

1-1-2017

## Review Essay: C'est Impossible/Impossible n'est pas francais

Frankie Condon

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/wcj>

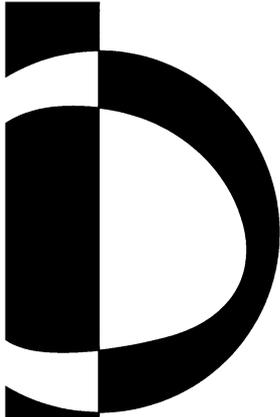
---

### Recommended Citation

Condon, Frankie (2017) "Review Essay: C'est Impossible/Impossible n'est pas francais," *Writing Center Journal*: Vol. 36 : Iss. 1, Article 10.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2832-9414.1822>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries.  
Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.



Frankie Condon

**Review Essay: *C'est Impossible/  
Impossible n'est pas français***

***Other People's English: Code-  
Meshing, Code-Switching, and  
African American Literacy and  
Survivance, Sovereignty, and  
Story: Teaching American Indian  
Rhetorics***

---

The first phrase in the title of this review translates from French as “it is impossible.” The second is a French proverb that literally translated means “impossible isn’t French” and figuratively translates as “there’s no such thing as can’t.” The proverb points out that “impossible” is not a French word, but also suggests, perhaps, a national ethos or *esprit de corps*: an expression of rhetorical sovereignty that claims both a cultural identity and a web of affiliative relations within that identity. Both

The Writing Center Journal 36.1 | 2017 217

phrases are examples of intrasentential code-meshing, but not of the sort likely to set off the alarm bells of the keepers of Edited American English (EAE) as French continues to be received as a high-status language—even and perhaps especially among those who do not speak, read, or write in it frequently or very fluently. To weave French into one’s English sentences (or, occasionally, English into one’s French sentences) suggests linguistic sophistication at best or, at worst, a certain pretentiousness in the writer. And yet the phrase “*impossible n’est pas français*” might suggest instead the rhetor’s gest with the limitations of language-singular: that some quite serious things one wants or needs to say—or that need to be said—cannot be said in one language or expressed through a single rhetorical tradition, but can be said in another; that there is pleasure to be had by both writers and readers from playing among and between languages and rhetorical traditions; that far from prohibiting understanding, the mixing and blending of languages, discourses, situational conventions, and even rhetorical traditions might deepen and extend our ability to communicate nuance and complexity across languages, cultures, identities, and communal, local, and national affiliations.

For over 20 years, I have been attending conference panels and delivering my own conference papers, reading published material, and publishing my own articles, chapters, and books that include a call for writing centres to offer some critical account in our pedagogical practice of racism in the teaching of tutors and tutoring in writing and to at least consider what might constitute an antiracist writing centre theory and practice. And of all the concerns and objections I have heard raised in response to this body of work, the ones that seem to me most common, most sincere, and most troubling are these: that we don’t know how to teach and tutor linguistic and rhetorical diversity (often expressed as the claim that to do so is impossible) and/or that we continue to fear that to encourage and foster such diversity among our students will set them up for failure within and beyond the academy—for though we are not racists and do not subscribe to linguistic and rhetorical intolerance, the world is and does. We need to prepare our students—particularly those whose mother tongues and rhetorical traditions have historically been marked as Other and deficient in contrast to EAE—so this reasoning goes, to survive in a white supremacist world. To overturn, transform, or even to intervene in systemic and institutional racism (particularly as they pertain to linguistic and rhetorical diversity) from the writing centre is impossible.

The first concern is, I think, at least partially true. We have some work to turn to within our field to begin to learn how to prepare our

tutors and ourselves to encourage, support, and teach linguistic and rhetorical diversity, but not enough. We need to learn more. Scholarship that does address theory, practice, and pedagogy of language diversity (and its intersections with racial justice) is largely being produced outside the field of writing centre studies: in the broader field of composition, rhetoric, and communication. The second concern is provisionally true. That is, so long as we allow our ignorance to drive our practice, our efforts at antiracist writing centre theory and practice will be inadequate. Further, as the Persian poet Hafiz (1999) once wrote, “What / We speak / Becomes the house we live in” (p. 281). Displacing responsibility for the ways in which racism inflects and informs the reception of othered languages, discourses, and rhetorical traditions—and the speakers and writers of those languages, discourses, and traditions—within and beyond the academy will never alleviate the degree to which writing centre directors and tutors are implicated. We are not merely following orders, as it were, but following orders we know to be unjust. If we speak for and gate keep on behalf of racist linguistic and rhetorical intolerance and exclusion, that’s the house in which we will live. And if we tutor student-writers to do the same, then that’s the house in which they will live as well.

