

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Gadamer's Inbox: Auseinandersetzung (Critical Encounter)

by

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A THESIS

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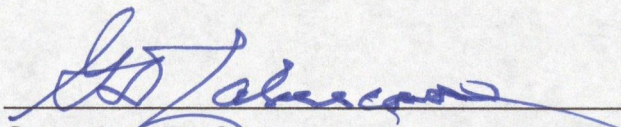
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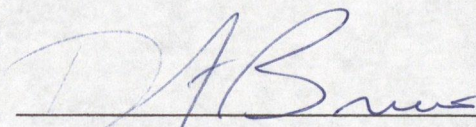
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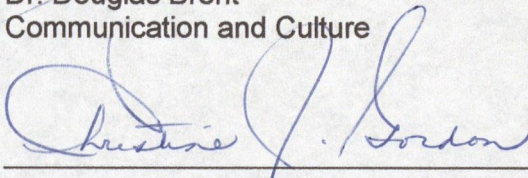
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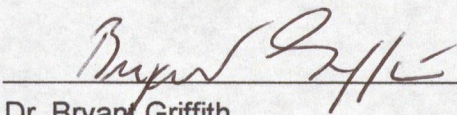
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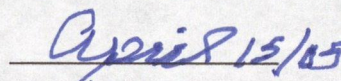
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Date



## ABSTRACT

This thesis applies the theories of Hans-Georg Gadamer to the teaching of writing. In a series of e-mail exchanges, two scholars, Hans Gadamer and Felix Tholomyes, discuss a writing sample composed by Huizhen, a Chinese graduate student. Hans contends that writing is something with a place in the world and a truth to convey. The writer's function is not to dominate the writing event but to allow the subject matter to come into being. Felix explores the surface structures and incongruities of writing. He overlooks the authority of the work and converges on the person of the writer.

In the margins of the thesis, the commentary by Sun Tzu depicts the world as a cohesive whole with temporary and shifting patterns within. Phenomenal signs and signals are contextual and must be known to attain success. Ultimately, the Sun Tzu transcends its borders and fuses with the main dialogue.

## PREFACE

*Gadamer's Inbox* did not begin with a Master's degree; it sputtered into existence in 1991 when Nancy Atwell's (1987) *In the Middle* exploded into writing pedagogy and became the companion of every writing instructor worth her salt. Classrooms were transfigured from tidy rows of students, stiff as soldiers, to pockets of writers generating perceptive pieces of work. My colleagues and I sought to fully exploit the propitious environment occasioned us by this new "process" approach to writing: we met weekly to discuss teaching strategies, we implemented a telecommunications network that allowed students to compose on-line, and we modelled the writing process in an anthology published for classroom use. Every month we gathered with students to celebrate writing with readings and music and wine and cheese.

Naturally, when I began working at the University of Calgary in 1993, I expected the same successes. But I was now teaching immigrant students - most of them with rudimentary English skills - and each semester I was given twelve weeks to train them to wield the weaponry of English syntax. It was cheerless, desultory work; many students could not extend an argument beyond a few spindly paragraphs, and I wondered how they would ever learn the conventions of academic discourse when they could not produce a grammatical sentence. I was tempted to devote large blocks of time to grammar instruction: not only did the interminable succession of errors clog their written communication, but students equated success with their capacity to eradicate the imperfections in their writing.

Worse yet, my university students did not respond to writing process tactics. They disliked commenting on their peers' essays in group readings, they were too shy to discuss their writing with me or with anyone else, and they were disinclined to plod through the recursive stages of planning, drafting, revising, and editing. I became sceptical of the virtues of process writing theory - particularly in its application to an international community of writers. When I asked students to produce a writing file complete with prewriting samples, multiple drafts, and pieces ready for publication, they produced the file - but only to get the grade. How many of them continued with the process after the course had ended? I began to think that writing process was as

individual, as unchanging, as lines on a face, and that my writing course was an academic affectation, an envoy of abstracted Western ideals.

