of writing only as a product, but writing teachers, and any instructor interested in giving writing guidance to students, must be concerned with the process of writing and must be prepared to intervene in the process as well as to discuss the quality of the end product. It was a somewhat eclectic thesis as we were not excluding either product or process, but we did maintain that knowledge about the process of writing is important and relatively mysterious to teachers both in and out of the writing program.

For use in the afternoon discussion groups, we distributed student and professional essays. These provided material for examining both general and specific problems in student writing. The professional essays, taken from standard anthologies, were included for two reasons. First, we wanted to impress on the participants what kinds of materials were available for the students to read, what their models were. Second, we wanted to impress on the participants that if they expected writing of this caliber, or better, they were really holding students up to professional standards. Many of the participants realized that they did indeed expect their students to live up to the example of E.M. Forster's "My Wood."

Furthermore, when we examined the professional writing according to the standards that we asked of our students, even on the most elementary, truly basic level, some of the professional writing did not measure up. We looked at each essay to see whether it had a thesis statement or even a thesis, and some of them did not. One essay, "The Population Bomb and How to Defuse it," by Jean Libman Block, reprinted from *Good Housekeeping in Steps in Composition*, a widely-used writing text, is full of unsubstantiated generalizations. There is no clear thread of argumentation. In fact the article—I cannot in good conscience call it an essay—is a potpourri of cataloguing ineffectively the methods of population control, ranking them with very little thought or discussion, and indicating that if we don't employ them, disaster is imminent. There is no documentation for this claim. If a student ever presented such a whirligig of claims to a writing teacher, he would receive an F. But the writer of this article was paid for her work, and anthologized in a writing text, surely more for the interest of the subject than for the quality of writing.

This gave the faculty participants something to ponder. And they felt less inclined to look with scorn on their students in retrospect. "The Population Bomb" was not the only disappointing professional essay. Perhaps, our participants began to think, they had been expecting not only professional standards, but the highest professional standards.

The student essays were drawn from a pool accumulated by the CNR faculty. In the September preceding the first workshop, we put out a call for

faculty to xerox student papers and essays at our expense. They were cooperative, and we had samples from all the disciplines.

We used student essays on the first day to try to make workshop participants sensitive to the kinds of writing strengths that CNR students typically exhibit, as well as to their common problems. Distracted by awkward wording and poor spelling, instructors may fail to notice that a paper has a thesis statement, well-formed paragraphs, and an appropriate rhetorical strategy. We certainly did not presume to tell our participants that this sort of essay was well written. We wanted to discuss other distinctions so that participants' comments to their students would not be misleading. To call an ungraceful, but coherent paper "badly written," we pointed out, was too general a criticism to be useful. If the teacher could explicitly comment on the structural achievement of a coherent paper and distinguish the problems in it as stylistic and mechanical, the student would be in a better position to know what revisions were called for. This was another shock, and we needed to reiterate early and often that we did not mean that bad spelling was good writing, only that there were other considerations that could be named and were more important.

We also used the student essays to address the problem that faculty outside the writing program seemed reluctant, to say the least, to allow poor writing in a student paper to affect the grade. This, we told our faculty associates, undercuts the college's writing program and development of student writing ability. Colleagues told us that there was no sense in bothering the students about those details since so few of them know how to write and since the non-writing faculty could understand the papers and essays anyway. We insisted that there was no difference between clarity of form and content, and they chuckled at us, poor, deluded English types. But they *could* see that they did not understand the badly written student papers that we showed them and were reduced to interpreting what the student "must have meant." We used these moments to emphasize that lack of control in the writing obscured the content. Then why did they understand their own students? We said they didn't. We suggested that they appeared to understand their own students because they were immersed in the material they were reading and automatically inferred what a writer presumably "meant," without requiring sufficient documentation or coherent presentation. We pointed out that depending on the reader's active and accurate intuitions is one of the major pitfalls against which students are warned in writing classes. Teachers were surprised by the suggestion that they had unconsciously filled in the gaps left in student papers.