While there is no easy exit from the morass of racial politics in North America and the roles assigned to teachers of writing, reading, and speaking within that morass, there are alternatives to thoughtlessly going along. If there is insufficient work within the field of writing studies to teach us how to think more deeply and effectively about antiracist pedagogical practice in the writing centre, then perhaps we may find aid in published scholarship outside the field, as well as inspiration and a firmer footing for producing our own. In this regard, two recently published books stand out to me as offering both a richly developed theoretical framework and teaching advice that can easily be transferred from the classroom to the writing centre context: *Other People’s English: Code-Meshing, Code-Switching, and African American Literacy*, written by Vershawn Ashanti Young, Rusty Barrett, Y’Shanda Young-Rivera, & Kim Brian Lovejoy (2014) (published by Teachers College Press), and *Survivance, Sovereignty, and Story: Teaching American Indian Rhetorics*, edited by Lisa King, Rose Gubele, & Joyce Rain Anderson (2015b) (published by Utah State University Press).

*Other People’s English* is a collaboratively authored book in which four teacher-writers, each of whom has contributed three interconnected essays, critique the assumptions underlying current (traditional) writing pedagogy and counter those assumptions with alternative analyses, teaching tips, and queries with which readers can engage. All

of the essayists compose in a conversational tone—indeed the book is organized as a dialogue between its writers and readers. While their arguments are rigorously made and their critiques pointed, this is a book that invites the reader in and that does not assume consensus but works for an informed, thoughtful, and careful conversation among teachers and students in such fields as teacher education, composition and rhetoric, and, I think, writing centre studies as well.

Each essay in the volume begins with a clearly articulated concern that the writer will address as well as a succinct overview. Each writer comes to the conversation from distinct, if overlapping, disciplinary backgrounds. Barrett is a linguist; Young, from African American, writing, and communication studies; Young-Rivera, from teacher education; and Lovejoy, from writing, literacy, and language studies. Each writer addresses language and rhetorical diversity—code-meshing—from their disciplinary vantage point for an audience of both students and scholars. The design of this book—its arrangement, tone, and substance—make it ideal for use in an undergraduate or graduate course for peer tutoring in writing. The weight of the arguments presented here, as well as the clarity of their articulation, make the book exceptionally usable for writing centre scholars and directors.

Barrett's essays on linguistics, grammaticality, and language ideology begin the volume. In them, Barrett demonstrates the grammaticality of all language and the role language ideology plays in establishing and sustaining the status of languages relative to one another. From the perspective of a linguist, Barrett makes a critical, qualitative distinction between metaphorical code-switching (intrasentential, or within a single utterance or sentence), situational code-switching (intersentential, or between sentences or contexts), and code-shifting (the laying aside of one language in favour of another; when visiting France, speak French, for example). Barrett points out that when we are advocating for and teaching situational code-switching, we are in fact teaching toward a code-shift, requiring speakers and writers of languages other than EAE to speak and write in that language. Barrett notes the differences between learning and moving between two or more different languages and moving between different dialects of the same language. He argues that language ideology and bias do more to inform our valuations of othered dialects than their (un)grammaticality, for no language or dialect is, in fact, ungrammatical. In his final essay, Barrett outlines a variety of language and dialect teaching methods, noting the intellectual tradition from which each method emerges. He demonstrates the limitations of approaches that draw from and enact language bias in the

classroom as well as the array of negative impacts—harms, in fact—that the enactment of such bias has on student-writers and speakers.

