

Summer 7-6-2022

Master's Portfolio

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FINAL MASTER'S PORTFOLIO

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A Final Portfolio

Submitted to the English Department of Bowling Green

State University in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in the field of English

with a specialization in teaching

8 July 2022

Dr. Chad Duffy, Portfolio Advisor

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Dr. Chad Duffy

ENG 6910

5 July 2022

Analytical Narrative

I chose the *Candyman* paper because I have a personal and professional connection to its setting. As a teacher of students who lived in the Cabrini-Green neighborhood, my first-hand experiences allowed me to shed light on what the film got right about the transformation of the area and the reasons behind it. I was able to blend my experiences with historical information I discovered through researching to come to an understanding of what brought us to the point where the film picks up.

I chose the paper on paradigm shifts in the teaching of writing because it is important to my career as a teacher of writing. I have spent the last three decades teaching students to be successful writers, in spite of constant changes in pedagogical theories in the teaching of writing. Over the years I have found that we are most productive when we allow ourselves, and our students, to try new ideas, but we need to be careful not to throw the baby out with the bath water. When we seek to jettison a method of teaching that is not working, it does not mean we have to throw out every aspect of it. We need to get rid of old ways that are not working, while keeping what is working.

Both topics were important to my goals in pursuing a master's degree in English with a specialization in teaching. They both helped increase my understanding of changes in the way we understand the world, how it is important to change and evolve, but how it is also important

to make sure that in our pursuit of the transcendent we trust ourselves not abandon that which is productive.

The *Candyman* paper originated from Dr. Piya Lapinski's graduate seminar, Victorian Monsters in Literature and Film. Early in the course, we analyzed monstrosity and traced it from nineteenth-century British and French novels through twentieth-century films. Michel Foucault describes monstrosity as "the natural manifestation of the unnatural brought with it an indication of criminality." For my discussion board post the week we watched *Candyman*, I wrote a personal narrative about my experience teaching in Chicago's Cabrini-Green neighborhood in the 1990s, when the high-rise projects still stood, how the buildings were monsters, and how they got that way because of the monster of racism. The razing of the buildings and the removal of nearly 15,000 people was the continued result of that monster's wrath. Dr. Lapinski suggested I write my final paper on the film and also suggested I submit it to an upcoming conference on the film.

The paper on paradigm shifts in the teaching of writing originated in Dr. Ethan Jordan's course, Teaching of Writing. Throughout the semester, we read texts on various writing pedagogies. One of the ideas that continually came up in the readings was theorists wanting to shift paradigms in the teaching of writing, some so dramatically that they would divert students away from ever gaining the basic tools for writing. While working toward transcendent ways of teaching writing is good, many of these theorists seemed to want to do away with the old ways, even if they were effective methods. My paper addresses how we can transcend the way we teach without throwing out the old ways that work.

My biggest area for revision was cohesiveness. For both papers, I went back and extensively corrected dangling/dropped quotes, eliminated excessively quoted material, and

provided better transitions between paragraphs. I also improved the clarity in both papers by making sure the reader would be aware of my purpose, and also by carefully rereading the paper several times and revising it to make each statement clearer. Also, for both papers, I recalibrated the wording and information provided to adjust for a more general audience, rather than the people in the respective classes who needed less context.

The experience of creating, researching, and revising the work has increased my knowledge and understanding of the topics I explored and also of the writing process. Going through this process has helped me grow as a scholar, as I have developed new ways of viewing and understanding these topics. It has also helped me grow as a teacher, as it has reaffirmed an appreciation for my students' struggles with the process of researching and writing.

Both papers serve as evidence of substantive research. The Candyman paper cites several academics in film and literature, as well as many sources to substantiate the sociopolitical assertions the paper makes. The paradigm shifts paper cites the work of several pedagogical theorists. The paradigm shifts paper is a pedagogy-based project which covers important information from scholars in writing pedagogy and valuable ideas that I use in my teaching of writing.

Completing these projects and the MA program will help me in my current and future career as a high school English teacher. I have a new depth of understanding of literary theories, methods for teaching writing and literature, and also have confirmed the value of theories I have previously held.

In the teaching of writing, my knowledge base has grown in many ways. One example is the value of teaching students to produce writing in varied genres and modalities, while still providing students with foundational skills to produce their work. In the teaching of literature, I

have come to realize that literature genres that I previously did not take seriously, such as graphic novels and video games that tell a story, are valuable forms of literature to teach to students.

In conclusion, completing the master's program at Bowling Green State University has transformed me and elevated me to a new level of knowledge and understanding in my area of concentration. It has made me more cognitively capable as an individual and has helped me become more knowledgeable and better equipped to help my students as an instructor.

Jennifer Cousino

Dr. Piya Lapinski

ENG 6800 Victorian Monsters Lit & Film

5 July 2022

Racism as the Monster in *Candyman*

African American artist William Walker painted his famous mural *All of Mankind (Why Were They Martyred?)* on the Northside Stranger's Home Missionary Baptist Church in the Cabrini-Green neighborhood of Chicago in 1972. The painting, a civil rights era relic bearing names of people whose lives were sacrificed, including Jesus, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Anne Frank, Emmett Till, Fred Hampton, and Medgar Evers, was "whitewashed" in 2015, following the removal of nearly 15,000 residents and the demolishing of twenty-three high-rise buildings four years earlier (Cancino). In Nia DaCosta and Jordan Peele's 2021 film, *Candyman*, the main character and artist Anthony McCoy holds a picture of the mural while he's standing in front of the whitewashed church. The old church is juxtaposed with a billboard advertising luxury housing and the construction of new condominiums in the background. In the film, it is inside this same church where the gaping Candyman mouth is painted around a door, similar to the painting around a doorway of the council maisonette in "The Forbidden," Clive Barker's 1988 story that inspired the first *Candyman* film, released in 1992, which features the gaping mouth painted around a bathroom mirror cutout. In each, these serve as a portal to ensuing horror. This paper will explore the racial othering of African American people that led to that horror in the 2021 film.

The Monster of Racism

Michel Foucault describes monstrosity as “the natural manifestation of the unnatural brought with it an indication of criminality” (81). Racism has been a monster for centuries in America since the first human-trafficked people from western Africa arrived in St. Augustine in 1565 and Jamestown, Virginia in 1619 (Waxman). James Baldwin offers these words for racism’s monstrosity: “The hatred is not equal on both sides; for it does not have the same roots.... Black men do not have the same reason to hate white men as white men have to hate blacks. The root of the white man's hatred is terror, a bottomless and nameless terror, which focuses on the black, surfacing, and concentrating on this dread figure, an entity which lives only in his mind” (60). The racial power structures that have existed in the United States have given rise to the need for massive housing solutions like those that Cabrini-Green was intended to be. Racism and white supremacy created the monster of poverty for many people of color in America, and thereby violence and mass incarceration, by redlining neighborhoods, denying loans for houses, denying jobs, in addition to more direct forms of racial violence and trauma such as police shootings and other forms of police brutality. Racial segregation in schools was not abolished until *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, twelve years after the first Cabrini-Green building was completed. The US Supreme Court decision expressed awareness that the “intangible considerations” have affected African American people psychologically “in a way unlikely to ever be undone” (“Brown”).