In addition to discussing teacher attitudes, we also discussed the teaching of grammar, usage, the selection and availability of writing texts, rules of organization, research, and modes of commenting on, or correcting a

student paper. The research unit included a discussion of plagiarism; the unit on usage included a section on jargon. For several of these units, the participants were asked to prepare at home some work to be discussed in the seminars.

Most of the material we presented is already familiar to writing teachers; but because some of the topics were presented in an unusual way or were received with special enthusiasm, I will mention them more specifically. The sentence combining exercises were the most fun; the jargon homework was the most fraught with danger; the plagiarism homework provoked the most thought.

The sentence-combining exercises, taken from William Strong's *Sentence Combining: A Composing Book* (NY: Random House, 1973), sparked off all those qualities that make people teachers: imagination, the rage for order, the urge to excel. Faculty members outdid themselves and tried to outdo each other in making the longest and best combinations. These exercises accomplished two purposes. First, of course, they made the faculty more conscious of grammar skills. Second, they gave the participants a sense of fun about grammar. However, since many of the faculty either were sure that they did not want to teach writing or did not know whether they wanted to, exactly how the benefits from these exercises would be channeled to the students was unclear.

The jargon homework required participants to bring in two passages from learned journals in their fields, one that they considered well written, and one that they believed contained jargon. In connection with this homework, participants read George Orwell's "Politics and the English Language." In preparing this unit of the workshop we were aware of the danger that jargon might be spotted in some favorite essay, causing friction and worse; but this did not happen.

The plagiarism exercises were designed by Dr. Barbara McManus, Chairman of the CNR Classics Department. (See Appendix A.) They required participants to examine several different paraphrases of a quotation and decide which were plagiarisms, to examine an example of plagiarism in professional writing, to practice paraphrasing, and to design a paraphrasing exercise using readings from their own disciplines. The faculty was generally impressed at how hard it is to paraphrase legitimately and were less inclined, as a result, to abominate plagiarisms that were the result of inexperience rather than dishonesty.

Several evaluation procedures were built into this project. The participants filled out questionnaires. Discussion leaders submitted reports at the end of each workshop. The directors wrote an interim and a final report. In addition, writing samples were taken from classes of all participants in the workshops who went on to teach writing.

Other institutions can replicate some of the benefits of the workshops. The participants' responses varied in style, but they were all impressed at what hard work it is to teach writing. This realization meant one tremendous and significant advance; it reduced the hostility other departments had felt toward the writing program. They had previously suspected that bad student writing was the result of incompetence and irresponsibility in the writing faculty.

The participants, in general, became aware of their own prejudices about writing. Some teachers began to see that it was prejudice that prevented them from seeing any value in a paper if the spelling was poor. Among these, some wanted to get past this kind of intense emphasis; others were not sure.

The participants were pleased to have learned the terminology of the writing program. Many had never heard terms like "thesis sentence" and "topic sentence." They felt that they were now in a position to name problems that they had simply experienced globally as "bad writing." They also believed that they now were better able to talk about grammar and felt gratified to have learned of several texts.

During the sessions, we discussed a number of ways that already busy instructors could integrate a follow-up on the college writing course into a junior course, in modern art, for example. Several of the solutions that we discussed seemed promising to workshop participants. One idea was for teachers to assign papers which explicitly recall the modes of organization in the basic writing course, such as comparison and contrast, definition, and classification, so that students recalling these modes of organization would then be prone to see their general usefulness. Another idea was to assign three short papers which build on each other. For example, in a course on modern art, one might assign a paper about a specific figure. The second paper assigned might be to contrast and compare the figure considered in the first paper with a second figure. The third might involve a classification project in which the first two figures were involved. This means that the student can incorporate responses to the two papers into the third, in likeness of the rewriting process. Cumulative papers seemed especially attractive to teachers with large classes who felt that their comments on written work were futile for they simply could not cope with requiring revisions of so many separate papers.