In Part II of *Other People's English*, Young lays out the case for code-meshing in clear, compelling, and unequivocal terms. In his first essay, Young explains the racial politics at work in language ideology that privileges EAE over and against othered varieties of English, particularly African American Englishes. He points out the implicit or agentic racism that shapes teachers' "address" of linguistic racism by "putting another dialect, evidently one favoured by those perpetrating prejudice, in the mouths of the disadvantaged" (p. 55). Young suggests that teaching students of colour to speak and write the favoured dialect rather than addressing the racism that, among other harms it inflicts, promotes that dialect over and against students' own languages constitutes a kind of resignation to racism, in general, and to linguistic intolerance, in particular. In this first essay, Young advocates for a code-meshing pedagogy that teaches the conflicts associated with language use: the power dynamics that inform the reception, valuation, privileging, and disenfranchising not only of dialects but also of their speakers and writers. He urges teachers to acknowledge and address conditions of racism and linguistic intolerance in their classrooms and beyond, rather than merely capitulating to them. Finally, Young notes the ubiquity of code-meshing in public discourse, both professional and political, and the relative silence of the teaching profession on the prevalence and rhetorical value of code-meshing. He argues that teaching more people to avail themselves of the linguistic and rhetorical potency of code-meshed Englishes is a more politically responsible and pedagogically efficacious approach to the teaching of writing for all students.

In his second and third essays, Young expands his argument for the teaching of code-meshing. He lays out the costs of code-switching practice and pedagogy to students of colour. Drawing on prior scholarship by Suresh Canagarajah, Kermit Campbell, John Ogbu, and Signithia Fordham, Young argues that these costs include the breeding of animosity within and beyond communities of colour, fostering and increasing negative attitudes toward African American Englishes, not only among white students but also among African American students, and the linguistic confusion that results from the exaggeration of grammatical differences between Englishes and the occlusion of mutuality between them. Young closes the essay with a call to reframe code-switching by teaching "how the semantics and rhetoric of African American English are compatible/combinable and in many ways are already features of Standard English, and vice-versa" (p. 75): to teach code-meshing, in

other words, in order to expand and enrich the linguistic and rhetorical repertoire of all students.

Young-Rivera draws on 20 years of experience as a teacher and administrator in Chicago public schools, as well as knowledge gained as an educational consultant in her contributions to *Other People's English*. She writes as an educator who, by her own account, resisted arguments for the teaching of code-meshing and who came see its value only after setting herself a course of study of the practice of code-meshing in public discourse, prior scholarship advocating linguistic inclusiveness in the teaching of writing (including the texts associated with the National Council of Teachers of English's landmark resolution on "Students Rights to their Own Language"), and her own survey of language teachers advocacy for or rejection of code-meshing and its associated pedagogies.

In her first essay, Young-Rivera traces her own journey from resistant interlocutor to an advocate for educational experimentation with the theory and practice of teaching code-meshing. In her second essay, Young-Rivera points out the mutuality of aims articulated in the Common Core with those of code-meshing advocates. She uses two case studies to describe the questions or issues the teaching of code-meshing might take up and the means by which teachers engaging with code-meshing might proceed. Young-Rivera then outlines a unit she designed and taught for a class of 20 eighth graders as well as a unit designed and taught for a class of fourth and fifth graders, with learning goals and outcomes. In her final essay, she refutes the notion that code-meshing is incompatible with educational reform efforts. Young-Rivera reminds readers that the relationship between "self confidence, self efficacy, and success" in student learning has been indisputably established and issues a call for educational reformers to open themselves to study and experimentation with language arts pedagogies predicated on linguistic as well as cultural diversity and inclusion (p. 117).

Finally, Lovejoy extends the teaching focus of *Other People's English* to the post-secondary writing classroom. In his first essay, Lovejoy recounts an initial foray into the teaching of code-meshing and resistance to that approach not from students, but from a racially diverse group of colleagues. Lovejoy concludes his account not with a conversion story, but rather with an acknowledgment of the complexity of learning as well as of the racial politics associated with the teaching of writing. Rather than constructing a new doxa, Lovejoy argues for teaching "the expansive, large version [of EAE] that can be code-meshed with other dialects" (p. 129). Rather than suppressing or ignoring possible student

objections to this approach, Lovejoy advocates against the stigmatization of the linguistic and rhetorical choices of Othered students, as well as for teacherly openness to the choice some students may make to compose in EAE.