The same racial inequality that led to the existence of this type of housing also led to its destruction. In the 1920s, inspired by the garden city movement, Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier designed a new urban planning concept that included high-density high-rise buildings surrounded by green space (Kashef 9-10). Later in the twentieth century, public housing

throughout the world would be based on this model. What seemed like a solution to the housing needs of the poor and working-class, instead became a monster. “These buildings were not just seen as ugly or poorly constructed; they were often viewed as actively hurting the city and its residents” (Field 121). The Cabrini-Green complex became a stunning example of this housing failure.

The first *Candyman* film, released in 1992, was inspired by a murder that happened in 1987 when an attacker entered Ruthie Mae McCoy’s apartment through the cut-out for the bathroom mirror in the wall of an adjacent vacant apartment in another of Chicago’s high-rise projects. The high-rise buildings were so monstrous, not only were they part of a mechanism to cut groups of people off from the rest of society, but they also produced dangerous situations such as sniper shootings that killed two police officers and a seven-year-old boy, the deaths of people jumping or being pushed down elevator shafts, into trash chutes, and out of windows, and the rape of a nine-year-old girl in a stairwell, left on a snow-piled landing on the seventh floor (Bogira). This monstrosity can be seen in the 2021 *Candyman* film with Brianna’s father’s suicide from a window in a high-rise apartment.

The shadow puppet theater in the film provides a glimpse into monstrous violent acts of racism, some fictional and some real, such as the dragging death of James Byrd, Jr., behind a truck in Texas and the execution of 14-year-old George Stinney, Jr., the youngest person ever to be executed in the United States, whose murder conviction was posthumously overturned in 2004 when it was determined he did not receive a fair trial. Scenes such as this are too horrifying, even for a horror film. Portraying the stories with silhouetted puppets provides enough shock but takes the sting out of them while still allowing viewers to sling back popcorn and enjoy the film. The same is true for the real violence that took place in high-rise housing

projects across the city. Steve Bogira's *Chicago Reader Article* about the true story of the murder of Ruthie Mae McCoy, which inspired the original *Candyman* film, is a much more horrifying and traumatizing read than the films and the story that inspired them. Bogira's story points to the high-rise buildings as monsters. Ms. McCoy suffered from mental illness, which included paranoia. She was receiving treatment and was reportedly doing better. Her existing paranoia was fueled by the high-rise building where she lived in Chicago's Abbott Homes. Bogira gives details from an interview with a janitor who worked in her building:

The mode of entry didn't startle residents of the high rises; Abbott intruders have been breaking into their apartments through medicine cabinets for at least a year. Even the dullest youth here knows you can slither from one apartment to the adjacent one through the pipe chase, about two-and-a-half feet across, between the cabinets. The cabinets themselves, secured by only six nails, are no obstacle. In some areas of the building you can even climb vertically in the pipe chase to an apartment above or below the one you start in. "It's the way to go from one apartment to the next even if you're not killing nobody," the Janitor says. (Bogira)

Ms. McCoy's daughter reported that her mother's apartment had been broken into a year before her murder. Those intruders also came in through the bathroom mirror's cut-out, part of a spate of bathroom mirror burglaries. A neighbor of Ms. McCoy was watching television one evening when two teenagers ran from her bathroom and out her front door. They had climbed through the space in the pipe chase and pushed out her mirrored medicine cabinet. "For several months, (she) tied a rope to the bathroom door at bedtime, pulled the door shut, and tied the other end to her kids' bunk bed. She put out a pail of water for her kids to use as a nighttime toilet. Other Abbott residents position furniture in front of their bathroom doors before going to bed"

(Bogira). The monstrosity of this high-rise building inspired the first *Candyman* film, which was ultimately set in Cabrini-Green because of its visibility and notoriety.

In addition to the buildings, othering as monstrous is a thread that starts in Barker's story and continues throughout the films. In the story, the monster is the public housing complex, and also othering, but the "other" is the poor. Racism, however, should be a monster in the story, but it is not. People of African and West Indian descent lived in Liverpool's council housing at the time the story was set. In fact, they would have been more likely to live in council housing in the dilapidated condition of the one in the story. The United Kingdom's Commission for Racial Equality published a report in 1989 showing that people of color were more likely to be assigned a dwelling that was in poor condition than their white counterparts (Commission 35). Furthermore, the Brixton and Toxteth Riots took place in Liverpool in 1981, the same decade in which "The Forbidden" was published, which protested "Sus Laws" under Margaret Thatcher. These laws permitted police to detain young black men merely on "suspicion" of a crime with no evidence (Connell). Despite this fact, all of Barker's characters in the story are white. Council resident Anne Marie has blonde hair. Her son's hair is described as downy. The painting of Candyman has his skin the color of buttermilk and Candyman himself is described as a "waxy yellow" with "jaundiced cheeks" (5-21). Toni Morrison comments on American writers who exclude black characters from their stories in a nation in which black people are a part of the tapestry: "To enforce its invisibility through silence is to allow the black body a shadowless participation in the dominant cultural body" (14). The same can be said for English writers, as England has also been home to black people for many centuries. This failure is corrected in the 1992 film, directed by Bernard Rose, but the story is told through a white lens. The film was a

reflection of its time with an integrated cast, but still catering to white audiences with a white hero/martyr in Helen Lyle.

Fear of miscegenation, which is a strong theme in the 1992 film, is a product of racism and a spawn of that monster. We find out through flashbacks that the supernatural Candyman is an embodiment of Daniel Robataille, a fictional painter from the nineteenth century who fell in love with one of his female subjects and was tortured and killed for his “transgression.” Comedian Trevor Noah, who was born in South Africa under apartheid when mixing of races in that country was against the law, explains in his memoir, *Born a Crime*, why racists fear miscegenation: “In any society built on institutionalized racism, race-mixing doesn’t merely challenge the system as unjust, it reveals the system as unsustainable and incoherent” (Noah 21). The 1992 *Candyman* film plays into the ethos of the time and those fears. “The ghostly Candyman... puts the death of a child on the hands of a white woman in both a mirror image of his own gruesome end (since the blood that has soaked Helen’s sweater when she wakes up only covers her stomach, an apparent callback to the fact that Candyman was murdered for impregnating a white woman) and in a resurrection of that very event at the site upon which his death occurred” (Garrett 94-95). Candyman’s “crime” of miscegenation and the horrific punishment meted out by racist whites over a century ago haunts the film’s characters.

