DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 478 385 SP 041 647

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| AUTHOR | Lincoln, Yvonna |
| TITLE | Performing 9/11: Teaching in a Terrorized World. A Performance Script. |
| PUB DATE | 2003-04-00 |
| NOTE | 33p.; Cast included: Norman Denzin, Mary Weems, Ivan Brady, Rob Leffel, Robin Hughes, and others. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, April 21-25, 2002). |
| PUB TYPE | Creative Works (030) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150) |
| EDRS PRICE | EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | Creative Teaching ; Drama; Elementary Secondary Education; Ethnography; Higher Education; Preservice Teacher Education; Scripts; *Terrorism; Violence |
| IDENTIFIERS | *September 11 Terrorist Attacks 2001 |

ABSTRACT

While the research literature on teaching as a form of scholarship has been growing, there has been a concomitant growth in understanding that teaching itself is a kind of performance--an interactive dramaturgical relationship between students and teachers with potential positive outcomes for student learning, motivation, discovery, and community. This performance script, which focuses on teaching in a world impacted by September 11th, is intended for use in any classroom or conversational setting where educators, professors, students, or teachers might gather. Readers stand around the room, close to the audience, and share space with them. (Contains 32 references.) (SM)

# PERFORMING 9/11: TEACHING IN A TERRORIZED WORLD

A Performance Script Assembled by Yvonna Lincoln

CAST:

Norman Denzin, *as himself*
Mary Weems, *as herself*
Ivan Brady, *as himself*
*Rob Leffel,* reading for Jack Bratich
*Robin Hughes,* reading for Michelle Fine
A Greek chorus/Audience Responsive Readers
And Other Voices







## SETTING

*Any classroom or conversational setting where educators, professors, students, or teachers might gather—a conference, perhaps.*

*No talking heads. Readers standing around room, close to audience, a part of audience, sharing space with them.*

*The history of performance ethnography is a short, but powerful and connective, one (Mienczakowksi, 1995; Becker, McCall, & Morris, 1989; Conquergood, 1985). Oral traditions connect audiences across educational barriers and across socioeconomic lines, because such traditions bypass social class, literacy, and frequently racial and ethnic obstacles. Outside of education, performance, ethnographic theatre, ethnodrama, participatory action research-oriented "community portrayals," and "polyphonic narrative publicly performed by [professional or non-professional] actors" (Mienczakowksi, 1995) are*

*all becoming both more common and far more accepted as means for communicating important social understandings, social criticism, and powerful emotion-laden social science research. Such work has been especially useful in medical and cancer-related contexts (see, for instance, Gray & Sinding, 2002), but also in helping communities to understand the impact of food, food production, and family farms on neighborhoods and communities (see, for instance, McCall, 2001, or Thorp, 2003), and in the form of psychodrama, a tool both therapeutic and explanatory, for a variety of psychological treatment contexts.*

*Against this sociological and anthropological backdrop can be viewed a second issue: teaching as performance. While the research literature on teaching as a form of scholarship (Boyer, 1990) has been growing, there has been a concomitant growth in understanding that teaching itself is a kind of "performance"—an interactive dramaturgical relationship between students and teachers in which the potential positive outcomes are virtually unlimited: student learning, motivation to learn, discovery, skill acquisition, the creation of a self-contained "community" which, in its higher realization, is a journey not only intellectual, but also moral, spiritual, and self-revelatory (Palmer, 1993). It is clear that much teaching which goes on does not exhibit those characteristics, but the reemphasis on undergraduate and graduate teaching which has derived from major criticisms of higher education in the 1990s has driven a re-examination of teaching and its role in several aspects of higher education more broadly: the "value added" concept, the marketing of institutions in a highly competitive environment, and, more purposefully, the questioning of the proper roles of the faculty. In an era when reconsideration is being given to reward structures which acknowledge and recompense faculty for excellent teaching, teaching as an*

*interactive performance between students and faculty is once again at the forefront of serious intellectual thought around the purposes of the university writ large.*

**YVONNA LINCOLN:**

September 11 strode onstage without lines, without script, without character, but with enough force and horror to alter the play forever. September 11 has changed the way many in the professoriate view their own teaching, the role, form and nature of content, and the place of values in classrooms. As Denzin (2002) asked, "What will we tell the children?" According to Svi Shapiro (2002), the issues on the table for teachers and professors are "the value of human life and public service, the danger of directing anger toward whole groups of people, the need to examine critically the global conditions that spawn terrorism, and the destructive social and psychological effects of modernity" (Shapiro, in *Chronicle of Higher Education Online*, 7/21/02). Since the national tragedy of September 11, the question of what teaching is, and what will be taught, has never seemed more pressing. When we perform acts of teaching, how will those daily dramas be influenced by our views on the meanings of 9/11 for us as citizens, and as global participants in the political lives of those both near to us, and in far distant lands?

