

## **Crossing Lines, Encouraging Ownership: Teaching the Occult Early Modern**

by  
**Katherine Dauge-Roth**

Teachers of early modern French literature often face undergraduate student reactions to their scholarly field of interest that range from incomprehension to disbelief. Our students, firmly grounded in the here and now or even in the what's around the corner, rarely feel any immediate draw to the earlier periods, societies, and cultures that we love and to which we have devoted much of our own studies and scholarly careers. Moreover, even at a small liberal arts college such as Bowdoin, our best students of language and literature are not necessarily students of history. They often see their work in French foremost as developing an important linguistic skill, a goal whose attainment implies no direct need for the exploration of earlier periods. Even those students who love literature tend to shy away from early modern texts because of the unique linguistic challenges they provide. While this essay is based on activities and experiments conducted in the context of an upper-level French course I have now offered twice at Bowdoin College, "Witches, Monsters and Demons: Representing the Occult in Early Modern France," what concerns me in this essay is not so much the occult in early modern France. Rather, it is a concept that I will refer to as "the occult early modern."

The period we teach is often "occult" to our students—a *boîte noire*. They generally know little about it, it is foreign, strange, old, and maybe, they suspect, even boring—translation: "irrelevant to their lives." Antoine Furetière's 1690 definition of *occulte* as that which is "[c]aché, secret, qu'on ne voit pas," corresponds perfectly to the way in which our students may perceive—or, more accurately, fail to perceive—the period we study (*Dictionnaire universel*). They cannot see it in any easily discernable way; it remains hidden from view in their daily lives, full of "secrets" that only professors would or could pursue. Our

enthusiasm alone, though it no doubt contributes in important ways to inspiring student interest in the period and the courses we teach, does not suffice. As Furetière reminds us, “Les sciences occultes sont la plûpart vaines,” and the general public often sees those of us who work on the past as watching the day-to-day bustle from the safety and irrelevance of our ivory towers. Our students’ puzzlement over our interest in the early modern might well be summed up by the question of one undergraduate, who, having enjoyed a contemporary culture class with me, scanned the catalogue for the upper-level courses I offered and asked me, “Do you only ever teach *old* stuff?” Though most college teachers trained in earlier periods do not actually “only teach old stuff” (and some of us may even teach everything but), most of us, at least at the seminar level, do attempt to lure students into our passionate affair with early modern France.

The language of seduction I use here may raise red flags for some. So let me be clear from the start that in taking the approach I have to teaching the period I do not consider myself to be “selling out,” “watering down,” marketing “edutainment,” or anything of the sort. Making the study of earlier eras attractive to students does not mean sacrificing academic rigor, quite the contrary. By looking for effective means to offer our students “ways in” to the period we study and to make the subject matter relevant to their lives, we inevitably create approaches and assignments that foster students’ active engagement throughout the course and both demand and inspire fuller investment on their part in the collaborative creation of knowledge. While there are disadvantages and risks to my answer to the vital question of relevance, which I will refer to at points throughout this essay, the advantages and overall gain for the students’ learning experience truly outweigh the potential downfalls.

Understanding who our students are and where they are coming from proves crucial to rethinking the design of the courses we offer. Perhaps we would like all of our undergraduates, or even a majority, to share our fascination with the early modern and to pursue graduate studies in seventeenth-century French literature. But, if we are honest with ourselves, this just does not happen very

often. At a small liberal arts college like Bowdoin, though we have between ten and twenty-five French majors graduate each year, most of these students are double majors. Only about one student every three or four years chooses to continue the study of French literature at the graduate level. Minors in French, who tend to pursue the discipline primarily to maintain their language skills, also take at least one three-hundred-level course during their cursus, thus joining the majors in our upper-level seminars. Though this state of affairs is common at undergraduate institutions nationwide, many French programs nonetheless continue to emphasize content as the primary goal, pursuing a period based literary curriculum, where courses and requirements justify their existence primarily for reasons of “coverage” or student “exposure” to different eras or movements. While undergraduates continuing on in French literature might be well served by this comprehensive approach, it has a tendency to cast courses, especially those in earlier periods, as necessary rites of passage rather than sought after opportunities for discovery and intellectual growth. Other than for fulfilling the important goal of knowing something about the past, most of our undergraduates do not, on a very practical level, need to explore earlier periods in French. While I do not wish to discount our students’ often terrific enthusiasm and pleasure in learning something new, we must admit that the reasons for taking courses on earlier periods in French are not self-evident, neither to our students nor, increasingly at many places, even to colleagues and administrators. We must, therefore, reevaluate what our true pedagogical aims should be when we teach the literature and culture of our period of specialization.

It comes down to a question of purpose. What are our real goals in teaching early modern France? For some of us, our primary aim may be, and very much need to be, that our students come away with a detailed and deep critical knowledge of the period and its literature. For me, however, the goal of conveying ideas about the early modern remains secondary to the more overarching goals that guide me in all of my teaching pursuits. In addition to improving their speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills in the French language, I want my students to gain

sensitivities and abilities that will serve them well throughout their academic and professional careers. I want them to learn to read and to analyze the wide variety of texts, speech, and images that inundate the world around them with a critical and informed eye, encountering difference with curiosity and sensitivity and gaining tools to make the most of experiences that trouble or challenge them. I seek to encourage their development of the ability and confidence to formulate an opinion or argument and to be able to defend or to modify their position accordingly when confronted with a contrary view. I hope they will become attentive and responsive listeners, discovering effective strategies for interacting with others and working as a team. I seek to foster their ability to come up with a creative idea, to set goals for themselves, and to see the project through to successful realization, as well as to gain the skills and confidence necessary to critically evaluate their own work and those of others. Ultimately, I hope to encourage their awareness of themselves as both learners and teachers, responsible and equal partners in a collective process of knowledge creation. These are, admittedly, high goals that cannot be fully realized as the result of any one course. But by placing them at the center during course creation and planning, rather than the subject matter per se, we bring about a shift that allows us to shed some of our *idées fixes* about what constitutes an upper-level course in our area of specialty and to explore possibilities that both encourage links between the students' everyday preoccupations and those of early moderns and cause students to increase their personal investment in the course material, meetings, and assignments. By making course content the means rather than the goal, the vehicle for developing valuable learning and life skills rather than the end in itself, we free ourselves from the drive we feel to cover ever more content and become able to rethink our courses with the learning process foremost in mind.<sup>1</sup>

The goal of this essay is twofold. First, I begin by outlining some of the ways in which I have attempted to build bridges with my students between the present and the past. Here, I will address the question of relevance and expose some of the strategies implemented in this course for making the period we deal with less occult while preserving its otherness, and more attractive and

“meaning-full” to students who might not otherwise have explored it. Second, I will examine methods I have experimented with to encourage greater student investment in and ownership of the learning process. I will discuss learner-centered course assignments that in my experience have lead students to engage more fully with course content and to assume a larger role in the creation and transmission of knowledge both in the classroom and outside it. At their best, these methods increase students’ motivation and personal investment in their own and their classmates’ learning.