We who were running the workshop felt that we had gleaned information too. As we presented our material, we learned about style manuals and conventions of other disciplines, especially the sciences. We brought out into the open the places in which academic styles differed. Far from despairing, we agreed that now that we knew about the differences, we would be better equipped to help our students. We would be able to warn

biology students, for example, that what we were teaching did not apply in the particular situation which the biology department had outlined for us. They had their own style for citation of sources. We believed that, armed with this knowledge, we would increase our credibility with the students, as they would not find themselves reproved in other courses for doing what we writing instructors had told them to do.

Rapport between the faculty members and between faculty and the writing program was much improved by these workshops. Unfortunately, this change was much greater than the change in student writing. This was true, in great measure, not because the workshop itself was ineffectual, but because the goals of this project were fuzzy; the step after the workshop had not been delineated.

It was not clear whether teachers entering this workshop were to emerge from it to teach writing or simply to be more informed about the writing program. When faculty members were first approached with the idea of the workshops, some resisted, fearing that the administration would coerce them into teaching writing once they “knew how.” This was especially true of teachers in the humanities and foreign languages who had tenure and/or full-time contracts and whose enrollments had sharply dropped because of the stampede for vocationally geared courses. The administration had to guarantee that no faculty member would be coerced to fill the four course obligation with writing courses, regardless of circumstances. This guarantee dissipated the reluctance of some faculty to volunteer for the workshops.

The extent to which the lessons of the workshop became a part of teacher practice, then, was a matter of the faculty’s good will and adaptability. It is difficult to integrate new concepts into a course design; and like all of us, the CNR faculty works extremely hard without taking on new obligations. There were sporadic reports of actual implementation of the program’s suggestions, but that was all. Although the CNR faculty workshop taught the participants a great deal, what came out of it clearly did not reach the students undiluted. Certainly the administration was wise to promise not to make the workshop a means of “punishing” teachers for failing to subscribe the requisite students.

At Drew University, faculty participate in a series of workshops similar to those at CNR and then teach a freshman course in which they combine writing instruction with instruction in their own academic disciplines. A grant from the Mellon Foundation provides funds for this program. Over a three year period, all the Drew faculty will attend a three week summer workshop covering writing, speech, and guidance, the writing part taught by Drew’s Jacqueline Berke, author of *Twenty Questions for the Writer*. The faculty participants are paid \$1,200 for attending. Then, having completed

the workshop, the Drew faculty member is ready to be part of a university-wide writing program which faculty do not perceive to be punitive.

Briefly, Drew has organized its freshman year so that along with the regular English Department writing course, the student takes a freshman seminar, restricted to 14 students, taught by a faculty member who has participated in the workshop. The instructor also serves as the student's academic advisor. Students choose a seminar from a large list of seminar topics prepared by the participating faculty. The wide range of topics and interests permits almost all students to be placed either in their first or second choice of seminar.

These seminars are the courses that each instructor has always wanted to teach, but which he has not been able to offer—either because they lie outside his discipline, adopt a cross-disciplinary approach, or would not, in ordinary circumstances, be economically feasible. Thus, for the instructors, the seminars revive the good old days when electives did not depend on registration.

Teachers will not teach their seminars, however, indifferent to the writing of the students. All grammar and organizational errors lower the grade no matter how much detail is packed in, and there are about eight papers a semester. No student is exempted from the seminar, even though all students who score over 570 on the College Boards are exempted from the parallel English Department course.

The combination of the English Department course and the freshman seminar has provided many benefits for Drew. First, the advising system has improved tremendously, because the advisor and all his advisees meet weekly and establish a relationship that enables the advisor to give meaningful academic guidance. Second, faculty morale and *esprit de corps* is very high. As at CNR, barriers between departments are broken in the workshops. The faculty are also able to pursue teaching interests they could not have considered under the earlier system. Most spectacular and cheering, student writing has significantly improved. From comparing the writing samples of Drew students who took writing after the freshman seminar was instituted to student samples before the program, it is clear that there has been a significant change for the better. What is even more interesting is that students who were not exempt from the English Department parallel course and therefore took both the seminar and the writing program scored higher on some of the control tests than the students who came in with higher College Board scores and supposedly better skills and therefore placed out of the English Department course. The program clearly includes, from a faculty point of view, adequate financial compensation, rewards to the student, and intellectual excitement. From the student point of view the program results in better

advisement and better writing. There are of course some problems, but Drew seems to have benefitted in the essential areas of faculty attitude and the improvement in student writing.