Theorist of gothic literature Diane Hoeveler comments on miscegenation in the 1992 film: “I would claim that both Candyman films suggest that the dominant culture has a strong investment in a racial hierarchy, and in asserting the supremacy of Whiteness, the dominance of White masculinity, and that both of them play with the tropes used much earlier in *Birth of a Nation* or *King Kong*: the ritual sacrifice of a virgin to a black potent male, the ‘brutal Black buck’” (1-2). This notion is further supported by Tananarive Due, professor of Afrofuturism and

black horror at UCLA: “Really what was fueling a lot of the fear around (Candyman) was fear of black masculinity, black men, fear of the urban jungle,” (“Candyman”). Helen Lyle teeters between being the victim and the heroine as the film ascends toward its final climax. She gives her life to save the boy, Anthony, whose mother’s life she has turned upside down. In spite of all the damage she has done, the film ends with her as the martyr and savior.

In the 2021 film, Anthony McCoy is the main character. He is the victim, but also the hero who ultimately triumphs over the lynch mob police, who becomes eternal as he transforms into Candyman. However, his girlfriend, Brianna Cartwright, was a heroine-martyr. She jeopardizes her own safety by summoning Candyman to avenge Anthony’s death. Horror writer Dani Bethea explains that so often the “horror character or caricature that Black Women are constantly composed to be are hyper-sexualized, life-draining succubi archetypes” (Bethea). Instead, throughout most of the film, Brianna plays the sometimes annoyed, but mostly supportive, girlfriend. It is possible that she heroically sacrifices herself to try to save Anthony, the same way the white savior, Helen, from the 1992 film sacrifices herself to save him as a baby. Brianna’s fate is ambiguous, as she is still handcuffed when more police cars arrive and the ending credits begin to roll.

Anthony in the 2021 *Candyman* absorbs the racial trauma many who came before him have endured, which perhaps creates the monster into which he transforms. Co-director Jordan Peele explains: “The very question of this eternal dance between monster and victim that is the racial history of this country is at the center of this movie. There’s a perpetualness to the story of racial horror. It doesn’t go away. It changes shape, and it changes form, and it’s elusive, and it’s sneaky. Candyman is an eternal figure. This monster has been swept under the carpet for so long” (“Candyman”).

The 2021 *Candyman* shifts racially from the 1992 film, with African Americans as upper-middle-class gentrifiers rather than whites in that role. While this might signify an attempt to paint twenty-first-century America as post-racial, the creators carefully remind us throughout the film that America is not post-racial. Decades earlier, *The Cosby Show*, which featured a wealthy black family headed by Claire and Cliff Huxtable, was the highest-rated television series for four straight years. The show received a lot of criticism for its implication that America was post-racial when African-Americans were still suffering a great amount of systemic oppression (Budd and Clay). Contrasted with Brianna and Anthony cast as black gentrifiers with advanced degrees in an expensive apartment amid a backdrop of existent poverty and white gentrification, the creators of the film make it their mission to illustrate that America is not post-racial. Brianna and Anthony each earned their upward mobility after coming from poverty, unlike Claire and Cliff Huxtable who each come from upper-middle-class families. The makers of *The Cosby Show* intentionally avoided issues of race in order to maintain its high ratings (Budd and Clay). *Candyman* tackles the issue head-on by placing Brianna and Anthony in a horrifying situation with police violence against African-American people, like we see played out numerous times in real life each year in the present age. The evidence of this is staggering: Over 200 African-Americans were killed by police each year from 2017 to 2020, at a rate of 38 deaths per million people from 2015 to 2022, contrasted by 15 deaths per million for whites during the same time span (Fallis and Rindler).

Anthony talks about the monster that Cabrini-Green had become and the subsequent removal of its residents and gentrification of the area. Brianna responds thus: “White people built the ghetto and then erased it when they realized they built the ghetto” (*Candyman*). Director Nia DaCosta explains, “Gentrification had to be part of the tale because that’s what’s been happening

in the neighborhood. I kind of looked at it as a force that we're all swept up in, a force that is definitely a form of violence in particular" ("Candyman"). The monster of racism is what caused a place like Cabrini-Green to exist. This same monster is what caused it to be destroyed.

Race is a continual issue for Anthony in the 2021 film. For example, the art dealer, Clive, pressures him to produce new and different work: "Like, dig into that history of yours, dude." Anthony replies, "I'm thinking about doing something about the projects and about how white supremacy, how it creates these spaces of rampant neglect for communities of color, in particular Black communities." He says he will center his art on Bronzeville, where he was raised. Clive says, "South Side is kind of played." Anthony chooses Cabrini-Green. We find out later that Anthony's mother kept from him that he was born in Cabrini-Green, perhaps an allegory for the thousands of Cabrini-Green residents who were separated from relatives and close friends after the buildings were torn down.

When Anthony is in the courtyard of the row houses near the beginning of the film, where he first meets William Burke, a police siren whoops and then drives away. Burke says, "They'd almost never come around here back in the day unless it was to take somebody in.... Now they can't seem to stay away. At night, they'd post up where the last of us still live.... Keeping us safe, (pause) or keeping us in" (*Candyman*). The "us" Burke refers to is African-American people. This is one of the early indications that racism is a monster in the film.

There are real, historically recorded stories of horror in Chicago, such as the lynch mob style drowning murder of black youth Eugene Williams that sparked the 1919 Chicago race riots, which left 23 blacks and 15 whites dead (Jones). After meeting Burke, Anthony asks, "What is he?" Burke replies, "Candyman ain't a *he*. Candyman's the whole damn hive." He then goes on to list the "hive" of victims of white supremacy: Samuel Evans and Daniel Robitaille, who were

fictional, and William Bell, a young man who was lynched by a mob of white men in Chicago on suspicion of attacking two white women. The art critic, after viewing Anthony's art pieces inspired by his visit to Cabrini-Green with depictions of historical victims of lynch mobs, such as Emmett Till, dismisses the work as "knee-jerk" and trite. The searing pain Anthony stoically endures, is perhaps part of the cause of the madness he descends into as the film progresses.