### **Crossing Lines**

Perceived relevance plays a key role in influencing an adult’s motivation to learn (Wlodkowski 118–20). As teachers who want to foster motivation in our students, and thus engaged learning, we must seriously consider how we can make the period we teach matter to them. While the content of a course in early modern literature and culture does not necessarily lend itself to immediately obvious applications, the skills that students take from our courses should do so, an argument that I will develop further in the second part of this essay. If we are to construct courses that make connections between the early modern and our students’ lived experience, we must first be willing to transgress certain “sacred” boundaries—including those between periods, disciplines, media, discourses, languages, the campus and the larger community. Since we cannot assume any intrinsic interest in the early modern on the part of most of our students, nor usually rely on much prior knowledge on their part of the era or its literature, we as teachers must work harder to design courses that build bridges for our students and offer them multiple approaches to the subject matter. While the primary source readings for the course I am focusing on here spanned the sixteenth through early eighteenth centuries, we constantly drew comparisons with modern examples, and I encouraged students to make links and to pursue projects beyond that period.<sup>2</sup>

I began by choosing a theme that resonates with one of popular culture's obsessions today: the occult. Film studios fill our screens with visions of otherworldly persons and powers at work. The explosive occult and horror movie genres have treated us over the years to such occult specials as *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *The Exorcist* (1973), *The Shining* (1980), *Poltergeist* (1982), and *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), to name only a very few. Television shows from the classic *Bewitched* to the *X-Files*, *Charmed*, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* have populated the average American's evenings with vampires, witches, monsters, and ghosts. Harry Potter has become a household word, and countless other popular novels and the *BD* genre have made the most of the occult's mysterious, spectacular, and psycho-thriller potential. Rock groups exploit occult themes on album covers and in music videos, and video games could not subsist without it. Broadway musicals have also often taken up the theme, most recently with Stephen Schwartz's *Wicked*. When you start looking, even current events, not only those appearing in tabloids but also those reported in mainstream periodicals, often examine the occult. And at least once a year on October thirty-first, Halloween festivities and garb fill our stores, schools, streets, and homes with a vivid performance of our ongoing fascination with the occult. Because these themes and the questions they generate remain such a prominent part of our popular culture, choosing to focus on them in a seminar on the early modern period gave students a "way in" to course material. They had "baggage" and background knowledge to bring to the classroom, and therefore felt more inclined to participate in class right from the start, drawing on their own experience and the cultural representations with which they were familiar. While sometimes this knowledge could lead them to interpret familiar themes in an anachronistic manner, it did empower them to risk a first attempt at making sense of what they were seeing and reading.

Throughout the course, "Witches, Monsters and Demons: Representing the Occult in Early Modern France," I encouraged dialogue between today's fascination with evil, the monstrous, and the inexplicable and the relationship that people living in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries entertained with the

supernatural and the otherworldly. The juxtaposition of our still ambivalent relationship to the occult today with that of early moderns revealed both continuities and differences. It led students to try to understand as much our own period's fears and desires as those entertained by early moderns. I found that by pushing my students to examine attitudes and experiences that were part of their own, more familiar culture, they were far more careful not to brush certain early modern ideas off as "backward" or ridiculous. Instead, they attempted to understand the logic and world view of the people they were reading and learning about. Because they had been asked to explain their own and their contemporaries' thinking on similar questions, they better saw the need to look closely and not simply dismiss the ideas of those of earlier periods.

As will become apparent, in attempting to make connections between the present and the past, I inevitably crossed several other lines. I did not limit course material to texts generally considered to be "Literature," but rather included other discourses such as medical and ecclesiastical treatises, juridical documents, and popular texts, as well as a wide variety of media including art, video, film, television, and the web. I drew from several academic disciplines in my choices of reading assignments and class activities and even invited colleagues from other disciplines to appear in my classes. A colleague from art history generously shared her expertise on sixteenth-century visual representations of witches with my class, and an anthropologist, who teaches a course on Modern Witchcraft and kindly gave my students an overview of present-day Fijian beliefs in the otherworldly and the unique experience of a simulated Kava ritual for connecting with the ancestors.<sup>3</sup> I also worked at breaking down frontiers between the classroom and the wider community, and was fortunate to be able to invite a practicing witch to campus, who held class with my students and gave a public lecture entitled: "What is it with Witches? Contemporary Wicca: Neither Oz, Nor Hogwarts, Nor Buffy the Vampire Slayer."<sup>4</sup> As I will develop further, I also created an assignment that had students work with staff at the College's Museum of Art to create an exhibit of artistic representations of the occult, and several of the student-designed

final projects involved extensive contact with people outside the campus. I broke the “French only” rule on occasion, choosing not to exclude valuable sources or experiences simply because they were not in French. Most student work and all class discussion were carried out in French alone, as were all of the primary and most secondary source readings. However, much of the present-day material I used was in English, particularly the films and television, and the students’ encounters with individuals from outside the class also took place in English.

All of my excursions outside France and French were motivated by a desire to make the most of resources or opportunities that would enrich the course. For example, during our unit on “Witches and the Witchcraze,” I decided to make the most of Salem, Massachusetts’s proximity to Bowdoin and my students’ relative familiarity with those witch trials by devoting a section to Salem. Along with excerpts from trial minutes presented by David Hall in *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England*, students read Maryse Condé’s 1986 historical novel, *Moi, Tituba, Sorcière noire de Salem*, a fictional account of the life of Tituba, the black slave brought to Salem Village by the Parris family and one of the original Salem “witches.” I chose to use this modern novel as an anchor for our examination of seventeenth-century events, for it asked crucial questions about the construction of witchcraft and evil and offered students a vivid image of the cultural climate and mentality that led to the witch trials among the Puritans in colonial New England, which we adapted to the French Catholic context. The class traveled to Danvers, the site of the original Salem Village where the accusations broke out in 1692, and to Salem, the site of the present-day hysteria and hype around the witch trials. The visit was one part history and one part sociological experiment. I offer it the course only in the fall, so that in addition to visiting the few remaining historical sites, students may witness Salem’s Halloween scene, which comes alive during the October “Haunted Happenings,” attracting an amazing assortment of characters to its reconstructions, reenactments, wax museums, haunted houses, and esoteric shops. The trip thus reinforces is the ways in which the present reappropriates and

exploits the past to further its own ends—in this case, those of financial profit.

One of the potential risks of this approach is that in casting the net so widely, we end up doing a little bit of everything but doing nothing in depth. In a course that included the study of numerous occult themes—monsters, the devil and his demons, witches, demonic possession, astrology and divination, and ghosts and vampires—there was certainly ground to be “covered,” even had we followed the more straightforward patterns of a conventional approach. It may be preferable to break only certain “rules” rather than all of them at once. But in this particular course, I was far more pleased with the results than I was unhappy with what the students may have missed. Though crossing these lines sometimes proves difficult for the teacher, and usually involves leaving our own comfort zones or simply doing a great deal of “extra” work (conducting research in new areas, finding appropriate materials, organizing visits, designing and coordinating involved assignments), it has been my experience that these transgressions allow us to connect with and interest more of our students, to motivate them, and to better facilitate their encounters with early modern literature, culture and society. By multiplying possible points of engagement through the use of varied media and disciplinary approaches, we also provide more students of diverse learning styles and experience opportunities to connect positively with course content, for “[t]o be truly relevant, instruction has to go beyond adult interests; it must ensure that learning is accessible through the person’s ways of knowing” (Wlodkowski 169).<sup>5</sup> Moreover, by making the kind of investment that adopting this multi-faceted approach demands from us as teachers, we also model the engagement that we expect from and encourage in our students, who tend to work harder, give more of themselves, and more easily risk stretching their own limits when they see their professors doing the same.

