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Performing Writing, Performing Literacy

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Jenn Fishman, Andrea Lunsford, Beth McGregor, and  
Mark Otuteye

## Performing Writing, Performing Literacy

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This essay reports on the first two years of the Stanford Study of Writing, a five-year longitudinal study aimed at describing as accurately as possible all the kinds of writing students perform during their college years. Based on an early finding about the importance students attach to their out-of-class or self-sponsored writing and subsequent interviews with study participants, we argue that student writing is increasingly linked to theories and practices of performance. To illustrate the complex relationships between early college writing and performance, we explore the work of two study participants who are also coauthors of this essay.

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**C**omposition research is, at its best, research concerned with writing, writers, and the contexts in which they write, and longitudinal studies in particular offer unique insights into this complex of relationships. As Marilyn Sternglass explains, longitudinal research shows “how individual students adapt and adjust themselves to the fluctuating currents in their own lives and the shifting requests made of them” (12). Focusing primarily on school writing, Sternglass and others have gathered interviews and questionnaires, classroom observations, and cumulative writing portfolios in order to identify and better understand different connections among students’ personal back-

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The companion video to this article is available at CCC Online at <http://inventio.us/ccc>.

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grounds, their attitudes toward writing, and the academic writing they do. Rich with data as well as lore, Sternglass's *Time to Know Them*, Anne Herrington and Marcia Curtis's *Persons in Progress*, and Lee Ann Carroll's *Rehearsing New Roles* are among the recent studies that offer tremendous insight into college students' development as confident and able producers of academic discourse and knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Most recently, Anne Beaufort's forthcoming *Freshmen Writing and Beyond: Re-Conceptualizing the Design of Post-Secondary Writing Courses* includes a detailed longitudinal study of one student writer.

Of course, composition is not limited to school subjects or school texts, and researchers have, over the past thirty years, pursued strong interests in extracurricular composition, especially in personal and professional writing. Research on "real world" writing, whether the setting is a kitchen table or a government agency, usefully expands the study of composition to include a greater range of literacy practices along with a diversity of interlocutors, from cancer survivors to members of architectural firms. As the authors of *Worlds Apart: Acting and Writing in Academic and Workplace Contexts* explain, this body of work "throw[s] light not only on the nature of writing but also on the nature of disciplines and professions" (Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré 15).<sup>2</sup> Likewise, school-centered studies that go beyond the classroom illuminate otherwise hidden or undocumented scenes, actors, and acts of composition. As Shirley Brice Heath demonstrates in her ongoing research into literacy and the arts, when young people perform writing they perform literacy, and their activities, whether open-mic poetry readings or drama workshops at boys' and girls' clubs, exemplify the self-conscious, multimodal communication that distinguishes literate interaction today.

Aware of these issues, we began the Stanford Study of Writing in fall 2001 with a desire to describe the breadth of "college writing" experienced by our 189 students.<sup>3</sup> Interested in everything from the group's conventional academic texts to their new-media compositions, we arranged to collect materials electronically, and we invited participants to submit both assigned and extracurricular writing. As a result, our database filled quickly with a wealth of assigned genres (e.g., reading summaries, analytical essays, source-based essays, e-mails, multimedia presentations) as well as a range of out-of-class compositions (e.g., letters, résumés, self-designed online petitions, newspaper articles, plays). Intrigued by what we were receiving daily, we did not think much about what might be missing until our first-year interviews began. As we talked with a

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subgroup of study participants, we listened hard as, one after another, they told us about what we have come to call writing performances: students' live enactment of their own writing.<sup>4</sup> As our interest in these performances and their importance to students grew, so too did our interest in performance itself, and not in the usual sense. Although "performance" often refers to demonstrable mastery over skills or knowledge, and in writing programs we tend to treat student performance like something we can measure and assess using rubrics, grades, or test scores, our students compelled us to pay attention to the live, scripted, and embodied activities they stage outside the classroom: everything from spoken-word events and slam-poetry competitions to live radio broadcasts, public speaking, and theatrical presentations. In addition, our students prompted us to consider how the act of embodying writing through voice, gesture, and movement can help early college students learn vital lessons about literacy.

In this article, we present our earliest findings from the Stanford Study of Writing, and we begin the process of identifying how writing performances play a role in early college students' development as writers. Our considerations are based on interviews, questionnaires, and text submissions from the first two years of the study, as well as work we have done with two study participants, Elizabeth McGregor and Mark Otuteye.<sup>5</sup> Among the first to talk with us about performance, Beth and Mark see themselves as both performers *and* writers, a point they made in a directed reading course we did together and in a presentation we gave at the 2003 Annual Convention of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. Through our work with these two students, and with others in the study, we have learned to see a potentially close relationship between performance and current college literacies. Our collaboration has taught us to count performance as one of the many nonacademic knowledges that students possess, and our work together has compelled us to think about how teachers of writing can respond. How, our research has prompted us to ask, can we expand our curricula and our pedagogies to make room for performance in the writing classroom? The reasons for doing so are numerous, and they strike us as highly persuasive. Performance is a dynamic form of literate expression that is both fun and deeply serious. Immediate and face-to-face, performance encourages active participation and collaboration, and thus it models many of the qualities we value most in real-time new-media writing, while at the same time it brings renewed attention to talk and

scripted forms of oral communication. A tool for innovation as well as a potential vehicle for helping students to transfer literacy skills from situation to situation, performance, at least from our perspective, stands to reinvigorate both teaching and learning in the writing classroom.

### **Restoring Performance to Writing and Literacy**

In choosing to write about performance and college writing, we also want to bring a particular set of ideas about performance into view. During the course of our research, a great deal of scholarship on performance has become important to us. In particular, work in performance studies has changed our reading of more familiar work in rhetoric and composition, helping us to formulate new questions and new approaches to our data and to college writing research more generally. As a result, we believe that performance studies, a field that emerged formally in the 1950s, has much to contribute to composition studies, a field with a parallel history and a host of similar concerns, including relationships between language and the body, individuals and communities, and social norms and forms of resistance. Perhaps most important, performance studies offers useful ways of theorizing the oftentimes slippery idea of “performing,” which is both medium and act, noun and verb.

