



CREATING RADICAL SPACE: INTERWRITING THROUGH THE SPIRAL

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Narrator: Confronted with the task of writing an “academic” paper, an example of your liberal education, you seek the refuge of the Writing Center.

Writer: Where do we start?

The revolutionary paradigm begins within the deeply personal space of an individual tutoring session, interwriting, in which dominant frameworks for interaction—patriarchy, racism, intellectual chauvinism, physical and psychological oppression—are eroded through a pedagogy based in popular education and radical empowerment.

Narrator: *Sitting down now.*

Writer: I’ve never been here before, how does this work?

Tutor: How do you go about writing?

Bullet Point The process of creating and disseminating radical space fluctuates between disparate spaces and is in irreconcilable tension with forces opposed to it.

Bullet Point At its most intimate, within the space of an individual tutoring session (interwriting), radical space gestates in the interaction over text or the idea of text between two writer-tutors.

Rad•ic•al Space:

n. Physical, psychological, and relational space in which a commitment to the safety, autonomy, and empowerment of oppressed voices is deliberately upheld and fiercely defended. Radical space is prefigurative, simultaneously seeking to dismantle the oppressive norms of a system while engaging in the tactile work of constructing a vision of a radical new social order. See the Writing Center.

Pre•fig•ur•a•tive:

adj. A process which simultaneously seeks to dismantle existing systems of oppression while intentionally constructing radical new systems of social interaction. Movement that transforms clearly articulated visions into material realities, despite the continuing encroachment of oppressive norms.

Bullet Point The coalescence of the gestating forces created within individual sessions takes place within the next spiral or spatial container: the Writing Center. In this space collaborative projects of prefigurative, radical space occur: workshops, parties, joint writings (Inkwell), conversations, permutations, and manifestos.

Bullet Point The forces, once coalesced in the spiral of the Writing Center, follow writer-tutors beyond the bounds of the Center and into the next, broader spiral: the College. Within this more permeable spiral, space is highly contested, the tensions between radical space and its oppressive antagonists heightened. With this increase in tension, however, comes an enlarged community of writer-tutors, potential radical agents, within which the forces from concentric spirals percolate and are infused with new spirit.

Bullet Point Coalescence in the College spiral is less distinct, though the College as spatial container emanates more potent radical and oppressive forces into the next spiral: communities, continents, and human society beyond. From this monolithic space, which radical space seeks to permeate in its entirety, come the most potent forces of oppression. Guided by human agents utilizing state violence, an elaborate network of interlaced markets, systemic and historical racism and patriarchy (all this fused in the form of global market society: capitalism), radical space faces pervasive hostility.

Bullet Point The dialectic of interactions which constitute the contest between radical and oppressive space will never be truly resolved. To conclude that oppression has been vanquished, domination obliterated, and a new order achieved would be to allow oppression to arise anew. Thus the constant tension between oppressive, hegemonic forces of market-governed society and radical opposition and alternatives, must remain permanent.

Bullet Point The unending revolution.

In•ter•wri•ting:

n. The intimate space within and between two writer-tutors during an individual tutoring session.

Tutor: What are you hoping to accomplish with our time today?

- Reading out loud
- Reading in silence
- Conversing
- Storming

“As religion ceases to provide the social ‘cement,’ affective values and basic mythologies by which a socially turbulent class-society can be welded together, ‘English’ is constructed as a subject to carry this ideological burden from the Victorian period onwards” (Eagleton, 21).

Constraint 1: The academy preserves the liberal humanist tradition of literature.

Constraint 2: Affluent white males produce and defend the literary tradition.

Constraint 3: The literary tradition is a bastion of class, sex, race, and state-sponsored power.

“If the masses are not thrown a few novels, they may react by throwing up a few barricades” (Eagleton 21).

Constraint 4: English literature replaces religion as Marx’s infamous ‘opiate of the people.’

Constraint 5: Literature, academic writing, and the academy operate as a spurious means of social control, enable oppressions born of English class, gender, intellectual roles, and racist imperialism.

Note: Constraints may be combined or altered in order to fit circumstance. Not all constraints are listed.

As a space dedicated to non-hierarchical, popular forms of education and writing, the Writing Center is a node of radical opposition and alternative to **Constraints 1, 2, 3, 4, 5** (as well as those not listed), a node whose pulse spirals outwards, contesting space at Evergreen and into the world beyond.

...you realize that a tutor, far from reifying these oppressive standards, is willing and eager to explode them with you, to circumvent and redraw them, like manipulating a star map. A tutoring session takes you beyond the form of this intellectual legacy to which you are not beholden, which in fact excludes your voice entirely. You discover that beyond, under, flanking, and dive-bombing that form, are the free realms in which your own voice restlessly evolves, scrawls, and asexually divides, a linguistic amoeba frantic for expression. Soon, you forget that the form ever limited you at all...

Narrator: Look now, the tutor writes down what you say, takes careful stock of your answers, your musings, asks clarifying questions, attempts to distill potent ideas. The conversation, for now it is

just that, even though you were expecting to be handed concentrated writing wisdom, becomes excited, the tutor latching on to your words, finding in them star maps from skies yet unseen.

Writer-Tutor: Have you ever tried making a mind map?

Writer-Tutor: Again with the questioning. *This time you resignedly gesture no.*



Narrator: Now, you fear, the chauvinism of form and schematics will once again encroach upon your psyche, make writing like attempting to escape a steel bubble. It turns out your steel bubble is in fact one of permeable glass.

Narrator: But then the pencil and the ideas that you had so adeptly divulged earlier, are before you. Again, the power is in your hands, the menacing chauvinistic scholars, long dead or sequestered in their towers, cannot touch your canvas, cannot withhold your voice.

Writer-Tutor: The looming inadequacy once felt in the face of the task of “academic” writing erodes; definition, invention, and creation...

placed at your disposal. Unlike the authoritative statements of antiquated intellectuals to which you have no affinity, questions engage you, they ask of you. You are compelled, not to enact some rigid ritual of writing, but instead to engage the vast spaces in which questions, properly posed, can illuminate.

...one idea down,
 encase it in a polygon, a
 sphere,
 an exploding star
 follow it with a connector
 where does it lead you?
 to another supernova
 another idea
 an exploding star
 a beam of light
 a serpentine vine

until the entire page crawls

with the stuff of your insides

whispers the makings of a plan

intimately designed by you,

in whatever form

most adequately engages you

with a plan,

you can mount an assault upon those

vainglorious towers of academia

the oppression of

the form has been exploded

and so on

The exploded form is revealed bereft of the limiting power it proclaims. Working in radical space, you are able to deny it any power whatsoever, able to deafen and ostracize it as it once sought to silence you. You realize that despite your inability (at least in the context of this assignment) to remain in this unchecked state of linguistic anarchy, you can work within said form; shoot it through with blazing holes of your own design. So you return to the form, the patriarchal, racist, and elitist form, and you shatter its now feeble skeleton. Your thesis, divined from the prior formless storming work, is driven, not static, and is never subsumed by the prejudices of the now exploded form it inhabits. Your textual examples are drawn from text galaxies from the canon. Your organization is attuned to your audience and is undeniably you, defiant. You realize that even such oppressive institutional forms are beholden to you, writer, and that language is

so malleable as to allow you, even within the given (now radically transformed) structure, to frame meanings, theories, analyses seemingly antithetical to the form itself.

In that space where form is defied, exploded, bent to your will, writer, you come to find the power of your own voice and realize white male “academia” to be a bitter ghost, the failures of which are denied only by those whose identity depends upon clinging to its last vestigial claims to viability.

WORKS CITED Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983.