Two units will serve as more comprehensive illustrations of my attempts to make connections with my students’ modern-day knowledge and experience, the first on “Demonic Possession” and the second on “Astrology and Divination.” After examining

textual and visual representations of the devil and his demons in the early modern period and today, we explored the troubling idea of the possession of a human being by a demonic force. It came as a surprise to most students that belief in the devil as materially present and in exorcism as a desirable and efficacious way of combating his influence is currently on the rise in both Europe and the United States. In the United States alone, the number of official Catholic Church exorcists increased from one to ten during the 1990s to meet a sharply increasing demand for exorcisms. The growing number of requests spurred the Vatican to publish a new edition of the rite in January 1999, the first new edition since 1614. In addition, evangelical Protestants have become more avid exorcists than their Catholic counterparts, conducting hundreds of underground exorcisms.<sup>6</sup> As a class, we read newspaper articles in English and French on the revival of exorcism in and viewed a French documentary on exorcism today in Switzerland, France, and Italy. Through grappling with understanding rising belief in possession and the power of exorcism today, students were better equipped to analyze the ways in which possession and exorcism had been understood in the past. Looking back to the seventeenth century, we concentrated on the famous Loudun convent possession case (1643–47) and the demonic experiences of Jeanne des Anges and Jean-Joseph Surin as recounted in their memoirs and letters. The class looked at late nineteenth and twentieth-century rereadings of demonic possession by the emerging discipline of psychiatry, personified by Jean-Martin Charcot, as well as 1970s feminist use of the figure of the possessed woman. We also discussed some of the many representations of Loudun by historians, filmmakers, musicians and novelists. We watched Ken Russell's troubling film, *The Devils* (1971), based on the story of Loudun and starring Vanessa Redgrave as Ursuline prioress Jeanne des Anges. Students read excerpts from a seventeenth-century exorcism manual and watched William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973, rereleased in 2000), where an identical rite gets used. Working on analysis of that film helped students to ask questions about the way evil is represented in both periods and to examine with greater sensitivity Jeanne des Anges's and Surin's accounts of their personal experiences of the demonic, as well as the diagnostic

systems put in place by ecclesiastical and medical authorities of their time.

This cross-period interface continued in our unit on divination, where we looked at astrology and chiromancy (or palm-reading) then and now, as well as other so-called occult sciences. Here again, students were able to compare and contrast present-day interest in and derision of these ways of knowing with sixteenth-century scientific and popular beliefs through short textual and visual sources, from sixteenth-century almanacs to modern astrology magazines. We read Roland Barthes' entry for "Astrologie" in *Mythologies*, which reinforced the cultural constructedness of science that students had already observed during their cross-century comparisons. The class traced the demise of the occult sciences and the increasing crackdown on diviners as the seventeenth century progressed. Through Jean de la Fontaine's fables "L'Horoscope" and "Les Devineresses" and Thomas Corneille's *La Devineresse* (1679), we examined mounting skepticism over such beliefs and practices. We studied the play in relationship to its historical context of the *Affaire des Poisons*, looked at period engravings of scenes from the play and its notorious real-world "heroine," and students made the seventeenth-century comedy meaningful to them by transposing it into their campus world. They cast Bowdoin students seeking out the help of the *Devineresse* to solve their problems and produced some terrific scenes, ranging from assistance with the housing lottery to insight into their amorous affairs. These are the things that students remember about a course—the moments they created and invested themselves in, the course activities that made them work and laugh together.

### **Encouraging Ownership**

This leads me to the second major goal I had in designing this course, which went hand in hand with the first: to find ways to encourage students to take greater responsibility and invest themselves more fully in the learning process. Educational scholars agree that the more active students are in the learning

process, the better they learn, and since the 1990s, a major shift toward “learner-centered” education has been underway.<sup>7</sup> But students, accustomed to and usually happy with the relatively passive learning that goes on in the more traditional teacher-centered lecture format of many college and university classes, do not become more engaged, active learners simply because we ask them to; we must structure our courses in such a way as to make this happen. Language departments should have a notable advantage over some others in encouraging active learning in their upper-level courses because their students, having engaged in language learning, are already accustomed to the learner-centered classroom where, in order to make progress communicating in the language, they had little choice but to take an active role. The challenge, however, is extending this kind of student engagement and investment into more advanced courses, where assignments and class discussions tend to resemble to a greater extent those of other humanities courses and students sometimes fall into more complacent patterns of behavior. “Learner-centered” class activities and assignments, usually collaborative or cooperative in nature, lead students to take on more responsibility for their own and their classmates’ learning, give them more freedom to choose the structure of given tasks and often a role in their assessment, and make them more accountable for their progress and results. My experience putting these ideas to work in my courses has consistently been that when students feel they have greater determining roles in their learning and see themselves acknowledged as valuable and reliable producers of knowledge by being given these responsibilities, they rise to the occasion, work especially hard, and even exceed expectations in their performance. They also achieve a deeper level of understanding of course material through contributing to a collective process of knowledge creation.<sup>8</sup>

One of the biggest challenges of creating a learner-centered classroom is divesting ourselves and our students of accepted notions of the teacher as sole authority in the business of learning. Radical and feminist pedagogy has put the power dynamics of the classroom into question and advocated increased power sharing among students and between students and teachers.<sup>9</sup> This is not to

say that we as teachers must surrender all authority into the hands of our undergraduates—such an approach would be problematic and even unethical—but we must work to deconstruct the idea that the teacher represents the unique source of knowledge in the classroom and is the lone determiner and enforcer of the course’s rules. I saw my ability to implement structures that diffused authority among all class participants and that helped students to come to see themselves and each of their fellow classmates as valuable sources of information and insight as key to getting students to take greater charge of their own and their classmates learning. To lay the foundation for cooperative learning and give my students a determining role in the course from the outset, during the first course meeting I asked them two related questions to which they responded first on paper, then in discussion in groups of three. First, I asked them to list what elements were for them the prerequisites that made for a good learning atmosphere, and second, I asked them to define what for them constituted good class participation by inventing a clear method and scale for evaluating it that we would use throughout the course. After they got over their initial discomfort at finding themselves in the position of discussing issues that affected the structure of the course and their own evaluation, rather than being told my established criteria, they came up with provocative responses and high standards for how they wanted the class to be and individual class members to contribute. We pooled the groups’ ideas and established together the principles and standards by which the class would function and its participants be evaluated. This initial exercise accomplished several things. Holding such a discussion at the beginning of term set the tone for the kind of involvement I was to expect from them, and they from each other and from me, for the rest of the semester. From day one, students had to work cooperatively to devise a plan for something that truly mattered to them—how their class participation would be assessed and by what guidelines the group would function. I remain convinced that the sense of ownership the students took from this process made a great positive impact on the quality of our interactions throughout the semester. As Wlodkowski reminds us, “adults will more actively accept norms they have helped establish. Ownership gives them a sense of personal choice, an understanding that the norms

reflect their values, and a better awareness of the need for their support to maintain the norms” (124). Having the question of what constituted positive group dynamics on the table from the get go opened the door for further critical appraisals of our progress at points throughout the semester. Moreover, by having the students take an influential role from the start in shaping the kind of class they hoped to have, the onus for its success no longer rested exclusively on me, the teacher, but became instead a cooperative responsibility.<sup>10</sup>

