# Inkshed

## Inside Inkshed

Imagine that you enter a parlor.  You come late.  When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about.  In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before.  You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar.  Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you.  . . . However, the discussion is interminable.  The hour grows late, you must depart.  And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.

> Kenneth Burke, *The Philosopohy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1973) 110—111.

# Inkshed

4.6.  December 1985.

## Seasons Greetings

# Fourth International Conference on the Teaching of English

The nineteenth annual CCTE conference (Ottawa, May 11–16, 1986) is also going to be the Fourth International Conference on the Teaching of English, 'The Issues that Divide Us.' The conference organisers hope to move the model of a large conference a little further away from the familiar NCTE/IRA/TESOL model of short papers in packages of three, a few long papers by passing stars, and a number of workshops too short to be of much use. This does not mean that the conference will go as far towards the 'commission' model familiar from NATE conferences as the organisers of the Third International Conference (Sydney, 1980) sought to do. But it does mean that we take seriously Russ Hunt's challenge, in *Inkshed*, to try to make English conferences provide for something of what we know of the value of talk. So, in addition to a mix of papers of various lengths (20 minutes, 40 minutes, 60 minutes, some of them back–to–back on opposing sides of an issue, and some of them with invited commentary to tease out the implications from different points of view), and workshops both short (90 minutes) and long (6 hours), the organisers are shaping the program to allow space and occasion for the dialogue they hope the papers and workshops will start. They may even incorporate some Inkshedding, if Inkshedders come to provide role models.

The themes are a review, critique, and extension of what has happened in the profession since Dartmouth, with particular attention to writing and talking; an inquiry into the philosophy and politics of English education in an age of 'accountability'; an examination of the role of English education in the face of multilingualism and multiculturalism; an international symposium on preservice and inservice teacher education and the implementation of curriculum change; a series of reports on early literacy; an analysis of the progression from early reading to literary response, and from there to post–secondary concepts of what constitutes 'English'; an examination of our understanding of what constitutes the canon of English literature as new national literatures in English continue to emerge; an investigation of roles for computers in English and language arts education; a thorough dissection of international trends in the evaluation and assessment of English. (Allow us to add, a big thank you to the thesaurus for all the synonyms.)

Proposals for papers and workshops have come in from thirty countries, many of them from people whose work is well known to Inkshedders (James Britton, Donald Murray, Nancy Martin, Mary K. Healy, Dixie Goswami, Andrew Wilkinson, Pat D'Arcy, Donald Graves, James Sledd, Richard Larson, Gordon Pradl), some of them submitted by Inkshedders, and some by people whose names are less well known in North America than they deserve to be. It looks, for example, as though there will be a major contingent of Australians, some of them, like Clem Young, Jack Thompson, Ken Watson, and Margaret Gill (the latter an invited plenary speaker) among the best thinkers about English education in the world today. Interestingly, many of the African and Carribean contributions are concerned precisely with that area of English education in the early post–secondary stages that is the level at which most Inkshedders work, and are concerned, like Inkshedders, both with writing and reading, as well as the relationships between them. If nothing else, this international perspective on common concerns should prove particularly interesting to Inkshedders.

The conference organisers want to warn Inkshedders that registration at the conference is going to be limited, because they do not want it to grow too big to be productive. And they want to warn as well that, if you leave your decision till later, it will probably be impossible to get accommodation in Ottawa: the dates of the Conference overlap with the dates of the Tulip Festival, during which there is never any accommodation available in Ottawa.

**For a registration package, write Ian Pringle, Carleton University, Ottawa   K1S 5B6**

# Announcement: Inkshed III

Patrick Dias and Anthony Paré want you all to know that session proposals for Inkshed III have begun coming in—and that, since the number of sessions for this small conference is very limited, if you plan to submit a proposal you should do it *now*, before the January 15th deadline. (See *Insheds* 4.4 [September 1985]: 1, and 4.5 [November 1985]: 1.) They also want you to know that announcements and calls for proposals were recently sent to English departments and to other parties who might wish to propose sessions.