New Rochelle and Drew, therefore, present models of ventures in writing across the curriculum. Both involve courage, foresight, imaginative planning, and funding. The latter is, of course, the component most difficult to replicate for other colleges and universities that would like to take something of value from these models.

We cannot underestimate the complexity of attempting writing across the curriculum without funding but, alternatively, I do not wish to suggest that without funding the attempt is ill-advised. Let us then consider two discrete questions, the likelihood of obtaining funds and what measures may be taken if funding is either too far in the future or unavailable.

If we are to take the warnings of George Orwell to heart, it would seem that the government ought to budget money for retraining writers in every institution in the country as a matter of national security. For now, however, we writing teachers must rely on sporadically available funds of foundations like Mellon and government institutions like NEH. Although one cannot predict never-fail formulas for tapping these funds, several points seem worth making.

First of all, the planning and writing of the proposal must be clear, detailed, and precise, including the administrative and teaching staff, their names and dossiers, if possible. The proposal should include a fully articulated budget and timetable demonstrating the percentage of the faculty to be retrained, and how the specified time is necessary for reaching this significant number. Evaluation procedures measuring such things as the response of faculty members to the program and the subsequent achievement of students must be spelled out. Finally, it is helpful to research the inclination of the funding source in advance, whether it is interested only in projects that have never been tried or interested in helping institutions, even if by tried and true methods.

We should not imagine that implementing writing across the curriculum can be approached equally well with and without funding, but we should not fail to attempt broader institutional involvement in any event. Because real education demands the ability to write, the stakes are too high not to.

Several possibilities for colleges and universities without special training grants come to mind. One or two day conferences paid for from faculty development funds may be possible to start the ball rolling. Follow up might be administered on the initiative of the faculty senate or equivalent body, or by the individual departments. This is to say, after a formal, but brief, workshop dedicated to discussing writing across the curriculum, the faculty senate might organize short term interdepartmental cooperation.

For example, during a particular semester the English Department and the History Department might coordinate a particular history class with a particular writing class. During the chosen semester, all assignments in the history class would be given to the writing teacher in advance and used pedagogically in the writing class. Possibly such arrangements might not be made by an all-college body, but by the individual departments themselves.

In such less comprehensive programs, the major task of the one or two day conference must be to create a climate that will foster active interest in interdepartmental cooperation for improving student writing. There is hardly time in one day to teach non-English faculty to discuss writing with their students. Perhaps most success is possible if the course projected by these one day conferences is one in which non-English faculty will not be required either to supervise student writing, or to change in any way their usual plans for the semester. Departments can cooperate with the writing program by making good writing a fundamental part of the course grade; and writing teachers can cooperate by discussing the mechanics and organization of papers assigned in other courses.

Alternatively, funding for a wider retraining like the workshops at the College of New Rochelle and Drew might come from already existing funds. Teachers might take a semester course in teaching writing as part of their semester work load in lieu of teaching one course. Still another idea for small colleges might be to set up a consortium to pool their faculty development funds for the purpose of mutual retraining. Large colleges may have access to special intra-college funds, or might consider asking the student government to help underwrite faculty retraining with some portion of the student activities budget.

The possibilities for involving an entire institution with teaching writing are many, but the problems are also numerous; we face error, not only in linguistic and intellectual disarray, but also in professional and financial turmoil. Big, daring measures seem to be in order. Let us, by all means, seek comprehensive, and therefore expensive, solutions to our problems. Nevertheless, if we lack the grand scale, let us continue to use the tools of the trade: imagination and intelligence. We can and we should involve the entire institution in what, after all, is our common goal: the creation of a literate, educated graduate.