To continue this active in-class exchange outside of the classroom and to increase the visibility and stakes of solid class preparation, I replaced the individual weekly reading response journal I had often used in the past with an open journal and discussion on line. Students contributed journal entries to a web-based on-line discussion twice a week, by ten o'clock the night before each course meeting. Though I gave them clear guidelines and suggestions as to how to use their journal space, students generally chose their content. They used the space to think through the reading or viewing assignments, to propose questions for discussion the following day and to elaborate on ideas they had from previous class discussions. Sometimes I gave specific assignments for their entries in preparation for a class activity or asked half the class to contribute and the other half to respond to these contributions. For example, before we began our unit on “Witches and the Witchcraze” by looking at early modern and modern images of witches in class, they wrote about their personal vision of a witch and analyzed what elements composed it and where they came from. Thus, when we began the unit the next day they had already thought through their own ideas and used them as a springboard for discussion of the representations we had before us. On another occasions, I asked students to pick out a specific passage that they wanted to discuss in class, or to formulate specific questions for the discussion of the readings.

An on-line journal has several extraordinary advantages over a traditional reading response journal.<sup>11</sup> First, it answers a myriad of very practical concerns, which, when solved, actually lead to better learning. The response journal no longer needs to be carried

around, neither by the students nor in a heavy stack by the teacher when she reads them. Students can access the discussion from any networked computer, and can even write their text in a word processing program first, allowing them to easily revise and check for errors, and then cut and paste it into their posting. Accents can also be used without a problem. The fact that their entries appear with the specific time and date of their posting keeps students doing the advance work necessary for successful in-class discussion on time, ensuring their preparedness for the following day. Because it is a web-based discussion, rather than a listserv, the entries do not fill the e-mail inboxes of class members and, more importantly, they appear on the page as a navigable and chronologically organized whole, allowing both students and teacher to revisit past contributions and maintaining a helpful record of shared discussions that students can draw on for further assignments. The teacher has easy access to the entire semester's postings at any time, allowing for more frequent and efficient feedback to students and facilitating the return to points made earlier in the semester during later discussions.

Second and even more significantly, because of the immediacy of the web postings, we teachers know what students' reactions are to a given day's assignment before they come into class, which makes a world of difference in our ability to plan class so as to better connect with their greatest concerns and make the most of their best ideas. This avoids what is often the case with written journals, collected only periodically: that teachers frequently only find out about certain students' good ideas sometimes even weeks after they have gone unsaid during class discussion. Moreover, often students' readings of the texts we have chosen will often provoke questions and reactions that we as teachers had not anticipated, and having greater lead time allows us to adjust our approaches to the material and our class activities to address and accommodate their readings. Entries can be used to start discussion, to structure group activities, and to ask specific students for greater elaboration on interesting points they make. Bringing the on-line discussion back into class and using students' contributions to plan class activities shows them that they are

valued as thinkers who have an important role in determining the direction of the course. This, in turn, increases their motivation.

Third, a key advantage to the open journal is that students share their ideas not only with their teacher but also with their classmates. Besides the obvious benefits of extending the classroom community virtually, writing for their fellow classmates ups the ante significantly on the quality of student contributions. Students are, it seems, far more concerned about writing something of consequence if what they write will be read by their peers, and I have been told as much by my students. What is more, they explain their ideas with greater clarity because they have the audience of their peers in mind and see their writing more as a real conversation, rather than an academic essay that must adopt a certain tone and vocabulary. Fourth, this virtual venue allows shy students and those who are more comfortable expressing their ideas in written form, who have a more difficult time than others participating orally during in-class discussion, a chance to be “heard.” They establish a “voice” on-line, which allows them to build confidence in expressing their ideas. They can be acknowledged for making a significant contribution, even if they speak less frequently in class. For the teacher, knowing these particular students’ ideas ahead of time also makes it easier to draw them out in class by inviting them to share an idea they have already thought through in writing. For the more loquacious students, using the on-line discussion as opposed to writing a formal response paper also seems to be far less stressful, since the norms of on-line communication resemble more closely those of oral discussion. Shifting to the use of a web-based discussion thus accomplished far more than alleviating the inconveniences and faults of the traditional reading response journal. It actually improved the quality of my teaching and of my students’ preparation, while fostering more inclusive learning conditions.

Maintaining a cooperative learning environment depends on the active engagement of all participants and on students believing that there is something valuable to be learned from all members of the group. While we always hope these prerequisites will exist from the outset or at least develop “naturally” in our classes,

experience shows that they often do not. Convinced that much is to be gained when students view each other as potential sources of learning, and that they become more motivated when they are given greater responsibility for what goes on in class, I have tried several tactics. In addition to encouraging students to share with the class personal experiences, current events, or other discoveries related to course themes and questions, I assigned individual students to bring certain pieces of useful information to class on a regular basis to enlighten our readings and discussions. I call these short assignments “missions.” Rather than presenting a given work or author myself, or always being the one to explain complex vocabulary or unfamiliar references, I give students the responsibility for these tasks, thus encouraging in a structured way the multiplication of sources of knowledge within the classroom. For example, when the class examined literary representations of witches through difficult poems by Pierre de Ronsard and Mathurin Régnier, and a *histoire tragique* by François de Rosset, I assigned individual students to research period-specific vocabulary, cultural, historical, biblical, and mythological references. Missions can also be used to report briefly on authors, literary and artistic movements, historical trends, political systems, and much more. Sometimes students may be asked to create a short handout on the topic for the rest of the class, as I have done in my introduction to literature course. In general, however, I have found missions to be most effective at creating a dynamic interaction in class when they are relatively short assignments on discrete elements. The teacher lists the “missions” for the next class meeting on the board or on a transparency at the end of class and students volunteer for a mission for the next class meeting. The students then research their assignments and share their findings during the next class discussion. In a class of eighteen, each student typically executed a mission five times during the course of the semester. Thus, students get used to presenting informally and relying on each other to clarify elements rather than always turning to the teacher. In this way, they become more responsible for their own and their classmates’ learning. The other members of the class pay close attention to the person reporting because they know that their classmate is providing them with valuable information they do not yet have and that will be

immediately applicable to the text or image they have before them. Through this regular exercise, students become conscious of their engagement in a collaborative learning process. Based on “constructivist” theories that “emphasize learners’ actively constructing their own knowledge rather than passively receiving information transmitted to them from teachers and textbooks,” these short assignments push students to see themselves as having a decisive role in their own and their classmates’ learning.<sup>12</sup> Missions make students responsible for bringing information to the class, and give them practice in accessing it quickly, making sense of it, prioritizing it, and presenting it concisely, all learning skills that will serve them well. That responsibility for helping others to understand a given text or image increases their motivation to present quality work. For missions to be successful, the teacher must establish clear guidelines for the assignment (emphasizing direct relevance and brevity), anticipate the difficulties or points of interest of future assignments and distribute these missions a class ahead, and be willing to hang back in the classroom so that students take a greater role in initiating the contribution of their findings.

