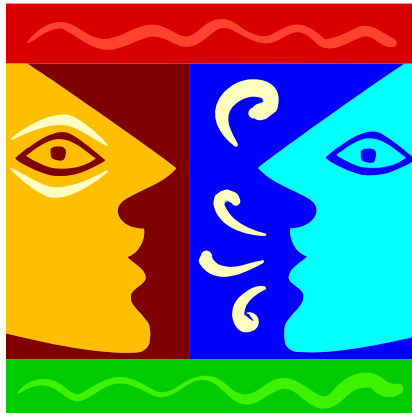


Sound Practices: Performing Reading and Writing



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**People learn ten percent of what they read, and
seventy percent of what they talk over with others.**

(John Biggs)

I. Conference Session

Oral pedagogy focuses on student voices—in whole-group discussion, small-group informal talk, recitation, and performance—as the central learning events in the classroom and as the best means for students to practice high-level acts of attention to texts. As a first-year student success strategy at Colorado Mountain College, oral pedagogy attracts and holds fledgling college students. ‘The simplest yet most vital courtesy we can offer to our students is hospitality,’ insists the guru of higher education reform, Parker Palmer (51). Instructors who practice oral pedagogy implicitly respect student ideas, identities, and life experience. This habit of hospitality in the classroom invites students to make meaningful connections between their lives and their education.

A commitment to oral pedagogy rests on two indisputable facts. First, it is common knowledge that humans learn primarily by talking with each other. In the realm of education theory, Lev Vygotsky was convinced that knowledge is always co-constructed, and that spoken language is the primary means of cognitive development. Closer to home, the National Council of Teachers of English in its “Definition of 21st Century Literacies” emphasizes aurality and orality as important literacies, acknowledging that “non-print texts” provide students with the information they seek to understand the human situation and the demands of work and social life. Talking, then, is learning.

The second fact about aural and oral learning methods is this: the ear captures and processes textual nuances that the eye misses. First-year college students need to mobilize all four language skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—in order to be

able to succeed in the multi-modal, digital, audio, visual, and literate world. In order to make use of this powerful source of learning, I align course materials, classroom practices, assignments, and grading methods in a performance model that encourages students to develop all four language skills.

Why would we not take advantage of the organic, student-centered learning methods that arise from human speech? As a teacher, I strive to balance the hand and eye literacy of writing and reading with mouth and ear communication (talking and listening), so that students continually practice and perform mastery in all four modes.

Here is a classroom activity that illustrates the principles of oral pedagogy. This exercise purposely aims at the ear only. We can study the printed poem later, but for now let's suspend the eye literacy for the ear. Please listen to Robert Frost reading his poem, The Road Not Taken at [poets.org](https://www.poets.org). Previous knowledge of the poem and poet serve as a cultural context. I just want to ask you, what does performance add to the silent reading of this great American classic?

In class, an audio exercise would work this way: We listen three times. The first is listening only, followed by an informal group discussion of the elements students notice: plot, setting, characters, and figurative language. The second hearing is done with pen in hand, for jotting down key words and doodling strong images. After the second hearing, the group again comments on their increasing understanding of the poem. After the third listening and discussion, I ask for a statement of the meaning or theme of the poem.

This is just one example of what I mean by performing literature: Students encounter texts as live or recorded performance, and they discuss and critique the works together. I find that composition and literature students take a personal interest in text analysis when they are encouraged to build meaning upon what they hear and talk over with others.

In this study, I have identified four learning outcomes that arise from the practice of oral pedagogy: multivocality, aesthetic and critical awareness, analytic ability, and personal performance. An explanation of each learning outcome sketches how instructors can implement oral and aural learning methods.

1. Multiple literacies; multiple voices in the classroom

Oral pedagogy, as I practice it, offers multiple ways for students to master course content. Learners perform what they know as they acquire new skills and information. Also, this model of learning and teaching covers learning styles not available in traditional methods; for example, aural, verbal, interpersonal, kinetic, and aesthetic.

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), in its most recent report on 21st century writing, supports oral pedagogy in several ways. Past President Kathleen Blake Yancey encourages writing instructors to design new curriculum for the teaching of new forms and formats of writing that often incorporate sound and images into texts (Yancey). Oral pedagogy addresses this need and guides students in recognizing and articulating the varied contexts of their readings and of their lives. When students talk over the content and meanings of texts, they practice the kind of conscious oral communication that is often missing in their lives.