APPENDIX : Plagiarism Exercises

1. Here is a passage from Walter Allen's *The English Novel* (New York: Dutton, 1954), p.223.

"*Wuthering Heights* is the most remarkable novel in English. It is perfect, and perfect in the rarest way: it is the complete bodying forth of an intensely individual apprehension of the nature of man and life. That is to say, the content is strange enough, indeed baffling enough, while the artistic expression of it is flawless."

Which of the following passages constitute plagiarism and why?

a. The most remarkable novel in English is *Wuthering Heights*. It brings forth an individual apprehension of the nature of man and life; therefore it is perfect in the rarest way. The artistic expression is flawless, but the content is strange, indeed baffling.

b. *Wuthering Heights* is a great English novel. It is perfect in the rarest way: it provides an individual apprehension of man's nature. The artistic expression is flawless, although the content is strange and baffling.¹

c. Walter Allen insists upon the extraordinary quality of *Wuthering Heights*. In this novel, he maintains, Emily Bronte makes an extremely personal comment on the human situation by employing an impeccable novelistic framework to present her strange and mysterious characters and plot¹.

¹Walter Allen, *The English Novel* (New York: Dutton, 1954), p. 223.

2. Analyze the ways in which the second quotation makes use of the first without acknowledgement. If you were Varma, how would you make use of Summers' main point without extensive direct quotation and without plagiarism?

a. "In by far the greatest number of their works it would be true to say that the protagonist is neither the plaintive and persecuted heroine, Elmira, Rosaline, Matilda; nor the handsome and gallant hero, Theodore, Constantine, Rosalvo; nor the desperate and murderous villain Montoni, Wolfran, Condemar; nor even the darkly scowling and mysterious monk, Father Heriome, Abbot Benneditto, Theodosius de Zulvin; but rather the remote and ruined castle with its antique courts, deserted chambers, pictured windows that exclude the light, haunted galleries amid whose mouldering gloom is heard the rustle of an unseen robe, a sigh, a hurried footfall where no mortal step should tread; the ancient manor, hidden away in the heart of a pathless forest, a home of memories of days long gone before when bright eyes glanced from the casement and balcony over the rich domain, the huge-

girthed oaks, the avenues and far-stretching vistas, the cool stream winding past the grassy lawns, but now tenanted only by a silver-headed retainer and his palsied dame; the huge fortress set high upon some spar of the Apenines, dark machicolated battlements and sullen towers which frown o'er the valleys below, a lair of masterless men, through whose dim corridors prowl armed bandits, whose halls ring with hideous revelry or anon are silent as the grave. . . ." —Montague Summers, *The Gothic Quest* (New York: Russell, 1938), pp. 191-192.

b. "The background of Walpole's story is a Gothic castle, singularly unenchanted, but capable of being invested with mysterious grandeur as later in the novels of Ann Radcliffe. The Castle has been called the true hero of the book, the hub around which all action gravitates. The remote castle, with its antique courts and ruined turrets, deserted and haunted chambers where hang age-old tapestries; its grated windows that exclude the light; its dark, eerie galleries amid whose mouldering gloom is heard the rustle of an unseen robe, a sigh, a hurried footfall where no mortal step should tread; its dark machicolated and sullen towers set high upon some precipice of the Apenines frowning upon the valleys below—it is the castle itself which is the focal point of Walpole's romance." —Devendra Varma, *The Gothic Flame* (London: Arthur Barker, 1957), p. 57.

3. If you were writing a paper upon a suitable topic, how would you make use of each of the following passages? Where would you quote and where paraphrase? What factual material could be used without footnoting? Practice reading each selection to abstract the main point made by the author; practice paraphrasing these points.

a. "It is true that, since the end of the Second World War, there have been a number of local wars. But it is also true that, during those 20 years, there has been no war between any of the three super-powers, no world war, and no war in which the atomic weapon has been used. The reason surely is that the significance of this invention has been recognized, and this has led the governments and the peoples, since then, to keep their warfare within bounds, even though it has not deterred them from going on playing the very dangerous game of making war within these limits. If war were man's normal condition, the normal sequel to the Second World War would have been for the United States and Russia to go to war with each other, and for China then to go to war with the survivor, if there was one.

