

“Anatomy of an Article: How an Undergraduate Researcher Turned a Passionate Project into a Published Essay”

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In their book *Undergraduate Research in English Studies*, editors Laurie Grobman and Joyce Kinkead issue “a clarion call for the integration of undergraduate research in English studies” (x). They suggest that “As faculty, we need to articulate our methodology, define appropriate tasks for students, and ask for authentic scholarship” (x). They also argue that such work offers important “benefits to the discipline(s) of English studies” (xxviii). That is because “Students engaged in genuine research gain an insider’s understanding of field-specific debates, develop relevant skills and insights for future careers and graduate study, and most important, contribute their voices to creating knowledge through the research process” (ix).

In “Making Long Shots: A Path toward Undergraduate Professional Publication” Marta Figlerowicz, who published her work as an undergraduate researcher, supports Grobman and Kinkead’s point and argues that “it is possible, and beneficial, for students to attempt to bridge the gap between undergraduate essays and professionally publishable papers” (119). Figlerowicz outlines several conditions for success, claiming first that “It is fair to say that an undergraduate is sometimes capable of preparing an innovative academic paper that is entirely her own in terms of authorship” (119). However, she notes that a writer’s intellectual ability and capacity do not preclude the need for careful intervention and mentoring: “the additional help a student requires to publish even a laboriously researched course essay cannot be underestimated, nor can the value of a faculty member’s assistance” (119). According to Figlerowicz, such success may have still another component: “It is also true that, to be able to learn from the frequently difficult stages of transitioning toward professional publication, a student has to show a lot of self-driven motivation and persistence” (119). The larger message seems to be that such important work involves the extensive mentoring of students by faculty and much self-drive (e.g. persistence and passion) by dedicated student authors. To those ends, Grobman and Kinkead ask and answer some important questions:

What happens in humanistic inquiry? It is actually quite similar to other disciplines and may be outlined as follows: the identification of and acquisition of a disciplinary or interdisciplinary methodology; the setting out of a concrete investigative problem; the carrying out of the actual project; and finally, the dispersing or sharing of a new scholar’s discoveries with his or her peers—a step often missing in undergraduate educational programs. How often do we unpack this methodology in our classrooms for our students? (x-xi)

“Anatomy of an Article” seeks to trace and illuminate one such unpacking. This case study examines the ways that an undergraduate researcher revised one of his essays from a classroom seminar project and turned it into a published article in a scholarly refereed journal. The author is Jonathan Pearson who graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from University of Missouri - Kansas City in May 2009. The journal is *Young Scholars in Writing (YSW)* which is dedicated to helping undergraduates publish their research and scholarship in the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition. Jonathan’s journey toward publication covers a time period from 2004–2010 and documents the author’s and the article’s most important streams of input. Those streams include the

writer's enduring passion for his subject and the ongoing mentoring he received from his teacher, Professor Jane Greer, and from Professor Patti Hanlon-Baker, one of the journal's editorial board members. Jonathan's project is an analysis of politician Hillary Rodham's development as a public rhetor during her years at Wellesley College and Yale University. I call this text "Anatomy of an Article" because it examines the ongoing project of pursuing ideas across time, venues, and genres in an evolving text that, according to its author, "changed from 12 to 8 pages - back to 12 and then 20 pages."

In "Undergraduate Research Fellows and Faculty Mentors in Literary Studies," Christine F. Cooper-Rompato, Evelyn Funda, Joyce Kinkead, Amanda Marinello, and Scarlet Fronk identify two key components to successful undergraduate research. The first is to "Be sure the student takes an active role and is a decision-maker in the faculty-student relationship" (156). The second component is geared toward teachers. They ask us to "Be reflective and ask students to be reflective as well." They remind us that "In order to make this experience effective, students need to be self-conscious about their research process" (156). This case study will spotlight an evolving occasion where active learning and reflection were practiced and supported by all participants. This essay will also highlight Jonathan's process of intellectual development and spotlight the textual revisions he made as he pursued his project across multiple venues, media, and genres while seeking and negotiating important input from his classroom teacher and from one of the journal's faculty-advisor editors.

In reporting and commenting on several interviews with each of these individuals, I hope to highlight the processes of ongoing conversation, mentoring and learning that occurred for all participants as the author's project evolved. The story I hope to tell here is two-fold. First, I wish to show how pursuing one's "passion" – one's strong feelings about and deep commitment to a subject – across time and in multiple venues involves seeing and re-seeing one's work, ideas and texts again and anew. Second, I will explore how the process of collaborating in order to mentor student work toward publication provides rigorous and sometimes surprising learning experiences for all involved. This is especially true in the case of *YSW* which offers extensive mentoring and intellectual support to undergraduate writers as they make their research and scholarship more visible and more public.

In tracing Jonathan's evolution from writing a tribute paper to Hillary Rodham to eventually crafting a complicated argument involving detailed rhetorical analysis of her work, I will show how the project of coming to meaning was inherently multimodal and performative and had several ongoing streams of intellectual input and mentoring. Those streams involved the author's personal investments and embedded opportunities (e.g. creating a tribute video and giving two public presentations) for public performance and textual revision. Most of all, in pursuing and refining his project, the writer was asked to repeatedly call upon and extend his passion for his subject. My goal here is to show how passion – the powerful and compelling emotions we have for a subject – plays into our reading and writing activities, plays on in our research, and plays out in our interactions with those who try to support and help us pursue our goals.

Introducing Author Jonathan Pearson

In many ways, Jonathan's project is one of passion. He refers to Rodham as "Hillary" and calls her "one of [his] heroines." Indeed, the published essay emanated

from the author's personal interests in and felt connections to his subject. There was also a strong sense of cause.

Jonathan became very interested in "Hillary" in 2004 after reading her 2003 autobiography, *Living History*. The influence was so significant that reading about Rodham's achievements influenced Jonathan's early career decisions. As Jonathan states, "I decided to become a lawyer. I even applied to Yale for undergraduate to be like her—and I wasn't accepted. Instead I went to college at University of Missouri-Kansas City and was a political science/pre-law major." He notes a pivotal point in his interests: "After the first semester I realized I was meant for the English department." Yet his passion for this public figure persisted, "Every day I read news about Hillary and her Senate work. Supported her campaign for reelection in 2006 and when she decided to run for president in January 2007." He even visited web sites that kept him abreast of her campaign.