Along the same lines, oral classroom work provides training in the intricate thought patterns necessary for students to thrive in this era of complex writing and digital communication practices. A familiarity with textual pace, rhythm, dynamic images, and dramatic surprise provides sources of critical engagement that enrich student thinking, talking, and writing.

Consider one last essential feature of oral pedagogy: Student responses, comments, and questions constitute elements of instruction. In this way, from the beginning of their college careers,

students experience the text and their own critical reflections as interrelated acts.

2. Aesthetic awareness, critical reading and thinking

Guided practice in listening to and discussing a wide variety of texts helps students develop sensitivity toward the spoken and written ideas of others. The common culture created by the live experience of the poem becomes the setting for dynamic learning.

Everyone in the audience creates vastly different first impressions of the poem, based on immediate ear-brain sensations. Students enjoy making fine distinctions and articulating their positions. This personal connection to the poem's situation and message elicits authentic responses from students, many of whom, when assigned silent reading of poetry, declare themselves confused and disengaged. With an audio warm-up, students perform the academic and emotional moves that improve composition and reading comprehension skills.

As instructors in the first two years of college, we often hear that people are more likely to find the beginning of their college careers meaningful and worth continuing when they build connections to other people. I trust oral pedagogical methods to offer this crucial connection: in a performative environment, personal and intellectual ties form readily.

To guide beginning college students in their responses to a variety of performed and written texts, the *Reading Journal* can establish the habit of recording gut reactions and initial impressions as starting points for understanding texts. The moves that follow such authentic response in the learning sequence are critical thinking, writing, and revision. Writing and revision, in turn, often require research. Fittingly, oral pedagogy gives students the chance to practice each step and to extend, reflect upon, and evaluate their

own learning. In oral pedagogy, the sequence of academic moves from gut reaction to formal research are performed individually and collectively in the classroom.

3. Analytic ability

From notes and discussions, students have the ingredients for producing college-level text analysis. By listening, talking, and writing, they have captured quotes, intriguing images, symbols, and key words from which they build original interpretations of the poem. They even have a draft of a thesis, because, in discussion, they verbalized a statement of the meaning of the poem. Organizing these elements, students progress from personal reactions to considerations of style and theme. They are ready to complete the literacy loop by formulating their ideas into written critical essays.

In this area, too, NCTE advises college instructors to invent ways for students to use writing to “solve problems and construct questions,” rather than just to write down ideas that are already fully formed (“NCTE 21st Century Curriculum” 3). Oral pedagogy enriches the writing process for our students by making text analysis a collective, engaging in-class activity, and by placing composition on the continuum of collaborative learning methods. That is, students write in order to learn as often as they write in order to show what they know.

To strengthen students’ ability to move from personal reaction to critical analysis, the *Template for Analyzing a Text* supplies organizational patterns for blossoming ideas. Students provide the raw material—reaction to the text and awareness of its elements—and the template provides order. Such guided writing practice increases students’ ability to express their original perspectives and to support these ideas with evidence from the text.

4. Actor and audience

The strongest theoretical support for a pedagogy of orality is performance studies. On the most basic level, performance is the vehicle for practicing the disciplines of composition and literature: reading aloud, enacting poetry and drama, and discussing their reading, research, and writing with others. By extension, we can think of this kind of performance as perennial human behavior, linked to the one of the fundamental rituals of our species—storytelling.

Performance studies offers a view of the classroom as a setting for rituals of learning: structured group activities that involve the personal, social, and spiritual dimensions of the participants. In the classroom, the methods and aims of oral pedagogy parallel those of ritual: participants in a repeated or performed act learn to suspend, challenge, and possibly transform previous ideas and beliefs. Performance studies posits that these ritual occasions give rise to a liminal state of mind in participants: an in-between, threshold frame of mind that fosters cultural and personal self-reflection (Bial 27, 79). As teachers, we live for those magic moments when students are completely absorbed in learning, formulating thoughtful questions and making shrewd observations. Most often, those moments arise when the group has experienced together an event that moves students toward new interests and fresh associations. These moments illustrate the powerful learning value of performance and oral pedagogy.

