



April 2005

Teaching Ghazal

An unkindness of ravens flowing together
Beat wild with their wings, crowing together.

At sea the wind lashes, the couple is lost.
They bend their backs to it, rowing together.

Freedom saturates the moon-filled forest.
A bright pack of wolves howling together.

Their roots entwined, the maple and birch
Blaze into autumn growing together.

Dazzling colored scraps make a crazy quilt,
If only the women go on sewing together.

What birds, what beasts, these strange poets are
With Lynn in the classroom keep knowing together.

Lynn Wagner is a 2003 SIT fellow who has taught 5th graders in WPWP's Young Writers Institute and high school students for the Poetry Apprenticeship of the Allegheny Intermediate Unit. She recently completed an MFA at University of Pittsburgh and curates the Pittsburgh Poetry Calendar at www.poetz.com.

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A n n o u n c e m e n t s

*First Saturdays, Every Month

Remember, First Saturdays at Tazza d'oro coffee shop in Highland Park: 9a.m. to noon for informal writing and conversation. May 2nd will be hosted by Beth Voltz. June 4th will be hosted by Lucy Ware. July 2nd will be hosted by Nancy Addy. August 6th will be hosted by Pam McCune.



*Len Roberts Poetry Workshop

Tuesday, May 17, 2005 from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.— location to be announced. \$25.

*\$500 After School Grants Available

Thinking about starting a Teacher Writing Group at your school? Or, if you have another idea for an after school activity the WPWP can help you with, apply for a \$500 After School Grant. Contact Carolyn Luck for details.

*Memoir and Metaphor: A Bookmaking Class

On four Wednesdays (April 6, 13, 20, & 27) from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Ellis School, Faith Adiele and our own Barbara Dahlberg will guide a class in unlocking memories and creating a metaphor for your life.

*Ligonier Valley Writers School Poetry Contest

For students in grades 4-12 in Southwestern, PA, this contest offers contests in nine categories each with three cash prizes. For information and entry form please visit ligoniervalleywriters.org/schools.asp

*Be a Presenter at the 2005 NWP Annual Meeting

Session proposals for the 2005 NWP Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh, November 17-19, are being accepted online through May 9.
www.writingproject.org/cs/05am/view/nwp_e/147

*English Language Learners Network Writing Retreat

From June 23 - June 26, 2005 at Sunrise Springs Inn

and Retreat in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The ELL Network Writing Retreat offers participants the opportunity to write about teaching students in the process of learning English, and to consider how writing project sites can better serve teachers. The purpose of the retreat is to advocate improved education for English language learners and bilingual and indigenous students, who collectively represent a large, diverse, and growing population in both rural and urban areas. Deadline: April 18, 2005. For more information www.writingproject.org/cs/nwpp/print/nwp_e/124

*Writing and Technology: A Professional Writing Retreat

From August 4 - August 7, 2005 in Lied Lodge and Conference Center at Nebraska City, Nebraska. Are you experimenting with writing and technology in your classroom or at your writing project site? Have you used weblogs, email, the NWP E-Anthology, online chat rooms, or other forms of technology that help students or teachers write and learn? Come to this retreat and write about your experiences with technology and writing. Deadline: April 11, 2005
For more information please visit:
www.writingproject.org/cs/nwpp/print/nwp_e/129

P S S A F i e l d T e s t

Comments Wanted

Now that the PSSA writing field test has been administered, we are asking fellows to give us your thoughts and concerns about the test components and scoring guides. The PA Department of Education has been in an on-going dialog with the PA Network of Writing Projects. We would like to take this opportunity to take your responses back to the state. Please take a moment to write to us with your reactions to the PSSA writing test. You can send your responses to Carolyn Klug via email at cdklug@hotmail.com or to the project office. Thank for your time.

The Solidness in Change: Teaching the Ghazal

By Lynn Wagner

Once again, I had the pleasure of teaching Allegheny Intermediate Unit's Poetry Apprenticeship to our county's gifted high school students. It was fun to revisit structuring and teaching the class after my inaugural year of 2003, following the Summer Institute.

Each time I've taught a form somewhere two thirds of the way through the course. Usually I'm opposed to any "recipe" school of teaching poetry, by which I mean an unexamined application of "this plus this equals a poem." Any class anthology inevitably fills with a dozen 'this is just to say' poems, or some such and I'm never quite sure what students have learned. This is *not* to say that I'm opposed to models, just that I think we need to immerse ourselves in them to know what we are teaching. When I teach Pablo Neruda's odes to fourth graders, I want them to learn about close observation and variety, about celebration ("o fathomless cat") and metaphor (Ode to Clouds: "heaven's clothing / petals, perfect fish / of summertime:"). The key to models is reading broadly and divining common characteristics to teach.

I'm fascinated that closed forms such as the sonnet or the villanelle have existed for centuries and have been reborn into languages other than their own. I teach form to introduce students to discipline, to pushing the rules. Form connects us to history and most certainly to the aural aspects of poetry. Most forms derive from songs or chants; they were ways to carry ideas before the widespread use of books. The ghazal has the further advantage of introducing students to another culture and another way building a poem.