**MARY WEEMS:**

Yvonna asks me to write about my post 9/11 teaching and I re-see Gloria Ladson-Billing reminding last year at the AERA conference that terrorism was here long before 9/11/01, and that I, she, we are all victims. I feel June Jordan's spirit and am certain she wrote about this before she died. Quick rewind out of my professor space into my home space, video tape in hand, pride shining in my eyes that until this year haven't watched the Academy

Awards since Diana Ross in *Lady Sings the Blues* did not win—I am re-hearing Berry, my home-town sister give props to so many powerful, incredible, recently African women acting their asses off in more movies that I can count—myself calling everybody I knew to scream that I don't think Sidney Poitier thought he'd live to see the day two recently African people won what he probably never thought he would.

**NORMAN DENZIN:**

*18 September 2001 / 1 December 2002, Champaign, Illinois: Flags in the Window*: Within a week of 9/11/01, in response to the terrorist attacks, flags, in all forms and sizes, began appearing in the windows of schools, private homes, automobiles, pick-ups, 18 wheelers, gas stations, K-Mart and Wal-Mart superstores, IGA grocery stores, clothing stores, book stores, and other public establishments. In Champaign, Illinois, the flags appeared in window after window of Central High School, the large public high school I ride by everyday on my bicycle on the way to campus.

In the weeks after 9/11/01 everywhere I looked, I saw flags of every type, size, and shape: flag-pens, flag mousepads, flag-stickers, flags on poles that waved in the wind, flags on coffee cups, flags on radio antennas, big, little, and medium-sized flags. Flags so big they covered football fields. Songs about flags became popular, songs with lines like, "Red, White, and Blue, these colors don't run."

Last spring a woman in Urbana, Illinois, made up a questionnaire and asked storekeepers why they had flags in their windows. "I was just curious," she replied, when asked why she had done this. Store owners reacted in anger and accused her of being a troublemaker.

People called the local talk radio station and wrote letters to the editor of our local paper. They said she was being unpatriotic.

**MICHELLE FINE/ROBIN HUGHES:**

Death, ghosts, orphans, analyses of U.S. imperialism, Middle East politics, and the fears of what's yet to come sit in the same room and need to sit in the same text. That said, tears can't trump analysis, but so too analysis can't evacuate emotion. In fact, the binary of grief and analysis must collapse. Even further, because we challenge what has been U.S. foreign and domestic policy does not release us from the responsibility to critically examine this assault. The intellectual, political, and ethical task of interpretive social science—of living and working ethically on projects of meaning—is to join the contradictory genres of writing and coping, to seek evidence, and to ask *Why* and *What next* through the streams of tears.

**AUDIENCE:**

AND LOIS ECHOES HER:

Out of the depths of our pain we must hold on to our responsibilities. We must not mince words as we represent ourselves and others in our work. We must not paper over and attempt to explain away that which can have no explanation or excuse. For an engaged activist research agenda can tolerate nothing that is fundamentally wrong. And we cannot and should not be lulled by the drug of objectivity or deconstructionism, nodding off as we pick apart categories and refuse to name any wrongdoing for fear being labeled *modernist* or perhaps worse, *politically engaged*. We get close, and that closeness touches chords within our heart and our soul that match those of the people with whom we work. We need to continually be mindful of inscribing in the social science literature vengeful and hateful

apologetics for the status quo. But in doing so, we need to remember that some behavior is plain wrong and must be labeled as such as we work toward a more just and equitable society. We cannot shirk our responsibilities as intellectuals by hiding the cloak of overly meek or inward-looking social science, whether quantitative or interpretivist (Weis, 2002, p. 154).