Finally, I believe that classroom listening and talking taps another important dimension of learning: play. Creative, empathetic, imaginative play draws on innate human capacities rarely elicited in the college classroom. In writing and reading classes, performance of students' changing selves enlists the human instinct for play and ritual towards ways of learning and knowing that go beyond silent reading and writing.

Through embodied expression, students bridge lived experience to scholastic material and to larger social realities. The sounding of multiple voices in the classroom closes the gap between individual students and between teachers and students. Dynamic play and live performance of written texts foster a classroom environment of adaptability and multilevel communication, whereby liminal, threshold experiences are possible. That is, the value of play and performance is evident when students and teachers are willing to learn, unlearn, and relearn from each other.

Now, imagine the end of a semester, after students have listened to more than a score of live and recorded texts. Their ears are tuned to hearing metaphors, images, symbols, rhyme, alliteration, and personification. They have established habits of listening closely and proposing diverse interpretations of themes. In addition, they discover meaning in the tone of the performer, in this case the Zen scholar and Beat poet Gary Snyder. Moreover, even before Snyder begins his recitation, the students know one important thing about this exercise: their ideas matter. They are at the center of a cultural experience, and soon they will describe their reactions and share their responses with other members of the audience. Please listen to Gary Snyder reading his poem, available on CD, *Why I Take Good Care of My Macintosh Computer*.

After hearing him perform his composition, imagine other classroom activities that enlist the strengths of oral pedagogy toward student success.

II. Current Research

This study reflects my own thirty-six years of experience in the college classroom as a literature, language, and composition instructor, combined with research into the work of such prominent theorists as Howard Gardner, Gerald Graff, and David Bleich. I also refer to current publications of the *National Council of Teachers of English* (NCTE) and *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* (TETYC), organizations that represent my discipline. The premise underlying oral pedagogy is that global, digital, and multicultural forces have propelled new literacies into the foreground of higher education. Our task, as college instructors, is to interpret these new literacies in order to prepare our students for successful participation in the varied communication media of the 21st century.

The best way to address these changing needs in higher education is for voices other than the teacher to sound in the classroom. Because texts now include a range of written, visual, and oral productions, the classroom—like the greater social and technological landscape—must treat texts as ongoing investigations through time, via an array of media. Oral pedagogy gives beginning college students practice in reading a range of texts aloud, from published works to their own writings, as well as practice in hearing literary material performed both recorded and live. When texts speak for themselves, their strength does not always rely on the meaning of words, but on their rhythm, repetition, and power to evoke visual images. These multiple voices create audible, reflective thought whereby students can pay attention to the text and to their own reactions and the reactions of their peers.

Such amplified literacies oblige educators to align learning outcomes, classroom activities, and assessment practices with features of oral pedagogy. To help our students meet the challenges of the contemporary multimodal world, our first step is to develop an active, flexible communication style in the classroom, so that discussion,

performance, and student talk can transform traditional lectures and other instructor-centered practices into engaging learner-centered processes. The second is to build up a repertoire of formative assessments that measure positive learning outcomes such as reflective thinking and collaborative mastery of new skills.

Scholars and theorists who lead the field of college pedagogy offer guidance in practical ways to achieve institutional and national learning goals. Howard Gardner defines and explains seven intelligences, which he classifies as linguistic, logical/mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (44). He advises teachers to design learning activities that take into consideration diverse ways to process information and to solve problems. Gardner urges an emphasis on performance, which “not only stimulates active consumption of classroom material but also enhances understanding of the material” (161). Gardner’s claim that in-class discussion, recitation, and recordings require from students “extensive grappling with historical, social, and personal worlds” is completely consistent with my observation of hundreds of beginning college students (163).

For over thirty years, scholars like Howard Gardner and David Bleich have conducted studies aimed at increasing student learning, and their conclusions indicate the processes defined here as oral pedagogy. Gardner prescribes classroom performance, and Bleich stipulates an interactive, intersubjective learning environment where students can restore the connection between speech, writing, and reading (117-42). A third prominent teacher scholar, Gerald Graff, echoes his peers’ recommendation for more ear training in the writing classroom, because, he asserts, “listening closely to others and summarizing what they have to say can help writers generate their own ideas” (xiii). Graff explicitly recommends talking and listening as the means for students to engage deeply with other people’s views in order to “write the voices of others” into their own

texts (3). Graff, like Gardner and Bleich, are convinced that college-level thinking, reading, and writing depend upon practical training in listening to, responding to, and talking about texts experienced as public, cultural events in the classroom.