The essential anthology is Agha Shahid Ali's *Ravishing Disunities: Real Ghazals in English*. Ali, a Kashmiri-American who died in 2001, did much to promote the popularity of the ghazal form in English. In the adjacent box are excellent resources on the web

concerning the origins and characteristics of the form and I especially like teaching students the proper names for the ghazal's intricacies. As Dr. Arshad Jamaal writes, in an article translated by Abhay Avachat, "Ghazal is a collection of Sher's in which there is at least one 'Matla', one 'Maqta' and all the Sher's are of same 'Beher' and have the same 'Kaafiyaa' and 'Radif'." To know what that means is to truly understand the form.

I think of ghazals as having a solidness in change. On first reading, their repetition is obvious, but it is the 'Kaafiyaa,' the embedded rhyming word within the line that strikes me as unique from Western forms. Then there is the disunity of Ali's "ravishing disunities" that students find hardest to attain. Reading many ghazals would help with this mind leaping.

"Teaching Ghazal" is the *almost* third ghazal I've written. My first attempt of three years ago proved I was very misinformed about the ghazal's structure. I wrote a second ghazal this past summer before preparing to teach my class. I have tucked "Teaching Ghazal" into the AIU's class anthology, where it sits comfortably among the half dozen ghazals the students chose to publish with rest of their work. I wanted my poem to express the culminating unity that develops in an active classroom striving in learning. For me, that solidness in change is one of most exciting things about teaching.

What is a Ghazal. Avachat, Abhay.

<www.cs.wisc.edu/~navin/india/songs/ghalib/ghazal.def.html>

Another Definition, Ali, Agha Shahid.

<members.aol.com/poetrynet/ghazals/>

When I say 'ghazal,' I mean 'ghuzzle'. Doty, Gene Doty.

<web.umar.edu/~gdoty/poems/essays/ghazals.html>

Ali, Agha Shahid, Ed.. *Ravishing disunities : real ghazals in English.* Wesleyan University Press : (2000).

Join the NWP Online Community!

What is NWP Interactive?

NWP Interactive (NWPi) is the National Writing Project's online community of teachers, writing project site leaders, and staff who are interested in sharing tools, resources, and strategies for furthering their work as educators and writing project participants.

Why should I join?

- Keep in touch with the growing national community of writing project practitioners.
- Enjoy all the benefits of belonging to an online community: ready access to the updated information, the ability to register for upcoming events, and automatic subscriptions to E-Voice, NWP's bi-monthly electronic newsletter.
- Join the discussion groups on specific topics and find out about events, resources, and cross-site projects.
- Access a directory of names and email addresses of NWPi members across the country.
- Learn more about NWP's special-focus networks—the English Language Learners Network, Rural Sites Network, Teacher Inquiry Communities Network, and Urban Sites Network. These groups use their online discussion forums to share resources, ideas, and questions about practice. The forums are also an important venue for collegial interaction about current events and network-related concerns. Subscribe now to get in touch with your colleagues and become an active member of these networks.
- Joining NWPi is fast, free, and easy!

National Writing Project Teacher Exchange Program

An exciting opportunity for NWP sites to develop teacher leaders...

The National Writing Project Teacher Exchange (TEX) Program supports the development of NWP sites by offering promising teacher-consultants (TCs) a unique opportunity for cross-site collaboration and travel. TEX TCs and their site directors tell us that they return to their home sites with a wealth of program ideas and a renewed sense of the own professionalism.

Teacher exchanges are initiated by the local site director and site leadership. With the support of their home sites and TEX, participating teacher-consultants visit another NWP site for the purposes of networking by sharing resources and program ideas and, in some cases, by engaging in follow-up cross-site collaboration and inquiry.

The goals and purposes of the individual NWP site as well as the strength and professional interest of the exchange TC determine the type of exchange. For more information, visit: www.writingproject.org/Programs/te/index.html If you are interested in developing a teacher exchange, contact the Project office.

Join the Conversation!

April 11-22, 2005

NWP Authors and Issues Online

Hosted by the Rural Sites Network

You are invited to:

Participate in a discussion about place-conscious teaching and learning

Share experiences about teaching and living in small towns

Discuss issues that challenge rural schools and communities today

Learn more about teacher-as-writer publications

Exchange ideas about site-based programs that support teachers in rural areas



Registration for the event will take place via NWP Interactive on the NWP website in March 2005

Featuring:

Robert E. Brooke, Editor

&

Sharon Bishop and Robyn Dalton, Teacher-Researchers

Contributors to the book, *Rural Voices: Place-Conscious Education and the Teaching of Writing*

It is not necessary to have read the book in order to participate, but books are available at a discount through the NWP website.

For more information, go to:

www.writingproject.org/cs/nwpp/print/nwp_e/135

Strategic Plan Update

In two separate sessions on February 19, a group of fellows and WPWP staff members gathered to discuss two integral programs of this project: youth and community writing (namely, the Young Writers Institute) and the Summer Institute for Teachers.