The effects of racism and unbridled capitalism have rendered many neighborhoods in Chicago impoverished, cut off, and forgotten. Poverty and disenfranchisement stretch on for miles. These places aren't noticed like Cabrini-Green was because they aren't right next to the wealthiest part of Chicago. Chicago is like a lot of big American cities, with extreme wealth existing parallel to abject poverty. In huge swaths of poor neighborhoods, people live an almost third-world existence, cut off from opportunities. The wealthy want to hold onto the power that makes them wealthy.

In the two years after the last high-rise building came down in 2011, there were over 400 arrests for trespassing in the neighborhood still known as Cabrini-Green. Many of the arrests were former residents coming to visit with family members or friends who still live there. Alderman Walter Burnett, who was heavily involved in the redevelopment in the 1990s and who grew up in Cabrini-Green, says the new affluent neighbors are the ones who are unhappy about the guests. He has to keep them happy if there is any hope of preserving what public housing still remains. "Standing in the row houses, it feels like they're being swallowed up by the high-end real estate around them. They are the only part of the old Cabrini-Green community that hasn't been knocked down" (Caputo). Post-colonial theorist Frantz Fanon refers to this idea of creating spaces cut off from the people who once lived there by colonizers in *The Wretched of the Earth*. He writes, "The town belonging to the colonized people...is a place of ill fame, peopled by men

of evil repute.... It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other.... The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire” (51).

Cabrini-Green was this “town,” a space cut off and starved. After its destruction, and recolonization by wealthy, mostly white residents, this space was cut off from its former, mostly black residents.

The land Cabrini-Green was situated on had become some of the most valuable real estate in Chicago due to its proximity to the Gold Coast, home to some of the nation’s wealthiest people. A stone’s throw from the Magnificent Mile, there was a clear view of downtown skyscrapers, including the Willis Tower and the Hancock Building, from the complex. “By the time of *Candyman* (1992), Chicago was home not only to three of the country’s 12 richest communities but also, amazingly, to 10 of the country’s 16 poorest census tracts, all of them including large public housing complexes” (Austen). The Lincoln Park neighborhood to the north had become gentrified a decade earlier, and the Wicker Park neighborhood to the west was in the process of gentrification. Sandwiched in between was Cabrini-Green and its approximately 15,000 residents, who, while poor, had put down roots there. They worked at nearby jobs, had friends and relatives as neighbors, and went to churches and schools in the area.

Cabrini-Green: A Close Read

This section is interspersed with my personal narrative to help the reader understand what the Cabrini-Green neighborhood was really like in the years prior to its destruction. I taught English at Near North Career Metro Magnet High School. The school, now torn down, was situated on Larrabee Street, which was an east-west divide at that time, between Chicago’s wealthiest and Chicago’s poorest, and between white and black. In my first year there,

mixed-income townhouses were under construction on the other side of the street, the first phase of the “rebuilding” of Cabrini-Green. On the other side of the school were Cabrini-Green’s high rises, some of which were already being emptied and prepared for demolition. Its transformation was not really like what you typically see with gentrification, as was alluded to in the film by Brianna, Anthony, and the art critic, with artists coming first and then people with money coming in and fixing up dilapidated buildings to live in one by one. Cabrini-Green’s transformation was a full-scale removal of people and bulldozing of buildings. James Baldwin spoke in 1963 about such removal: “(U)rban renewal... It means Negro removal.... These are Negro boys and girls who at 16 and 17 don't believe the country means anything that it says and don't feel they have any place here” (“Conversation”). While gentrification played a role, the demolition and bulldozing of the Cabrin-Green buildings and the removal of people was not unlike the removal that has occurred throughout North America.

Africville, a black community settled in the late 1700s in Canada’s Halifax, Nova Scotia, was leveled in 1970, after the removal of all its residents. This close-knit community was poor, but the residents were self-sufficient and did not receive welfare assistance. Sunday Miller, former Executive Director of the Africville Heritage and Trust, said about the residents, “When they took them off this land and forced them to be a ward of the government, which is what happened for those who went into social housing, you took their dignity from them” (“Africville”).

In Detroit, The Black Bottom, named for its dark rich marsh soils along the Detroit River (Binelli 20), was a vibrant neighborhood from the 1920s to the 1940s, settled by African-American people arriving from the south during the Great Migration. The neighborhood was host to numerous jazz and R & B musicians, such as Ella Fitzgerald, Cab Calloway, and

Billie Holiday. The 1920s jazz dance known as the Black Bottom got its name there. Its black residents were of varying economic circumstances. The residents were forced out so the area could be leveled to make way for a highway. Evidence in the form of photographs of every house, much like Google Street View, shows that the nearly 2000 homes were mostly in decent shape, not dilapidated, as the government reported them to be. The photographs were archived and organized for an exhibit at the Detroit Public Library in 2019 (Hodges).

Many of the residents of Cabrini-Green were the descendants of African-Americans who also came north with their dreams during the Great Migration. They were attracted by jobs in food production, manufacturing, and the steel industry. During the second half of the century, nearly all of these industries had left the city, leaving those dreamers in poverty (Bennett and Reed 202).

The colonization of the hegemonic whites by removal of established black neighborhoods has a feel not unlike the Indian removal of the nineteenth century. The protracted process by which the Cabrini-Green residents were removed was actually a lot like the process of Indian removal in the nineteenth century. When Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which prompted the removal of Indians from the fertile lands of Georgia to the wastelands of Oklahoma, or Trail of Tears, he was asked why he didn't just kill them as he had done before. He cited concern of uprising and also that there were other Americans at this point who didn't share the notion that all Indians should be dead (Steinberg 216). Both histories, that of the Indigenous people of America and of the Black residents of Cabrini-Green and other Black settlements, are riddled with broken promises, and both removals were cleverly disguised as something other than what they were to prevent backlash. The 2021 *Candyman* film, reminds us that this imperial colonization continues, especially in the final scenes when the white police

officers behave much like the slave patrols of the nineteenth century and the post-slavery lynch mobs with the white police officers representing, or perhaps working for, the colonizers.

Part of the false promise of the Cabrini-Green removal was that its residents would be able to move into mixed-income housing, on which construction had started in 1997. Mixed-income housing was supposed to be the answer to high-concentration low-income housing. However, it ignores the elephant in the living room--the unbalanced power structure created by racism and capitalism. It was obvious there were not enough units for the displaced families of multiple high-rise buildings in the new townhouses, so city leaders promised to provide scattered-site housing for Cabrini-Green's residents throughout the city. However, the residents were nervous that when they lost their homes, they would be placed somewhere far from there, such as in the outskirts or suburbs, away from their extended family, friends, jobs, churches, and other familiar places, or end up homeless. Many of them joined together to fight the city leaders and the Chicago Housing Authority for their homes. Our school was often a meeting place where large numbers of residents met frequently with city leaders, such as Mayor Richard Daley and Alderman Walter Burnett.