Current research by TETYC and NCTE scholars mirror the recommendations of Gardner, Bleich, and Graff. TETYC scholar Nanette Wichman maintains that reading aloud gives students practice in hearing what sounds right in their own writing and that of others. She writes, “Classroom practices that tap the oral, meaning-based, interactive nature of language are vital” (285). Wichman’s approach to teaching grammar requires students to discover and express the ways in which sentences function; as she says, students actually “perform the thought processes for sentence revision” (284). Oral and aural material, therefore, satisfies several pedagogical goals. Students learn from each other as they share initial impressions, journal entries, and revised writings.

For first-year composition courses, Jennifer Locke Whetham advises work in the genre of creative nonfiction, because such dynamic genres feature embodied, expressive storytelling that relies on attention to audience and on verbalizing personal experience, which in turn leads to self-reflection and written revisions (259). Whetham’s work illustrates again how personal experience becomes public, academic performance.

Maureen Neal’s research in discourse analysis presents compelling reasons for instructors to abandon teacher-dominated classroom discussion in favor of classroom talk in which “students ask and answer questions and then question the answers” (279). In this way, students, rather than teachers, perform the critical thinking tasks of questioning, evaluating responses from their peers, synthesizing ideas, and moving on to more advanced questions. According to Neal, effective interactive discussion requires instructors to curb the desire to answer the questions that

they themselves raise and to resist recasting student comments. As instructors transform classroom discussion patterns, students create a continuum of meaningful learning methods through talk, revision of initial impression, and self-reflection. Such inclusive and broad-based student talk opens space in the classroom for personal narratives to evolve into expressive essays and argumentative research papers.

The scholars and teachers who join me in adopting aural and oral learning methods realize that, ultimately, what is at stake here is offering today's college student the best chance to succeed in our digital, multimedia world. Through an emphasis on multidimensional texts and liminal classroom experience, we can bring into play the heightening and brightening of consciousness that oral pedagogy offers.

The key to assessing new and emerging literacies is to strengthen formative assessment measures. Especially in the early semesters of college, students benefit from frequent feedback appraising their command of new skills and concepts during the learning process. Formative assessments differ from traditional standards-based, summative assessments, which typically gauge students' grasp of content at the end point in the learning process—final exams and final papers, for example. The NCTE Position Statement on 21st Century curriculum and assessment supports methods that consider “the extent to which images and sound may amplify text” and “students' self-evaluation and reflection on process” as well as their diversity of lived experience (3). Formative assessments allow time for students to make adjustments to their study habits and to practice before being held accountable in gradebook, summative assessment fashion. Howard Gardner suggests that instructors assess students' understanding “not simply at the end of the course, but through regular, interim “practice” performances” (166). He proposes assessments designed to allow students to perform understanding of new course content, and to

“display [their] comprehension of that content in a publicly accessible way” (161). In other words, students need time to play with new concepts and skills, because engaging with and interpreting texts now includes listening, talking, rethinking, and revising.

Clearly, much recent scholarship advocates providing students manifold ways to explore aesthetic, personal, and scholarly dimensions of multimedia texts. The foremost authorities in the field of college pedagogy recommend two practices that will prove vital to student success: learning activities designed to increase student voices in the classroom, and formative assessment measures. These two pedagogical features present the means for instructors to put into practice educational ideals that prominent scholars have been promoting for over twenty years:

- More learner-centered, learning process-driven classroom practices and less teacher-centered and content-driven, lecture-style instruction;
- Students who are assumed to be active, engaged agents in their own learning, rather than passive receptacles of information;
- Instructors who create optimal conditions for students to apply course content in ways that involve high-level thinking and attitudinal change, rather than instructors who disseminate information by doing all the talking and by maintaining complete control of the classroom agenda.

When we as leaders in higher education fully commit to pedagogies of orality and formative assessments, we offer our students important personal validation through continuous demonstration that their ideas matter to us and to their peers. We encourage students to become actively involved, socially integrated learners who know how to reflect on their own learning and how to transform their life experiences into learning experiences.

III. Appendix

At Colorado Mountain College, many instructors in our First Year Experience Student Success Program, called Base Camp, use some version of these materials to train students in self expression and close reading of texts. These instruments, geared toward multiple voices in the college classroom, constitute meaningful learning sequences that move students through the listening to or reading of a text to guided critical thinking and collaborative discussion, and then on to essay writing.