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A uniquely interdisciplinary endeavor, performance studies has emerged through the joint efforts of scholars and practitioners working in theater, sociology and anthropology, and linguistics.<sup>6</sup> From theater, performance studies inherits a certain kind of literalness about performance. Concerned with live bodies and writing, theatermakers contribute an abiding interest in and curiosity about interrelationships among live actors, live audiences, and dramatic texts. From sociology, performance studies gains an expanded sense of text, which extends from dramatic literature to everyday acts and socially scripted forms of performance. In turn, anthropology, with its deep concern for ritual, contributes ways of understanding the constitutive power of rites, ceremonies, and other formally enacted social behaviors. From Victor Turner’s foundational study *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* to Jon McKenzie’s recent survey of contemporary performance *Perform or Else*, anthropological perspectives emphasize performance’s ability both to reinforce social hierarchies and to resist them by offering alternative ways for imagining and enacting social relationships. Linguistics articulates for performance stud-

ies, as for rhetoric and composition, the creative, potentially life-changing power of words. In this case, it is not performance, but performativity that takes center stage, whether the linguistic performatives J. L. Austin and John Searle consider or the much broader sense of signification that Judith Butler theorizes in her work on gender performances, such as cross-dressing and drag.

Our entrance into this discussion comes at the intersection of the body, rhetoric, and writing, thus reuniting composition and communication, the two founding disciplines of CCC and CCCC. Grounded in the body, our focus on

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performance locates textual exchange in specific sites; it makes delivery interactive; and it turns the idea of audience into something concrete and participatory. This view of writing as an activity—as an act always involving the body and performance—enriches I. A. Richards’s notion of the “inter-animation of words” (47): it is not only that individual words shift meaning given their context within a sentence,

but also that words shift meaning given their embodied context and their physical location in the world. Calling attention to this phenomenon raises our awareness of the power language gains through physical interaction and exchange, and it transforms our understanding of Kenneth Burke’s “symbol-using, symbol-misusing animal” (3). To be human, we are reminded, is to speak and write *and perform* through multiple systems of signification.

In expressing his theories of language and symbolicity as dramatism, Burke populates rhetorical study with a host of *dramatis personae*, and he infuses teachers’ and scholars’ activities with an unmistakably performance-oriented consciousness. If Burke thus emerges as a very early performance theorist, at least in rhetorical study, his work also serves to restore to rhetoric its own longstanding tradition of performance, which centers on interconnections between language and live performance or delivery. While these interconnections retained their importance from the classical period through eighteenth-century elocutionism, the growing hegemony of writing through the nineteenth century obscured the body and performance from critical view, shifting attention away from oral and embodied delivery to textual production of the printed page. But performing bodies could never be erased completely from modern industrial literate culture, and so we think of them as ghosts in the writing machine: ghosts that have, over the last forty years, haunted work in rhetoric and composition. Indeed, performance has been irrepressible, from the improvisational play of the process movement to the use of role-playing in writ-

ing classrooms, from the focus on writing for community service and activism to the focus on the social nature of all written communication.

Today, dramatic changes in literacy and literacy practices have brought rhetoric's ghosts fully back to life. In an age of (multi)media, we can no longer ignore the embodied nature of discourse, and we are having to rethink almost every aspect of the teaching of writing, from ways of being in the classroom to the kinds of assignments students do and how those assignments are delivered and assessed. For us, the notion of performance is crucial to participating in this work. Not only does performance help us draw connections between past and present habits of communication, it also helps us look toward the future and the great range of self-aware, media-savvy moves that are coming to signal full literacy, indeed, the multiliteracies that present-day college writers must strive to achieve.

### **In Class and Out: An Overview of Early College Writing**

In its first year alone, the Stanford Study of Writing collected over three thousand individual text submissions, and by the end of the second year that number had more than doubled. A substantial cache, these submissions are not an exhaustive record, but a rich sample of the total writing students composed during this two-year period, and survey data helps us to fill in some of the remaining gaps.<sup>7</sup> As participants reported, they wrote between sixty and one hundred pages for their first-year courses alone. For university requirements such as Introduction to the Humanities and Writing and Rhetoric (first-year writing), students composed analytic essays, persuasive essays, and source-based essays, while in other courses they wrote lab reports, problem sets, and charts and graphs. By the second year, most study participants began to shift from introductory-level general education courses to courses in their majors and other areas of interest, and, in typical fashion, they found themselves writing fewer papers but papers that demanded greater specialized subject knowledge as well as discipline-specific vocabularies and rhetorical styles. In addition, over both years students composed a steady stream of new-media texts, including electronic bulletin board postings, listserv messages, and multimedia presentations.

Along with coursework, students wrote a great deal outside of class for a variety of audiences and purposes. Certainly, many students in these writings composed in the reflexive mode Janet Emig associates with the self-sponsored activities of twelfth graders. Whether journal and diary entries, letters, or e-mail, such self-reflexive writing "focuses upon the writer's thoughts and feel-

ings concerning his [or her] experiences; the chief audience is the writer himself [or herself]; the domain explored is often the affective; the style is tentative, personal, and exploratory” (Emig 4). At the college level, students often recognize these qualities in their own texts. Reflecting on her first year, Lani describes her self-sponsored writing as “more personal” than her academic essays, and Jeffrey explains: “I tend to use the nonacademic writing as a type of personal therapy.” Additionally, students are keenly aware of how they write when they write reflexively. Comparing school- and self-sponsored writing, Anya explains: “[When] I’m not trying to be formal and academic, i [sic] just write what’s on my mind without trying to form it.” Similarly, Jeni reports: “I spend much more time trying to structure and to organize my academic writing in a clear and concise manner. My out-of-class writing is far less structured and mainly reflects my thoughts at that time.”

Emotional, immediate, and unconstrained, self-sponsored writing takes on additional characteristics when it is directed toward external audiences,

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especially public rather than personal ones. Outside of class, our students compose not only for themselves, their families, and their friends, but also for campus groups, off-campus organizations, and workplace audiences. For Keiko, for example,

extracurricular writing is “either very casual or professional,” and for Sandy self-sponsored writing includes sending “e-mails to important people asking them for help,” “writing news stories and editorials,” and “creating organizational documents for [her] groups.” Transactional rather than self-reflective, these types of self-sponsored writing also differ in students’ minds from academic modes. As Joe explains:

My academic writing tends to be more abstract [...] dealing with grand concepts directly related to my coursework, whereas my out-of-class writing tends to be more “business” oriented. My out-of-class writing is normally asking questions and directing people to do things.

For many students, the purposefulness of extracurricular writing stands out, as it does for Joe and for Alice, whose out-of-class writing includes press releases and grants. Describing the writing she does outside of class, and registering a great deal of frustration with introductory coursework, Alice states succinctly: “Not as much bullshit.”