There was, however, a pattern developing. At the end of each term, I gave students a final writing assignment: they compared their first and final compositions and discussed how their writing had changed. Invariably, the writing improved considerably on this assignment, bearing little resemblance to what students had produced all term. They spoke of drafting, editing, reading, and collaborative learning, metamorphosing the words that had dwelled in the classroom. They weren't merely caught up in an exercise of sterile imitation; they had, in fact, entered into a community of discourse and had become fluent in the vernacular dialect. But it was not enough that they could give utterance to a single narrow topic. Somehow their learning had to be enlarged.

In the fall of 2002, I gathered three Chinese graduate students and formed a small writing group. Each week, students read assigned texts, worked on pieces of writing, and evaluated their progress in journals. Under the canopy of a single theme, writing, speaking, and reading activities combined to form the foundation of the study. I hoped that heightened interaction with the texts would occur – a sort of inner speech – as students related their own experiences to the themes of the texts. I hoped to discover something of value that I could pass onto my colleagues, who were grappling with the same issue of how to get internationals to write cohesive English prose.

Out of that research, *Gadamer's Inbox* was born. The thesis makes no attempt to give answers; it merely opens up the topic so that a conversation can emerge. In the thesis, two scholars, Hans Gadamer and Felix Tholomyes, discuss a sample of writing composed by Huizhen, a Chinese graduate student who speaks English as a second language. The opening commentaries on whole and part, inside and outside, imitation and pattern, and truth and control loop through the body of the conversation. The conversation is round; like the parlour discussion that rages in Kenneth Burke's *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, it has no beginning and no ending, although one might guess at where it has been and where it might go. It hinges on an opening question: *Why doesn't Huizhen see the errors?* This is a wrong question, according to Hans, but certainly an immense one, which Felix attempts to address. The e-mail format,

suspended between written and spoken discourse, is inescapably discordant, encumbered by the ruptures characteristic of everyday e-mail correspondence and reflective of Felix's cacophonous worldview.

The character of Felix Tholomyes is borrowed from Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, in which Felix is a prodigal son indulging in the mirth of women, wine, philosophy and poetry. Once he and his friends exhaust the limits of their diversion and determine to be "like the rest of the world, prefects, fathers of families, rural police, and councillors of state," Felix abandons his lover Fantine, leaving her poor and pregnant, and returns "to society, to duty, to respectability, at full trot" (Hugo, 1987, p. 143). In *Gadamer's Inbox*, Felix similarly flirts with surface structures. Felix is a figment of the theoretical gyrations that occupy writing pedagogy and are routinely disarmed and regimented in their application. He sees Huizhen's writing as a series of inexplicable, discordant parts, none having greater rank than the others, and finds that he can neither deconstruct nor regulate the writing event. Hans, Felix's close associate, attributes Felix's lack of control to a misunderstanding about the mode of being of writing itself: writing, like genuine conversation, is formless.

Ultimately, the thesis is a test of Hans Gadamer's theories. If Hans' model of genuine conversation is to remain intact, he must come to an understanding of Felix's views. In effect, a fusion of horizons must occur, where neither man remains what he was. Such an intersection occurs only briefly when the men forget Huizhen and descend into a discourse about art itself – about Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergere* and Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*. It is the commentary of the Master Sun in the margins that effects a fusion of horizons. Admittedly, the Sun Tzu is somewhat of an obstruction, but it nonetheless shapes the ground of the dialogue, forming and transforming the key concepts of authority, wholeness, power, and truth – integral to Gadamer's thought and to the teaching of English as a second language. The Master Sun is spiritlike: his voice transcends the limits of the margin and fuses with the main dialogue. In the end it is his voice that we hear; he is the most successful because he subdues the enemy without battle.

The reader may be disconcerted by the ending of the thesis – indeed, there is no ending. Few genuine conversations achieve anything like “closure”; they unravel in a shared context and at some point they stop. But this lack of closure, I think, will draw the reader back into the circle to re-examine the critical encounter that unfolds between Huizhen, Hans, Felix, and the Master Sun.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am profoundly indebted to Dr. George Labercane for his professional guidance and support in the navigation of this piece of work. Dr. Labercane respected my integrity as a writer and directed me to the scholars who would impact my thinking and research.