1. The Journal

For both composition and literature courses, the Journal is indispensable. The Journal offers practical training in mindful, attentive reading. The questions that make up this Journal place students at the center of the analysis process and allow them to explore elements of assigned readings that are of interest to them.

The Journal

Use The Journal as a tool for noting first impressions of what you read, hear, or watch. Make notes about content, style, and themes. Answer basic questions so that your writing and in-class discussions can be meaningful and complete.

KEEP TRACK OF VARIOUS THINGS THAT INTEREST YOU:

ANSWER THE BASIC QUESTIONS: WHO? WHAT? WHERE? WHEN?

Be sure to know the facts, for a comprehension of the reading

WHY? Interpretation and Analysis begin: consider why the text was written. What is the author's purpose?

HOW? Comment on the style of the writing, its structure and rhetorical devices that add to the meaning of the writing. Look for organizational strategies, images, key words, poetic repetitions and metaphors.

SO WHAT? WHO CARES? In what ways is the text important, artistically, historically, socially, or politically?

READER REACTION: Comment on ways that this writing is important to you personally. Is it believable? Have you had similar life experiences? Your personal perspective matters.

ALWAYS MARK SPECIFIC QUOTES. They will be useful for participating in class discussions, and for writing your own text-based essays.

Other contents of the Reading Journal:

Comments

Questions

New Vocabulary

Your specific comments may help others appreciate aspects of the reading that you have discovered.

2. Template for Analyzing and Evaluating Readings

This template, adapted from the Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking, guides students toward deep reading of high-level, scholarly material. Beginning college students usually have good ideas about what they read, but they lack practice in how to express those ideas. This template not only helps students read critically, but it also helps them advance their writing skills by giving them ways to get started and stay organized.

Template for Analyzing and Evaluating Texts

1. The main purpose of this reading is _____.
State as accurately as possible the author's purpose.
2. The key question that the author is addressing is _____.
Figure out the key question in the mind of the author.
3. The most important information in this reading is _____.
Figure out the facts, experiences, data the author is using to support his/her claims.
4. The main inferences or conclusions in this reading are _____.
Identify the key conclusions the author comes to and presents.
5. The key concepts we need to understand in this reading are _____. By these concepts the author means _____. Figure out the most important ideas you would have to understand in order to follow the author's line of reasoning.
6. The main assumptions underlying the author's thinking are _____.
Figure out what the author is taking for granted (that might be questioned).
7. If we take this line of reasoning seriously, the implications are _____. What consequences are likely to follow if people take the author's line of reasoning seriously?
8. The main point of view presented in this article is _____.
How does the author perceive the subject?

3. Oral Pedagogy in Action

This learning activity demonstrates the theory and practice of multivocality and performance in the classroom.

Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* as song, oral narrative, and written text

The activities that make up the first day's lesson plan for studying Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* illustrate how aural texts broadened students' grasp of written material. This novel's scope lends itself to clear illustrations of how sound leads to meanings that silent readings might miss. To begin the study of Ellison's novel, the group directly encounters the opening scene, the *Prologue*, through music and oral performance. As the instructor, I briefly provide the novel's setting: In the opening scene, the unnamed narrator is living in 1940s Harlem, in an underground basement rigged with 1,369 lights powered by stolen electricity. He thinks over his life story, which includes a special admiration for Louis Armstrong's song, "What Did I Do To Be So Black And Blue?"

To bring to life this opening scene, the group listens to a recording of Armstrong performing "Black and Blue." Louis Armstrong's song establishes a common culture among learners by offering a shared artistic experience that illuminates the style and subject matter of *Invisible Man*. Asked to jot down some ideas about characters and themes they notice while listening to the song, students establish the habit of writing while reading and listening that is one of the learning outcomes of the course. They notice the simple, sad lyrics that tell a story of racial persecution. They write things like, "The singer complains that, because of how other people react to his skin color, his lot is almost unbearable." One student comments on the trumpet solo and the scat syllables, and someone else familiar with blues and jazz contributes some basic notions of improvisation.