Frustrated with busywork as well as the struggle to become part of different disciplinary discourse communities, students find themselves deeply engaged in and satisfied by self-sponsored writing. "I enjoy my out-of-class writing, and it shows," Todd told us: "The in-class writing is restricted to topics that are often not things that I am passionate about while I can always choose to write on my own about exactly what fuels my passions." Making more than an affective distinction, Todd emphasizes that personal connections are also critical connections that inform the content as well as the quality of what he composes. In Todd's words: "The substance is the difference." Important, too, is students' sense of a rhetorical situation and the presence of an audience for their writing. As Paolo puts it, "[P]ersonal writing has more of my style and is more liberal with grammar," though not because it is writing without conventions or rules. Instead, Paolo makes choices that are deliberate and planned, with a clear sense of audience and rhetorical purpose. "I'm willing to break rules more often in order to get a specific effect I desire," Paolo explains, helping us to understand how self-sponsored writing invites self-consciously rhetorical writing. In out-of-class texts, "[Y]ou seek to persuade your reader of something," Eliza states, and "you make conscious choices in this persuasion."

Self-conscious and self-confident, students see themselves as savvy, risk-taking writers when they reflect on their self-sponsored writing activities. As Alissa puts it: "I am more courageous in my out-of-class writing." Her observation is significant, not least because courage and college do not always mix, even for the most ambitious and self-possessed students. Upon entering Stanford, nearly three quarters of the study's participants had had a high or very high degree of self-confidence in their writing abilities. However, attitudes changed during the first year, and fewer than 10 percent of students maintained very high confidence in themselves as writers during that time. During the second year, as the numbers crept back up and students regained at least some of their self-assurance, we speculated about the factors contributing to this shift. Along with students' growing familiarity with college life and college writing, we wondered how extracurricular experiences informed students' self-perceptions. Just as Alissa found courage through self-sponsored writing, so too might others draw confidence and strength from their experiences in what Anne Gere calls composition's extracurriculum. Located "in living rooms, nursing homes, community centers, churches, shelters for the homeless, around kitchen tables, and in rented rooms," the extracurriculum provides writers with

community, encouragement, and more (76). “You feel brave,” explains Anita Ardell, a recovering cancer patient and writer: “You feel brave at the women writers group,” and Gere explains why: “Positive feelings about oneself and one’s writing, motivation to revise and improve composition skills, opportunities for publication of various sorts, the belief that writing can make a difference in individual and community life” are just some of the many rewards reaped by those who write outside the traditional or formal classroom (78).

### **Performance and Early College Writing**

Performance is another valuable component of the extracurriculum, as both Gere and our students attest, not least because performance has what Gere recognizes as a powerful “transformative quality” (89). When performance theorists make similar claims, they distinguish usefully between performance as entertainment and performance as something efficacious or capable of producing change.<sup>8</sup> This claim is based on three widely held assumptions about performance that Jon McKenzie summarizes in *Perform or Else*. Since the 1960s, McKenzie writes, performance has been seen as “a catalyst to personal and social transformation” because it fosters “social and self-reflection through the dramatization or embodiment of symbolic forms”; it presents “alternative arrangements” to extant social institutions and relationships; and, through live action and human interaction, it confirms “the possibility of conservation and/or transformation” (30, 31). For Gere, whose interest is, similarly, the cultural work that performance accomplishes, the extracurriculum is the primary site

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of activity, while for others, critical pedagogy invites performance into formal classrooms and curricula. As Elyse Pineau explains, performance can provide both teachers and students with “a means to understand and reform the institutions that discipline our minds and bodies” (41).

Pineau regards performance from within the tradition of critical pedagogy established by Paolo Freire, Henry Giroux, and Peter McLaren, and it was the last who envisioned school as a theatrical stage where teachers and students enact and react to (or against) “specific forms of language, reasoning, sociality, daily experience and style” (xxiv). In this educational theater, learning is a process of “enfleshment” or repetition and habituation centered on the body rather than the page or the screen. Within this context, the embodied practices that

dropped out of composition's regular curriculum in the nineteenth century (i.e., the recitation, declamation and speech making, extended reading aloud, and other oral forms associated with rhetoric) become significant tools for working powerful classroom transformations.

Such is certainly the case in some writing classrooms today, including Della Pollock's, where graduate students practice a form of performative writing that Pollock relates to what she terms "the arena of corporeal history" ("Performing" 74). Rather than working with ideas and arguments on paper, Pollock's students are required to stage their critical inquiries by finding ways to embody them and act them out in class. Such assignments challenge students to incorporate time and space as well as the corporeal body into the activity of writing, while later, in subsequent assignments, Pollock challenges students to use their knowledge of performance and the knowledge they have gained through performance to conceive of paper compositions in new ways.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick aims to "help graduate students explore and expand the shifting grounds of possibility for their own preprofessional and professional writing" (104) by assigning projects that combine "reading and performance elements" (106). Thus, when Sedgwick asks, "Where does a voice come from?" she is asking students to consider not only ethos and tone but also the physical voice that is supported by breath, impeded by stuttering, and amplified by training as well as technology (113).

And when she directs students to "come up with a performative utterance," she requires them not only to engage Austin's notion of linguistic performatives conceptually, but also to enact his idea, and to do so "on a public scale" (114–15).

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While undergraduate writers also seek out performance as a means to explore and expand the realm of the possible, as several study participants did during their junior and senior years, most of the study participants used performance to different ends during their early college years. Making the transition from high school to college and from general coursework into major (and minor) fields, study students called on performance to help them negotiate unfamiliar territories, especially the gaps they discovered between theory and practice, abstract ideas and concrete examples. One study participant perhaps puts it best. When asked whether any of her extra-curricular activities informed her academic writing, Margaret told us: "Drama most certainly does. More so than other disciplines I believe drama pulls theory to earth." Finding the body a good place to work things out, Margaret discov-

ered that “[I]nsights also come out of active experience (if performing or directing),” and “are immediately felt.”

Perhaps it is the immediacy of performance that makes it a medium well suited to teaching students important lessons about writing. When we first spoke to Beth, she brought up performance to explain how she was learning to recognize good writing. Explaining that her definition had changed since she arrived at college, Beth credited first a literature seminar and then a drama class. Not only reading Shakespeare but also performing his works aloud helped her come to a “deeper appreciation” and understanding of his plays. In addition, both reading and performing David Mamet’s work made Beth newly conscious of the relationship among audience, text, and artist. As she explained, “[T]hey’re words, right, but the way a certain person manipulates them can have an obvious effect on people.” Likewise, Mark learned about writing through performance, although he did so as a writer-performer of his own texts rather than as an actor of other people’s writing. Differentiating between self-reflective writing and other forms of communication, Mark contrasted self-expression and communication. “If you write stuff for self-expression, your own personal stuff,” he said, “that’s fine, don’t show it to anybody. But if you want to show it to people, then you need to communicate.” This is a lesson Mark learned well by performing both for live audiences at spoken word events and for the live, embodied readers who critiqued his poetry in a writing workshop.