Another method by which I sought to make learning cooperative was by distributing different but related readings to individual students or groups of students, a method Wlodkowski refers to as the “jigsaw procedure” (106). In such assignments, each group member takes responsibility for a different part of the reading and must explain it to the rest of the group until they all have a good understanding of the whole assignment. These activities create “positive interdependence” among students, a situation where “[t]hey sink or swim together. Each group member has a unique contribution to make to the group because of his resources, role, or responsibilities” (106). I return to our unit on “Witches and the Witchcraze” for an example. The first part of the unit was an examination of the representation of witches and their activities according to early seventeenth-century demonology. We read a large portion of Pierre de Lancre’s 1612 *Tableau de l’Inconstance des mauvais anges et des demons*, a text whose nature and amplitude made distributing chapters among students ideal. Everyone read the introduction and one key chapter to have

a common base, and then students, divided into four groups, read different predetermined additional chapters. Drawing on the same principle behind information-gap activities for language learning—where motivation for real communication is engendered by creating an “information gap” between speakers, each speaker having different information that must be shared in order to solve a given problem collectively—distributing readings among students creates a situation where they must rely on their classmates directly to complete their knowledge. Not only were my students made responsible for others’ learning and thus prepared the assignment thoroughly, but in order to get the whole picture of De Lancre’s ideas on witches and their pursuit, they had to pool their knowledge. They did so in class, first by meeting with the other students who had read the same chapters they had, to clarify any difficulties and to decide what important elements to share with the others. They then formed new groups where each member had read different additional chapters and shared their findings. Together they formulated a set of conclusions about De Lancre’s demonological thought that we then discussed and debated as a large group. This process balanced individual and group responsibility for knowledge creation, encouraging a learning environment where the teacher was no longer the sole determiner of the “right answers,” but instead a facilitator of the students’ collective exploration. Missions could also be used in a similar way on the small group level, for example, when working with a difficult poem. Each group member could be placed in charge of researching or interpreting given elements and students could share this information with their group in class to come up with a common interpretation of a given text or answer a question asked of them.<sup>13</sup>

Role-play was another effective tool I developed for encouraging student ownership of course material. Though we often make use of it for facilitating language practice, we sometimes forget its potential value in more advanced courses. In this particular course, we held a debate on the reality of witches and the sabbat in which sixteenth and seventeenth-century writers on witches such as Johann Weyer, Jean Bodin, Amboise Paré, Michel de Montaigne, Pierre de Lancre, Henry Boguet, Cyrano de

Bergerac, and Nicolas Malebranche participated, played by various members of the class. I split the class in half, had students in each group pick the historical figures they would represent, and gave them corresponding readings by the authors whom they had chosen. They each read and did further research on the identity and positions of their writers, met with their double in the other half of the class to brainstorm ideas, and then came to the debate as the historical figure. While this may seem a little silly at first—why not simply have students report on a given author's positions on witches and witch prosecution?—the results prove outstanding, differing greatly in the level of quality and student engagement from those of a more standard approach. Having to assume a role forces them to try to understand their mindset, logic, and arguments of their authors so that they might properly represent and attempt to think like them. Students come extremely well prepared, use their knowledge and creativity to invent anecdotes and experiences for their character beyond the historical record, and respond in character to arguments presented by their classmates. They learn various positions on the issues from each other's characters and together attempt to reconstruct the worldview of this earlier period.<sup>14</sup>

I have also used role play with good results when the class examines the Salem witch trials through several trial documents presented by David Hall in *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England* (280–314) and Maryse Condé's 1986 novelistic portrayal of seventeenth-century Salem, *Moi, Tituba, sorcière noire de Salem*. Each student plays the part of a specific Salem villager at an emergency meeting called by the Governor of the colony to discuss the rising number of witchcraft accusations. They must understand in detail the events that would have preceded this meeting, their relationships with and attitudes toward other members of the community, their position within Salem village, their hopes, and their fears. Because students were given this assignment as they began reading the novel, they read with a great deal more care and attention than they often do. Playing a role can also be quite freeing, not to mention fun. It has been my experience that more reserved students become more talkative and playful under the guise of their new identity. They express

opinions and make arguments that otherwise would not be aired under normal conditions. Demanding this level of involvement with course material from students in class also raises the bar for their preparation, leading not only to the success of the role play itself, but also to better discussions throughout the unit.

Role play could be used with any work of fiction, by asking students to assume the role of a particular character to interact with other characters and create an imaginary dialogue, an activity that calls students to understand the psychological make-up, values, needs, and desires of that particular character on a much deeper level. Students read closely, and their reading becomes a sort of detective work enabling them to understand what makes their character tick, what pieces of insight they can gain to help reconstruct their character. Role play could potentially be even more open-ended when studying a particular period or issue, allowing students the opportunity to choose a historical character on their own, do the research to find and understand them, read some of their writings, and enter class discussion as that figure with other members of that society played by the rest of the class.

In the same way that role play works as a motivator for student engagement in course material because it demands that students invest fully in their readings so that they might give an informed and creative performance for their peers, so also can assignments that matter beyond the classroom provoke a similar motivational response. As experience with academic service learning over recent years has shown, students perform better and invest themselves more fully in the learning process when they are working, not for a teacher, a grade, or even for themselves, but for a larger “real world” audience.<sup>15</sup> When their efforts matter to and will be seen by people beyond the classroom—and even beyond the college community—their commitment to the project increases substantially. “Making it real,” I have found, takes the emphasis off the grade and makes the process and the final product matter to students on an entirely different scale. My students created a month-long exhibit of twenty-five works from the Bowdoin College Museum of Art’s permanent collection, which ranged from Renaissance woodcuts and engravings to nineteenth and

twentieth-century lithographs and photography. We have the great fortune at Bowdoin to have an excellent Museum of Art, whose staff reaches out to faculty to encourage them to make use of the Museum's resources, and reserves a special gallery for the mounting of course-related exhibitions. The students' exhibit, entitled "Witches, Monsters, and Demons: Representing the Occult," which ran September 30 through November 2, 2003, though not service learning per se, was designed for and enjoyed by visitors to the museum and therefore had similar motivational benefits.<sup>16</sup> "So is this a *real* exhibit, for *real* people?," my students asked, buzzing excitedly about the project as they left our first meeting. Students chose one or two works among a number preselected from the Museum's collection by myself and members of the museum staff, researched and analyzed them, and wrote and rewrote bilingual English-French wall text. Not all the works were French and only about half were early modern, but they filled the walls with a wide variety of occult figures and themes, most of which were dealt with at some point in the course. The fact that Maine has a large population of French-Canadian origin, as well as many visitors from nearby Francophone Canada, made providing the French text of greater realistic value. Students also presented their pieces to the class in French during our opening visit to the completed exhibition. The show was advertised by the Museum and timed to attract visitors by culminating Halloween weekend and complementing the major exhibition that fall on the ghostly theme of "The Disembodied Spirit."<sup>17</sup>

Choice is another key factor that contributes to increasing student motivation. Beginning at mid semester, students began designing their final projects for the course with a great deal of freedom coupled with a substantial amount of guidance and feedback. Final projects and presentations were open to a wide range of topics, periods, and styles. The only limits I placed on what they could do were that the project had to be linked to course themes, to make use of some French-language sources, and to be presented written and orally in French. Students could pursue a project on their own or as part of a group and decide on the form their project would take. All involved presentation to the class and at least some writing, but they could range from a full-length

research paper to a creative project with a shorter written analytical component. Making students responsible for defining, in consultation with me, not only their topic but also the structure and goals of their project allowed them to choose a format that was best suited to their strengths and interests, while holding them to high standards that they themselves had set. The fact that they had to negotiate the form of the final product individually or as a group with me kept the lines of communication open and increased accountability throughout the process. Students wrote a three-page prospectus mid-way through the semester, in which they presented their initial findings, ideas, difficulties, and sources. They each presented their project plans briefly in class and received their classmates' and my feedback and suggestions, both in class and afterwards over our on-line discussion.