The discussion that follows the song and note-taking exercises the group's synthetic and analytical abilities. We discuss the elements that the students identified in terms of their possible meaning to the novel, anticipating styles and themes that might appear elsewhere in Ellison's novel. This brief sketch prepares students for the many-leveled reading to come. Musical improvisation, alternating between strict group discipline and wild personal abandon, foreshadows important structural considerations of the novel. Also, after encountering the text initially through sound, students are more likely to discover that sound itself is critical in Ellison's art, as alternative history and cryptic registers in culture.

As audience, students are no longer passive spectators of a silent novel; their new role as active participants transforms them into characters in the invisible man's personal, political, and expressive drama. Through recorded performance, students participate in the text from pre-critical, aesthetic, and critical positions, progressing by stages in deep reading skills, critical thinking, and advanced writing and speaking. As a first step, Louis Armstrong's performance of "What Did I Do To Be So Black and Blue?" builds anticipation of further textual, thematic, and dramatic engagement with the novel.

To nurture these capacities, we follow the song with an audio recording of the *Prologue*. Twelve pages in the text requires twenty-five minutes of performance—an investment in class time that transforms school time into dramatic storytelling spectacle. Students transfer the listening ability demanded by Armstrong's music and lyrics to Ellison's text, preparing themselves for the work of reading the novel.

After hearing the *Prologue* performed, students indicate a high level of engagement and preparedness through their questions and observations. For example, one student remarks on the invisible man's political position, his hiding out underground and draining power illegally from the authorities. Another student questions the

character's reflections on his past violent encounter with a white man. Such comments prepare the way for several theoretical perspectives that prove valuable during the study of the novel.

Performance also renders the text immediate, demanding involvement from those who hear. After hearing the text performed, the audience is willing and able to meet the text in silent, isolated, informed reading. Performance leaves traces in memory that resound during silent reading. The sound of voices, their accents and cadences, and the music and lyrics of jazz all resound in the reading ear after hearing the *Prologue* performed.

Creative play of this sort mobilizes multiple expressions of human experience by the writer and the audience. The hour and a half classroom work on *Invisible Man* prepares students for the textual pandemonium that ensues in the novel. Because the *Prologue* sounds most of the major themes of the novel, students leave the first day class keen for more episodes of the narrator's journey toward the light of truth, freedom, and identity. From the outset of their study of the novel, they practice the kind of listening in which multiple possibilities sound.

The sequence of learning bears notice: students hear textual contradiction, after which they question and speculate upon its purpose in the text. The ear training that aural texts provide creates occasions for students to explore multiple implications of meaning. Music, performed text, and student-generated discussion bring vitality to the study of literature that strictly writing and reading programs ignore. That is, when instructors adopt orality and aurality as the main learning method, personal, aesthetic, and intellectual dimensions of course material become concrete and accessible.

The Ellison example illustrates possible uses of audio texts in literature and compositions courses course, where students listen for rhetorical devices, narrative pyrotechnics, transitions, and other language features that writing displays. Audio texts are equally

valuable in many other disciplines, because aural material fortifies the students' sense of learning things on their own; they meet the text on its own terms. Aural texts address a problem common to many readers in their early college years: lack of close reading skills to explore what a text really says. Training the ear through aural texts supports the kind of sharply focused interpretation that engenders high-level reading and writing capacities.

4. Poems referred to in the study

The Road Not Taken

by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference. 1915

Why I Take Good Care Of My Macintosh Computer

by Gary Snyder

Because it broods under its hood like a perched falcon
Because it jumps like a skittish horse
 and sometimes throws me
Because it is pokey when cold
Because plastic is a sad, strong material
 that is charming to rodents
Because it is flighty
Because my mind flies into it through my fingers
Because it leaps forward and backward
 is an endless sniffer and searcher,
Because its keys click like hail on a rock
& it winks when it goes out,
& puts word-heaps in hoards for me, dozens of pockets of
 gold under boulders in streambeds, identical seedpods
 strong on a vine, or it stores bins of bolts;
And I lose them and find them,
Because whole worlds of writing can be boldly laid out
and then highlighted, & vanished in a flash at
 “delete” so it teaches
 of impermanence and pain;
& because my computer and me are both brief
 in this world, both foolish, and we have earthly fates,
Because I have let it move in with me
 right inside the tent
And it goes with me out every morning
We fill up our baskets, get back home,
Feel rich, relax, I throw it a scrap and it hums. 1988

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Notes:

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