Roman history gives us a longer view than our own generation gives. The Romans closed the doors of the temple of the god Janus when Rome was at peace, and those doors are recorded only once to have been closed (and then for only a year or two) before they were closed in the reign of Augustus. Thus

the pre-Augustan chapter of Roman history might seem to be evidence that war is the normal condition of man.

The next chapter, however, is evidence to the contrary. Augustus established peace throughout the Mediterranean world, and the Augustan peace was preserved for a quarter of a millennium. Within that period there were, of course, one or two short civil wars over the succession to the imperial throne; there were one or two minor wars with the Parthian Empire, which was Rome's only civilized nextdoor neighbor, and there was intermittent police action against the barbarians beyond the Roman Empire's frontiers. All the same, this was on the whole an age of peace for the western end of the Old World. The years 31 B.C.-235 A.D. stand out, in this respect, in sharp contrast to the preceding millennia. Those 265 years of peace prove that, after all, war is not the normal condition of man in that part of the world." — Arnold Toynbee, "War is Not the Normal Condition of Man," *Tradition and Dissent: A Rhetoric/Reader*, Florence Greenberg and Anne Heffley, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), pp. 476-477.

b. "What we really see in the modern film of serious intent is, almost always, a bedroom sequence worked into a plot in order to assure that the film will be able to compete commercially with films that include such sequences for purely sensational reasons. Such a sequence, when it concerns main characters, cannot be detached from the narrative, regardless of the degree of its relevance. If, for instance, a harassed filmmaker wanted to include such a sequence only for the commercial value his producer thought it would have, he could not dispose of it in the form of a digression. In other words, he cannot decide to spend five minutes or even three minutes with his main characters running about undressed and hope that as a deliberate and obvious digression it will not affect the rest of the film.

For the sake of comparison, consider the deliberate digressions that were implanted in the Marx Brothers films. Today, those obligatory scenes in which Harpo and Chico play their instruments are annoying flaws; the films stop dead for a few minutes while comedy and the plot are suspended for solo performances. We are bored, but the film does not irretrievably flounder, for the sequence, once past, is forgotten as the Brothers roll merrily through the rest of the film. If the sexual encounter could be handled the same way, it would create only a small artistic problem. However, the casual treatment of sex is improbable, since sex implies either the development of a passion or a calculated use of another person—and both alternatives incorporate meaningful human motivations. For every bedroom encounter, sequences leading up to and away from it must be made part of the film. In fact, a filmmaker cannot make a believable bedroom sequence irrelevant because it shapes our awareness of the characters; it sometimes tells us more about them

than is intended for the artistic integrity of the work. As a cliched attribute of modernism, the persistent use of sexuality in film after film results in a emphasis on characterization beyond every other aspect of the film—and an insistence that every film do the same thing (i.e., stress personality). Constructing a story so that it will contain a bedroom sequence narrowly restricts the film idea.” —Stanley Solomon, *The Film Idea* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1972) pp. 245-246.

c. “We are now in a position to spell out the essential fable of Natty’s celebrated friendship with Chingachgook, the “Big Serpent” (so called, as Natty never tires of explaining, after ‘a sartain serpent at the creation of the ‘arth that outwitted the first woman’). The American Adam knows intuitively how to avoid the error of his archetypal ancestor; he can only hope to retain possession of his American Eden if he makes a pact with the devil and they jointly exclude women from the virgin forest. ‘Where is the man to turn this beautiful place into. . . a garden of Eden for us?’ Judith Hutter demands of her sister Hetty. The harsh answer is given throughout the *Leatherstocking Tales*: the American Eden (to paraphrase Melville) is a Paradise for bachelors only. —Joel Porte, *The Romance in America* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), p. 28.