Cabrini-Green had a reputation as being the scariest place to find yourself in, yet it was not the only high-rise housing development in Chicago, nor was it the largest or most dangerous. Other large high-rise complexes included Rockwell Gardens, Henry Horner Homes, The Ickes, Ida B. Wells, Stateway Gardens, and Abbot Homes, where Ruthie Mae McCoy was murdered in 1987. The largest was Robert Taylor Homes in Bronzeville, which interestingly gets a mention in the film when Anthony says he is from there. Cabrini-Green's location just north and west of downtown had more to do with its notoriety.

Ben Austen, whose book *High Risers: Cabrini-Green and the Fate of American Public Housing* provided Nia DaCosta information for her 2021 *Candyman*, writes,

Cabrini-Green was both an actual place with an array of serious problems, and a nightmare vision of fear and prejudice. A horror movie is often about what isn't seen; it requires menacing visions to fill in the shadows of the unknown. The real Cabrini-Green had plenty of violent crime, but it was also home to thousands of families who had formed elaborate support networks and lived everyday lives. The fictional Cabrini-Green, in which people believed in a murderous, hook-handed spirit, was the pure creation of that fear" (Austen).

My students in Cabrini-Green talked about Candyman all the time, often challenging each other to say his name five times in front of a mirror. Folklorist Jan Brunvand characterizes the urban legend as "...a unique unselfconscious reflection of major concerns of individuals in the society in which the legends circulate," (qtd. in Towlson 35). I think the idea of an urban legend, which they knew wasn't real, was easier to focus on the actual horrors, which were real, as the fictional Helen Lyle suggests in her notes that Anthony revisits in the 2021 film. "Just as urban legends are based on the real fears of those who believe in them, so are certain urban locations able to embody fear," (qtd. in Austen).

Among the many fears residents had in Cabrini-Green was gun violence between gangs. There would be times that the gang wars got so bad that I would get calls around mid-morning from parents requesting their child be sent home because "they started shooting," and they wanted them home before it got worse later in the day. The young people and their parents in Cabrini-Green were perpetually in need of a real and imaginary escape from their surroundings.

There was a strong sense of community, but it was often overshadowed by the desperation and crime that also existed there.

The residents called the buildings the “Row houses,” the “Reds,” the “Whites,” and the “Greens.” The two- and three-story row houses were the oldest, built in 1942 and named for Frances Cabrini, the only American to be sainted. Over the next two decades, CHA added the “Reds,” high-rises made of red bricks, and the “Whites,” high-rises made of white bricks. The “Greens” were high-rises made of white brick that made up the William Green Homes extension, added in 1962. The red brick buildings were the older of the two types of high-rises, yet the newer white brick buildings were of much poorer quality (Austen 7-43).

I tutored students in their homes who weren’t able to come to school due to pregnancy or long-term illness. Going into the white brick buildings was a scary experience, partly because of the shoddy construction. The first time I went into a high-rise, I was worried I would be hassled by the residents like Helen and Bernadette in the first *Candyman* because of being white and an obvious outsider. There were people “posted up” at the entrance, but they didn’t say a word to me, in contrast to the white construction workers building the mixed-income housing across from my school, who cat-called me each morning as I walked from the parking lot into my school building for work.

The scariest part to me was the buildings themselves. They had two elevators, each of which only went to the odd or even-numbered floors. Sometimes the elevators didn’t work for months or years. If you were lucky, one of the two was working, so at most you would have to walk up one level. If not, you were walking up as many as 19 flights of stairs. There were no hallways, but instead concrete balconies with floor-to-ceiling chain-link fencing on the outside. When I got to the balcony on an upper floor, I swear I could feel the building sway due to its

poor construction. Once inside, the apartment, which had cinder block walls and four rooms, was clean, neat, and tastefully, although modestly, decorated, much like Anne Marie's apartment in the 1992 *Candyman*.

I also had a student who lived in a row house apartment. This apartment had two stories, with a kitchen and main room on the first floor and a bathroom and bedrooms on the second. Most of my students who lived in the row houses lived with their grandparents. The waiting list for these apartments was long because it was the most desirable housing in Cabrini-Green. If you were lucky enough to be in a row house apartment, you hung on to it. That's why so many of the row house residents were third-generation. When the 2021 film was released, the 240 row houses were all that remained of the Cabrini-Green complex.

Cut Off and Cut Out

There has been research indicating that a high concentration of poverty doesn't cause poverty problems. Poverty in sparsely populated Appalachia is evidence. "Alas, urbanists have fallen into the trap... of positing the reified "city" or aspects of urban ecology as the cause of "urban ills," rather than a political economy that engenders deep and persistent inequalities. And before we dynamite housing projects, obliterating the homes of 100,000 families, shouldn't there be convincing evidence that deconcentration will have the transformative effects that are presumed?" (Steinberg 219). Efforts to reduce the concentration of poverty by providing Section 8 vouchers has led to a concentration of poverty in other neighborhoods and "(n)or do the suburbs provide the magic formula.... '(M)any minority families that moved to the suburbs in the 1990s, even if they became homeowners, did not escape the pattern that contains poverty, school failure, and job isolation in particular geographic areas'" (qtd. in Steinberg 221). This is

in addition to being cut off from the “village” of extended family members and friends who provided a support system, looking out for their safety, providing child care, and offering socialization.

One former resident described witnessing Cabrini’s demolition, saying, “It was a city within a city. That’s what we called it. There were drug dealers, gangbangers, but it was mostly a family. Generations of families grew up here” (Field 207). Most of the people there were decent people. One of the greatest tragedies about Cabrini-Green, and about race in America, is the failure to see individuals rather than condemn an entire race because of the actions of a few.

The harm that was done to nearly 15,000 people, their families, and their community, displaced from their homes and kept away from the spaces they once resided in, may resonate for years to come. Unbalanced racial power structures have continued to be a catalyst for othering and for creating monsters in the oppressors as well as the oppressed. The *Candyman* films, and the story that inspired them, remind us that the specter of discrimination, in its many forms, still haunts us.

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5 July 2022

Paradigm Shifts in the Teaching of Writing: Developing New Methods for Success While
Keeping What Works

In the 1970s, painters were told to abandon the rules of painting--just paint what feels right. The problem that ensued was painters trying to get something on a canvas without even knowing how to mix paint. They knew what was in their head, but were rendered incapable of getting it down on the canvas as they envisioned it because they had never been taught the techniques of painting. I think what painting instructors really wanted their students to do was to transcend their current knowledge and create a new movement in art by shifting the existing paradigms. The unfortunate downside was that so many would-be artists lost out on the opportunity to gain essential skills to be able to produce the paintings that would be a part of this movement.