**IVAN BRADY:**

New York City, September 18, 2001

Dear Grandfather,

We saw the parade today

The men wore plaid skirts
Like our school uniforms

They marched in small steps

Step Step Step

All in a row

Step Step Step

The music didn't breathe
It just kept coming out

High notes and low
High and low again

*Ama-a-a-zing grace*
*How sweet the sound …*

Step Step Step

Many people were crying

The pipers acted like they were doing
What they always did when people were sad

I will never forget them

I wonder if I will ever see them again

Love,
Marianne

**NORMAN DENZIN:**

This year I'm not sure who the flags are for. I guess they just mark our endless war against the terrorists.

But it does not matter who the flags are for. The effect of all of these waving flags in all of these windows, on all these car and pickup windows, in all those stores and store fronts, is to say that Americans are patriotic, that God is on Our Side. As we enter Year Two of Bush's War, to raise a question about the flags, any question, is to risk being called unpatriotic. But then how do we celebrate patriotism in this new war, when the war is taking away the very freedoms and ideals the flag stands for?

**Orem, Utah, 1 December 2002.** *The New York Times* reports on a debate about the war with Iraq. In the first-period social studies class at Lakeridge Junior High school in Orem, Utah, students in Donell Willey's world studies class debate the war, taking sides, for and against Bush: "The President is doing this for political gain"; "The Administration has the right to act quickly"; "The Constitution says we the people, not we the government. You can't just let the President decide things on his own"; "Killing Saddam Hussein won't bring a solution"; "There are career terrorists. The only way to stop them is to put them away for good" (Clemetson, 2002, p. 20).

**AUDIENCE/CHORUS:**

And before we think through what 9/11 means, we have a war in Iraq. How do we deal with the meaning of this in our classes? In our lives?

**JACK BRATICH/ROB LEFFEL:**

In its early days, "America's New War" was given the official name "Operation Infinite Justice." On one level, this name was itself an injustice, which forced officials to rename the operation. On another level, it is this very conceptual injustice that gives us a sense of how to think about this new war. For this is not merely America's next war, not another war in a series of wars. From its inception military experts were alerting us to the new form of war about to "take place."

In fact, place and space are precisely at issue in this new form. September 11, 2001, may seem to name only a temporal event (either within history or an event that ruptures it) but it is also profoundly spatial. We can approach this form through the spatial problematic of governing and warring through immanence, especially in the constitution of a U.S. "homeland."

On the U.S. domestic side, the new form of war requires a new form of homefront.... According to professor of information studies Philip Agre, what is happening is an institutionalization and normalization of warfare into everyday life. The U.S. homefront itself is as much of a theater of war as the foreign lands where the special forces and cruise missiles wreak devastation (though the deadly toll will be unequal). "Temporary inconveniences" at isolated sites (airports, government buildings, national monuments) in the name of security may well become mundane habit in the indefinite future. Homeland

security essentially involves indefinite low-density warfare punctuated by high-alert moments—a "constant state" of alert. It is in this way that "infinite justice" translates into "permanent war," where an unspecified enemy can always potentially arise, giving an indefinite time to a state of permanent exception (Bratlich, 2002, p. ).

**AUDIENCE/CHORUS:**

What does this state of permanent war with an ambiguous enemy mean for us?

**ROBIN HUGHES:**

When the United States launched its bombing campaign against Afghanistan, student groups staged both peace protests and rallies in support of the military. In sum, we began to do what institutions of higher learning are supposed to do. We began to teach and learn from each other.

But teaching and learning in the midst of a national crisis is different from teaching and learning in normal times. If the past is any guide, students and the public will have less tolerance for the controversial, even discomforting, opinions that faculty members and students may offer (Boyle, 2001-2002, pp. 9-10).

**NORMAN DENZIN:**

So life after 9/11 has become more complex, as we glide from one war to another. And 9/11 itself has become complicated, folded into the flag, commodified, packaged, sold, worn on one's lapel, waving in the front yard. 9/11 everywhere you look. Bush's legacy, unlimited patriotism, unending war, everyday something new to lose your mind over, the evils in this

insane world seem unfathomable. Laurel Richardson (2002, p. 25) asks, "How can we make sense of this war for children, if we cannot explain it ourselves?"

**MARY WEEMS:**

I am not Mammy, but wonder what she's thinking:

"Hut-Keeper"

When Mammy left the set of *Gone with the Wind*
packed her bag with all of her belongings:
one white apron, and a large iron pot, she set
out on a long walk.