Jonathan's interests in Rodham drove him to read everything he could find about her. In fall 2007, Jonathan read journalist Carl Bernstein's book, *A Woman in Charge: The Life of Hillary Rodham Clinton*. Looking back, Jonathan recalls that "I appreciated his journalistic style of providing both views of Hillary." He calls it the "most objective look at her biography" and says that it "confirmed a lot of details of her biography which many criticized and said she had fabricated." With clarity, Jonathan notes the backlash against Rodham, adding that "A lot of anti-Hillary groups would take her original title, *Living History*, and change it to *Rewriting History*. But Bernstein took her book one step further." As Jonathan reports, "He [Bernstein] interviewed hundreds of people, including conservative Dick Morris (former Clinton ally, now foe), who fleshed out the details of her biography." Jonathan perceptively notes that Rodham also threw focus on certain moments and events, adding that "Hillary would shy away from too much in depth analysis about her life, skimming certain parts, like her schooling, so she could focus on the more controversial areas like her years as First Lady and the Monica Lewinsky scandal."

In fall semester of 2008, Jonathan's interest would soon receive a major writing opportunity. As he reports, "In my senior year of undergraduate studies, I took a class called 'Women and Rhetoric.'" In that class "we studied famous female rhetoricians and the tools they used to convey their message, whether it was specifically about issues concerning females (i.e. right to vote) or slavery, etc.." Jonathan then went into detail about the major class assignments, "We had to do a project about a female rhetorician as part of our final grade." His teacher was Professor Jane Greer, Associate Professor of English at the University of Missouri - Kansas City. As Jonathan remembers, "When Jane proposed the assignment, Hillary was an obvious choice." He notes that "I had followed her work so much she felt like a close friend" and adds that "I felt comfortable researching her because I felt I knew her." Jonathan elaborates on his felt connection to his subject "All through my youth I heard nothing but awful things about her, and after reading her autobiography I realized how much the media and her critics obsess about all the negativity surrounding her." Jonathan explains that "I knew in my Spirit she was not those things (i.e. manipulating, calculating, deceitful)." He adds "I really identified with the criticism and began to write the paper as a tribute to show people, 'Hey! She's not what you think!'" As Jonathan explains, "My initial goal was to defend her." He also

articulates the emotions that drive the goal: “I felt that no one understood her like I did, and everyone must know the Hillary I knew! I started to formulate ideas for my paper.”

Perhaps attendant to his devotion to his subject, this writer appears to be driven by a desire for redress and clarity. That desire brought issues of focus and selection. As Jonathan reports, “Problem arose—what aspect to cover? First Lady? Senator?” Then clarity came: “Covering her presidential campaign would have been easy since there were plenty of available media.” He adds that “In fact, she sharpened her oral rhetoric—that’s where I noticed the biggest change of her rhetoric. Speaking every day she began to sharpen her campaign message.” When asked, Jonathan expands on this idea: “At the beginning of her campaign she was almost quiet in her demeanor. She announced her candidacy through a video instead of a public venue, but by the end of her campaign, she publicly and humbly accepted her loss.”

As a passionate and purposeful rhetor, Jonathan sought to make a specific intervention. Today, he explains his choices: “However, I didn’t want to focus on this period of her career. I felt it wouldn’t contribute to her life story in a significant way. There was already too much commentary.” He goes on to explain: “I was really curious about her college life since I was also in college. I realized a lot hadn’t been discussed.” According to Jonathan, “Hillary wrote very little about her early days in her autobiography—[I] wanted to do some more investigating. Since there wasn’t much discussed academically about her early work, I decided that was the best area to cover.”

As mentioned, Jonathan’s project was inherently multimodal. The author pursued his need to research by creating a video he later posted on YouTube, called [“Celebration”](#), which he presented to his “Women in Rhetoric” class. As part of his research, Jonathan read Rodham’s articles in the journals *Harvard Educational Review* and *Yale Law Review* concerning the well-being of children and their rights under the law. In paying attention to Rodham’s language choices, he found that “she used a lot of analogies to talk about how children were being neglected and even U.S. Senators didn’t even want to address the issue at the time.” For research, Jonathan consulted JSTOR, used interlibrary loan, and scanned back issues of *Life* magazine. He found that those sources were adequate for his project and adds that “I was able to find all primary sources via library and online. Eventually [I] scanned four sources from books and the rest downloaded from the internet and kept them in one giant folder.”

When I asked Jonathan what caught his attention as he reviewed those sources, he replied, “I read all this material, was fascinated by it, but couldn’t decide what area to focus on.” For him, the “biggest question was the thesis.” He adds, “that’s when it started out as a tribute paper for the class.” At that point, the goal became clear: “I was going to defend Hillary to the people who supported other presidential candidates at the time. I wanted them to see what I saw in Hillary.” Here the author elaborates eloquently: “What jumped out at me was a truthful, honest, hardworking person who was being maliciously and unfairly attacked, and I felt it my duty to reveal the truth about her.” This sense of duty, coupled with the desire for redress, led to an even closer inspection and counter-reading of some of Rodham’s early writings. Jonathan asserts that “Her college thesis wasn’t radical and her work on behalf of children really shed light on a lack of protection for children in their own homes.”

Jonathan used the discoveries he made in his research to make an intervention. In his close readings of some of her arguments he noticed a misperception of and an over-

reaction to many of Rodham's ideas and words. As he put it, "Her critics were only concerned about her subject, [community organizer and writer] Saul Alinsky and I kept wondering if they had even read the thesis at all." As Jonathan explains, "I didn't feel it was overwhelmingly supportive or against him. I felt she was simply analyzing his work." Here a researcher's scrutiny led to ongoing reflection: "After having read Bernstein's book, I remember the Republican criticism about her years as First Lady. I remember when they did pieces in 1992 about 'Who Is Hillary Clinton?' and talked about her 'radical' speeches and thesis at Wellesley." Jonathan explains his own reaction to that criticism: "As I read that speech and thesis, the 'radical' ideology never jumped out at me. I kept asking, 'where is it'? It was more of a sensationalistic portrayal made out of fear of Hillary." Such dramatic portrayals reified Jonathan's belief that "The critics had this image of her as radical and kept promoting something that wasn't true. She was passionate about her beliefs and I believe they were afraid of a strong woman."