In his second essay, Lovejoy carefully defines expressive writing, deconstructing reductive assumptions about the practice that confine it to “self-expression” and occlude its value to the meaningful articulation of perspective on the world, reflection about relations between world and the self as well as about learning, and engagement of a more full linguistic and rhetorical repertoire. Building on his analysis of the value of expressive writing, in this essay, Lovejoy advocates for the inclusion of self-directed writing in the composition classroom as a means to encourage linguistic and rhetorical experimentation among students and to include students in drafting, revising, editing, and publishing practices that are driven by a more expansive and inclusive understanding of language variety. In his final essay, Lovejoy notes that bad academic writing is not bad because it is code-meshed, but rather because it fails to effectively emulate the conventions we most closely associate with EAE. In fact, he notes, we frequently encounter code-meshed writing that works these conventions with remarkable efficacy and to great rhetorical effect in scholarly publications. Our challenge, suggests Lovejoy, is to learn how to teach this composing practice well. In this context, he explores ways of creating and sustaining trusting communities of writers who code-mesh within the writing classroom in which writing as a social process is recognized and addressed. Lovejoy concludes with the advice that teaching code-meshing has the potential to enliven and more fully engage not only students in their own textual production, but also teachers with their subjects and the learning of their students.

*Survivance, Sovereignty, and Story: Teaching American Indian Rhetorics* is a similarly accessible and inviting book. In their introduction to the essays collected in this volume, editors King, Gubele, & Anderson (2015a) affirm not only the value but the centrality of story to the worlds we make and inhabit, to the relations we create and affirm, and to the recognition and acknowledgment we offer or withhold to speakers and writers. They note the degree to which colonial stories privilege a master rhetorical tradition (Greco-Roman) over and against others. The book, note King, Gubele, & Anderson, is designed to invite readers to imagine and experiment with “breaking precedent with the master story,” particularly as that story cathects indigenous rhetorics (p. 4). They note that to study indigenous texts and to teach indigenous rhetorics requires recognition of the importance of sovereignty to indigenous nations, cultures, and the diversity of indigenous peoples and

positions, as well as cross-cultural understanding. Drawing on Gerald Vizenor (1994), the volume's editors define survivance as simultaneous survival and resistance: an active presence in and through stories that renounce "dominance, tragedy, and victimry" (p. 7). Teaching survivance, they suggest, "is then an act of recognition: acknowledging the ongoing presence and work of indigenous peoples, particularly the way indigenous communities negotiate language and rhetorical practice in a paracolonial world" (pp. 7–8). The editors note the intersections and interdependence between political and rhetorical sovereignty, arguing that "recognizing indigenous sovereignty as part of rhetorical practice recognizes both an American Indian nation's rights as a nation and the nation's and its rhetors' rhetorical choices as part of that frame" (p. 8). This recognition, they argue, is fundamental to any "appropriate, respectful, and historically accurate discussion of American Indian texts" (p. 8). The web of relations between sovereignty, survivance, and story constitute a frame within which a decolonial pedagogical practice might be imagined and enacted.

Each essay collected in *Survivance, Sovereignty, and Story* offers both theoretical insight and an exploration of the implications of that insight for teaching. While these essays may require more intellectual labour on the part of writing centre readers to recognize the transportability of the theory and practice articulated here to a writing centre context, this is work worth doing. And, lest an obstacle to writing centre uptake be that familiar plaint that "our tutors and student-writers are nearly all white" (and diverting around the problematic determinism implicit in such a claim), this collection is particularly aimed at supporting the teaching of indigenous rhetorics in classrooms (and, I would add, writing centres) where students and teachers are non-Native.

Contributors to this volume include Janice Gould, Resa Crane Bizzaro, Sundy Watanabe, Qwo-Li Driskill, Gabriela Raquel Ríos, Kimberli Lee, Andrea Riley-Mukavetz, Malea Powell, Jessica Safran Hoover, and Angela Haas. Each of the editors has also contributed an essay to the collection. There are too many essays in the book to address them all in the space of a single review. Instead, I want to focus on a few terms and concepts that may be introduced in a single essay, but have relevance to or may be traced through all of the essays in some way or another. Further, these terms and concepts have, I think, particular relevance to writing centre theory and practice. I am particularly concerned, however, that readers of this review not assume that because I am writing specifically about only a few essays, the others are not worth reading. They are—and once you've begun reading the collection, you'll not want to put it down.