Following up these initial interviews, we learned more from Beth and Mark about how performance informed their writing. And, after a term of working together, both students joined us at the CCCC convention in New York, where they both described and enacted writing performances. Their presentations appear below as written text, followed by our responses to their talks/performance as the conclusion of this essay. For the spoken, performed versions of Mark and Beth’s work, please see <http://www.inventio.us/cc/>.

### **Beth McGregor: Acting as a Writer**

I’ve always considered myself more a performer than a writer. I’ve been in lots of theatrical productions, and although I’ve done considerable amounts of academic writing and some creative writing, it just doesn’t come as easily to me. So, when asked to speak on a panel about performance and writing, I assumed I would focus on how I saw writing as its own thing, how I see performance as its own thing, and how I’ve found a few places like playwriting where I see the two media intersect.

My perspective on performance and writing was derailed when Andrea Lunsford asserted that all writing is a performance. This idea gave me the lens I needed to examine my own writing and acting experience and to recognize some clear connections between them. The greatest of these realizations is that with both my writing *and* my acting, I'm producing work for the judgment of the same general internal and external audiences. The most surprising thing for me to recognize about myself (regarding my writing and acting) was my use of character adoption for both acting and writing. Perhaps the best way to explain who my audiences are and what I mean by character adoption is by giving you a glimpse into my writing process.

Last year, as a first-year student at Stanford, I took a seminar called Tolerance and Democracy, in which the entire grade was based on a ten-page research paper. It wouldn't have been so bad if I'd ever written a research paper before in my life, but as my public high school back home in Russellville, Arkansas, had only ever required me to write a few five-page papers on books read in class, I felt totally in over my head. My five weeks of frustrations and my frantic desire to do well showcase both the function of my internal audiences and my character adoption.

#### My Performance Text

*In this dialogue, I've endowed the voices of my two prevailing editor-audiences on the often-imitated, never-duplicated Jenn Fishman and Roland Hsu. Jenn is my ever-present and lovingly critical Creative Content Editor (CCE). The first audience for all my ideas. The filter through which my thoughts must pass before making it onto the page. My original backspace key. Once I make it past the gate of my creative content editor, I run straight into Roland, my Grammar and Flow Editor (GFE) who wants to arrange and organize. This is the audience that wants my first draft to be the final draft.*

**BETH:** Okay. I've got to write it now. Ten pages, two more days, no more stalling. It's time. I'm ready. (Hesitates.) I've read the articles. I've taken twenty pages of notes. I've outlined it three times and scrawled sentences in the margins of my Chem. Problem Sets. Now all I need to do is sit down and write it out coherently and show him that I did the work and understood the theories behind it. This isn't hard. (Deep breath.) "Although Isaiah Berlin first drafted his ideas of . . ."

**CCE (very snide):** Don't start with "although." You want to start off strong.

**BETH:** You're right. (Thinking.) "Value Pluralism is the brainchild of . . ."

**CCE:** "Brainchild"? Beth, please. There must be something better.

**GFE:** If you're stuck on "brainchild," you should bury it somewhere on the seventh page, not hang it out in your intro.

**BETH:** Okay . . . “Berlin suggests.”

**CCE:** “Suggests”?

**BETH:** “Berlin recognizes the spectrum of people . . .”

**CCE:** You’re implying people are on the ends of the spectrum.

**BETH:** “Berlin recognizes the plethora of people . . .”

**CCE:** “Plethora”? You’re trying too hard.

**BETH:** Right. “Recognizing the diversity of people and their desires . . .”

**CCE (accepting, but not encouraging):** Just come back to that before the final draft.

**BETH (action of typing):** Right. There’s still time to revise. I just need to flesh it out on the page tonight. I just need to write what I know. Terrific. Here we go. “People with different value systems will have different desires and needs and preferences.”

**GFE:** Too many “ands.” Find a word to say them all.

**BETH:** Priorities?

**CCE (still not sold, but accepting):** Eh.

**GFE:** And don’t put that here. Have that start your section on the difference between liberalism and pluralism.

**BETH:** Okay. (Action of using mouse to drag down).

**GFE:** Better, but what’s this quotation about negative liberty doing with pluralism?

**BETH:** Right (action, moves mouse). Who am I kidding? I can’t do this. I need some coffee. Wait, no. I need some tea. Tea is what smart people drink. (Revelation.) That’s right! And smart people also wear glasses. Where are my reading glasses? (Finds them, puts them on. Puts hair up.) Okay, Elizabeth Ann McGregor, please describe to me how Isaiah Berlin’s notion of Value Pluralism informs current ideas of liberalism.

**ELIZABETH:** Certainly. “In our cosmopolitan country and increasingly globalized world there are countless competing worthwhile needs and prerogatives and no one system of higher moral values to which they can all be held, measured, and prioritized.”

*Elizabeth looks at both CCE and GFE, who nod in agreement.*

*End scene.*

Success! My paper got written, largely because of the help of an adopted character, who was just an elevated form of myself, but a character, nonetheless: someone with a voice different from my own and more like the “eloquent” voice I thought my erudite professor was looking for. In the end, equipped with the authoritative voice of my assumed character, I was able to hush my hyper-

active internal editors. To do that, I had borrowed the tool of character assumption from my acting experience in order to aid my writing process, and in essence the way I hushed the paralyzing presence of my internal editor-audiences for my paper is the same way I hush those same internal audiences when I'm acting. By presenting myself either to the stage or to the page as a character, I can distance myself from the very personal editor-audiences, who can be so debilitating that they cause either writer's block or stage fright.

Before I borrowed the tool of character adoption to lessen the restraint imposed by my internal editor-audiences, I actually had been known to take a much more physical approach to a similar end. I would physically reach out and turn off my computer monitor, thus removing my internal Grammar and Flow Editor. Without this editor-audience to critique the tentative writings I made on the page, I allowed myself to carry on in a much more freewriting manner.

The second tool I transferred from my acting experience to assist my writing process came to me in my improv class. The overarching rule to "accept all offers"—to allow yourself to trust your intelligence and imagination enough to say the first thing that comes into your mind—has given me license to shortcut past the Creative Content Editor and say the first thing that comes into my head. It's still necessary for me to use the Grammar and Flow Editor to make sense out of what has been said and what is being said, but this reduction of the overwhelming presence of my two internal editor-audiences has carried over to my writing and allowed for a greater freedom for converting my ideas into concrete words on the page.