Jonathan's increasingly pointed passion for redress was fueled by examining a variety of texts. He described a very special resource in some detail: "I was given a pamphlet once by a fellow Hillary supporter (my high school English teacher whom I'm still friends with!) that was made by the American Conservative Union called, *Hillary Rodham Clinton: What Every American Should Know*." Jonathan goes on to describe this tome in terms that are less than flattering. He writes that "it was made during Hillary's run for the Senate in 2000" and notes that "it was the same misconceptions and misinterpretation of her life and work." He adds that "I still hold on to it for purely entertainment purposes because of its absurdity and as a reminder of how people are unfairly vilified." Jonathan enjoys quoting excerpts. For example, he quotes from the preface: "The 'real' Hillary Rodham Clinton, with her many faces, is a terribly complex individual—much more so than either her sycophants or worst enemies believe." Jonathan also shares this excerpt from the text:

This book is by no means a chronicle of Clinton scandals—Lord knows that would take more space than I've been allotted here—but it is a summary of those scandals [i.e. her alleged affair with Vince Foster and later, his death] that seem to have come about primarily as a result of Hillary's ego and actions (ACU 4).

To such florid prose, Jonathan offers this succinct rebuttal: "It's such an absurd piece of political trash I find absolutely hilarious that anyone would actually believe it." He adds that "I also find it interesting how a lot of Republicans support her now over President Obama. I think a lot of them realized she wasn't as 'radical' as they thought she was." Jonathan also notes that "Even Rush Limbaugh admitted during the democratic nomination he would rather support Hillary over Obama if he had a choice because her politics seemed more middle-of-the-road than liberal."

An Exemplary "Extra Nudge": Introducing Professor Jane Greer

At this point, I wish to introduce Professor Jane Greer, Jonathan's teacher in the "Women and Rhetoric" course, later guest editor of volume 7, and now editor of *Young Scholars in Writing* (YSW). To learn more about Jonathan's writing project from this faculty mentor's perspective, I asked Jane several questions about pedagogy and intent and present her responses here.

My first question was how and when Jane sensed publication potential Jonathan's original essay and why she believed that it should be shared with others. Her answer reflected a deep commitment to mentoring all student writers. As Jane writes, "For me,

it's less about identifying potential in a particular piece of writing and more about creating opportunities for all students to decide what they might want to do with their work beyond the classroom." She explains eloquently that "In all of my undergraduate classes, I make lots of announcements about all kinds of publication/presentation opportunities." Some of those opportunities are in-house. They range from "our annual English Department Undergraduate Research Symposium to our Composition Program's *Sosland Journal*" to "UMKC's Honors Program's interdisciplinary research journal, *Lucerna*" and "our campus-wide Undergraduate Research symposium." Jane adds, "and, of course, *Young Scholars in Writing*," which is now housed at her university. As Jane notes, "I really try to encourage all students to share their work with wide audiences."

Consistent with her welcoming approach, Jane regularly urges her students to take their projects forward and make them more public. As she recalls, "I've also had students who produced amazing class projects/papers, but they're just not interested in going further." She notes, "And I've seen what I thought of as pretty average papers get transformed (through editorial feedback and lots of hard work and revision etc.) into really amazing articles or presentations." She concludes, "Sometimes it is the student I never expected who is quietly passionate about a project and wants to keep working on it beyond the classroom."

I then asked Jane how she tried to intervene and mentor this particular writer. She responded by referring to her intended classroom environment: "I think this started with the way I set up the undergraduate class in which Jonathan was enrolled—in fact, I try to set up all my undergraduate classes this way." When asked to expand on this point, she adds, "I want to give students opportunities to experience the fun and excitement of asking a real question and looking for answers." She goes on to explain that "In the case of 'Women and Rhetoric,' each student works all semester on constructing a rhetorical biography of a woman who should be included in our histories of rhetoric." She reports that "students in Jonathan's class chose Anna Wintour (editor of *Vogue* magazine); Condoleezza Rice; Emma Goldman; Jane Fonda; Susan Sontag; Victoria Woodhull; Pat Summitt (B-Ball coach at U of Tennessee); and others."

At my request, Jane detailed her pedagogy. She explains that she "responded to students' research proposals; to annotated bibliographies they constructed; and to first drafts of their projects." Jane routinely augments her responses with supplemental learning opportunities "I also set up peer response opportunities for students. I also assigned several texts from *YSW* as part of our class reading—Lauren Petrillo's work on girls' in antebellum female seminaries; Laura Northcutt's work on Myra Page." Jane notes that "While I would include these texts on the syllabus alongside other readings by well established scholars (Royster; Kates; Johnson; Buchanan), I would also point out that these were published essays by undergraduate researchers." She remembers that finally, "as the class wound down, I mentioned to all students that they could consider revising their work for *Young Scholars in Writing*."

When I asked Jane to focus on her experience working with this author, she said that "With Jonathan, I sensed pretty early in the semester that his interest in the rhetoric of Hillary Rodham was long standing and that regardless of what we did in class that he was committed to thinking and writing about her." Drawing on her memory, Jane added that "On the first day of class, I asked students to brainstorm a list of important woman rhetors, and he was the first to pipe up with HR [Rodham]." She remembers that

“Throughout the semester, he seemed eager in class to share his research on HR and what he was learning as he read and wrote more about her.” When asked to recall her memories of Jonathan’s early drafts, Jane says that was struck by “Jonathan’s quiet passion about HR.” She adds that “In terms of the paper itself, when I read the first draft of his research paper I learned things about HR that I didn’t know.” Jonathan’s research helped Jane learn “that she [Rodham] wrote her senior thesis on Saul Alinsky; that she helped found a new law journal at Yale, etc.” This was a reflective and catalytic moment for Jane who notes that “When I learn something new from reading a student’s paper, I often give them an extra nudge to think about how they could continue working on a project and share it with wider audiences.”