Inkshed III was scheduled for Montreal for 9–11 May to make it not only possible but easy to attend both Inkshed III and the **Fourth International Conference on the Teaching of English (CCTE 19)** (see above, p. 1). Inkshed III will end early enough on May 11 to allow people to travel the 135 miles from Montreal to Ottawa in time to arrive before things get officially underway at the ICTE; and, to make it even easier for people to attend both conferences without missing any part of either, Pat and Anthony are looking into various travel options. If you plan to attend both, check with them. If they don't actually formally arrange something, they will at least be able to suggest some reasonable options.

And, by the way, *you should plan to attend both!* Each in its own way promises to be excellent. Inkshed III will provide an opportunity to tussle with a single major disciplinary issue—the role of social context in writing and reading (an issue that should be hot at ICTE); the ICTE will provide the best opportunity since Ottawa 1979 to engage with the issues and the people now constituting 'the present state of the discipline' (*not* your usual annual convention). Cheap advice: scrimp, save, move mountains (but do not lie and cheat) to make this a special May—a special year—full of good, solid 'PD'.

# Suggested Readings for Inkshed III /// Pat Dias and Anthony Paré

*Becoming Readers in a Complex Society.* Ed. A. Purves and O. Niles. 83rd Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984.

See especially the articles by Suhor and by Harste and Mickulecky.

Britton, J., et al. *The Development of Writing Abilities (11–18).* London: Macmillan Education, 1975.

It is worth reviewing the introductory chapter as well as the chapters on 'audience' and 'function' for a sense of situational features the research team saw influencing writing.

Halliday, M. A. K. *Language as Social Semiotic.* Baltimore: University Park P, 1978.

Halliday's notion that 'form follows function', that language is inherently social, has clear bearing on the topic of this working conference.

Heath, Shirley Brice. "The Function and Uses of Literacy." *Journal of Communication* 30.1 (1980): 123–135.

'For a large percentage of the population, learning and sustaining reading and writing skills are not motivated primarily by a faith in their academic utility. For many families and communities, the major benefits of reading and writing may not include such traditionally

assigned rewards as social mobility, job preparation, intellectual creativity, critical reasoning, and public information access. In short, literacy has different meanings for members of different groups, with a variety of acquisition modes, functions, and uses. . . .'

*Language and Social Context: Selected Readings.* Ed. P. P. Gigioli. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1972.

Papers by Hymes, Fishman, Goffman, Searle, Bernstein, Labov, Gumperz, Goody and Watt, and others.

Malinowski, B. Supplement 1 in Ogden, C. K., and I. A. Richards. *The Meaning of Meaning.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1923.

In this seminal work in sociolinguistics, Malinowski coined the term 'context of situation' to refer to all the linguistic and extra-linguistic features which affect the language user's discourse. M's influence is seen in the work of Halliday and Britton.

McDermott, R. P. 'The Ethnography of Speaking and Reading.' In *Linguistic Theory: What Can it Say About Reading?* Ed. Roger Shuy. Newark, DE: IRA, 1977.

Focuses on young children but has implications at all levels of schooling. One of the key issues addressed is the effects of the culture of the classroom on learning to read.

McHoul, A. 'Ethnomethodology and Literature: Preliminaries to a Sociology of Reading.' *Poetics* 7 (1978): 113–120.

Raises central issues for the study of reading as a social phenomenon.

Smith, David M. 'Reading and Writing in the Real World: Explorations into the Culture of Literacy.' In *Developing Literacy: Young Children's Use of Language.* Ed. Parker and Davis. Newark, DE: IRA, 1983.

'Rather than looking at reading and writing primarily as cognitive processes, or as skills with sociocultural dimensions, it is fruitful to view them as fundamentally sociocultural phenomena. . . . As used here, this phrase ['real world'] does not refer only to literacy activities which are confined to out-of-school contexts. The social context, school or otherwise, is not simply a setting to display a set of cognitive skills and knowledge which remain constant across settings, but is a key ingredient in the literacy event itself.'