These similar tools for my acting and my writing are only some of the ways in which they are similar. Not only are my internal E/As always with me when I'm performing or writing, but the external audiences I write and act for are essentially the same, too—be they my peers, my professors, other actors reading my plays, an auditorium full of an amorphous mass of people waiting to be entertained, or perhaps even the extreme case of a conference of writing professors and critics. Even with the general external audience being the same, clear differences exist. Foremost among them is that when acting in a scripted play you use the author's word and not your own, and this shared responsibility for the product makes it much easier to distance yourself from the full judgment of the external audience. When writing, the full weight of the product rests on the performing author. For me, the degree to which I am concerned with the judgment of this audience has a direct effect on the level of inter-

nal audiences. Both on the page and on the stage, my desire to impress this external audience factors into my immediate ability to express myself, and the more I want the approval of the external audience, the more critical my internal editor-audiences become. Because of this, it's essential for me to use techniques of detachment from different internal audiences, be it by turning off the screen, "accepting all offers," or adopting a character to escape from the paralyzing din of my internal editor-audiences.

**Both on the page and on the stage, my desire to impress this external audience factors into my immediate ability to express myself.**

In conclusion, although I can see that my approach regarding audience and tools for allowing performance is essentially the same for both the page and the stage, I maintain that there are some greater differences between theatrical performance and writing composition as a performance. For me, the force of the embodied performance is unparalleled by the written word. To the performer, the difference in performing for a dynamic audience as opposed to performing for a lifeless piece of paper or computer monitor is immense. Therefore, I maintain my love of performance, and I can only restate that I consider myself more an actress than a writer. (See Beth's performance at <http://www.inventio.us/ccc/> to see if you agree.)

**Mark Otuteye: Self-Performing**

I'm a poet and a lover of words, and I'm here to show you how experience with performance can improve your students' writing. What I want to suggest is that performance brings real writing lessons to life in a way that can be tangible and engaging for students. The specific lesson I'm going to talk about today is that communication through writing is not only what you say but also how you say it. This may seem like an obvious lesson, but I'm going to illustrate how performance can really make this lesson tangible and accessible for students.

My first year at the university I cofounded the Stanford Spoken Word Collective, a community of poets that meets regularly to write, collaborate on, and perform spoken-word poetry. Through my experience with spoken-word, I came to realize some forms of performance and writing are intimately connected. In particular, through my exploration of the intersection of writing and performance, I began to realize that there is a fundamental difference between writing that is self-performed and writing that is not self-performed. By "self-performed" I mean a text that you are writing but that you are going to

physically perform before your intended audience. Self-performed texts include spoken-word poems, speeches, dramatic monologues, and songs that are written by you (the performer) yourself, and lectures that you write and then later deliver before a class. By “not self-performed” I mean a text that you wrote but that you will not physically be able to perform before your intended audience. This includes e-mails, written books, and most academic writing.

While there are indeed many differences between these types of texts, the difference I want to highlight has to do with the writing processes for these respective texts. In self-performed writing, you do not have to encode within the writing itself how you are going to say the words you say. In contrast, with non-self-performed texts, you are obliged for the sake of clarity to encode how you intend your words to be conveyed. For example, if you’ve ever used instant messaging on AOL or some other online service then you’ve probably experienced how difficult it can be just to communicate. The problem can be especially vexing if you’ve got some sarcastic friends. Emoticons help because you simply can’t tell what written words mean until the use of a smiley face tells you how they were meant to be said. Thus, in this non-self-performed kind of writing, instant messaging buddies are obliged to approach their writing processes conscious of encoding that “how” into the text itself.

When you work with self-performed texts, you work with texts in which the lyrics (the what) cannot be separated from the music (the how). You also realize that, as is the case with academic writing, if you are not there to perform the text, the lyrics and the music have to be encoded. That is, in academic writing, you must not only say what, but also how. You must not only make an argument, but also make it with eloquence, a human touch, and polish. Great composition writing must not only be clear and analytical, but also phrased with music. One of the ways to get students to a place where they truly understand the importance of “how words are said” is to work with self-performed texts in which this distinction is literally embodied and personified.

**Great composition writing must not only be clear and analytical, but also phrased with music.**

In spoken-word, the how is not encoded in the text. Rather, the performer creates the how dynamically and on the fly as the performance is occurring. By way of analogy, the words on the page of a spoken-word piece are like the lyrics of a song without the musical notes. Even if you have the lyrics of a song, you still don’t know how to sing the song without also having the musical notes and additional notation. With spoken-word, similarly, all that lives on the page are the lyrics. The music of the poem lives in the performer.

To demonstrate these ideas, I'd like to perform my poem, "I'm Daaaaaaat Nigga!!" for you two different times. I chose this poem, "I'm Daaaaaaat Nigga!!" because of the vast amount of nonwritten music that actually lives in me, the performer, and not on the page. First, I will do a straight read-through. By analogy, this would be like just reading the lyrics of a song aloud. The second time I read my poem, I'll read it with lyrics and music: with both the what and the how. I want to draw attention to the difference in how I read the same words.

*I'm Daaaaaaat Nigga!!*

I am on fire! Got the  
 Orange-Spalding-Wide-Channel-Official-Sponsor-of-the-NBA basketball  
 In my hand crossin the glossy red paint of the half court line  
 One on one fast break.  
 Chum—  
 On the other team back against the basket  
 Deep in the paint trying ta defend against me? Brother please.  
 Because I'm Dat Nigga!!!

In fact that's what it says on the back of my  
 Red and black jersey number 14 "Dat Nigga"  
 Just drafted outa Calabassas Tennessee  
 Weighin in at a cool 2 10 standin lanky  
 Muscular black glistening 6 ft 10.  
 And my face is scrunched up in calculation.  
 And ain't no sweat drippin from my fresh fade  
 So fresh look like it just got edged up at the last time out.

Now, which way should I score upon your  
 Sorry weak-game havin chronic carry-over traveling  
 Shotblock-ee, mama shouldn't a had em  
 No left handle frequently get dissed. Pissed on.  
 Dismissed ugly girl kissed on.  
 Having no game is your mission. Possible.  
 Often getting shit tattoed off the backboard swatted  
 Like the back hand of a pimp slapped around and ordered  
 Like a side of french fries

Because I'm Dat Nigga!!!

Descended from the streets of the Empire of Hip Hop  
 Started circa 1000 Before MC.

In the city of NYC

Where gladiators with jerry curls, afros,  
Thick gold chains and microphones  
Blasted epitaphs as sharp as glass across the coliseum floor  
The rows of Harlem youth rose and roared

Outside of the coliseum

In another coliseum called the concrete streets  
Where ya often see em  
The basketball players soared higher  
Like a spiraling flame of flesh  
To test whose game came the best  
And I confess I must be the baddest motherfucker to eva touch the ball  
The snap of net. The shoes squeak.  
The sweat drip drop dribble behind the back  
Bounce pass between the legs, heads turn like tables,  
Lay low on the treble, brother, you just got played bass line.