Both sessions were held together by a set of Belief Statements put together by the Small Planning Group. They were as follows:

1. If the WPWP serves teachers in eight counties, then we would...
2. If we believe in the integration of technology and writing, then we would...
3. If the best teachers of writing are teachers who write, then we would...
4. If professional development is ongoing and shaped by teachers, then we would...
5. If we want to nurture our WPWP community, then we would...
6. If WPWP is teacher-centered and teacher led, then we would...
7. If reflective writing about teaching is a powerful form of learning and communication, then we would...
8. If we believe universities and schools can be effective partners, then we would...
9. If we value open communication throughout the WPWP, then we would...

At breaks and other opportunities, the session participants were encouraged to take time to record their thoughts on the chart papers posted next to each of the previous statements around the room.

Throughout the sessions, the participants were reminded of the goals and ideals of the Writing Project in their efforts to bring about questions and con-

cerns regarding Youth and Community Writing, and the Summer Institute for Teachers.

Melanie Taormina facilitated the former of the two sessions. Fellows raised concerns about the staffing choices for the YWI, the lack of service given to rural counties, transportation issues, the current rate of full scholarships (35%). Also, the possibility for the YWI institute to act as a bridge between the SIT and classroom practice.

Many fellows noted that the current MFA/Fellow model for teaching has been very fruitful and dy-

There was no outcry to overhaul the program, and it was clear that the YWI has been a lasting, functional, and positive institution for the WPWP.

amic in producing teacher experimentation, and in fostering an environment that is very different from the normal school-writing environment.

This session was one of the first opportunities for many fellows to be exposed to the ideas in the "Marshall Plan" — a monograph out of the Oklahoma Writing Project that proposes an more localized Young Writers Institute that is both fiscally solvent and easy to set up in local school districts. The "Marshall Plan" presents a very different method to the WPWP's Young Writers Institute, and perhaps may be used as an alternative or in conjunction with our current model.

The general themes for the discussion clustered around four themes: program and staffing concerns, the professional development aspect of YWI, issues of diversity and accessibility for students and teachers, and community and continuity within and across the sites.

There was no outcry to overhaul the program, and it was clear that the YWI has been a lasting, functional,

and positive institution for the WPWP. Marnie Arnold facilitated the afternoon session on the Summer Institute for Teachers—the dynamic process that all fellows share as a common history. The session began with a remembrance of the intensity, the sanctuary, and the enormous amount of work done while in the SIT. Part of this was a “State of the Union”, given by Lucy Ware, recalling how the SIT has changed in the past 18 years.

Over the years, the Summer Institute for Teachers has attempted to accommodate as many different teachers as possible from a variety of geographies and races. However, one primary issue was recruitment, the invitational process and who, by default is excluded from the Summer Institute.

Additionally, who becomes excluded after the SIT, by not participating in continuity events designed for fellows. Issues of SIT practices, the desire to stay current, the pressure to share, and create knowledges useful for other teachers. Or how to encourage participation in the dialogue that takes place on the national level.

Also, there was a desire to keep the Summer Institute small, preferably less than 18, in order to foster not only an intimate dialogue about writing and teacher, but also to help forge real friendships and connections between fellows, and allowing for a depth of individual guidance to be given by SIT directors.

The sessions seemed to express that the limitations of the Summer Institute for Teachers were the limitations of the WPWP—geographic isolation, for example, in the SIT carries out to the WPWP as an inability to serve eight counties.

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However, the abundance of opportunities presented in the Summer Institutes are also the opportunities of the WPWP. The chance to share ideas about teaching and writing in the SIT carry into the events and dialogue of the WPWP. What remains is that at the heart of the Writing Projects is the Summer Institute—it is where teachers make their connections to the ideals of the Project and where the Project expands its possibilities.

Many have commented on how this Strategic Planning process is so vastly different than the previous two, of which the first was carried out by consultants outside the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project, and the second was carried out by a small group drawn from Fellows Council. In comparison, this process seems to have little in common with the first one—sessions are run, facilitated, and recorded by fellows and staff whose investment in the Writing Project is professional, and also committed. The participants bring ideas, ideals, and passion to the tables at each session. The facilitators bring not only the ability to listen and discern, but they create a safe environment for the many voices that are represented.

Many thanks to Melanie Taormina and Marnie Arnold for their facilitation and to all who participated in this session. Please check the website regarding the March 19th session on School-Based Professional Development and Continuity Events.

A great deal of information is on the website: visit wpawritingproject.org and click on *Strategic Planning*.

Watch this space in the Bulletin for updates on the strategic planning process and for opportunities to participate in guiding the future of the WPWP.

Dearest Reader,

This is the final Bulletin for the school year 2004-2005, and is therefore the final bulletin I will be editing. My tenure as Graduate Assistant for the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project will conclude at the end of this month.

I would like to thank you all for your kindness and inspiration. I have been truly impressed by your professional commitment and passion to the ideals of the Writing Project.

While I don't know what my next step is, I am considering spending a few years in Cairo, Egypt (just to work the wetness out of my system). If you wish to reach me, my personal email address is oliverakhan@yahoo.com

Be excellent to each other,

Oliver

Oliver Khan, Bulletin Editor

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*The best teachers for writing are teachers who write.
The National Writing Project*