## Invitation: Springboards '86—Annual Language Arts Conference
### Montreal, Thursday and Friday, 8–9 May 1986

Theme: Language—Reflection and Action

The aim of this year's conference is to explore ways to translate into effective classroom practice whole language theory in a meaning-centered curriculum. Half-day and full-day workshops on Thursday; a variety of demonstrations and presentations on Friday.

For information, contact: Gary Mullins
Springboards '86
3700 McTavish Street
Room 244 North
Montreal, PQ H3A 1Y2

# A History of Composition Instruction in Canada: 1800–1900, A Working Outline   /// Nan Johnson

I am presently investigating the history of composition and its relationship to the development of a Canadian discipline of rhetoric in the nineteenth century. As I began consulting existing studies of the history of Canadian education and examining masses of primary materials such as superintendent of public schools annual reports, ministry of education guidelines, and college and university calendars, it became clear that I could not understand the role of rhetoric in higher education without first investigating how and why rhetoric was taught at the secondary level. I have since realized that rhetoric, composition, and grammar were closely related subjects in the curricula of nineteenth century public schools, early high schools, colleges, and academies, and it has been helpful for me to outline the nature of composition instruction in particular, as its tie to rhetoric is so persistent. I submit this outline to *Inkshed* in response to several suggestions that some readers might find such preliminary findings of interest and use.

This outline is very much "in progress"; I have added, deleted, and moved items around on it several times in response to newly acquired information, and I expect to continue to do so as I extend my research into the history of rhetoric and composition studies in Canada.

## Elementary School

### Status in General Course of Study

1. Composition an inherent part of Reading instruction (paraphrase, personal response)

2. Compositions were a major form of evaluation and response in other subjects such as History, Geography, Nature Study

3. Composition practice and instruction in grammar were closely related; writing "correctly" was a basic skill in composing

### Formal Instruction in Composition: Progressive Acquisition of Skills (sentence–paragraph–prose and oral essay)

1. Grades  –3: prose and oral composition of simple sentences; subject matter based on response to material read; personal experience or observation lessons

2. Grades 4–6: narrative and descriptive paragraphs; oral narratives; and practice in structuring logical paragraphs

3. Grades 6–8: composition of abstracts and expanded narratives; study of style (usage, syntax, figures of speech); composition of letters and other forms of social discourse; and simple expository themes

## High School, Normal Schools, Colleges, and Academies

### Status in General Course of Study

1. "Composition and Grammar" typical subject heading in exams and course of study descriptions for junior level

2. Composition instruction integrated with "Rhetoric" in senior level

3. Composition remains major form of evaluation and response in courses such as History and Reading. Important in high school in study of English and French literature.

Formal Instruction in Composition: Practice of Basic Skills; Acquisition of Style and Taste

1. Junior level (Grades 9–10): descriptive and narrative essay practice; expository themes; instruction in sentence structure, paragraph structure and topic arrangement in the essay; review and continued practice in diction; vocabulary, punctuation; instruction in writing formal letters, business correspondence

2. Senior level (Grades 11–12): description, narration, expanded exposition; argument and critical essays; study of rhetorical aspects of style, figures of speech and arrangement; development of range of rhetorically effective styles; clear, forceful, and elegant

## University

Status in General Course of Study in Modern Languages or Arts Courses

1. 'Composition and Rhetoric' typical category for entrance exams and title of many first-year courses in English studies. By 1900, category appears more and more as 'Composition'

2. Instruction in composition given as preparation for writing skills required by general course of lectures in humanities (logic, philosophy, classics, modern languages)

Formal Instruction in Composition: Practice in Modes, Style, and Rhetorical Analysis

1. 1st & 2nd years: study of rhetorical forms and principles including practice in exposition, narration, description, and argument; practice in 'correct and elegant style'; study of models; study of argumentative logic

2. 3rd & 4th years: imitation of prose models; critical essays (rhetorical analysis); study of rhetorical principles in persuasive writing.