They got: ten games going at the same time.  
And as the sun sets, you could see 50 black silhouettes  
Kinetic, connecting and laughin,  
Scraping the scratching the rapid fire dribble rapping:

Brrrrrrrup boom brrrrrrrup boom boom!  
Brrrrrrrup boom boom boom boom!!

See back in the day we used to own the courts all day.  
Now for every 25 black males the courts send one to jail.

So outside its bouncing bicka bicka bouncing  
Inside it's the fists are pounding pounding pounding pounding  
Outside its bouncing bicka bicka bouncing  
Inside its pounding pounding pounding pounding

Bouncing beep bep bep bep bep  
Bouncing bebep bep boom boom Bouncing chick  
Chicka boom boom chick chicka bouncing  
Ba doom Boom.. Boom.

And they wonder why even our style is free

Because I'm Dat Nigga!!!

And as I take off from behind the 3-point line  
I got it in my mind "I'm gonna DO this!"  
I see your little face whine like "OH SHIT!"  
And ain't no sweat drippin cuz it's "dry-fit"  
  
Ba da dump Ba dump BOOOM!!!  
And one. Count it.

For me, the more I've worked with self-performed writing, the more I've become hyperaware of how the content of my words is interpreted in non-self-performed texts. With this in mind, I've been able to write academic essays that maintain a human touch by learning to collapse the body language and voice modulation of performance directly into the written words themselves. My experience with performance has improved my writing in this way and in so many others. And I strongly believe that even a little experience with performance can help students become more supple and expressive writers. (To see Mark's reading "with the lyrics and the music" go to <http://www.inventio.us/ccc/>.)

### **Responding to Writing Performances**

When Beth and Mark perform, we see two students self-consciously working out both strategies and theories for writing. Focused on invention, audience, and delivery, they seek not only to master but also to understand literate communication across multiple media and situations. Beth's dialogue, a dramatization of "think-aloud protocols," reveals the sometimes paralyzing and potentially alienating process of internalizing academic discourse, while her solution, the transformation of her most formal self into a character poised—or perhaps posed—to deliver academic prose, updates one of the fundamental strategies of rhetoric, imitation. Just as children "follow the traces of letters in order to acquire skill in writing" and "musicians follow the voice of their teachers, painters look for models to the works of preceding painters, and farmers adopt the system of culture approved by experience," so too are adult citizen orators under Quintilian's tutelage directed to imitate the words, figures, and art of composition (10.2.1–2). It is not far from imitation to Beth's method of character adoption or Victor Villanueva's "Professorial Discourse Analysis," the procedure he developed in college to write successfully "for the University" (71). As "a standard practice" Villanueva the undergraduate would "go to the library; see what the course's professor had published; try to discern a pattern to her writing; try to mimic the pattern" (71). A tool for writing, professorial

discourse analysis, like character adoption, simultaneously enacts and critiques Quintilian's "rule of life," pointing out the lengths to which college students go not only to copy what they approve, but also to copy what they learn will win them approval.<sup>10</sup> In both cases, the strategy comes first and the level of analysis performers gain develops more slowly. For Beth, full recognition of the nature of her actions and her own rationale, along with her position as a first-year undergraduate in the academy, developed in the years after she adopted the character of Elizabeth Ann McGregor. So, too, we suspect it was for Victor Villanueva, who wrote about his own undergraduate education years later, when he was well into his professional career.

Where Beth's strategies differ from others is in their borrowing from theater a form of expression (the dialogue), a compositional method, and an ethic. Less by imitation than by animation, Beth brings grammar, flow, content control, and her own academic persona to life, and she finds her way around writer's block by granting herself permission to keep going, if only provisionally. As she explained to us in conversation, she borrowed this strategy from dramatic improvisation, where actors working together without set scripted material are guided by the principle of "accepting all offers." For example, one actor might point to something imaginary on top of her head, and ask: "How does this hat fit me?" In response, a second actor might respond, "Looks great," or "That hat doesn't fit at all." Or, if he is canny, he may say with Samuel Beckett's Estragon, "How should I know?" Whatever the case, the hat exists not only by grace of the first actor's speech act, but also through the ethic of acceptance that compels the second actor to recognize it. In other words, the principle of accepting all offers allows the first actor to trust that the second actor will accept the hat and keep going.<sup>11</sup> In the same way, Beth the writer learns to trust and accept herself enough to move on.

Mark addresses another set of issues pertinent to early college writing. Through his discussion of self-performed and not-self-performed writing, Mark establishes a theory of authoring that is strikingly audience-oriented, especially coming from an early college writer. This point may be difficult to appreciate fully since Mark's performances are present only as recordings (both print and digital). To be in the audience while he is performing is to witness not the invention but the performative reinvention of writing through the dynamic interaction between writer-performer and audience. Live, Mark's poetry is a combination of oral performance, the written text he has composed, and the

**Mark's poetry is a combination of oral performance, the written text he has composed, and the decisions he makes in response to the actual scene of enactment.**

decisions he makes in response to the actual scene of enactment: his spontaneous adjustment of words, gestures, and voice in response to heads nodding, feet tapping, and the intangible, yet palpable energy of a full room. Perhaps the most compelling examples we have of “the how” behind Mark’s “what” are the different versions of “I’m Daaaaaat Nigga!!” that we have witnessed. Over the space of two years, we saw Mark deliver this poem to a packed house at a coffee shop, to a conference room crowded with compositionists, and to a small audience in an English department office. In each case, Mark performed his poem differently, or he performed a different poem, each iteration calibrated to the rhetorical situation at hand and attuned to such physical logistics as acoustics, space, and time allotted. Watching Mark make subtle adjustments—the taming of a broad gesture, the deliberate lowering of a shout—as he performed for us and the digital camera recording his work for this essay, we realized we were watching a powerful example of what it means for students today to be multiliterate and to master multimodal forms of communication.