Her tongue thick with the goodbye she'd just
acted out on the movie set, spelled the word "wind"
as she walked out into a world that was no longer
America, but could have been anywhere.

Confused, standing between the rock and no
place, trying to roll the script back,
she forgot her name and everything about herself
except that she was Black
and stopped in the middle
of the street, picked up a broom

and started to weep.

...as I'm drinking something much too bland like—milk, for this—In the midst of revealing Halle Berry's character, "Monster's Ball," the movie tells us, that the Monster's Ball is the party dead men walking have before they are executed. Next, I see the soon-to-be executed man is Halle Berry's husband, that she is slapping the shit out of her eating disordered 12-year old son, that she is telling her husband that she is tired of coming to Death Row to see him. I see that the Billy Bob Thornton character is a nigger-hater who pulls a shotgun on two recently African children who come on his property to ask for work, helps electric-chair Halle's husband. I hear Billy Bob tell his only son that he's always hated him just before the son shoots himself in the chest in Bill Bob's living room—I stop the movie and talk to my daughter who is watching and we are appalled, and pissed in the same places. I see Halle Berry who is by some coincidence, uneducated, poor, and soon-to-be-evicted, beg Billy Bob to make her feel good, to take care of her—I see them have much-more-than sex—worse I see him change into a lover of recently African people the very next day like Halle Berry's body is a mojo ...

**NORMAN DENZIN:**

July 15, 2002: "Mission Creep. The war on terrorism moves to Colombia" (*Washington Spectator*, 2002, p. 1)

**AUDIENCE:**

It's good to re-think these things. We need to. But we have a war going on, in living color, 24 hours a day. Wolf Blitzer is em-ceeing. We check in with the 6 p.m. news, and again at 10, to find out what inning we're in, what the score is, who's winning.

How do we talk with our students? What do we tell them about serious issues—geopolitics, hatred, social justice, dissent, silence, hope?

**PETER FREUNDLICH/YVONNA LINCOLN:**

We can bring contradictions, and bitter irony to bear, as Freundlich does:

> All right, let me see if I understand the logic of this correctly. We are going to ignore the United Nations in order to make clear to Saddam Hussein that the United Nations cannot be ignored. We're going to wage war to preserve the UN's ability to avert war. The paramount principle is that the UN's word must be taken seriously, and if we have to subvert its word to guarantee that it is, then by gum, we will. Peace is too important not take up arms to defend. Am I getting this right? Further, if the only way to bring democracy to Iraq is to vitiate the democracy of the Security Council, then we are honor-bound to do that too, because democracy, as we define it, is too important to be stopped by a little thing like democracy as they define it. Also, in dealing with a man who brooks no dissension at home, we cannot afford dissension among ourselves. We must speak with one voice against Saddam Hussein's failure to allow opposing voices to be heard. We are sending our gathered might to the Persian Gulf to make the point that might does not make right, as Saddam Hussein seems to think it does. And we are twisting the arms of the opposition until it agrees to let us oust a regime that twists the arms of the opposition. We cannot leave in power a dictator who ignores his own people.

And if our people, and people elsewhere in the world, fail to understand that, then we have no choice but to ignore them. Listen. Don't misunderstand. I think it is a good thing that the members of the Bush administration seem to have been reading Lewis Carroll. I only wish someone had pointed out that "Alice in Wonderland" and "Through the Looking Glass" are meditations on paradox and puzzle and illogic and on the strangeness of things, not templates for foreign policy. It is amusing for the Mad Hatter to say something like, "We must make war on him because he is a threat to peace," but not amusing for someone who actually commands an army to say that. As a collector of laughable arguments, I'd be enjoying all this were it not for the fact that I know—and we all know—that lives are going to be lost in what amounts to a freak, circular reasoning accident. (Freundlich, 2003, National Public Radio Broadcast, n.d.)

**ROB LEFFEL:**

But contradiction and bitter irony are not enough ...

**AUDIENCE:**

Right! How do we shape their critical capabilities around the issues? How do we get them to <u>think</u>?