Persistence and Ongoing Textual Performance

In order to refine their texts, most authors need to negotiate several streams of input. That input can involve advice, applause, criticism, and/or many questions. In Jonathan’s case, valuable feedback came from two public performances, both of which gave the author a taste *of* and *for* increased public reaction. As Jonathan reports, “In April, 2009 I had two symposiums. The first was the English symposium where I read my paper and had a lot of questions from the audience.” According to him, “There were about ten people in the small conference room, including Jane and my parents, and only myself and another person read a paper in that room. Other rooms had different categories of presentations and presenters.” Jonathan remembers that “My paper was still in its earliest form! Most of the questions dealt with the thesis. They were trying to figure out my point! (And I was, too!)” From that first public performance, Jonathan drew a lesson, “I learned I needed to make it understandable for the reader. If I was having a hard time with my paper, how did I expect them to understand it?” This led to a key insight: “I began to think a lot about my thesis. But ultimately I realized it was time to get working and finish my paper. My listening to the paper was over and it was time to finish.”

Regarding that input, I asked Jane if she and Jonathan had discussed the concept of “audience” and, if so, how? To that query Jane replied, “I think Jonathan and I may have talked about audience more in terms of his two oral presentations.” She remembers reminding him “that the audience at the departmental symposium would be mostly English Department faculty and that the audience at the campus-wide symposium would include folks from all over campus and in a variety of disciplines.” Jane also notes that “in terms of Jonathan’s paper, I think we talked about disciplinary issues and historical background—what could Jonathan expect his readers to know, what would we need to tell them?” She remembers that “this came up explicitly I think in terms of biographical information about [Rodham-]Clinton, about Saul Alinsky, etc.”

Today, Jane recalls the author’s two public performances of his texts. As she notes, “Jonathan presented a version of his paper at our departmental research symposium for undergraduates” According to her “Folks were enthusiastic about his project and asked lots of questions, but another student’s work was selected as the best paper in rhetoric / writing studies / linguistics at the symposium.” Noting the author’s remarkable dedication to his subject and persistence with his project, she adds that “Without missing a beat, though, Jonathan signed up to present his work at the campus-wide symposium for undergraduate research.” The second symposium, in mid-April 2009, was a campus-wide event. As Jonathan recalls, “It was open to anyone who

registered. I did an oral presentation with a handout (see “Paratexts” for pdf copies of these works) of four quotes from my paper so the audience could follow along.” When asked about the response to his work, Jonathan adds that “There was only one question at the end of my presentation (and it was after I sat back down) and that was about how long Bill and Hillary had been married.” That lack of detailed or even direct response to his work left an effect: “I thought I hadn’t done a good job because no one asked me any legitimate questions about my paper, but I ended up winning second place in the humanities category and fifty dollars.” Jonathan remembers that the second symposium was larger than the first. He notes that “There were eight presenters in my category—probably 50 overall at the event. I did have a handout.”

Both at the time and in retrospect, Jane applauded Jonathan’s ongoing perseverance and commitment. She is characteristically generous in her praise for this author, saying that “Finally, I’d say that I was tremendously impressed at how Jonathan responded to the feedback he received from audiences outside the classroom and how he remained committed to his project despite set backs.”

Continuing Conversations and an Author Takes an Extended “Time Out”

The process of working on this project continued far beyond a particular class or classroom situation. Jonathan and Jane met regularly to work on his project throughout spring of 2009.¹ As Jonathan remembers, “We met and discussed each draft throughout the spring...Most of the time she was concerned with my thesis.” Jonathan recalls that “My focus was too broad and she kept urging me to narrow my thesis.” According to the writer, “The original thesis was how Hillary believed the biggest inequity of society was children’s rights and I examined her oral and written rhetoric at the time and how her biography contributed to this discussion.” When I asked Jonathan if he thought his original thesis was perhaps a bit too broad, he responded, “Yes, it was.” He then went on to elaborate: “Jane encouraged me to work more on paper after the class was over by closely examining Hillary’s texts and trying to add more secondary sources.” He remembers that “she suggested I submit it to *Young Scholars in Writing (YSW)* and [mentioned that I] had many months to prepare for submission.” Furthermore, “She said I could submit it then, but I decided I wanted to work more on it because I knew it wasn’t my best work yet.”

Expanding on his sense that his project needed work, Jonathan said he was “unsatisfied” and didn’t “feel ready” to write. It was then that Jonathan stopped revising and took a “time out” in order to “listen to the paper.” He remembers that “For a couple of months I didn’t look at the paper even though I knew I needed to get finished. I thought about it. I listened.” Jonathan’s listening included a component of faith and spirituality.² This idea becomes apparent as Jonathan notes that “As a Christian, when I have a question or problem, I listen to what God wants to tell me (even if it takes awhile for me to get His message).” Jonathan explains that “If I keep thinking about it and worrying about it, it doesn’t get fixed. But if I sit and listen, I hear what I’m supposed to.” He adds that “It’s kind of like talking to someone with a stereo blasting next to you.” This sense invites a paradoxical question: “How do you expect to hear something if you can’t hear?” For Jonathan, asking such important questions underscores another perceived link to his subject. According to him, “Faith is something Hillary and I both share.” He adds that “As one of my favorite songs says, “Who knows what tomorrow brings or takes away?” Jonathan’s spiritual faith and his faith in his subject and project

are very strong. He is quick to say that “I’m positive that this paper will open doors for me; I’m just not sure which ones. With all the amazing things Hillary has done in her career, who knows what she will do next?”

In terms of revising his work, Jonathan remembers that “I kept rolling it [his project] around in my head.” He adds that he and Jane had two or three more conferences and that “each time Jane kept pointing out the fact that my thesis was too broad.” According to him, “I felt I was correcting it with each draft, but there wasn’t enough of my own voice. I was quoting others too much. Also, what was my thesis? I still didn’t know what I was trying to say about Hillary.” Jonathan remembers making this diagnosis: “It still felt like a tribute paper and not like a research/analytical paper.” Jonathan’s lingering dissatisfaction with his approach was coupled with a common writing issue, namely the overuse of source material. Jonathan said he was “over quoting” and didn’t quite know what he was trying to say. As he puts it, “I have a bad habit of over quoting. I rely too much on what the author says because I don’t really like it when people misinterpret a quote.”