Students presented their work during a final conference at the end of the semester, during the pre-scheduled three-hour exam period. Again, their "presentations" took on different forms depending on the project plan, but they all had to engage their fellow students actively in some way, whether through audio-visual aids, physical participation, group activities, question-response, etc. Since I have begun providing these guidelines I have not seen a failed presentation. Requiring students to think of themselves as teachers and to find an effective method for engaging their peers in their project raises their level of investment dramatically and produces outstanding results. The students' enthusiasm over the three hours we spent together was testament enough to the success of the final project design. Final projects included: a survey of people's beliefs and experiences with the supernatural and a one-woman dramatic production based on those testimonials; an analysis of the spell as a genre, the compilation of a *grimoire* in French, and the preparation and execution of a group ritual for concentration as the presentation; a film that explored the psyche of a seventeenth-century exorcist who begins to question his faith; a film on various supposedly haunted or spooky places on campus based on student surveys and college lore; a modern theatrical parody of seventeenth-century French fairy tales; a study of the importance of the Cabala in Renaissance natural magic; an essay on the political role of voodoo in Haiti today; an

anthropological investigation of Fijian beliefs on the afterlife, with the use of music and images in a PowerPoint presentation; an examination of the origins of our modern vampire image as a composite of two famous early vampires and the painting of their portraits; a study of certain occult figures of Tolkien's world, with the use of clips from the *Lord of the Rings* films during the presentation; and a comparative analysis of the muggle and magic worlds in *Harry Potter*, also using clips from the films to stimulate discussion. In presenting their work, students succeeded in communicating their enthusiasm about the topics they had chosen, an excitement that was equally evident in the high-quality work they produced on paper and through a variety of other media.

Finally, I must provide a word about evaluation strategies, a topic that is always bound to provoke some controversy. If we are to have a truly learner-centered classroom that shares authority between teacher and students, we must involve students to some degree in assessment. Because the assignment of grades is the ultimate act of power in the academic context, maintaining the teacher's exclusive control over student assessment undermines our goal of convincing students that they are partners in all parts of their learning and must take responsibility at all stages of the process.<sup>18</sup> My own attempts to give students a role in assessment have thus far been small, but worthwhile. As I discussed above, I involve students in determining how their class participation should be evaluated, and have them self-evaluate and assign themselves a grade three times during the semester according to the standards they set, to which I respond with my own comments and a final participation grade. Perhaps surprisingly, when given this responsibility, upper-level students tend to be rather fair judges of their performance and underestimate themselves more often than not.<sup>19</sup> Though I have not yet used self-evaluation techniques for grading papers or other major assignments, I see the potential for a helpful self-critical process in such an exercise. I have on occasion, having already calculated students' grades myself, asked them to provide me with the final grade they felt they had earned for the course, accompanied by a written justification. Here too I found students' estimations to be on par with my own with few exceptions. Their assessment of their work in the course was a

productive process of reflection for them and was helpful to me for gaining insights into their views on assignments and expectations.

My students also had the opportunity to provide formative feedback to their peers. They responded to other students' initial final project ideas, presented briefly in class, both in class and over the on-line discussion. Later in that process they participated in evaluating each others' final project presentations by writing comments on several students' work that I took into consideration and shared anonymously with presenters when providing feedback on that component of the final project. Having students evaluate their peers not only provides helpful insights to the students being evaluated, but also has the added benefit of ensuring the close attention of the evaluators during presentations. I have found self and peer assessment to be key when students work in groups on graded assignments, as many of them chose to do for their final projects. Each group determines their work plan and their individual roles, assesses their group's progress, and reports on their collaboration both during and following the completion of the project, both as a group and individually. This process helps to prevent what is sometimes called "social loafing," where one or more group members let the others do the bulk of the work.<sup>20</sup> I then take these assessments into account when determining individual grades for the group assignment.

Other helpful uses of peer-evaluation include the review of drafts with writing partners or practice for a presentation with fellow students, which I have encouraged and often required of my students in other courses. For writing groups, I provide student reviewers with a detailed evaluation form that solicits both positive and constructive feedback from the evaluator in several specific areas, and serves as the basis for in-class writing group conferences. Practicing assessment of their peers' writing tends to make students more aware of their own writing and leads them to become better writers. One final strategy I have found extremely helpful in my own evaluation of students' written work for increasing their investment in and concentration on improving their writing is eliminating grades from the draft and revision process. By giving extensive formative comments on first drafts of student

papers, rather than comments and a grade that can be raised with improvement in the final draft, I have found that students truly engage with my questions and suggestions, come see me to talk through them, and make real changes rather than only cosmetic ones (for example, only correcting the French to raise the portion of their grade attributed to grammar and style). I then assign a grade to the final draft, taking into account the effort and thought the student put into the revision process. All of these assessment methods teach the important skills of using criticism productively and of assessing one's own and others' work critically and constructively, tasks most of our students will be asked to perform throughout their professional lives (Weimer 131–32).

Student reactions to each of these ways of encouraging ownership of the learning process have been by and large positive and even enthusiastic. The majority of students sincerely enjoy the course activities, feel empowered by their increased role in the learning process, and give their all to their assignments. Some students, however, more comfortable in courses where they take a more passive role in the classroom and in decisions about their work, sometimes feel that the learner-centered course asks too much of them. On occasion, I have encountered student resistance to “having to work so hard.” Learner-centered approaches do place the bar high for both students and teachers, and any teacher who has tried them will attest to the huge investment they demand in the way of advance planning and follow-through. But though I have from time to time made adjustments to assignments when it was clearly in the best interest of the course and its members (myself included), I see in the end very little problem with the occasional student expressing distain for “too much work,” when what they are really complaining about is working differently, in a more engaged and active way with greater accountability. As Maryellen Weimer explains:

Resistance that is based on the increased amount of work is resistance for the right reason from the teacher's perspective (and someday perhaps from the student's as well). It ends up being proof that these approaches effectively engage students with

content. Consider resistance based on this reason as a sign that the approaches have been successfully designed and are accomplishing their desired objective. They are engaging students with content and developing their prowess as learners. (151)

Another factor that can make some students nervous is the significant degree of self-determination required of them by several of their assignments and contributions. Though their unease stems from the realization of the responsibility implied on their part, they may also be unaccustomed to such freedom or fearful of failing to make the “right” choice. When students are used to being asked for “twenty double-spaced pages on a one of the following two topics,” their discomfort with defining their own parameters on a graded assignment is understandable. During my meetings with students about their final project designs, for example, a few of them seemed to want me to tell them what was the best formula for success, thus attempting to give the control back to me. Though I insisted on their taking the initiative in developing their project design, once we had negotiated the final plan we put it down clearly in writing, as a sort of contract, which seemed to reassure any concerned students. In class as well, sometimes students have asked me to give “the answer,” invoking my supposed authority and expertise as the teacher. To this I have resisted, unless it was to throw yet another opinion or perspective into the mix, or responded with a question or a purposefully provocative viewpoint. Sharing authority requires both the students and the teacher to be willing to take risks, while carefully maintaining an atmosphere comfortable enough to be conducive to risk-taking. For teachers, it is often difficult to give up the reigns or to experiment with activities yet untried, while for students, often trained as more passive learners or understandably afraid of the new things being asked of them, it is often a struggle to take hold of them. But when activities and assignments are well-planned and structured with clear guidelines for students, complete failures are almost nonexistent, the experiments that turn out to be less than ideal can be learned from and improved, and the overall gain for learning is worth all the effort.<sup>21</sup>