### **Performance as Pedagogy**

That performance should become a primary teacher of literacy is not as far-fetched as it may at first seem. After all, gesture, movement, and talk have been part of literacy learning since the advent of reading and writing instruction, and we should all hear in our minds’ ears the recitations and orations staged by ancient grammar and progymnasmata exercises. And outside the

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classroom in literate cultures, talk as well as enactment have helped to circulate literate ideas and practices among not only readers, but also among those who are nonliterate and partly literate. In

our own time, studies conducted by linguists and neuroscientists remind us that embodying language—voicing and using gestural systems of signification—is a necessary precursor to early literacy acquisition. But classroom talk is too often desultory, focused on half-hearted discussions that are usually dominated by the teacher, and more often than not print-based. Our study students’ combined written and spoken performances indicate to us the need to restore performance to current considerations and thus to bring purposeful talk back to the center of the classroom. That is, we need to take seriously Kathleen Welch’s prescient insight that today the most important canon of rhetoric is delivery. Spoken word, drama, hip-hoperas, musical (song) reviews,

public protests, hunger strikes, nationally organized walkathons, live radio interviews, multimedia talks, conference presentations: these are some of the many forms that study students' composing takes. These are also some of the many genres whose conventions students manipulate as they combine words and images and sounds within the constraints of time and space to communicate their ideas and argue their most important points.

These examples remind us vividly that writing is both a powerful mode of direct, often personal communication and a form of highly mediated expression. With this in mind, we recognize that ours is no simple literate situation, and the scenes of writing in which students perform are not defined by the written or printed word alone, nor are they determined absolutely by the media and activities that Walter Ong associated with secondary orality: the electric technologies that make possible the phenomenon of 24/7 surround-sound split-screen cable-TV culture. Instead, students are writing and learning about writing in a culture of "secondary literacy," a term we use to name a literacy that is both highly inflected by oral forms, structures, and rhythms and highly aware of itself as writing, understood as variously organized and mediated systems of signification. Just as secondary orality was, according to Ong, "a more deliberate and self-conscious orality, based permanently on the use of writing and print" (136), so too is secondary literacy self-conscious, even at times ironic, as both Beth and Mark show us in their performances. Using *all* the means of literate persuasion, both students manipulate not only language, body, and voice, but also gender and racial stereotypes as they seek out ways to become legible within the university. As their performances help us to see, both old and new media are now the message, whether instant, text, or self-addressed stamped envelope, and students are not simply "writers" or "performers" per se. Instead, they are rhetors in both a classical and a distinctly modern—even postmodern—sense: individuals who, singly and in groups, participate in numerous communication situations that involve a dazzling, sometimes staggering, array of literate practices.

This is an observation that calls for a changed understanding of the relationship between performance and composition, a conversation already underway in combined departments of composition and communication, in programs adding oral communication to writing requirements, and in classrooms where presentations are more than convenient ways to end a term. Given the current popularity and prevalence of rap, hip-hop, and performance poetry, it makes sense to us to acknowledge the presence of performance in students' lives and in their early college experiences. Today's eighteen- and

nineteen-year-olds belong to a generation that learns to drive—if not to walk or crawl—on an information superhighway crowded with multiple media, and when these students arrive at school they take for granted the interplay between bodies, screens, and documents. Performance has a tremendous appeal for many of these students, and, during the early college years, we believe it helps them learn to work with different systems of signification in multiple modalities and to participate effectively as well as eloquently in a culture of secondary literacy.

How, then, can we incorporate performance into our classrooms and our pedagogies? How can we evaluate writing performances fairly and effectively when our students choose them as terminal assignments? And how can we learn from cross-cultural models of representation and communication, especially from communities in which silence and other nonverbal, nonlinguistic modes of expression play a major role?<sup>12</sup> As we seek our own answers to these broad and open-ended questions, we encourage teachers and students to turn to their own campuses and communities and to find ways to make use of the myriad performances already taking place there. All of us, for example, enact a combination of school roles, and regularly we engage in a variety of writing performances. We read aloud, and we ask students to read aloud; we stage formal debates; we invite students to dramatize texts; and some of us even

**In the future, we and others need to define a rhetoric (or several rhetorics) of performance, just as we need to develop strong rubrics for evaluating the different “writing” performances that our students complete for our classes.**

attempt to enact elements of complex arguments in order to call visual and physical attention to different aspects of rhetoric and writing. In addition, many of us are finding ways to incorporate multimodal writing into our curricula and to make use of different forms of delivery in

our pedagogies, whether or not we teach in so-called smart classrooms or subscribe to the principles of universal design. Certainly, for anyone teaching with technology, performance comes to the fore wherever networked work stations, electronic whiteboards, and other emergent teaching tools make writing “go live” in more ways than ever before.

In this essay, we begin the work of formulating vocabularies and theories for discussing these many writing performances. In the future, we and others need to define a rhetoric (or several rhetorics) of performance, just as we need to develop strong rubrics for evaluating the different “writing” performances that our students complete for our classes. Certainly, we will need to pay more attention to the fifth canon of rhetoric, delivery. It is as though, if we picture

the rhetorical triangle among sender, receiver, and message, our eyes should no longer rest on any one role, but should instead focus on the lines that connect them, lines that seem to shimmer and hum with the dynamism of those interrelationships. To express this activity—the “now-ness” of performance—we need a flexible critical vocabulary as well as a catalog of the writing and rhetorical situations that call for amplified, performative, and embodied argumentation of different kinds. Such tasks, we believe, will prompt us to revitalize our use of classical and modern heuristics (e.g., Aristotle’s canons of rhetoric, Kenneth Burke’s pentad) and, quite possibly, to expand our sense of the structures and elements of writing.

Here again, we are reminded of improv and especially of Viola Spolin’s handbook *Improvisation for the Theater*, which provides a series of heuristics for actors and, potentially, for teachers and students of writing. Part of a tradition that we might trace back to Aphthonius the Sophist, whose *Progymnasmata* is one of our earliest textbooks, Spolin’s work contributes a new voice to the conversation, as well as a series of exercises or games that teach students a flexible method of improvisational communication. Focusing on space, the body and the senses, the voice and language, character, emotion, objects, and interactions, Spolin asks students to engage actively with the complex dynamics of artist, audience, and text at the same time she encourages them to listen, to observe carefully, and to participate. From her exercises in gibberish, designed to develop fluency in “no-symbol” speech (122) to her spatial “orientation” games, which turn the mechanics of arrangement into physical activities (49–50), we see myriad possibilities for new lessons in some of writing’s and literacy’s most important concepts. In her list of the “Seven Aspects of Spontaneity” we find the basis for theorizing student-centered, group-oriented, audience-focused practices applicable to the demands of multimodal communication in a wide range of situations. And in Spolin’s “Reminders and Pointers,” we read a catalog of pedagogical precepts ready and waiting for writing instructors’ consideration.

These are just a few of the initial possibilities we see for incorporating performance into the writing classroom, and these are among the many areas of inquiry we are considering and the many questions about writing we are raising as the study proceeds into its fifth year. The importance of performance and writing is, for us, deeply connected to our larger goal: namely, to describe in detail the writing that students are doing and to use that information to question and perhaps to reconceive our understanding of the definition, future, and scope of writing in the twenty-first century.