## Sources

*Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools of the Province of Quebec*: 1885–86, 1887–88, 1860, 1901–02, 1903–04, 1924–25, 1926–27.

*Annual Report of the Common, Superior, Grammar and High Schools, and Model Schools in New Brunswick*: 1874, 1890, 1900, 1910, 1918–19, 1926–27, 1931–32.

*Province of Nova Scotia Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education*: 1910–11, 1919–24, 1930–34.

*Manitoba Department of Education Annual Report*: 1899–1905, 1912–15, 1920–28, 1928–36.

*Report of the Minister of Education of the Province of Ontario*: 1858, 1878, 1888, 1896, 1901–02, 1920, 1925, 1939.

*Annual Report of the Department of Education of the Province of Saskatchewan*: 1906, 1980, 1909–18, 1924–29, 1929–41.

*Annual Report of the Province of British Columbia by the Superintendent of Education*: 1888–91, 1891–94, 1894–97, 1897–1901, 1901–02, 1902–04, 1904–06, 1915–17, 1925–27, 1927–30.

*Annuaire de l'Université Laval*: 1867–68, 1880–91, 1899–1900, 1910–11, 1919–20, 1920–21, 1929–30.

*Calendar of Dalhousie College and University*: 1865–66, 1866–67, 1867–68, 1970, 1885, 1889.

*The Calendar of King's College* (Nova Scotia): 1855, 1860, 1870, 1880–81, 1890–91, 1900–01, 1910, 1920, 1930–31, 1940–41, 1949–51, 1960–61, 1970–71, 1980–81.

*Annual Calendar of McGill College and University*: 1860–61, 1869–70, 1880–81, 1899–1901.

*Calendar of the University of Mount Allison College*: 1870–1920.

*Calendar of the University of New Brunswick*: 1880–1910.

*Calendar of McMaster University*: 1888–89, 1894–95, 1899–1900, 1910–11, 1919–20.

# Iser Fish in the Text?
# An Interview on Using Journals in Literature Classes

*Inkshed* readers will probably be interested in how Perry Nodelman's experience of using journals or 'workbooks' in his freshman and children's literature classes has evolved over the last couple of years. As a full professor, editor (of the *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*), and literary critic, Nodelman does not fit the stereotype of hostile traditionalist and unreflective archeologist which composition experts' mythology sometimes assigns to those 'of his kind'. For instance, he insists on denying any responsibility for the silly professorial pun in the title of this interview. /// Murray Evans

**Evans:** What got you interested in using journals in your classes?

**Nodelman:** The inadequacy of the assignments I used to give—essays of the sort that students usually are asked to write in university courses in literature. The assignments worried me because they resulted in so much bad writing, and it took me some time to realize that this bad writing resulted from positive conviction rather than mere ignorance. The realization came after I gave one of my speeches about the virtues of simplicity and directness and a student said, 'Boy, I just finished learning how to write an essay in grade twelve, and now *you* tell me it was all wrong and I have to learn it all over again.' It occurred to me that other students were also writing badly on purpose—that even though they could write more simply and more clearly and more directly, they knew for an absolute fact that you didn't do that when what you were writing was something called an essay.

In fact, given my students' ideas about 'essays' and my own prejudices about good writing, my asking them to write essays was actually dooming them to failure. An essay, particularly the sort of literary essay I wanted my students to produce, is an expert's opinions expressed expertly; while the form nicely accommodates expertise, I realized that it might not be suited to apprentice opinions. In asking my students to channel their thoughts about literature through a form of writing not intended for the expression of a beginner's hesitant thoughts, I was asking them to misrepresent their thoughts. Worse, I was asking them to reverse the logical relationship between writer and reader: instead of being experts writing for those who know less, I was asking my students to be apprentices writing for a person who knows more.