**MARY GERGEN/NORMAN DENZIN:**

This is how I work with it:

I give small groups of students various news clips and pieces I have taken from e-mails to read and discuss. In each group I have editorials from American papers, and I have material from other regions in the world, some that emphasize the grave assault to our

identity as well as to mortal lives and some that emphasize the reasons why this might have occurred. One in particular is by a Palestinian woman who decries the bombings but who expresses her feelings about the tribulations of living under Israeli rule. I ask the students to consider how each writer makes assumptions about the nature of aggression, patriotism, terrorism, and what motivates people in their actions. I hope they realize that there are other points of view beyond CNN. It is an attempt to bring an interpretive perspective into the room where there seems to be little space for conversational differences. But I also do not want to deny whatever reality they cling to. (M. Gergen, 2002, p. 151)

**MICHELLE FINE/ROBIN HUGHES:**

Since September 11, mainstream media have covered—albeit partially—who, what, how, where, and when (at least when "they" attacked, less so when "we" did). The coverage, however, rarely enters the dangerous territory of *why*. Why us, why now, why those buildings, why the mass hatred? Why terrorism, why mass destruction, why this form of international assault?

Descriptive research, I worry, will no longer do. In our research we are now obligated to interrogate *Why*, assuring that analyses of history and justice are joined; discussions of what "is" are yoked to "what has been" and "what must be." *Why* raises hard questions, negotiated genesis stories, contentious histories. Given the shrinking community of people who are allowed to speak, the scripts for public intellectuals must grow correspondingly bold. (Fine, 2002, pp. 139-40)

**NORMAN DENZIN:**

Summer 2002: **Collateral Damage: Oruzgan, Afghanistan**: *New York Times*, Saturday, 6 July, front page. A photograph of a gravesite, rocks piled high on the brown earth. A young man named Abdul Malik stands looking at the fresh graves of his family. Abdul lost 25 members of his family, including his mother and father to an American air attack, on 1 July. He and his family were celebrating a wedding. It started innocently enough, children in the village setting off firecrackers and men firing rifles into the air in accordance with local traditions. Suddenly American bombers appeared from nowhere. Bombs were dropped on four villages. Forty-eight civilians were killed, 117 injured. U.S. Military headquarters called the loss collateral damage, contending it was part of the cost of fighting terrorism and ridding Afghanistan of the Taliban and Al Quaeda. American military officials stated that an American AC-130 had been fired upon by antiaircraft emplacement (Bumiller, 2002, p. A1).

**AUDIENCE/CHORUS:**

How do we get a dialogue about these things going?

**MICHELLE FINE/IVAN BRADY:**

Critical interpretive social science needs methods and theories that allow us, invite us, force us to crawl under the laminated discourses that refuse complexity and enable us, instead, to reveal the cacophony and dissent (Carney, 2001). Perhaps we can exhibit our most bold and radical democratic presence by refusing the freezing of conversation and imagination, revealing the fractures in the rapidly cementing ideological architecture of the state and the media, prying open the contradictions inside national consciousness, complicating the views

of violence while still holding accountable those who have terrorized, and by retelling stories that challenge hegemonic narratives of the "peace" of war (see Kitzinger, 2001; Scott, 1992; Wilkinson, 2000). Recognizing that no one is "uncontaminated," to find material beneath the ideologies, we have to search for complexity, evidence, those who stand alone and peer, more explicitly perhaps, into the messages carried not only in words but in bodies (Fine, 2002, p. 141).

**ROBIN HUGHES:**

As Kevin Boyle says,

> This means that we have to listen—really listen—to our students, including those with whom we disagree. Arguments will result, but arguments are the lifeblood of the learning process. We should not shy away from them. Nor should faculty back down in the face of cautious administrators and angry alumni.
>
> Those of us fortunate enough to have the protection of tenure need to defend the rights of educators and students to speak their minds, even if our colleagues are offering opinions we do not share. And we have to support those institutions, such as faculty unions, that are willing to defend freedom of speech on campus. (2001-2002, p. 13)

**AUDIENCE/CHORUS:**

I think freedom of speech is what we want to preserve. And one of the things we want to talk about. But we often feel silenced. And the pro-war, "pro-America" rallies, with their "AMERICA: LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT" signs, intimidate some of my more anxious and thoughtful students, and leave me feeling uncomfortable about talking.

**ROB LEFFEL:**

Teachers are not the only members of campus communities who may feel the need to silence themselves. Educators report intense student interest in discussing the roots and consequences of the crisis. But there is a serious question: Do students feel free to make comments that may be seen as insufficiently patriotic?

The pressure is even greater for Muslim students. A colleague who teaches at a university with a large Muslim population noticed in the weeks after the attack that women dressed in *chadors* avoided eye contact with non-Muslim students and staff, so intense was the intimidation they felt (Boyle, 2001-2, p. 13).