King's (2015) essay, "Sovereignty, Rhetorical Sovereignty, and Representation," introduces readers to concepts key to indigenous rhetorics. In defining and elaborating these terms, King notes that a limited understanding of them may lead teachers (and their students) to misunderstand and misrepresent indigenous texts and the rhetorical traditions out of which those texts emerge and to resituate indigenous texts within the amorphous category of work by "minority" writers. In current parlance, sovereignty, she writes, derives its meaning from European, Euro-American, and indigenous understandings. Rather than drawing on Enlightenment notions of the individual and individual rights and powers safeguarded by a nation-state as do European and Euro-American conceptions of sovereignty, for indigenous peoples, sovereignty emerges from an understanding of peoplehood, "a concept," she writes, "that has its roots in the preservation and prospering of the community and binds its members together in cultural and often religious terms" (p. 19). And, King points out, culture and religion bear an intimate, integral relation to the land inhabited by indigenous peoples. She reminds readers, however, of the local, situational, and context-driven nature of indigenous understandings and applications of sovereignty. The concept will be understood differently in different contexts or within differing political frames and exigencies, but always linked to the imperative to preserve and sustain indigenous peoplehoods that include cultures, languages, religions, and lands that are their progenitors.

King urges readers to learn more about the registers and valences of Euro-American representations of indigenous peoples, as well as about indigenous interventions in and resistance to them. She traces briefly historical legacies of the "Indian," the "savage," the "noble savage," and the "vanishing Indian," describing the relationship between representations of indigenous peoples by Euro-Americans and shifting historical contexts and ideologies. And, King argues, representations and their constructions of "Indian" continue to morph, adapting to the purposes of those who create and deploy them. To study indigenous rhetorical traditions and practices demands recognition of the ways in and degrees to which the indigenous rhetors continue to survive and to resist Euro-American representation.

This point brings King to Lyons' concept of rhetorical sovereignty and to the efforts of indigenous rhetors to resist and counter the culture and word wars waged against indigenous peoples by Euro-Americans across historical moments and social contexts. "To claim rhetorical sovereignty," writes King, "is to claim the right to determine commu-

nicative need and the right to participate in the process of public image making and meaning making” (p. 26).

In the second half of her essay, King explores the pedagogical implications of these key concepts and the differing forms of empowerment and engagement their uptake enables for Native and non-Native students. She posits a general writing/rhetoric course and elaborates the ways in which an advertisement analysis assignment might advance general learning goals as well as address the misrepresentations of indigenous peoples in advertising. While the specificity of the course and assignment King describes might seem at first glance inapplicable to writing centre theory and practice, I am struck by the value there might be for writing centre pedagogy in cultivating tutor understanding that not all writing teachers privilege (or gate keep) the rhetorical tradition that has historically dominated the academy—a tradition that frequently excludes indigenous epistemologies and meaning-making practices including story. Further, tutors should be prepared to offer culturally appropriate and meaningful support to indigenous student writers exercising their own rhetorical sovereignty, as well as for non-Native writers seeking to compose themselves and their relations in resistance to the array of cultural misrepresentations and appropriations to which we are all continuously exposed.

Such projects as preparing tutors to recognize indigenous rhetorical traditions, to respect the rhetorical sovereignty of indigenous writers, and to provide culturally competent and appropriate support to both indigenous writers and non-Native writers seeking to resist and counter rhetorical (and linguistic) imperialism might be understood as purposefully resonant with calls by such scholars as Marker, Miheuah, and Powell to indigenize the academy. These scholars advocate not only for greater inclusion of indigenous literature and scholarship, but also for an opening up of the academy to new languages, new epistemologies, and pedagogical practices that enable relations characterized by reciprocity and by respect (Watanabe, 2015). Reading *Survivance, Sovereignty, and Story* from the vantage point of the writing centre should lead us to ask what indigenizing the writing centre might look like or feel like and how our practice might be transformed by such a move—how we might be changed, too.