No wonder, then, that so many of them did so badly. No wonder they thought they had to pretend to be experts and use the language they thought experts use: hard language, almost incomprehensible language. They certainly seemed to be thinking more clearly when they spoke in class, or even when they wrote tests, than they managed to do in their essays.

At about the same time as I was making these realizations, my thinking about literature was changing significantly. Reading theorists like Rosenblatt and Fish and Wolfgang Iser had shown me the significance of a reader's engagement with a work of literature. I was beginning to see how much a poem or a story is something created in a reader's involvement with a text, and how much responding to literature is an ongoing process. I was finding my explorations of my own processes of reading and understanding literature both fascinating and illuminating—and I wanted to share my perceptions with my students. I had begun to introduce concepts like 'implied reader' and 'repertoire'. But while students seemed to find these ideas stimulating, their essays gave no evidence of it—they still wrote like pontificating experts, and they avoided in their writing the sorts of discussions of their own reading experiences that they partook in so enthusiastically in class. I felt there had to be a way to make their writing a more relevant part of their process of reading and thinking.

But while I knew something was wrong with my essay assignments, I could see no alternative. Then, a few years ago, I spoke with a friend at a conference who was wildly enthusiastic about the benefits of in-class writing, which she used often in her composition classes. She was convinced that this sort of immediate writing avoided many of the problems of formal assignments that had come to concern me; and I decided to try it.

It worked. Getting students to record their responses to poems I had just read, or their answers to questions that had just been raised, did two important things. First, it forced them to *use* their writing in their thinking. They had not been doing that, for their years of focusing on correct spelling and neatness in elementary school had taught most of them that it is *always* wrong to write inaccurately—that neatness and correctness are what writing is all about—and many of my students told me that when they were working on an essay, they wrote nothing at all until they had worked out in their heads what they wanted to say and could then concentrate on writing it 'properly'. Since my own thinking constantly involves writing notes to myself, and questions and possibilities and explorations and numerous drafts, I was disheartened by their ignorance of such a useful tool; in-class writing forced the use of writing in the presence of thinking.

And it led to clearer writing and clearer thinking. I designed my questions to encourage an awareness of how we build works of literature in our heads in response to words on the page; the fact that the answers had to be written ensured that the thinking was actually happening (as it does not always happen in response to questions requiring only oral answers, since only one student at a time can provide such answers, and the rest can sleep). Best of all, the spontaneous writing my students did in class was clearer, fresher, far more representative of their thinking than the essays they had labored so hard over. They were doing the things I had hoped they would do—they were reporting on their thinking rather than offering guesses as to what I might be thinking about the questions I asked them, and they were doing it in surprisingly good writing.

It worked—but I didn't like it. I enjoy talking, especially with students. Standing silently and watching a classroom full of people write all the time nearly drove me crazy. I had to find a way to get my students to write about their thinking that wouldn't force me into terminal anxiety as a result of mounting impatience.

My solution was, or so I thought in my profound ignorance of the methods of composition teachers, breathtakingly innovative: a journal in which my students would record their responses to the literature they were reading for my course.

**Evans:** What do *you* mean by journal?

**Nodelman:** Something quite different from what my students meant, as it turned out. 'Journal' implies subjectivity—one keeps a journal as a record of one's thoughts and impressions. I wanted thoughts and impressions, to be sure; but I didn't want mere statements of subjective feelings. The course was an introduction to poetry, and my assignment was to record their responses to poems in a 'Poetry Journal'. But I didn't want students to tell me that they liked a poem about strawberry ice cream because they had always liked strawberry ice cream—which is what they mostly did to begin with.

What I wanted, I had to make clear, was an exploration of 'shareable thinking'; I wanted students to record what happened to them when they read a poem that might help *somebody else* come to terms with the poem. That somebody else might be another student in the course; it might even be themselves at a later time. But it had to be someone with a need for their response—not me, the expert, but someone for whom they could themselves be experts. The important thing was that they record, immediately upon reading a poem, what it made them feel or think—assuming, of course, that they had been doing their best to be

aware and attentive, so that what they felt or thought might be what the poet had intended them to feel or think. In other words, I said, do the best you can to become the reader implied by the poem, and then describe the person you became.