Sometimes when we get excited about new ways of teaching and learning, our knee-jerk reaction is to reject the old way. It is easy to say, "This new way is working so great, so we must get rid of anything that reeks of the old way." What we need to do, instead, is to sort out what was working in the old way and preserve it while letting go of the things that didn't work. Paradigm shifts are great, but we need to make sure that in our passion for these new paradigms, we don't abandon what is working. It is important to avoid getting stuck on new dogmas when trying to move away from old dogmas. So often, we overcorrect and thereby villainize something

that works because it's "the old way," and "the new way" becomes the only acceptable way to do something. Paradigm shifts at the high school level and in first-year college composition allow us to transcend existing pedagogies in the teaching of writing, but it is important to also keep what works. This paper will examine what is new and what we need to preserve in the following writing pedagogies: process, multimodality, growth mindset, and rhetoric.

Process Movement—Don't Throw the Baby Out With the Bath Water

Chris Anson writes, "For its part, Elbow's *Writing without Teachers* reinforced a principle at the heart of the process movement and ripe for the use of invention strategies: Writers don't figure out what they want to say and then write it; they write in order to figure out what they want to say..." (218-219). While writing can be formative, sometimes a writer does already know what information they wish to convey or how they will defend a position. Writing it is merely another way of communicating it. Anson goes on to say later in his piece, "Process pedagogy was bound to be challenged by new generations of scholars who represent emerging ideologies of education and inquiry. Monikers like 'post-process' suggest a rejection of an existing system, which is replaced with a new set of assumptions and methods, in much the same way that process displaced its own predecessor" (225-226). He goes on to say that many elements of process writing remain. It's important to understand the evolution of the teaching of writing and make sure that we don't reject aspects that work while winnowing out those that don't work so well.

The idea of decentering or decentralizing the classroom is a positive paradigm shift in education. It empowers students to lead while the instructor acts as a facilitator. However, as facilitators, we still need to ensure that we provide our students with the building blocks to

produce good writing, just as good art instructors provide their students with the techniques for the media their students work in. In her book *Steering the Craft*, Ursula Le Guin reminds the importance of emphasis on the sentence parts and word level of writing:

Our schools now often teach little of an essential and once common knowledge, the vocabulary of grammar--the techspeak of language and writing. Words such as subject, predicate, object, or adjective and adverb, or past tense and past-perfect tense, are half understood by or wholly unfamiliar to many. Yet they're the names of the writer's tools. They're the words you need when you want to say what's wrong or right in a sentence. A writer who doesn't know them is like a carpenter who doesn't know a hammer from a screwdriver. ("Hey, Pat, if I use that whatsit there with the kind of pointy end, will it get this thing into this piece of wood?") ... I urge my writer-readers to consider the value of the marvelous tools their language provides and to get truly familiar with them, so that they can play with them freely. (LeGuin 4)

There are many ways we can accomplish this that don't involve the traditional "teacher at the front of the room lecturing." We can utilize student-led lessons. We can also take advantage of the many new technologies available. We can have our students create work in many different modalities beyond text.

Multimodalities—Get Disoriented, But Don't Get Lost

The evolution of technologies in New Media and Web 2.0 has also brought new modalities for writing courses. These new horizons allow instructors to explore new ways of allowing our students to produce communication and convey meaning. On the *Rhetoricity* podcast, Jonathan Alexander and Jackie Rhodes urge us to "get disoriented" and not be afraid to

abandon old ideas and jump into new ones, even though we may feel lost. Rhodes says, “outside of your comfort zone is where the magic happens” (“Rhetoricity”). However, we need to be careful not to completely abandon the old ideas that are working. We need to make sure that our students have the fundamental skills to convey their ideas in new ways. Some of the fundamentals that we use to construct a five-paragraph essay--a statement of purpose, organization of ideas, evidence and explanation, analysis and synthesis, and a conclusion--need to be taught no matter the modality used to present those ideas.

Alexander and Rhodes have their students experiment with different modalities of communication, such as film and video. Alexander suggests video as a modality shouldn't just be an essay put on video. Rather than starting with an essay and then making it into a video, he recommends starting with a video project. He emphasizes the idea of moving beyond rubric-based writing: “There is a messiness to a process that so much of our field is trying to clean up, and quantify, and make scientific in some ways...and yet I'm increasingly wanting to hold on to some messiness in writing to maintain some of the mystery in what we do because it's precisely in that messiness and in that mystery that we open ourselves to other ways of knowing.... (“Rhetoricity”) Alexander recalls how in the 1990s, when the World Wide Web was a new frontier, he would follow the “hyperlinks.” “I remember being able to get lost in the Web and not know how to get back to where I was. It's almost impossible to get lost in the Web now, and I think that that's generative. Getting lost sometimes is generative. Wandering is generative” (“Rhetoricity”). He points to Sara Ahmed's notions of orientation and disorientation regarding the rights of transgender people in the field of law. Ahmed writes, “We learn about worlds when they do not accommodate us. Not being accommodated can be pedagogy” (qtd. in Sciuillo 688), and suggests rather than the slow change toward accommodation and inclusion that liberalism

provides, there is a need for a radical disorienting (Sciullo 689). Alexander explains that disorientation opens other, radically different ways of thinking. Rhodes chimes in here and says, “The composing of multimodal work is for me most rewarding when I honor that sort of associational thinking.... If you compose in ways that are not hierarchical, if you compose in associational sorts of ways, you have to work, you have to queer the technologies because the technologies want you to do the hierarchical ordering of information” (“Rhetorocity”).

Alexander suggests there should be a desire to “constantly question normative, naturalized, sedimented ways of experiencing” (“Rhetorocity”). Rhodes suggests when using film or video as a modality, we should have students focus on the elements of film and video rather than the old formulas of text. The idea is to have the students fully disorient themselves, so they don’t default back to their old ways. Rhodes goes on to explain the results of a survey Alexander conducted on literacy narratives on YouTube: “Not only were the videos used to illustrate a print text... Very often they harked back to older forms where you would have a literacy narrative that was like, ‘Here’s my point, here are three set pieces that explain my point, and here’s the conclusion.’ So, essentially, you had a five-paragraph essay showing up in film” (“Rhetorocity”). Alexander’s idea of “messiness” for writing *seems* to suggest we should do away with rubric-based writing. I don’t think that is what he and Rhodes are suggesting. I think they still find basic tools necessary, but then take those skills into realms of the unknown. It’s like a jazz musician improvising *after* carefully studying notes, chords, and scales, and potentially finding new notes, chords, and sequences. Rhodes backs this up by saying, “if (people) go absolutely in a linear way, they’re going to miss things” (“Rhetorocity”). She explains that when the first Gutenberg print type came out, it resembled handwriting, and when the Web 1.0 came out, it resembled the type that we were accustomed to seeing in print because

there is a nostalgia and a safe feeling in seeing the familiar. We need to not be afraid to “disorient” and move away from the nostalgic and safe (“Rhetorocity”). This is fine as long as our students have the basic tools going into it.