In Sundy Watanabe’s (2015) essay, “Socioacupuncture Pedagogy,” we might find the beginnings of an answer to those questions as well as language for imagining an indigenized writing centre pedagogy. Drawing on Anishinabe scholar Gerald Vizenor’s (1994) concept of socioacupuncture, Watanabe sketches a pedagogical practice that works by “pricking or needling the social consciousness” (p. 36). Rather than

effacing and eliding difference, either through epistemological, cultural, or rhetorical monologism or through claims of “colourblindness”—obliviousness to difference—or of an outright absence of difference, socioacupuncture pedagogy goes quite deliberately to an address of or confrontation with difference. In this sense, Watanabe notes, socioacupuncture pedagogy may be unsettling for both teachers and students. However, she notes the practice directs focus and energy at those nodes of thought and action where positive movement is obstructed and is aimed at release and healing. Socioacupuncture pedagogy, writes Watanabe, builds and sustains “respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and relationship” (p. 37). Its practice depends upon shared interest, commitment, engagement, and labour. As Watanabe notes, it is important to use only those terms one understands and to use them only if one is actually doing the work they describe. Writing centre directors and tutors interested in understanding socioacupuncture pedagogy well and exploring its potential in the context of our centres will do well to read Watanabe’s essay in its entirety, as well as to read her source material—particularly Vizenor’s (1994) masterpiece, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance*.

Finally, in their essay, “Decolonial Skillshares: Indigenous Rhetorics as Radical Practice,” Driskill (2015) advocates for embodied learning through the teaching and learning of indigenous languages, rhetorical traditions, and maker-practices. Driskill situates this learning, though, within radical politics aimed at decolonizing the academy, the classroom, and the curriculum as well as on cultivating transcultural, transracial relations characterized by mutual understanding, respect, and reciprocity—through the embodied sharing of knowledge. Driskill traces their experience and development of the practice of decolonial skillshare to a history of activism within queer and trans communities of color, locating the concept, however, in punk and anarchist communities seeking to resist and intervene in authoritarianism and capitalism through the cooperative sharing of a variety of “do-it-yourself skills” (p. 60). Driskill notes that the skillsharing practices of these communities, however, tend to be dominated by white, middle-class men who reproduce the very hegemonic power they seek to disrupt through the exclusion of meaningful analyses of racism, sexism, queerphobia, and colonialism. And so, Driskill develops and theorizes a counter practice that disrupts and subverts the justifications, logics, and practices of colonialism.

Driskill describes three decolonial skillshares they regularly enact in their classroom: the teaching of indigenous language (for 10 to 20 minutes at the start of each class meeting); the weaving of wampum and

the use of wampum records for a wampum recitation; and the weaving of baskets. Driskill identifies as a Cherokee language learner and reminds readers that one need wait to begin teaching a language until one is fluent in it. Citing Darrell Kipp, a teacher of the Blackfeet language, Driskill urges readers to begin learning an indigenous language and to begin teaching students as we learn. The practice of teaching an indigenous language, Driskill suggests, re-centers the study of indigenous rhetorical traditions within indigenous language and culture, rather than through the lenses of the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition and its Euro-American interpretation. Wampum, Driskill notes, has historically been used for the purposes of recording and communicating history and recording agreements. In teaching wampum weaving and recitation, Driskill provides readings designed to help students understand and engage with wampum rhetorics. In the closing stages of the wampum project, Driskill invites students to give a wampum recitation using the record of their wampum to guide their speech. Finally, Driskill describes using basket weaving in a course designed to teach graduate students to compose teaching philosophies. Driskill describes a classroom setting in which students gather together to weave and, as they weave, to share stories and explore their ideas about their pedagogical commitments. Driskill closes the essay with a meditation on the value of embodied learning to the decolonizing of education. There is learning, Driskill writes, in the physical practices of making; in the sharing of story and the building of community; in learning to make by asking questions, receiving feedback, and collaborating; in the relationship of students to their teacher; and in learning through teaching, itself.

Driskill's essay is suggestive, I think, for writing centre scholars and directors in ways that are similar to Watanabe's. What would it mean, writing centre readers might ask, to work toward the decolonization of the writing centre by disrupting and subverting manifestations of colonialism in the spaces we design, in the relations we cultivate and sustain, and in our own pedagogical practice? Can we imagine a writing centre in which conversations about writing occur as we gather together with indigenous teachers and students to learn to weave a basket or to craft a wampum record of one of our own stories? Can we imagine the writing centre as a site that recognizes and acknowledges indigenous sovereignty over the land on which our universities have been erected? A writing centre that includes in its mission the teaching of indigenous languages and rhetorical traditions? We can learn, I think, to re-imagine our work in these ways, and we can be brave and smart and kind enough to try.