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## Notes

1. Since the publication of Marilyn Sternglass's six-year study, which she conducted from 1989 to 1995, several subsequent studies based at a range of institutions have focused on a variety of student writers. Anne Herrington and Marcia Curtis published findings from their 1989–93 study of four basic writers at the University of Massachusetts in *Persons in Process: Four Stories of Writing and Personal Development in College*; Sharon Thomas, Julie Bevins, and Mary Ann Crawford conducted their four-year Portfolio Project with thirty-four students between 1993 and 1997 at Michigan State University, and their findings appear in "The Portfolio Project: Sharing Our Stories." Lee Ann Carroll reports on her 1994–98 study of twenty Pepperdine University students in *Rehearsing New Roles: How College Students Develop as Writers*, and Nancy Sommers and Laura Saltz discuss the first year of Sommers's four-year study at Harvard (1997–2001) in "The Novice as Expert: Writing the Freshman Year."

2. Signal research on these topics includes Anne Beaufort's *Writing in the Real World: Making the Transition from School to Work*; Patrick Dias, Aviva Freedman, Peter Medway, and Anthony Paré's *Worlds Apart: Acting and Writing in Academic and Workplace Contexts*; Anne Ruggles Gere's "Kitchen Tables and Rented Rooms: The Extracurriculum of Composition"; Lee Odell and Dixie Goswami's *Writing in Non-academic Settings*; and the essays collected by Rachel Spilka in *Writing in the Workplace: New Research Perspectives*.

3. In August of 2001, 243 students or 15 percent of the class of 2005 were selected by random sample and invited to participate in the Stanford Study of Writing. Ultimately, 189 students (roughly 12 percent of the class) accepted our invitation, signed consent forms, and became part of the study.

4. The turn to considering writing as performance grew for us not only out of the study, but also out of creating Stanford's first writing center, which we envisioned as the locus of the campus writing culture. As a result, the writing center features not only tutorials and workshops, but also slam-poetry contests, spoken-word performances, ten-minute drama nights, and many other events at which students perform.

5. We have written permission from all study participants to quote from their responses and writing. In this essay, we refer to Mark and Beth, by request, by their own names. All other students cited have been given pseudonyms.
6. In *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, Marvin Carlson presents the first book-length summary of the rise of performance studies, and Richard Schechner provides scholars with a useful resource in *Performance Studies: An Introduction*.
7. Survey information cited below has been taken from surveys administered electronically to all participants during the first and second years of the study.
8. Richard Schechner, theater director and theorist, was the first to describe performance as alternately efficacious and entertaining. As Jon McKenzie argues in *Perform or Else*, the dialectical distinction Schechner makes is central to contemporary, post-1950s notions of cultural performance. See especially McKenzie's Chapter 1, "The Efficacy of Cultural Performance" (29–53).
9. Pollock described her course and course goals in "The Performative 'I,'" a featured talk at the Conference on College Composition and Communication annual convention in 2003. As William Banks notes in his review of her presentation, Pollock's performative classroom has much in common with Peter Elbow's notion of "enacting thinking." Pollock's talk harked back to the "descriptive/prescriptive, practical/theoretical" list of performative writing characteristics she offered in an earlier article, "Performing Writing." For Pollock, performative writing is evocative (80), deliberately partial and incomplete (82), subjective (86), "nervous" or associative or genealogical (90–91), and citational (92).
10. We are aware of the long debate centered on David Bartholomae's often-reprinted essay, "Inventing the University," and of the criticism of any pedagogy that seeks to impose a particular literacy (in this case academic literacy) or set of literacies on students. In this essay, note that Mark and Beth are choosing certain forms of imitation to link self-sponsored writing to academic writing. For us, this distinction, and their decision to make this choice, are crucial.
11. As our colleague Marvin Diogenes has explained to us, based on his ongoing research into improvisation and the process movement, the idea of accepting all offers is a central tenet in improv, from Viola Spolin's 1963 handbook, *Improvisation for the Theater*, to recent Second City comedy troupe practices. For Spolin, whose work has nurtured generations of improv students, including Peter Elbow, the idea of acceptance is fundamental to the antiauthoritarian pedagogy central not only to improvisation, but also to theater and to communication in daily life. For Spolin believes that "*the techniques of the theater are the techniques of communicating*," and her series of exercises or games are designed to teach a flexible method of participating in different forms of exchange (14). For example, the "Yes, and"

game derived from Spolin's teachings, referred to in Jeffrey Sweet's *Something Wonderful Right Away*, asks performers to take and then add to whatever their partners have last said. An exercise in copia, memory, and trust, Spolin's game is also an exercise in invention with numerous uses for writers, including the use that Beth found.

12. Stanford's new second-year writing course, in which students give multiple oral presentations/performances that they can "draft" on videotape with feedback from instructor and peers before the live performance, provides one site for addressing such questions. We would like to hear of other similar courses and programs.

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**Jenn Fishman**

Jenn Fishman is assistant professor of English at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where she teaches on the Rhetoric, Writing, and Linguistics faculty. While her research with the Stanford Study of Writing continues, she is at work on new projects: classroom research, which investigates the effects of embodying literacy on teaching and learning in first-year writing, and a book manuscript, *Active Literacy and Rhetorical Traditions*, which examines the central role of embodied rhetorical practices and pedagogies in eighteenth-century rhetorical history.

**Andrea A. Lunsford**

Andrea A. Lunsford is Louise Hewlett Nixon Professor of English and director of the Program in Writing and Rhetoric at Stanford University. Her most recent book is *Crossing Borderlands: Composition and Postcolonial Studies*, edited with Lahoucine Ouzgane. In addition to completing the Stanford Study of Writing, she is at work on a study replicating the research she and Bob Connors conducted twenty years ago on error patterns in student writing.

**Beth McGregor**

Beth McGregor graduated from Stanford University in June, 2005 with a major in drama and a minor in human biology. While at Stanford, she sang in Talisman, an a capella group, and starred in and directed numerous dramatic performances, including her own one-woman comedy show, "Adding Insult to Injury." Next year, Beth will be attending the Stanford School of Education as a member of the Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP).

**Mark Otuteye**

Mark Otuteye in June 2005 graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Stanford University, where he received highest honors in his major, African and African American studies. In his first year, Mark helped to found the Stanford Spoken Word Collective, which performed at dozens of campus, school, and community activities, as well as at the 2005 Spoken Word Nationals. The collective was also the subject of Mark's senior thesis, which examined the group's collaborative composing practices. He will begin graduate study at Stanford next fall.