He then explains the thinking that underlines this commitment: “I feel a lot of paraphrasing questions the validity of an author because it might leave doubt in the reader’s eyes—‘Is this really what Hillary meant, etc.?’” This strategy represents a commitment to fidelity: “I like to keep exactly what Hillary says so there isn’t any question or doubt.” He is also quick to explain the dangers of not presenting direct quotes: “I feel this paraphrasing of her words has contributed to her [Rodham’s] critics who may take something she does or says out of context and pervert it to solidify their assessment of her.” Along with this strong commitment to fidelity, Jonathan was becoming increasingly persuaded by Jane’s encouragement to put more of his own voice into his essay. Today Jonathan remembers that “After the copious amounts of drafts (probably 10?) Jane wanted my own voice. Same problem—what was I trying to say?”

Today, Jane also recalls this time when the author’s ideas were percolating in-process. She remembers that “Over the holiday break, Jonathan e-mailed me to ask if we could meet and talk about his paper and about his applications to graduate school.” She also recalls that “At a local coffee shop, we talked about his paper and what revisions he should make.” She notes that “I think I probably encouraged him to narrow his focus—I talk about that a lot with students!” Jane goes on to explain that “I think Jonathan also struggled in his earliest drafts with developing a scholarly relationship to his subject.” When asked, Jane elaborated on her perception of the conundrum: “He wanted to advocate for Rodham, rather than analyze her rhetorical development.” She notes that “Those two things aren’t mutually exclusive” and adds “but I think the earliest versions of Jonathan’s paper were a little tilted toward celebration, rather than critical analysis.” She notes, “And though Jonathan and I met and talked about his work, I think I do my most effective mentoring through written comments on students’ papers. I read and responded to several versions of his paper throughout the subsequent semester.” These nurturing and critical conversations continued and, as Jane notes, Jonathan’s persistence paid off: “He had undertaken some pretty serious revisions based on audience reactions at the departmental symposium, and he was awarded second place in the humanities / performing arts divisions at the campus-wide symposium.” Jane notes, “That, too, suggested to me that Jonathan would do well if he chose to submit his work to *YSW*.” Even then she was confident “that he would rise to the occasion if he was asked to revise

and resubmit, which is the most common decision from *YSW*'s editorial board."

Looking back, Jonathan recalls that their work spilled into the summer. He notes that "After graduation, I moved to Dallas. Jane and I did most of our work via email." Today, he reflects on that process: "I submitted the paper at the end of June. 'Here goes nothing!' was my thought." He elaborates on that feeling, saying that "I knew it was better than my very first draft, but still wasn't satisfied." Apparently for this author there was still a perceived distance between intent and inscription: "I just didn't feel it was my best work. I knew what I wanted to say in my head, but I couldn't seem to express those thoughts on paper." As he recounts, "It was the same with my appreciation for Hillary. I really liked her but when people asked me I couldn't put my feelings into words." For Jane, the roles soon shifted. As she notes, "Once Jonathan decided his paper was ready to submit his work to *YSW*, my role completely changed." She remembers that "As guest editor for volume 7.1, I ceased to be his mentor and moved his essay through the editorial process like any other submission." She notes that "his essay was evaluated by two peer reviewers and then those reviews and Jonathan's essay were forwarded to Professor Patti Hanlon-Baker, who serves on *YSW*'s editorial board." Jane is quick to voice appreciation for the dedication, diligence, and valuable contributions Professor Patti Hanlon-Baker, who teaches composition at Stanford University. Jane remembers that "She made the decision that Jonathan's work merited extending to him an invitation to revise and resubmit." Jane also notes that Patti "provided him with editorial suggestions for improving his project." While she is "not sure how many times Patti looked at versions of Jonathan's paper," Jane is inclined to "think it was late September or early October [2009] before Jonathan's paper was finalized." One aspect of the timeline is very clear; Jane remembers that "He began his revisions under Patti's direction in July [2009]."

Widening the Conversation: Introducing Professor Patti Hanlon-Baker

Professor Patti Hanlon-Baker serves on the editorial board of *YSW*. She worked extensively with Jonathan to steward his project toward publication. I asked Patti the same questions that Jane answered. The first was, "Please tell me how and where you sensed publication potential in the original essay—that it should be shared with others?" To that, Patti responded, "I'm not sure I remember the parts exactly, but there were places in the essay where I felt Jonathan's analysis and discussion of Rodham's rhetorical growth were insightful." She notes that "The links he was attempting to make between her educational and professional experiences as ones that informed her rhetorical choices were interesting; these were ones I felt persuaded by." To this assertion, she adds some reflection: "I suppose I felt this in part because I'd taught an essay in my political rhetoric course that addressed her changes from first lady to senator candidate, and Jonathan's seemed to be hitting similar issues and asking similar questions." From Jonathan's draft, Patti took this important idea: "that we should consider complex rhetorical change from a lens other than merely questioning intentional choices based on audience seems important when looking at politicians' growth and success." Ultimately, Patti remembers that "Jonathan asked us to think about her growth as it defined her intentions, and I felt his observations deserved to be read by others."

My second question was, "How did you try to intervene and mentor the student?" At that point, Patti revealed her method: "I tried to ask questions that would help him come to conclusions about his own writing that he felt comfortable with." She added that "I was direct in some places, making suggestions I thought he had to consider—I didn't

force a particular choice, but I pointed out he had to make choices about some parts.” As Patti spoke, it became clear that her method had an underlying goal: “When I asked questions, I tried to do so in ways that would help him see where I was confused.” Such “confusion” (or at least the performance of being confused by a text) had its motives. As Patti now reveals, “I sometimes knew the answer, but I wanted him to understand that there was a lack of clarity, leap in logic, or organizational problem.” Furthermore, Patti admits that “I wanted him to not only make revisions to improve the essay, but I wanted him to understand both how to restructure an argument as well as embrace revision as a positive thing.”

I then asked Patti whether she and Jonathan had explicitly discussed the idea of “audience” and if so, how? Perhaps commensurate with the goal of helping Jonathan write a public text, Patti outlined the ways she tried to help Jonathan become an even more conscious and deliberate rhetor than he already was. To that end, Patti focused her comments on selection and structure. As she recalls, “I tried to be gentle: I discussed audience early on. Initially, Jonathan was analyzing a lot of her material. I pointed out that his own [intended] audience needed more clear links between elements or fewer elements to negotiate.” She points out that “He was analyzing both her oral and written arguments and suggesting that rhetorical choices she made in writing were different from later ones she made when speaking.” Looking back, Patti remembers that “I pointed out that he needed to draw parallels between early writing and later writing with early speeches and later speeches as those audiences are different. I said his readers required clear links.”