**IVAN BRADY:**

A Palestinian woman brought up in New York, Suheir Hammad, wrote one week after the 11th:

> I do not know how bad a life has to break in order to kill.
> I have never been so hungry that I willed hunger.
> I have never been so angry as to want to control a gun over a pen.
> Not really. Even as a woman, as a Palestinian, as a broken
> human being.
> Never this broken.

And if not even as a woman, as a Palestinian, what about the rest of us? What do we know? (Williams, 2003, p. 268)

**ROB LEFFEL:**

But silence serves no one's interests. Though the pressure for conformity is considerable these days, teachers must resist the tendency to censor themselves. We have a responsibility to analyze the crisis, to explore the causes, to explore a wide range of policy alternatives, and to consider the likely outcome of our war on terrorism.

Out students deserve to hear a wide range of opinions, even if some of those opinions upset them. We also need to foster a classroom atmosphere that gives students the freedom to express themselves. (Boyle, 2001-2, p. 13)

**MICHELLE FINE/NORMAN DENZIN:**

As in the streets, the air in the academy is getting thin. To raise questions about the horrors of terrorism and U.S. imperialism in the same breath morphs into a betrayal of patriotism, a disregard for those who sacrificed life. Many work to separate grief and critique, as though we can't mourn as we consider critically what the U.S. might have done to contribute to the mass hatred that surrounds.

What counts as dissent has swollen beyond recognition. Censoring spawns mild and bold. Japanese internment, McCarthy, and Vietnam haunt. A timely e-mail from the Black Radical Congress—brilliant and powerful—was passed around with scores of others. This

one provoked a protest. A speak out at City College of New York, followed by nasty newspaper coverage, followed by pressure for us to rally around America.

The air is getting thinner. Intellectual surveillance constricts narratives and talk. Maybe this is the work of meaning for the radical democratic possibilities of social science. To make sure there is discursive air to breathe, to re-imagine, to critique, and to construct other stories of what could be. (Fine, 2002, pp. 137-8)

**ROBIN HUGHES:**

In the view of many citizens who favor the invasion of Iraq, opposition is symptomatic of anti-Americanism, and open dissent during a time of war comes close to treason. At some rallies, marchers carried signs saying, "America—Love It or Leave It."

It's hard to see why people should be expected to leave a free country because they have the gall to exercise their freedom. Maybe the ones who should leave are their critics, who would be more comfortable in a country whose government tolerates no criticism—say, Iraq. Or maybe they think we can't deliver liberty to the Iraqi people unless we first confiscate it from the American people. (Chapman, March 30, 2003, p. A10)

**MICHELLE FINE/IVAN BRADY:**

We must seek the words of dread and speak them back in ways that interrupt the dominant script. (Fine, 2002, p. 138)

**AUDIENCE/CHORUS:**

So silence and dissent are interactive? They work on each other in critical ways?

**NORMAN DENZIN:**

Outright censorship seems highly unlikely. In the current atmosphere of fear and anger, however, self-censorship is a real possibility. At the same time, it is all too easy for faculty and students raised in the long shadow of the 1960s to engage in dissent simply for dissent's sake. Campus protesters should not underestimate the impact their actions may have. The public has a right to be offended by words and actions meant to offend. So, even as we regain our voices, we find ourselves speaking and teaching in a world more precarious than the one destroyed on September 11. (Boyle, 2001-2, p. 10)

**MARY WEEMS:**

But as Jay Parini (2003, p. B20) makes clear, we can't afford either as poets or people to be silenced, or to silence ourselves. Listen to Adrienne Rich coming to terms with this:

*Try sitting at a typewriter*
*one calm summer evening*
*at a table by a window*
*in the country, try pretending*
*your time does not exist*
*that you are simply you*
*that the imagination simply strays*
*like a great moth, unintentional*
*try telling yourself*

*you are not accountable*

*to the life of your tribe*

*the breath of your planet.*

(Cited in Parini, March 14, 2003, p. B20)

**NORMAN DENZIN:**

**6 July 2002. Kennebunkport**: Bush offers apology: President Bush called President Hamid Karzal of Afghanistan today to express his sympathies, but not to apologize for the American bombing raid. Later in the day, the President celebrated his 56th birthday at a party with family members at their Walker's Point compound. He went boating and fishing with his father.