Making early modern literature and culture matter to our students requires, perhaps ironically, that we as teachers temper our focus on content and direct more of our attention to learning. In designing activities and assignments that require greater student involvement in the processes of discovery and the construction of knowledge, we invite our students to explore the past for themselves, to understand it on a deeper level, and to make their findings meaningful for them today. When we raise students' accountability for their own and their classmates' learning through collaborative tasks that increase their individual responsibility for the success of the group, students tend to do more thorough, thoughtful, and creative work. By asking students to take a greater determining role in shaping their projects, we require them to take charge of their learning and allow them to make choices based on their individual strengths and interests, all of which inevitably leads to higher-quality work. With greater ownership of the exploratory process and of the results of their journey, students inevitably do the work of rendering the early modern less occult.

**Bowdoin College**

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> On the need to rethink the role of content in the learner-centered classroom, see Maryellen Weimer, *Learner-Centered Teaching*, 5, 10–13, 46–71. Research in cognitive and educational psychology has shown that emphasis on content and coverage encourages largely surface learning that rarely stays with a student, whereas learning skills do (Weimer 10–13). In her chapter on “The Function of Content,” Weimer points out that students today, living in the “information age” have more need for skills to access, organize, and evaluate information than for storing information in their heads (50). Given our access to information and the rapid change in most professions today, good learning skills have come to be at least as valued as knowledge (49).

<sup>2</sup> Primary source readings for the course included the following sixteenth through eighteenth-century texts, grouped by theme. Le naturel et le surnaturel—Les monstres: Amboise Paré, *Traité des monstres*; Pierre Boaistuau, *Histoires prodigieuses*; Michel de

Montaigne, “D’un enfant monstrueux” in *Essais*; and Samuel de Champlain, “D’un monstre espouvantable.” Rencontres avec le diable et ses démons: Pierre de Ronsard, “Les Daimons,” in *Les Hymnes*; Jean Loret, “Diablerie,” *La Muse historique*; Charles Robinet, “Les Amours de Médor, Démon, et d’Angélique sa captive;” La Gravette de Mayolas, “La Monture du diable;” Jean Loret, “Messe noire;” and François de Rosset, Histoire X, “D’un démon qui apparaissait en forme de damoiselle au lieutenant du chevalier du guet de la ville de Lyon. De leur accointance charnelle, et de la fin malheureuse qui en succéda,” in *Histoires tragiques*, 251–61 and Histoire XX, “Des horribles excès commis par une jeune religieuse à l’instigation du diable,” 428–42. Les Sorciers et les sorcières: La littérature démonologique: Pierre de Lancre, *Tableau de l’inconstance des mauvais anges et démons*; Henry Institoris et Jacques Sprenger, *Le Marteau des sorcières*. Les Sorcières—Histoires et poèmes: Pierre de Ronsard, “Contre Denise Sorcière;” Mathurin Régnier, “Ode sur une vieille maquerelle;” Jean de Boyssières, “Des humeurs de la femme;” François de Rosset, “Des enchantements et sortilèges de Dragontine, de sa fortune prodigieuse et de sa fin malheureuse” in *Histoires tragiques*. Débat sur la poursuite des sorciers et l’existence du sabbat: Michel de Montaigne, “Des Boyteux” in *Essais*; Cyrano de Bergerac, “Pour les Sorciers” and “Contre les Sorciers;” Nicolas Malebranche, *De la recherche de la vérité*; Jean Wier, *De l’Imposture des diables*; Jean Bodin, *De la démonomanie des sorciers*; Henri Boguet, *Discours execrable des sorciers*; and De Lancre, *Tableau de l’inconstance des mauvais anges et démons*. Les “sorcières” de Salem: Maryse Condé, *Moi, Tituba, Sorcière noire de Salem* and David Hall, *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History, 1638-1693*. La Possession démoniaque: Joachim du Bellay, Sonnets 97 and 98 in *Les Regrets*; Maximilien d’Eynatten, *Manuel d’exorcismes*; *Relation Veritable de ce qui s’est passé aux exorcismes des religieuses Ursulines possedees de Loudun*; *Lettre d’un médecin anonyme à M. Philibert de La Marre* in Robert Mandrou, *Possession et Sorcellerie*; Hédelin Abbé d’Aubignac, *Relation touchant les possédées de Loudun* in Mandrou; Urbain Grandier, *Requête d’Urbain Grandier au roi Louis XIII* in

Mandrou; Jeanne des Anges, *Autobiographie*; and Jean-Joseph Surin, Lettre 52, *Correspondance*. L'Astrologie et la divination: Jean de la Fontaine, "Les Devineresses" and "L'Horoscope" in *Fables*; Jean de la Bruyère, *Les Caractères*; Thomas Corneille et Donneau de Visé, *La Divineresse*. Les Revenants et les vampires: Pierre Boaistuau, *Histoires prodigieuses*; Pierre Camus, "Le Fantomne;" Dom Augustin Calmet, *Dissertation sur les vampires*; and Voltaire, "Vampires," *Dictionnaire philosophique*.

<sup>3</sup> I would like to thank Susan Wegner, Professor of History of Art, Bowdoin College, and Matthew Tomlinson, Visiting Assistant Professor of Sociology and Anthropology, Bowdoin College, for their fascinating contributions to the course.

<sup>4</sup> My sincere thanks go to Marilyn R. Pukkila, Reference and Women's Studies Librarian, Colby College, who has kindly shared her time and expertise with my students and the wider community on two occasions.

<sup>5</sup> On the theory of "multiple intelligences" see Gardner, *Multiple Intelligences*, summarized by Raymond J. Wlodkowski, *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn*, 169–73.

<sup>6</sup> John Tagliabue, "Shoring Up Satan, Closing Limbo," *The New York Times* (Jan. 31, 1999) and John W. Fountain, "Exorcists and Exorcisms Proliferate Across U. S." *The New York Times* (Nov. 28, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> On the history of this major paradigm shift toward learner-centered approaches, an outline of these approaches, and the learning theories that have informed them see: Stage, Muller, Kinzie, and Simmons, *Creating Learner Centered Classrooms*; L. Dee Fink, *Creating Significant Learning Experiences*, 17–22; and Weimer, 1–20. Weimer's excellent reading list in Appendix C (224–32) includes many useful sources on active learning, small group dynamics, learner-centered teaching, and learning theories.

<sup>8</sup> The literature on adult learning, motivation, and learner-centered pedagogy in higher education is vast, and I cite here only a few sources that I have found particularly helpful, most notably Weimer and Wlodkowski, among the countless articles and books

available. Stephen Brookfield's *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* is an outstanding guide to rethinking our roles as teachers and raising our consciousness of the messages we send to students through our actions and assignments. I thank Elizabeth Barnhart of the Baldwin Center for Learning and Teaching at Bowdoin College for her generous help in directing me to several recent publications.