Since this was an entirely new approach for my students, I provided them with some questions they might try to answer—no more than one question per entry in their journal. For instance, 'Does the poem refer you to things you don't understand? What are they?' 'What other poems does this one remind you of, and why?' 'What specific words in the poem cause you most difficulty, or strike you as most interesting? Why?'

Since I had begun to realize that understanding any poem depends a lot on how many other poems you already know (Iser's idea of 'repertoire') and since I knew that few students know many poems, I put the emphasis in my first journal assignment on quantity—the students had to read and write entries about sixty poems during the thirteen weeks of the course—a hundred or so words for each entry. To encourage honest responses, I allowed them to write about no more than five poems after class discussion of them; but they could write second entries on any five if they felt they had significantly added to or changed their first responses. I also intended this huge amount of writing to encourage spontaneity; I told students who complained about all the work that they were spending too much time reworking and rewriting; they were not to think and then to write; they were to write as they thought.

**Evans:** Do you grade journals? On what basis?

**Nodelman:** Of course; why not? I do it on the basis that some are better than others—more detailed, more subtle, more honest, more interesting. First, though, I vow to myself and to my students to ignore all mechanical problems when I read the journals—and I keep that promise. I grade journals purely on the basis of what they reveal of the students' abilities to ask productive questions and to find stimulating answers for them, in terms of the process of reading and understanding poetry the course is designed to teach. Of course, this assumes that students writing spontaneously can write clearly enough to express thinking accurately. I have learned that most students who are willing to sign up for an introductory course in poetry can do exactly that—even, or especially, those who might make themselves sound stupid in an essay. I've only run into one or two who are genuinely incapable of expressing themselves on paper in these informal circumstances; those who get low grades almost always have little to express, and express it clearly.

I don't, however, grade individual entries, for I think that would suggest there is such a thing as a model entry, one worth 100%, that students should emulate. Instead, I demand that all workbooks be handed in on specific dates at various points in the course, I read them to get a general sense of the students' habits of thinking and general progress, and then I make an overall assessment in terms of a grade (and I have explained the meanings of the various grades earlier), accompanied by suggestions of things to work on. I allow no late submissions; journals not handed in on time get a zero, and incomplete journals are graded accordingly. This encourages the idea that the journals are not simply an assignment with the sole purpose of engendering grades, but a true record of the progress of my students' engagement with the material; an incomplete journal implies a lack of progress.

**Evans:** Has your use of journals gone through any identifiable progression or adjustments over the last year or two?

**Nodelman:** The most significant adjustment is a change in name—in response to the problems I mentioned before, I now call these 'workbooks' rather than 'journals'. 'Workbook' implies process rather than product; it also brings into play the major idea behind the assignment—that it represents one's thoughts as one *works* one's way though the problems of the material studied, and comes to some sort of understanding and judgment of it.

Given that focus, I now offer more specific suggestions about the contents of the workbooks. In my course in children's fiction, for instance. I require that the workbooks contain a number of specific items that are intended to make students do a number of different kinds of thinking about fiction: at least five entries discussing and initial response to one of the novels before class discussion; at least five entries on the same novels after class, discussing how the class added to or changed their evaluation of the book; at least five entries describing responses to critical articles on children's fiction; at least five discussing the characteristic qualities of children's fiction in general. I also encourage students to use their workbooks in preparation for the one essay I ask them to write: to do entries in which they explore their thoughts and questions about the topics they have chosen. I cut down the number of entries, to thirty-five; and since students tend to write more than the 100 words I'd first proposed, I suggested 250 words as an average length per entry.