When beekeepers need to move a beehive, they have much better luck not losing bees if they move it 1-2 miles away, rather than a few feet away. Bees use the location of the sun, even on a cloudy day, for navigation. With the longer distance, the bees have to reset themselves after being disoriented. If they are moved only a short distance, they don’t reset. Instead, they keep defaulting back to the old location, and they remain lost. “Move it more than 1-2 miles away for a few weeks and then bring it back to the desired location. This forces the honey bee ‘mind map’ to reset” (Anderson).

We want our students to be like the bees. We need them to get fully disoriented, so they don’t default back to the old way. If we do this, however, we’ll need to arm our students with the tools they’ll need when they get to their destination. So, we can tell them they need to have a purpose for a piece of writing or other communication. That can come in the form of a traditional explicitly stated thesis statement, or it can be an implied thesis statement. Or the purpose can be revealed to the audience as they move through the piece. There needs to be explanation and organization, but the explanation can come in different forms and the organization doesn’t have to be linear. There will need to be a conclusion, but it doesn’t have to be forced on the reader. Instead, the reader can be guided to draw their own conclusion, consider important takeaways, or develop further questions to consider. We don’t have to insist that specific items *must* be in the introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion, or the typical formulaic five-paragraph essay.

Painter Jackson Pollock was an artist who opted to disorient completely from what the art world was doing with his “drip” painting. These paintings *appear* to be a free-form

non-structured approach to art, utilizing none of the scholarly rules applied to painting. However, researchers found Pollock's paintings paradoxically to be a series of fractals, which are complex repeating patterns (Taylor 422). Pollock knew how to mix paint to achieve the color combinations he wanted, and he was skilled in the elements of design and the use of space. Although appearing to be free-form is a signature attribute of his painting, it seems he had an organized plan going into each one. The same can happen when we are writing, and when we teach writing. As instructors, we should have a rubric that provides a minimum set of necessary elements. The rest should be left for the writer to design and build. What we must not do, is disorient our students so far that they become lost. I never want to have a student stare at a blank sheet of paper, or a blank screen, and have no idea where to begin and how to flesh it out.

There have been times when I have had students say, "How should I start this?" or "What do I say in the conclusion?" Certainly, I do not want to give them a paint-by-numbers guide to constructing an essay or other piece of communication, but there is nothing wrong with a checklist of minimum requirements and some tools on how to produce those.

Alexander and Rhodes say when working in new modalities, "You have to embrace failure. Be willing to fail. Be willing to play to the point of failure. And then fail better next time" ("Rhetorocity"). As instructors, although we want to decenter ourselves and decentralize the classroom, we also want to be present and provide support for our students on their disorienting journey. In order to allow our students to fail without giving up, we must provide them with the tools and basic building blocks for success in writing. In order to do this, a growth mindset approach is vital.

Growth Mindset Before Growth Mindset Was Cool

Vernon Lattin, in his 1978 essay, identified the problem facing many first-year college students, especially among underrepresented populations, which included people of color, English language learners, and low-income students, who were not prepared for first-year writing classes. He provides these examples of student writing to illustrate the deficiencies students some of his students had upon entering college, such as this one: “If a child know better than be treated as an adult,” and this one: “If I don't study hard, some student give me several hard question, then I don't answered the question. Student think about a that teacher is don't know so much” (Lattin 312).

Lattin explains three options that existed when he joined the faculty at his university: Once was to place struggling students in regular first-year composition. He explains that many instructors of this class were unprepared, ill-equipped, or unwilling to address the needs of these students. The second option was to place students in a non-credit remedial writing course. This was the alternative at the time, and at many colleges and universities for the next several decades. Students were required to pass this class in order to move on in college, but they received no credit for the class. Lack of any real support and being unable to earn credit for their time and effort led to numerous drop-outs following this course. The third option was to place students in a remedial credit course with a small teacher-student ratio. This seemed like the perfect solution, but Lattin explains that while these were usually taught by instructors with skills in teaching this type of course, there was a pressure on staff to produce good results, which often resulted in inflated grades (Lattin 313-14).

To solve this conundrum, Lattin designed a system to help bring the students' writing to the college level. He proposed that the university offer a remedial writing course that would earn

credit, but that each student would need to stay in until their writing skills reached a college-ready level. He explains that the program must have weekly goals, and it must be “a regimented competency-based program” with “careful planning on the part of a director with experience teaching special students.... The university must make a financial and resource commitment to a total program” (Lattin 314). The course provided three credit hours and took the place of first-year composition. Testing took place in the summer, and course instructors had access to these essays, and they were given time to analyze the essays to prepare for course instruction based on individual student needs. There was a common syllabus for several instructors and support for the instructors as there was for the students: “Students must demonstrate writing proficiency in three areas: the sentence, the paragraph, and the essay” (Lattin 314). An examination was given every five weeks. Students used identification numbers instead of their names, and the exams were graded anonymously by all faculty members in the program.

Students who failed the course were allowed to take the course again for a grade: “In three five-week segments, students can progress slowly yet register achievement. Since each section is a contained unit, both student and instructor know what they have to achieve; even students who take the entire semester to master the first unit know they have accomplished something other than a dozen F's on papers they were unprepared to write” (Lattin 315). Lattin explains that faculty morale improved and that “(t)he anonymous grading system... eliminated both student and administrative pressure on individual faculty members, and the week-to-week common syllabus... provided a framework for classroom activities, teachers can devote more energy to working creatively with students' writing deficiencies” (Lattin 315).

Lattin reports positive feedback from instructors of subsequent English classes the students in the program later took was positive. Most importantly is this actual evidence in a student's writing:

The gun symbolically replaces the love relationship. The idea that love can bring about changes is shattered. The idea that only through violence and the use of firearms can man hope to survive or change the society in which he lives replaces the hope of love. Guns and violence become the way of change and each character in the novel is caught up in conflict. (Lattin 316)

Lattin describes this student as previously "sullen and hostile" unable to write a logical sentence, much less a paragraph or essay. He explains that through daily goals and progress she became motivated, and within two years not only had her writing improved, but she became interested in both writing and literature (Lattin 316).