Thank you also to Bryan Young, Dr. Douglas Brent, Dr. Bryant Griffith, and Dr. Christine Gordon for reading the drafts and providing sensitive and valuable feedback.

Jeff, Anika, and Peter, thank you for releasing me to write.

Finally, and most importantly, I could not have produced this thesis without the love and guidance of my Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.



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## The Attachment

### A Spring Morning

I was waken up by a loud and clear bird song. My eyes slowly moved to the window, a gleam of light casted through the curtain. A new day started.

I swiftly went to the window, pulled out its snib, then gently pushed the windows. A blast of humid and soft wind kissed my face with fresh earth, grass and flower fragrance. I had a deep breath as if I would absorb the whole Spring. It was still rain as silk thread. The Spring rain usually lasts one month.

Piquant lichen climbed around the alley, light green grass raised three more inches over one night, thin bead rolled through the grass. The peach blossomed out as an umbrella, pink petals danced with the wind in the courtyard. Over the vegetable garden, wickers lightly tapped the pond as a shy maiden. Beyond rivulet, the small massif was covered with the pear blossom, looks like a snow world.

“The person who lives in the south of the yangtse river speak nothing if he wants to keep the guests, what can we hear just the sound of the little rain”. (The rain makes the guest stay one more night).

When will I come back my hometown?

-Huizhen Hu

# The Auseinandersetzung (Critical Encounter)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 2, 2000 9:11pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

All right, Hans. I'll grant her writing a measure of kinship with the literary works we discussed before. But she is thoroughly unacquainted with the trappings of English. Her thinking is as erratic as a communist railway schedule. Why does she vacate the past in *The Spring rain usually lasts one month*? Is she now back in China? Does she forget who she is as storyteller? She's a player in a game; she can't transgress the boundaries of the playing field. Her verb tenses must be consistent unless the context asks otherwise. I'm going to have her do the exercises again – *AllWrite* (2003), chapter six, objective eighteen. But then again comma splices are also ravaging the piece. She knows that an independent clause is punctuated by a period, not a comma. We've reviewed all of this in our mini-lessons. Why doesn't she see the errors?

-Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 3, 2000 7:46am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix-

Perhaps you ask the wrong question. You are taking something apart that exists only if it is together. Think of the intermingling notes of a melody. Each note anticipates the whole; the whole is represented in the momentary (Gadamer, 1997, p. 68).

-Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 4, 2000 9:16pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Hans:

It seems to me untenable to accord written texts some sort of mystical inner consonance. Discourse bears the same ruptures and incisions indigenous to science, literature, philosophy, religion, and history. Certainly Huizhen's writing is evidence of that. Look at her concluding

*SUN TZU SAID:  
Hwun-hwun. Dwun-  
dwun.  
One's form is round  
and one cannot be  
defeated  
(2001, p. 18).*

paragraph, *bon sens*! It's untimely; it doesn't accommodate the final sentence. It should be deleted or moved.

Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 11, 2000 7:22am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

But even while you deny the text any propensity for unity, you search for coalescences among its insurgent forces because you know that "only what constitutes a unity of meaning is intelligible" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 261). Do you still have that Persian carpet?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 12, 2000 7:06pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Of course! I travelled to Azerbaijan to find it!

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 13, 2000 7:25am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

It's an old Heriz rug, isn't it? There is something festive about it; it is a contemporary pattern, yet something repeated. Its Bandi Allover design brings to presence the palaces and tombs of ancient kings and noblemen and the tents of nomadic tribesmen.