Consonant with her dual role of mentor and reviewer, Patti also offered Jonathan some strategic advice: “I also asked him to think about what points he wanted his readers to think about.” Her strategy had purpose: “To help him determine his own rhetorical moves, I asked ‘what is it about her change that you feel is most important for your readers to leave thinking?’” Today, Patti articulates her goals: “I’d hoped he’d see this as a way to think about focus and emphasis.” When asked, Jonathan explained his perceptions of Patti’s methods at the time. He reports that “Dr. Baker suggested three secondary sources and they helped get through my writing roadblock.” Patti recalls offering more specific advice. She asked Jonathan to “provide what I discuss with my students as ‘strategic sentences,’ ones that sometimes explicitly (or subtly but pushily) help readers see how they are to understand the example.” Today Jonathan goes on record to identify the benefits of Patti’s approach. He remembers that “I got a different perspective on the paper I had never considered. Dr. Baker read into my paper and offered pointers I hadn’t considered—mainly that I had ‘too many balls up in the air.’” He recounts that “in terms of my thesis. I was trying to cover ALL of her speeches and writings during that 10 year period and I needed to choose either written or oral rhetoric.” He then explains his new focus: “I chose written because I had more to choose from and she [Rodham] had undergone the most changes with her written rhetoric at this time.”

As Jonathan reminds us, “Like I mentioned before, her [Rodham’s] oral rhetoric improved most significantly during her campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination.” He notes that “For me, that was a separate study for a later date.” He adds that “One study about her rhetoric as First Lady was the most beneficial of the three from Dr. Baker.” As Jonathan recalls, “I incorporated a few quotes into the paper. I selected them based on how they analyzed her rhetoric as a whole (see opening paragraph [of the

revised article]).” Based on Patti’s suggestions, Jonathan undertook even more research in order to contextualize his argument more fully. Today he details his research process, saying that he “searched using key words ‘protest rhetoric’ and found four ‘overwhelming’ pages of entries.” He adds that “I started reading articles about the history of protest groups of the 1960s and 1970s and the rhetoric they used for their groups.” Jonathan says that “I didn’t know too much about protest history but was fascinated at the different student groups that appeared during the time, i.e. liberal and conservative youth groups.” He also recalls that “I compared what she had done with her writings against the history of the protest movement and tried to see how they lined up.”

In terms of conceptual and textual revision the central win was that as Jonathan conducted further research and thought strategically about his intended audience’s knowledge, questions, and needs, he was able to preserve his passion for his subject while continuing to refine and restructure his argument. From Patti’s perspective, “the main evolution was from Jonathan defending Rodham while performing a close reading of her early texts to his offering a much more detailed and contextualized analysis of them.” Looking back at the advice and mentoring that Jane and Patti offered him over many months and drafts, Jonathan evinces gratitude and a wonderfully insightful and precise articulation of their contributions to his development as a public author. Today, Jonathan recalls that “Jane became a friend and mentor,” and adds that “I’m a teacher’s kid so becoming friends with my teachers isn’t new. I keep up with a lot of my former teachers. We write cards and call each other. I know their families.” Even more to the point, Jonathan remembers that “Jane was wonderful with all her insight and help” and notes that “she connected to the paper as much as I did.” Jonathan also readily acknowledges Patti’s input: “But having Dr. Baker, who didn’t know me at all, she provided a lot of objective criticism and encouragement.” According to Jonathan, “That’s the best thing you can have if you want your paper to be the best.” He remembers Patti’s methodology: “She would make marginal notes suggesting meanings to what I was trying to say.” Jonathan recalls that “If she wasn’t interpreting it correctly, I would know that was an area I needed to fix.” On the other hand, “And when she was correct, I would know I was on the right track and in some cases, liked how she worded it better than I did.”

The Ongoing Project of Re-Seeing One’s Work

Toward the end of our interviews, I asked the participants what else they would like to say about the experience of working together and of mentoring student writing toward publication. Here are their comments.

Patti remains very appreciative of the opportunity to work with Jonathan. She recalls that “it was a great experience” and adds that “I feel like I learned a lot about how I work with my own students and how I want to work with my students.” She also recalls that “The two papers I responded to were very different, and the writers responded differently.” For her, “the process illuminated what I already knew—that I had to find ways to ask questions appropriately, that I had to listen when they didn’t understand or when they clearly rejected my suggestions.” She reveals that, ultimately, “I was reminded how important it is to listen to the student’s confusion or frustration carefully and to respond in ways that help them learn to re-see their writing.”

I then asked Patti if she could generalize from this situation and give advice to undergraduate writers publishing and to those who seek to mentor them. After graciously responding, “Hmm, good question,” she offered this detailed and intriguing response:

I think to the students—embrace an openness—that in this sort of student/faculty relationship, the goal is two-fold: 1) to improve the particular piece of writing, and 2) to help the writer learn to ask questions about the rhetorical situation, their own goals, etc. And, to the mentor, I think I’d emphasize that it is a rewarding experience. To work with students who are not our own lets us learn to guide differently and allows us to think about how we guide more carefully. I think I’d also tell mentors that the process requires patience and reflection—that we’d ask questions or make suggestions our own students would understand given what we discuss in class. In this case, the student may have discussed the same exact issues in class but in different ways, thus their interpretation of our intentions may seem off. Repetition helps.

I also asked Jane what she learned from working with this author. Her response was both precise and positive: “Jonathan’s persistence and grace were inspiring to me.” She adds that “I was so impressed by how he took advantage of all the opportunities available to him to continue improving his work.” Furthermore, she notes that “He accomplished much of this work in his final semester at University of Missouri- Kansas City and after graduation while working outside the academy.” Modestly ignoring her many important contributions to the author’s success, Jane defines Jonathan’s diligence as “a pretty impressive commitment to a project!”