**Evans:** Do the workbooks accomplish the goals you hoped for and expected?

**Nodelman:** Yes, and more. The workbooks do the job for which they are intended. They encourage students to think about the issues the course raises, and to arrive at a deeper understanding of them. Students come to class better prepared to discuss the assigned material, and more willing to discuss the issues that material raises because those issues have emerged first in their reports of their own thinking. Their responses to the material become more subtle and more intelligent far more quickly, and the thinking they record as their workbooks progress gets more interesting.

**Evans:** Do they have noticeable effect on reading styles?

**Nodelman:** Yes. As the workbooks progress, students record more entries in which they will suddenly stop reading at some point in a book and write down their thoughts about what is happening, or what strikes them as interesting, or what they think will happen—and then later they'll comment on how they were misled, and what that reveals to them about the plot of a novel, for instance. In other words, the workbook encourages more thought while reading—less unproductive absorbing, more awareness. Some literary theorists still believe that thinking and responding to literature are two different things—and that thinking kills a genuine response. My students' reaction is quite the opposite: the more they think in their first reading, the richer and more rewarding they find the reading experience—they are not just passive victims of a theoretically pleasing rape, but participants in the creation of their own pleasure.

**Evans:** Have workbooks led to changes in your teaching style?

**Nodelmam:** Yes. I encourage the reading of workbook responses in class to begin discussion—and find that these prewritten responses are thoughtful enough that they almost always lead to discussion. So I pontificate less, and orchestrate discussion more. Also, I now have enough confidence in the assignment to make it the bulk of the required term work in every course I teach; and while I still require an essay at the end, I encourage students to work out the essay—consider topics, explore aspects of their topics, and so on—in a series of workbook entries, so that the essay ought to grow naturally out of the larger assignment.

This doesn't always work, I'm afraid. Students who do clear, interesting writing in workbooks still often write vapid, generalized, pompous essays. I either have to find a way of integrating the essays more successfully with the workbooks, or else have the guts to get rid of essays altogether—and I am tempted to do so, for my experience with workbooks has taught me that doing well on an essay merely means that you know how to write an essay, and that writing an essay is a different enough act from clear thinking, or even clear expression of one's thoughts, that there really doesn't seem to be much point in teaching the average university student, who doesn't plan a career in literary criticism, how to write one.

**Evans:** What have your students' reactions been to 'workbooks'?

**Nodelman:** Given the amount of writing (and even more, perhaps, the focus on thinking rather than memorization), it's not surprising that most students don't much like the workbooks. Some do see how the workbooks have helped them; most attribute their progress to their interest in the material itself, or to my teaching—to anything but the work that cost them so much effort and that actually did the job.

**Evans:** Will you use them in the future? In any new ways?

**Nodelman:** Absolutely—and I will try to find more ways of integrating workbook work with class work. I'm thinking now of running in-class tests that require preliminary workbook entries; and I'm also exploring ways of getting students to read and respond to each other's workbooks. I want, above all, to encourage the workbook as a student's part in the dialogue with literature, with other students, and with me—a dialogue that any literature course ought to be, and that literary criticism itself always is. The workbooks record enough shifts in their own opinions that my students have begun to understand the one thing I was never before able to teach them—that there are no final answers about literature, only the answers we have so far, and that our pleasure in thinking about literature is based on the fact that different people have different answers, that those answers are stimulating to argue about, and that there is eternally the possibility that one's answers might change.

(This is Murray's last issue as an *Inkshed* Consulting Editor. I thank him for his support, for his good advice, for his commitment to the community. Jim Reither.)

# New Year's Resolutions

Please read thoughtfully the quotation from Kenneth Burke's *The Philosophy of Literary Form* that has now thrice graced our title page. I've printed Burke's little allegory three times now, not because I've run out of quotations, but rather because I think he tells us so exactly what we ought to be about, how we ought to behave. Have a great holiday, folks. Get yourselves charged up for a great New Year. And resolve to put in your oar. Let's talk. Tell us what you're doing and why and how you're doing it. Make sense of things for us (and for yourself).

*Cheers.* . . . . . . . . . . . .        Jim Reither