While Lattin's program was designed for students in need of writing remediation, this type of writing instruction is the foundation for all writing. As the idea of a growth mindset catches on in higher education, many colleges have done away with non-credit remedial writing courses. These same colleges have open admissions. The thinking is that the students' writing skills will improve as they proceed through college, once they have left the K-12 school systems that had left them poorly prepared. When this article was published in 1978, there was a greater belief in the fixed mindset, and remedial courses were often for the purpose of weeding out rather than remediation.

Lattin was perhaps ahead of his time with the notion that high expectations can be reached by spending time building the base that students needed to be successful writers. His proposal ensured that students received not only college credit for their time, effort, and tuition money, but also the ability to write. Instead of an inflated sense of self-esteem, the students increased their skills and gained confidence. In the 1980s, both in K-12 education and higher

education, the focus on high academic expectations shifted to the self-esteem of the student. The belief was that if educators nurtured the self-esteem of their students, those students would feel so great about themselves, that they would then be able to rise to those expectations. Research in this area has indicated that self-esteem has little impact on academic achievement and that it is more likely the reverse, that high achievement in school creates high self-esteem. A longitudinal study that tracked 10th graders for eight years, one of over 100 studies involving over 200,000 participants (Baumeister et al. 10), “did not point to any causal role for self-esteem. Instead, they concluded that shared prior causes, including family background, ability, and early school performance, affect self-esteem and later educational attainment and were responsible for the correlation between the two” (Baumeister et al. 13). Fast-forward three decades to 2007 when psychologist Carol Dweck published her research on what she refers to as the “growth mindset”:

We found that students’ mindsets—how they perceive their abilities—played a key role in their motivation and achievement, and we found that if we changed students’ mindsets, we could boost their achievement. More precisely, students who believed their intelligence could be developed (a growth mindset) outperformed those who believed their intelligence was fixed (a fixed mindset). And when students learned through a structured program that they could “grow their brains” and increase their intellectual abilities, they did better. Finally, we found that having children focus on the process that leads to learning (like hard work or trying new strategies) could foster a growth mindset and its benefits. (Dweck 20)

Much like Lattin’s work in the 1970s, Dweck’s emphasis is not on self-esteem, but on the students’ belief that they can improve paired with intensive instruction to make that happen.

At most colleges, especially in the last decade, there has been a shift to a paradigm more like Lattin's for students who are not quite ready for first-year composition. There has been a shift in the language used to describe the course, from "remedial" to "developmental" (McGee et al. 2), and the addition of a co-requisite, which refers to a support class taken simultaneously with a credit-bearing class. The co-requisite is also credit-bearing, usually for a smaller amount of credit (Bridges). Chicago State University, for example, located in an urban environment with a predominantly Black, first-generation or non-traditional, and low-income student population, is one of many higher education institutions that offer such a program to first-year students. Director of Composition Concetta Williams describes the developmental sequence that has been in place there since the mid-1990s:

All freshman students take a placement exam and are either placed in Composition I or Writers' Workshop I. Writers' Workshop I would be considered the developmental course, but it is actually Composition I with support. Students who place into the Writers' Workshop courses earn and pay tuition for three credit hours but are provided with six contact hours a week and an embedded tutor. Faculty are actually paid for the three additional contact hours as well. Students earn college credit because the course carries a 1000-level designation, and the course is transferable. (qtd. in McGee et al. 7)

Williams explains that students often choose this developmental course over traditional first-year composition because it offers credit toward graduation and also helps them build "a solid foundation in writing and, by extension, reading. Students become reflective and proactive when thinking about their needs because the workshop course does not carry an academic penalty.... It is not uncommon to hear a student say, 'I want to take this course because I know I need to work on my writing, and I want the extra support'" (qtd. in McGee et al. 7). Williams recognizes the

need to provide building blocks for her writing students in these foundational writing courses from which they can grow and become competent and even advanced writers.

The growth-mindset movement returns to the paradigm in which educators have high expectations for their students. It shifts away from the self-esteem movement, building authentic confidence in students and instilling the notion that “this is where you are now; this is where you can be; this is how you can get there.” Developmental education, not just in writing instruction, but also in reading and math, is and needs to continue to be viewed not as the “gatekeeper,” or a barrier to completing a college degree, but rather as the “gateway,” or the path to degree completion (McGee et al. 9).

Rhetoric—Give Your Students a Voice

Perhaps the most important discussion regarding shifting pedagogies is that in the end, the students’ work is theirs. When we decenter ourselves or change the power structure in our classroom, it clears a space for meaningful growth to take place for our students. The teaching of writing happens best when students feel empowered to have their voice heard and their ideas valued, coupled with the tools and basic skills to put everything together and convey meaning to an audience.

There can be a positive move away from formula writing--having students fill in a graphic organizer with set guidelines for a thesis statement, a counterargument, five paragraphs, and evidence and elaboration, and *then* have them write the essay. Instead, we can start with the student’s voice by having a discussion or a debate and asking, “What is your opinion? What might the opposing side say? What are some arguments that support your side?” There has been a paradigm shift in rhetoric pedagogy that has brought positive results in the field of writing

instruction. As instructors, *after* we have sparked their interest in a topic and let them know that we value their voice, we can tell them to convey their thoughts to their audience in writing, or in another modality, organizing those thoughts using a graphic organizer or a storyboard if they wish. When I have done this, I have had struggling writers write a lot better because they already have the words in their heads. Getting it then on paper is a lot easier when they are excited about the topic and feel empowered to have their voice heard, and their knowledge imparted to the world.

One of the most important statements regarding the teaching of writing is this from Downs and Wardle: “Simply put, we understand the ethos of the field as largely resisting deficit models of writing instruction, which assume students know little, have poor writing abilities, and need ‘saving’ from ‘bad writing.’ Instead, composition studies favors models of writing instruction that give voice to students, seeing them as able, engaged, and full of potential as knowledgeable individuals and able learners” (126). For many students, this approach is the most important one because getting started can often be the greatest barrier to successful writing.

Conclusion

Students who are motivated to write and have the building blocks to do so will feel confident about writing. As writing instructors, we must remember this and while we should always continue to seek new ideas for learning and not be hesitant to allow paradigms to shift, we must never get rid of what does work. We must be aware of new technologies and modalities, be willing to decenter ourselves to change the balance of the classroom or instructional space, and be willing to work with students where they are, but we also must be able and willing to provide the tools and essential skills that are vital to our students’ success as writers. As long as

we keep what works while moving forward, the teaching of writing will prepare our students for success writing at all levels in their learning and careers.

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