Several years ago, the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery on the campus of the University of Nebraska featured an installation of the work of sculptor Elizabeth King. I visited the exhibit half a dozen times, so taken was I by her exploration of perspective. In her work, King plays with the idea of the pupil—the aperture of the eye—as simultaneously the means by which we study the world and as the means by which we study ourselves. In reminding us of those moments when, as children, we leaned into our mothers' faces, gazing into their eyes to see ourselves reflected there, King reminds us also of the ways in which to study a world rich with difference is to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar.

This is the work that stories do. Every story we tell ourselves or tell one another begins with a question: Who am I? Who are you? What is to be done? We are all storytellers, suggests Jim W. Corder (2004) in his essay, "Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love." We make sense of our lives through the tales we tell of the world and ourselves. He writes:

Going through experience, hooking some version of it to ourselves, accumulating what we know as evidence and insight, ignoring what does not look like evidence and insight to us, finding some pieces of life that become life for us, failing to find others, or choosing not to look, each of us creates the narrative that he or she is. (p. 170)

But Corder is particularly concerned about those moments in which narratives collide. He notes that we are always inventing, tailoring our story to the shifting contexts in which we make ourselves present and to the audiences to whom we speak or write. Often we find ourselves in or choose to be in contexts in which our tales fit relatively seamlessly with those of others with whom we gather; our stories, Corder writes, are often "congruent" or "untouched" by the stories of others. And in such circumstances, we may play easily—seeing ourselves in the eyes of others, distorted perhaps by the curvature of their eyes, and yet recognizable. Corder continues:

But sometimes another narrative impinges upon ours, or thunders around and down into our narratives. We can't build this other into our narratives without harm to the tales we have been telling. This other is the narrative in another world; it is disruptive, shocking, initially at least incomprehensible, and . . . threatening. (p. 173)

In such a circumstance, we must choose what to do, how to listen (or if we will listen), how to make sense and meaning (or if we will go mad), how to make our relations, or if we will go to war to assert the rightness,

the righteousness, the dominance of the story we have constructed and to which we have attached the meaning of our lives.

For Corder, our stories are our arguments, but we err if we perceive the purpose of argument to be the demonstration (and performance) of some truth rather than as “emergence” or as “a willingness to dramatize one’s narrative *in progress* before the other . . . an untiring stretch toward the other, a reach toward unfolding the other” (p. 183, emphasis added). James Crosswhite (2013) takes up this understanding of argument—of rhetoric—when he writes that we need rhetoric for its “capability for deliberation and judgement in conditions of uncertainty where there are conflicting conceptions of what is good” (p. 2). For Corder, we need to learn to live—and to teach—with an awareness of the provisional qualities of the stories we tell about ourselves and about the world and with a willingness to not only yield, but to seek out learning (and being) made possible through a recognition and acknowledgment of difference in and through the stories of others.

So, why should writing centre folks read these books, written by scholars who work beyond the field of writing centre studies and who write, first, for readers teaching in writing classrooms? Read them, I think, because of the ways in and degrees to which each collection makes visible the boundedness of the stories about writing centre work to which, perhaps, as a field we are too inclined to cling. Read them because of the potential of the essays collected in each volume to teach us to open those stories to new possibilities for being and doing in our writing centres—to new iterations and revisions to our stories that deepen, extend, and make actionable our pedagogical commitments to all student-writers. Read them in service of remaking relations among tutors, between tutors and student-writers, and between our writing centres and the discourses of the academy, the professions, and the civitas. Read them in order that we may reconceive and enlarge our sense of what might constitute the “*ready* of ready-set-go” in tutoring when we recognize difference as an abundant rhetorical and discursive resource rather than as a problem or limit (p. 22). Finally and especially, read them because they demonstrate the possibility of doing that which we have too often told ourselves is impossible: to do something better, more responsible, and more just than to act in our capacities as teachers and tutors of writing as functionaries for racism and its companion, colonialism. Read these books because we have much to learn and the writers whose work is collected in them have much to teach—to us.