**10 July 2002:** American military officials admit the attack on the villages was not an accident, contending they had ground-level evidence that high-ranking members of Al Quaeda were in the region. So much for those smart bombs and that new satellite communications system.

**IVAN BRADY:**

The images will not go away ...

1

We dial a recording

and order Vitamin K,

Cipro, twin masks.

Shunted between prompts,

we stare at each other

with deep longing,

drumming our fingers

while the line grows faint.

We borrow a Glock and wrap it

in a chamois cloth and lock

the bullets in a separate drawer—

where to hang the key?

We stockpile Poland Spring

under our bed

and feel that bulk

nullify the give

when we make love.

2

Huddled before the news,

we touch the screen—

our bombs rain on Kandahar—

we can't feel them:

just a thrum, the pulse,

a film of dust, a red glow

shining through our nails.

3

We saw it

and can't stop watching:

as if the plane entered the eye

and it was the mind

that began burning

with such a stubborn flame.

We saw the bodies jump

and wouldn't break their fall—

now they wait so gracefully

in midair, holding hands.

(D. Nurkse, *October Marriage*, 2002, pp. 87-8)

**NORMAN DENZIN:**

Silence, Hell! "Fox News host Bill O'Reilly said a few weeks ago, 'It is our duty as loyal Americans to shut up once the fighting begins, unless facts prove the operation wrong, as was the case in Vietnam.'"

"Shut up once the fighting begins? You first, Bill. People who opposed the war have no duty to gag themselves once the war is under way." (Chapman, *op. cit.*, p. A10)

**AUDIENCE/CHORUS:**

That's right. We teach. Talk with us about getting past the silence. About disrupting our own silence. About usurping the silence laid on us. About how to help our students speak through silence. How to create their own voices.

**ROBIN HUGHES:**

... It is not enough to foster discussion and debate about the roots and consequences of the terrorist attack. We also need to spend more time discussing with our students the importance of dissent in the preservation of democracy. (Boyle, 2001-2, p. 13)

MICHELLE FINE/ROB LEFFEL

In critical interpretive social science, using numbers or words, we need to find and foreground those *who speak alone for many*. In statistics, these "cases" are called the "outliers," and in qualitative analyses, these are cases that stand apart from the others. This means we cannot only report those who fall along the slope of the majority of cases; we cannot only document those themes that emerge most frequently.

It is important to understand that majorities and "consensus" don't represent well the bandwidth of popular consciousness. By presenting a social science of consensus, we not only distort variation in the "common sense," but we may consolidate that very frozen, solid group that believes they speak for all. As in looking for the case that dares to stand alone, another site for getting beneath the ideologies, for encountering "counter stories" (Harris & Fine, 2001), may be the body.

**MARY WEEMS**:

Playing the patriotism card or the veteran card is a shameless attempt to discredit and intimidate dissenters, which is easier than proving them wrong.

The real divide is between those who see open debate in a democracy as a weakness and those who see it as a strength.

The antiwar demonstrators may be wrong about some things, but they're right about that. (Chapman, 2003, p. A10)

**IVAN BRADY**:

Such reasoned and sensitive positions are precisely what Americans need in this difficult time. Our nation will not be made stronger or safer by an imposed unity, nor will it be prodded on the right path by simple-minded protest. It will be strengthened, however, by the free exchange of ideas.

We need to talk about the United States' relationship to the Muslim world, about the military and diplomatic choices that our nation faces, about the moral complexity of retaliation, about the psychological burdens of fear, about the great American traditions of civil liberties. Colleges and universities know how to foster those discussions; it is what we do best.

As teachers and staff members, we cannot be afraid to break the silence that the brutal events of September 11 imposed on us. In fact, we are obliged to do so, by our commitment

to education, by our commitment to democratic principles, by the memory of our dead. (Boyle, 2001-2, p. 15)

**NORMAN DENZIN:**

The issue is not the individual cases of scholars who lacked the moral courage to face up to their past, but rather the refusal of the scholarly community to own up to its conspiracy of silence. (*Chronicle Daily Report*, 3/10/03)

**ROB LEFFEL:**

We have to talk about violence, too. Rowan Williams says:

> The truth is that if we respond violently, our violence is going to be a rather different sort of thing. It is unlikely to have behind it the passion of someone who has nothing to lose, the terrible self-abandonment of the suicidal killer which is like a grotesque parody of the self-abandonment of love. It is not that we are "naturally" less violent or more compassionate. The record of European or American military engagement should dispel that illusion. Be we are not acting out of helplessness, out of moral and imaginative destitution that can only feel it is acting at all when it is inflicting pain and destruction. (Williams, 2002, p. 268)

**AUDIENCE/CHORUS:**

Give us something. What can we get out of this? What, if anything, can we take away?