Because she now serves as the editor of *Young Scholars in Writing*, (and to throw an even brighter spotlight on the journal’s very important work) I asked Jane to say a bit about the journal’s mission. Jane’s response clarified the journal’s mentoring roles and goals:

Young Scholars in Writing’s mission is to help make research a central part of undergraduates’ work in rhetoric and writing studies and to create opportunities for students to share their research with national/international audiences. I believe that the research published in *YSW* stands along side much of what is published in other peer-reviewed scholarly journals and that the work of undergraduates can and should help shape our disciplinary conversations. I’m thrilled that *YSW* is now going to be indexed in the MLA International Bibliography, and I’m eager to create more avenues that will help researchers find their way to the work of *YSW* authors. As guest editor for volume 7 (and now the journal’s editor), it’s tremendously rewarding to work with *YSW* authors and to hear from them how the publication process transforms their sense of themselves as writers and scholars.

Jane then elaborated on what she learns from the process of mentoring undergraduate researchers through a given publication process, saying that “For me as a teacher, it’s been such a learning experience to see my students go through the submission/publication process with *YSW*.” That is because “The feedback (both positive and negative) that my students have gotten from peer reviewers and editorial board members have held up a mirror to my own practices in giving feedback to students.”

Jane then articulated the reciprocal learning that can occur when mentoring student writing with another colleague. As Jane puts it, “Patti gave Jonathan suggestions

that hadn't occurred to me but that I now recognize as just what he needed to hear in order to move his project forward." She remembers that "I also had a student whose work was rejected for *YSW*." She then adds, "and even though the editorial board member felt the piece needed more work than could be accomplished within *YSW*'s tight publication schedule the feedback that he offered the student helped her completely re-see her project." This re-seeing had several benefits. According to Jane, "I think I was steering her in a direction that just didn't click for her, but the editorial board member's feedback helped her reconceive her project and she's now submitting to other venues."

I asked Jane to describe what she perceived to be the biggest developments in Jonathan's essay. Once again, Jane generously put the focus on the author and reviewer, saying, "I feel like Jonathan developed a more polished and academic voice." She states that "He narrowed his focus (thanks to Patti's smart, diplomatic feedback) and pulled back on the cheerleading about Hillary Rodham." There were other benefits as well: "He also, I think, did a much better job of integrating some academic sources that helped to situate his analysis of Rodham's rhetorical development in terms of student activism and feminism in the 1960s." Beyond that, there was yet another win: "And he began to do more close textual work with Hillary Rodham's writing, which he really needed to do. And he relied less on lots of quotes from other scholars/historians, especially Bernstein."

In extolling the merits of undergraduate research, Grobman and Kinkead argue that "the power of inquiry" has an "effect not only upon the students, but upon their mentors" (xxviii). That appears to be especially true in this case. To this day, Jane evinces praise for Patti Hanlon-Baker's vital contributions to Jonathan's article, "I also really appreciate the ways in which having Patti respond to Jonathan's work helped me re-see and re-think the feedback I had given Jonathan." Offering Patti more praise, Jane adds, "More particularly, she encouraged him to limit his focus to just written rhetoric and to eliminate a portion of his essay focused on Hillary Rodham's commencement speech at Wellesley." As Jane recalls, "That had never occurred to me (duh!)...and it really seemed to free up Jonathan to do a little more close textual analysis of her senior thesis and her work in the law review."

Hoping that Jane would be willing to generalize a bit from the particular situation of mentoring Jonathan, I asked her to give some advice to undergraduate authors hoping to publish their work and to those who seek to mentor them. Suggesting that she "may have embedded responses to this question in my answers above," Jane offers some explicit advice: "To undergraduate authors, I'd encourage them to submit their work to *YSW* (and to other venues) and to view the process as a learning experience, regardless of whether their work is ultimately published." Noting the many potential complications and vicissitudes of the publication process, Jane adds that "I tell my own students that it's so important to develop a tough skin and to figure out how to learn from disappointments.³ *YSW* tries particularly hard to offer students who submit useful feedback on their work."

Jane also had some astute advice for those who wish to help undergraduate writers move their work forward:

To mentors, I think it's just all about good teaching (being authentically present for students, creating a space for them to take charge of their learning, serving as a mirror for them and helping them see their work through the eyes of others), and there are so many folks in rhetoric/composition who are far better teachers than I am.

Jane's remarkable generosity and modesty are reflected in another insight she shared: "I do think it helps when faculty members share their own experiences of both publishing successes and failures with students." According to her, sharing one's experiences "demystifies the process and helps students realize that even folks they perceive as 'successful' have had their share of disappointments."⁴

Discussing the dynamic of demystification and disappointment as it can play itself out in publication processes led Jane to reflect on the unfinished nature of most scholarly projects, even those that do manage to "culminate in publication" (Figlerowicz 119). As Jane puts it, "I guess I'd like readers, mentors, and undergraduate researchers to keep in mind that even a published piece isn't necessarily finished." She points out, "I think Jonathan's final essay is wonderful, smart, and well written, and I'm delighted that it's going to be published in *YSW*." When asked, she expanded on this idea: "I can also imagine ways that Jonathan might continue working to improve the piece . . . and it's certainly been my own experience that I'd like to go back and revise essays that I've had published." As she explains, "I think the published essay is still a step in a more extensive and ongoing process of intellectual development. And I wouldn't want folks to fetishize the published essay as THE hallmark of success for the undergraduate researcher." She concludes: "What's important, for me, is that undergraduate researchers have lots of opportunities to take their work beyond the classroom."⁵

Postscript: Spotlight on Jonathan Pearson, a Published Author

In tracing this now-published author's intellectual development as he pursued his evolving text and project, I think it is best to end this study with Jonathan's words. When asked to give advice to aspiring writers, this published author is particularly articulate. Jonathan wants writers to know that "it takes time and energy if you want a finished product you're pleased with—it doesn't matter if it's writing a book or recording an album." He notes that "perfection isn't possible in this life, but we can certainly push toward that goal." Jonathan also underscores the benefits of collaborating with mentors, adding that "one of the best things about working with professors is what you learn from them." As Jonathan explains:

The best ones are able to point out what needs to happen in a story or essay in a way we're able to conceptualize. Once we achieve that level of mature ability, we can pass it along to others trying to do the same thing. Thus, we reap the rewards of having learned something new, improved our own gifts and helped someone else—it's a triple treat.⁶

Looking back, Jonathan offers writers specific advice, some of which is reminiscent of Patti Hanlon-Baker's approach to working with him: "If you want to push yourself as a writer, you have to constantly write." Jonathan also sounds a bit like Patti when he says that "It doesn't matter what your gifts and talents are—if you want to play an instrument or dance or sing—you have to practice. Repetition is the key to achieving your goal."