**Acknowledgment**

*I would like to thank the many scholars of colour whose work is so powerfully transforming the fields of composition and communication studies. I would also like to thank my graduate student, Lacey Beer, who first got me thinking about English/French code-meshing and -switching.*

## References

- Corder, J. W. (2004). Argument as emergence, rhetoric as love. In J. S. Baumlín & K. Miller (Eds.), *Selected essays of Jim W. Corder: Pursuing the personal in scholarship, teaching, and writing*. National Council of Teachers of English.
- Crosswhite, J. (2013). *Deep rhetoric: Philosophy, reason, violence, justice, wisdom*. University of Chicago Press.
- Driskill, Q. (2015). Decolonial skillshares: Indigenous rhetorics as radical practice. In L. King, R. Gubele, & J. R. Anderson (Eds.), *Survivance, sovereignty, and story: Teaching American Indian rhetorics* (pp. 57–78). Utah State University Press.
- Geller, A., Eodice, M., Condon, F., Carroll, M., Boquet, E.H. (2007). *The Everyday Writing Center: A Community of Practice*. Utah State University Press.
- Hafiz. (1999). *The gift: Poems by Hafiz, the great Sufi master*. (D. Ladinsky, Trans.). Penguin Compass.
- King, L. (2015). Sovereignty, rhetorical sovereignty, and representation: Keywords for teaching indigenous texts. In L. King, R. Gubele, & J. R. Anderson (Eds.), *Survivance, sovereignty, and story: Teaching American Indian rhetorics* (pp. 17–34). Utah State University Press.
- King, L., Gubele, R., & Anderson, J. R. (2015a). Careful with the stories we tell: Naming *Survivance, Sovereignty, and Story*. In L. King, R. Gubele, & J. R. Anderson (Eds.), *Survivance, sovereignty, and story: Teaching American Indian rhetorics* (pp. 3–16). Utah State University Press.
- King, L., Gubele, R., & Anderson, J. R. (Eds.). (2015b). *Survivance, sovereignty, and story: Teaching American Indian rhetorics*. Utah State University Press.
- Lovejoy, Kim Brian (2015). “Code-Meshing: Teachers and Students Creating Community”. In *Other people’s English: Code-meshing, code-switching, and African American literacy*. Teachers College Press.

- Vizenor, G. (1994). *Manifest manners: Narratives on postindian survivance*. University of Nebraska Press.
- Watanabe, S. (2015). Socioacupuncture pedagogy: Troubling containment and erasure in a multimodal composition classroom. In L. King, R. Gubele, & J. R. Anderson (Eds.), *Survivance, sovereignty, and story: Teaching American Indian rhetorics* (pp. 35–56). Utah State University Press.
- Young, V. A., Barrett, R., Young-Rivera, Y., & Lovejoy, K. B. (2014). *Other people's English: Code-meshing, code-switching, and African American literacy*. Teachers College Press.
- Young, Vershawn Ashanti (2015). "Linguistic Double Consciousness". In *Other people's English: Code-meshing, code-switching, and African American literacy*. Teachers College Press.
- "The Costs of Code-Switching". In *Other people's English: Code-meshing, code-switching, and African American literacy*. Teachers College Press.
- Young, Y'shanda Rivera (2015). "Making Sense of It All: Code-Meshing and Educational Reform". In Young, Barrett, Young-Rivera & Lovejoy, in *Other people's English: Code-meshing, code-switching, and African American literacy*. Teachers College Press.

### About the Author

**Frankie Condon** is an associate professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Waterloo. Her books include *Performing Anti-Racist Pedagogy in Rhetoric, Writing and Communication*, co-edited with Vershawn Ashanti Young (WAC Clearinghouse and University Press of Colorado); *I Hope I Join the Band: Narrative, Affiliation and Antiracist Rhetoric*; and *The Everyday Writing Center: A Community of Practice*, co-authored with Elizabeth Boquet, Meg Carroll, Michele Eodice, & Anne Ellen Geller (both published by Utah State University Press). Among Frankie's recent book chapters is "Building a House for Linguistic Diversity: Writing Centers, English Language Teaching and Learning, and Social Justice," co-Authored with Bobbi Olson and published in *Tutoring Second Language Writers* (Utah State University Press).