**ROB LEFFEL:** (Quietly)

We have hope.

**IVAN BRADY:**

There is hope in believing that the bottom line of human nature is ultimately one of sociability, not social pathology.... On September 11th in the viciously culture-bound attacks on New York City and the Pentagon—a fireball of hate and anger exploded in the face of trust. America showed another side of self-interest as it moved to embrace its own in the wake of this tragedy and began to build a levee of heroic strength, high-risk relief, and soothing words to stem the tide of outrage and tears. Although retracted in scope from a global perspective and mostly unrecognized in the wrenching national pain of the moment, the prospect for global humanity known and cherished was insinuated in that resurrected solidarity. The blow knocked the wind out of most of the world. The pain was human, not just American, and thoughts of commonalities were showing up in word and gesture everywhere, including ground zero. Some unlucky souls in the tower attacks realized that they were trapped above blazing holes of concrete , steel, airplane fuel, and annihilating smudge and smoke that blocked all passages of escape. Those chose to jump to certain death rather than face a terrifying immolation. Hope for the species flickered briefly in a tiny sign on the way down. Some of the jumpers were holding hands. I don't know what you can call that in anthropology. I don't know how to teach its deeper meaning to terrorists or the Taliban. I only know that it has to be said and that we have reason to hear it, all of us. (Brady, 2003, p. 196-7)

**YVONNA LINCOLN:**

But to get back to the main issue: we have something of the freedom to consider whether or not we turn to violence, and so, in virtue of that very fact, are rather different from those who experience their world as leaving them no other option. But if we have that freedom, it ought to be less likely that we reach for violence as a first resort. We have the freedom to think what we actually want, to probe our desires for some kind of outcome that is more than just mirroring what we have experienced. The trouble is that this means work of the kind we are often least eager for, work that will help us so to understand an other that we begin to find some sense of what they and we together might recognize as good. It means putting on hold our most immediate feelings—or at least making them objects of reflection; it means trying to pull apart the longing to re-establish the sense of being in control and the longing to find a security that is shared. In plainer English, it means being very suspicious of any action that brings a sense of release, irrespective of what it achieves; very wary of doing something so that it looks as if something is getting done. (Williams, 2002, p. 270)

**MARY WEEMS:**

It still teach/learn, co-build community, caring, empathy, re-stitch my commitment into syllabi, 3-ring binder, the CDs I pack the-class-before-the-class-before, take incense, candles, break chairs into circles like bread, struggle with ethnicity/humanity/ethnicity/humanity human enough to share with K-12, university, library, recreation center students, that I don't-can-never-have-never just known but have always *felt-known* first and faster than speed. That I don't know how to not-feel, that not-feeling was the beginning of this global Monster's Ball ...

**ROBIN HUGHES:**

It means acknowledging and using the breathing space; also acknowledging and using the rage and revengefulness as a way of sensing a little of where the violence comes from. I'd better say it again: This has nothing to do with excusing decisions to murder, threaten, and torment, nor is it a recommendation to be passive. It is about trying to act so that something might possibly change, as opposed to acting so as to persuade ourselves that we're not powerless. (Williams, 2002, p. 270)

**NORMAN DENZIN:**

Maybe Annie Dillard (1974, p. 270) is right, maybe the universe was not made in jest, but I need more. I need hope, I need to believe that the world is a just place to live, that there are just people in this world. I need places to go where I can experience solace, and peace, a presence of mind that is not haunted by pictures of young men standing by gravel and stone graves, wondering why their mothers and fathers are dead. I need a just government. I need and dream of a government that shows in its performances how we can create a peaceful, nonviolent world, a world where there are no just wars, a world where words like freedom, happiness, human rights, care, justice, and equality have real meaning, a world without end, a radical, utopian world, a world filled with hope, and dreams of peace not yet dreamed.

**ROB LEFFEL:**

Selah.

**AUDIENCE/CHORUS:**

Selah.

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