This ability to consider and work through the varied—and sometimes critical—perceptions of others underscores the idea that writing on a subject one is passionate about can be as stimulating as it is complicated. On the one hand the activity of repetition, mentioned by Jonathan and Patti as a key strategy to success, pertains to passion in that repeatedly reading, thinking, talking and writing more and again about a subject you love can become one of its most enduring pleasures. Repetition may thus

serve emotional and intellectual intensity and curiosity, thereby fueling the ongoing desire to pursue and revise one's textual and emotional project through ongoing drafts, conversations, and public or private performances. The paradox then is that a writer's intense, enduring passion for a subject can become both a key and a lock. Passion is a provocative pass key when it serves as an entry portal and as an ongoing fuel source (with many contributories such as Jane and Patti) for continued thinking, reading, and writing. Yet that same passion can become an intellectual lock when a writer's strong opinion and project (the wish to defend, lionize, advocate or achieve redress for someone or some thing) obscures or occludes their vision, thus complicating the ability to experience or express a necessary critical distance from the work.

Reflecting on this nexus of passion as perspective, Jonathan shares more aspects of his transition from passionate researcher to public and published author. He recalls that in "every new draft I would see the areas I needed to work on and which areas I didn't need at all. Of course, having a set of objective eyes helped me receive honest answers about my paper." He concludes by noting that "I can't say I learned anything new about Mrs. [Rodham-] Clinton—my research simply confirmed what I already knew: she's a bright, compassionate and articulate woman." For Jonathan, the central learning about Hillary Rodham is that "She has worked hard and has remained steadfast in her faith and service to her country. She truly is a survivor."

There is also a creative (yet not always painless) tension between being resilient enough (having what Jane calls a "tough skin") to hold on to one's perspective and being intellectually flexible enough to interrogate and revisit one's initial assumptions and inscriptions. In making one's writing more public, the project and the dilemma is to work carefully with others in order to determine viable criteria by which to decide what parts of an argument or text to hold on to and which ones to release--or at least reconsider--in order to maintain "serious intellectual engagement" with, and critical leverage on, a selected topic or approach (Bartholomae and Schilb 273).

Fortunately, passion can also pay surprising and ongoing dividends when it fuels our interest, curiosity and excitement in important and unquantifiable ways. Jonathan Pearson's experience writing for publication in *Young Scholars in Writing* has inspired him to imagine future scholarly projects. As Jonathan remarks, "I would certainly write another essay." When asked why, he adds, "It's pretty neat to see my thoughts and ideas turn into something tangible. Everyone who has read it has been very supportive and complimentary. It's nice to feel that support from others, to feel appreciated for my contribution."

Beyond evincing a well-justified sense of satisfaction for having worked hard and achieved a high level of success, Jonathan recalls a more lasting insight and an enduring appreciation of the writing and publication process, noting that "It was a humbling experience to start to appreciate something that you've done. See it in print – that's my work."

Notes

¹ In "Nontraditional Students as Undergraduate Researchers: Expanding Horizons for Adult Learners and Their Mentors," Jane Greer explains how faculty mentors must evince flexibility by being generous, accommodating, available, and fully present to

learners. Enacting the mentoring she describes, Jane shares this account of working with one of her adult students:

We arranged to meet as they deemed necessary, often in the late afternoon or early evening to accommodate their work schedules and family needs. Email also served as a conduit for asking or answering questions, recommending readings, and circulating drafts with responses. Such scheduling flexibility can be tremendously important in ensuring that adult learners can successfully move toward their degrees (37).

² A thoughtful discussion of faith in relation to holistic learning can be found in David Elder and Joonna Smitherman Trapp's essay, "Mentor as Method: Faculty Mentor Roles and Undergraduate Scholarship." Elder and Smitherman Trapp remind us that education should include and welcome students' spirituality. They write that "Mentoring that 'really matters' must be the kind of mentoring that makes these connections, and the student and the mentor are ultimately changed: the beliefs and purposes of lives forever altered" (10).

³ Reflecting on her own experiences as an undergraduate researcher, Marta Figlerowicz offers this observation about the complexities of pursuing a writing project through the intricacies of publication. She writes that "Undergraduates—myself included—frequently do not realize how difficult it can be for even a university faculty member to publish work." Figlerowicz adds that "To properly interpret the transition to professional publication, and to benefit from its successive stages, an undergraduate must learn a vital skill: how to cope with the rejection letters she is bound to receive" (117).

⁴ Figlerowicz states that a mentor's advice can be vital when reviewers offer writers serious and/or contradictory criticism. She notes that "Thanks to my faculty mentor's frank assessment of what to expect, I learned relatively quickly how best to profit from my reviewers' comments and how to prevent myself from being easily discouraged." She adds that "Moreover, when I received varied and contradictory opinions from different reviewers commenting on the same paper, I realized I needed to develop a more independent judgment of my work" (117).

⁵ This sentiment correlates with Jane Greer's idea that "For many undergraduate researchers, this disciplinary initiation offered by faculty mentors lays the groundwork for what will become lifelong career pursuits that include graduate and professional school" (41-42).

⁶ It is perhaps not unusual for writers to express gratitude to their mentors. Marta Figlerowicz notes that "On the other hand, much appreciation should be given to faculty who help students pursue these kinds of projects" (119-120). She adds that "We should see behind each success an equal amount of the individual student's motivation and the faculty mentor's spontaneous support: an achievement of the undergraduate, but also of the department that provided a nurturing environment" (120).

To me, an interesting trait of scholars who evince or experience effective mentoring is their ability to move from elegiac celebration to future-oriented action. For example, David Elder and Joonna Smitherman Trapp suggest that mentoring (the giving of time, attention, and other intellectual resources) should be paid forward. David was mentored by Joonna as an undergraduate. Today they comment on how they will continue to mentor others.

But we suspect that such deep and abiding work together will not only multiply in continued work together, but find new forms as Joonna continues to mentor students in her care, and David, soon-to-be newly minted PhD, discovers that his interactions with students will require him to also give of himself in deep and meaningful ways (11-12).

They conclude by stating that that “If such relationships were the norm for education, the end could be quite predictable” (12).

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