<sup>9</sup> On the contributions of radical and feminist learning theories see Weimer's discussion, 8-10, her chapter on "The Balance of Power" 23-45, and her source lists, 229-30. See Weimer's chapter on "The Role of the Teacher" for discussion of the ways in which the role of the teacher changes in the learner-centered classroom (72-94). See also Brookfield.

<sup>10</sup> For further ideas on student involvement in participation evaluation and norm setting see Wlodkowski, 123-26, and Weimer, 108-109.

<sup>11</sup> In her 1997 article on her experience with the use of an e-mail listserve, "Virtual Encounters," Laura Mandell makes many of the same arguments I do here with equal enthusiasm for that format's advantages, upon which the newer web-based on-line discussion only improves. Other more recent web-based projects such as the Wiki open up a variety of exciting possibilities for collaborative work and sharing. For discussion of one such project, see Mark Phillipson, "The Romantic Audience Project: A Wiki Experiment."

<sup>12</sup> Stage et al., 35. See also Weimer's list of references on constructivism, 230.

<sup>13</sup> On making cooperative learning work well, see Larry K. Michaelsen, L. Dee Fink, and Arletta Knight, "Designing Effective Group Activities" and Wlodkowski, 104-115. On the motivation such learning inspires, see Theodore Panitz, "The Motivational Benefits of Cooperative Learning," and Wlodkowski.

<sup>14</sup> See also Wlodkowski's discussion of the benefits of role-playing and simulation exercises, 230-34.

<sup>15</sup> On the changes implied by service learning and its motivational benefits, see, among others, Jeffrey P. F. Howard, “Academic Service Learning: A Counternormative Pedagogy” and Rick Gordon’s introduction to *Problem Based Service Learning*, 1.

<sup>16</sup> See <http://academic.bowdoin.edu/artmuseum/exhibitions/current/html/occult.shtml>.

<sup>17</sup> See [http://academic.bowdoin.edu/artmuseum/exhibitions/past/2003\\_2004/spirit.shtml](http://academic.bowdoin.edu/artmuseum/exhibitions/past/2003_2004/spirit.shtml).

<sup>18</sup> See Weimer’s chapter on evaluation strategies, “The Purposes and Processes of Evaluation,” 119–45.

<sup>19</sup> Empirical research has shown that the disparity between student and teacher assessments of a student’s work is negligible for advanced students, but beginning students do have a tendency to overestimate their performance (Weimer 131).

<sup>20</sup> On group peer-assessment strategies, see Weimer 141–42. On the problem of “social loafing” and ways to increase individual accountability, see: Edmund J. Hansen and James A. Stephens, “The Ethics of Learner-Centered Education,” 43; Michaelsen, Fink and Knight; and Wlodkowski, 108–109. Weimer discusses methods for empowering student groups to solve their problems, 114–115.

<sup>21</sup> On both faculty and student resistance to learner-centered approaches, see: Weimer’s chapter on “Responding to Resistance,” 149–66; R. M. Felder and R. Brent, “Navigating the Bumpy Road to Student-Centered Instruction;” and Hansen and Stephens. On the need for learner-centered activities to be implemented according to student readiness, see Wiemer’s chapter on “Taking a Developmental Approach,” 167–83.

## Works Cited

- Barthes, Roland. "Astrologie." *Mythologies*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1957. 155–57.
- Brookfield, Stephen D. *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995.
- Condé, Maryse. *Moi, Tituba, Sorcière noire de Salem*. Paris: Mercure de France, 1986.
- Corneille, Thomas et Donneau de Visé. *La Devineresse*. 1679. Ed. P. J. Yarrow. Exeter: Exeter Printing Unit, 1971.
- Felder, R. M. and R. Brent. "Navigating the Bumpy Road to Student-Centered Instruction." *College Teaching* 44.2 (1996): 43–47.
- Fink, L. Dee. *Creating Significant Learning Experiences. An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.
- Fountain, John W. "Exorcists and Exorcisms Proliferate Across U. S." *The New York Times* Nov. 28, 2000.
- Furetière, Antoine. *Dictionnaire universel*. 1690. Paris: Le Robert, 1978.
- Gardner, H. *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice*. New York: Basic Books, 1993.
- Gordon, Rick, ed. *Problem Based Service Learning: A Fieldguide for Making a Difference in Higher Education*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Keen, NH: Education by Design, 2000.
- Hall, David D., ed. *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History, 1638–1693*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1999.

- Hansen, Edmund J. and James A. Stephens. "The Ethics of Learner-Centered Education: Dynamics that Impede the Process." *Change*. September-October 2000: 40–47.
- Howard, Jeffrey P. F. "Academic Service Learning: A Counternormative Pedagogy." *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 73 (Spring 1998): 21–29.
- Jeanne des Anges. *Autobiographie*. 1644. Ed. Gabriel Legué et Gilles de la Tourette (Paris: Delahaye et Lecrosnier, 1886). Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1990.
- La Fontaine, Jean de. Fable XIV, "Les Devineresses" and Fable XVI, "L'Horoscope." *Fables*. Ed. Jean-Pierre Collinet. Paris: Gallimard, 1991, 218–20 and 248–50.
- Lancre, Pierre de. *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et démons où il est amplement traité des sorciers et de la sorcellerie*. 1612. Nicole Jacques-Chaquin, ed. Paris: Aubier, 1982.
- Mandell, Laura. "Virtual Encounters: Using an Electronic Mailing List in the Literature Classroom." *Profession* 1997: 126–32.
- Michaelsen, Larry K., L. Dee Fink, and Arletta Knight. "Designing Effective Group Activities: Lessons for Classroom Teaching and Faculty Development." In D. DeZure, ed. *To Improve the Academy* 16 (1997): 373–98.
- Panitz, Theodore. "The Motivational Benefits of Cooperative Learning." *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 78 (Summer 1999): 59–67.
- Phillipson, Mark with David Hamilton. "The Romantic Audience Project: A Wiki Experiment." *Romantic Circles* (Dec. 2004)
- <http://www.rc.umd.edu/pedagogies/commons/innovations/rap/index.htm>

- Régnier, Mathurin. "Ode sur une vieille maquerelle." *Œuvres complètes*. Paris: Éditions d'Aujourd'hui, 1984. 324–26.
- Ronsard, Pierre de. Ode XXII, "Contre Denise Sorcière." *Œuvres complètes*. Vol 1. Ed. Paul Laumonier. Paris: Hachette, 1924. 238–43.
- Rosset, François de. *Histoires mémorables et tragiques de ce temps*. Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1994.
- Stage, F. K., P. A. Muller, J. Kinzie, and A. Simmons. *Creating Learner Centered Classrooms: What Does Learning Theory Have to Say?* Washington, D.C.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education and the Association for the Study of Higher Education, 1998.
- Surin, Jean-Joseph. Lettre 52. *Correspondance*. Ed. Michel de Certeau. Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1966. 262–68.
- John Tagliabue, "Shoring Up Satan, Closing Limbo," *The New York Times* Jan. 31, 1999.
- Weimer, Maryellen. *Learner-Centered Teaching. Five Key Changes to Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002.
- Wlodkowski, Raymond J. *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn: A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching All Adults*. Rev. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.