Hans

*SUN TZU SAID:  
 Heaven is yin and  
 yang, cold and hot,  
 the order of the  
 seasons.  
 Going with it, going  
 against it – this is  
 military victory.  
 (2001, p. 3-4)*

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 13, 2000 11:41pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

It's a carpet. It matches the paint.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 14, 2000 7:49am

**Subject:** Huizhen

Then why not get an imitation for \$69.99?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <felix.Tholomyes@>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 17, 2000 2:02am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

What? That carpet dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century! The Iranians regard carpet weaving as the most elevated art form attained by man!

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 17, 2000 7:06am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Exactly - it is a remnant of the carpet weavers of ancient civilisations. It is "an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 290). The dark Heriz reds and contrasting blues, the arabesque motif, the complex arrangement of stems and blossoms - they are compelling because they bring to presence another reality.

-Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 20, 2000 12:49am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Do they? Or do we dogmatize *our* reality with the imposition of patterns? Any unity of meaning – whether a pattern, a history, or a literary text - is contrived, the founding of rules and types, and we cannot quietly admit them into canonicity without first examining their lineage.

-Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 24, 2000 7:11am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

So then, all unities are fabrications, refugees awaiting deportation?

*SUN TZU SAID:  
 Musical pitches do not  
 exceed five,  
 Yet all their variations  
 cannot be heard.*

*Colours do not exceed  
 five,  
 Yet all their variations  
 cannot be seen.*

*Tastes do not exceed five,  
 Yet all their variations  
 cannot be tasted.*

*The shih of battle do not  
 exceed  
 the extraordinary  
 and the orthodox,  
 Yet all their variations  
 cannot be exhausted.*

*The extraordinary and the  
 orthodox circle give  
 birth to each other,  
 As a circle has no  
 beginning.  
 Who is able to exhaust it?  
 (2001, p. 17).*

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 24, 2000 9:46pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

I do not wish to deport them straight away, of course; I want to "subject them at once to interrogation; to break them up and then to see whether they can be legitimately reformed; or whether other groupings should be made; to replace them in a more general space which, while dissipating their apparent familiarity, makes it possible to construct a theory of them" (Foucault, 1972, p. 26).

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 24, 2000 9:57pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

I suspect, Hans, that you are brooding over the logic of reconfiguring uncontroverted unities if ultimately we restore them to their original posts. I would say this: "by freeing them of all the groupings that purport to be natural, immediate, universal unities, one is able to describe other unities" and "other forms of regularity, other types of relations" (Foucault, 1972, p. 29).

*SUN TZU SAID:  
 And so prick them and  
 know the pattern of their  
 movement and stillness  
 (2001, p. 23).*

Consider Picasso's *Le repos*, for example - the fluid black lines of the face against the tranquil white skin, the hands stretched out like a landscape on the violent red of the bed. The lines and colours carry meaning because they are juxtaposed with other lines and colours, not because they comprise an organic whole.

-Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 27, 2000 7:44am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix,

But *Le repos* is a member of the *Boisgeloup* paintings, you'll remember; it is part of a body of work. Look. I cannot endorse the suspension of unities - not for the reason that you propose - but because we are, I believe, *within* conceptual unities; we cannot perform operations on them like omniscient gods.

-Hans



-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 27, 2000 10:26am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Hans:

But how can one be certain that these unities exist? Let me indulge you with a literary example. Consider the ubiquitous claim that a book is intrinsically whole; it has, after all, a beginning, a middle, and an ending. Yet Foucault has said that "the frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network" (Foucault, 1972, p. 23). Thus a book's anchorage does not lie in its unity because, like history, it is a narrative always unfolding, always being recast.

*SUN TZU SAID:  
 Thus water  
 determines its  
 movement in  
 accordance with the  
 earth.  
 The military  
 determines victory in  
 accordance  
 with the enemy  
 (2001, p. 24).*

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 28, 2000 7:33am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Come now. You must confess that when you enter into a text you have a certain predisposition toward it, a *fore-conception of completion*, if you will. Even as I worm my way through Foucault's indulgent syntax, I search for a decipherable whole that incarnates the individual parts. I will agree that philosophy, art, and history are a "context always in the making," and so "all encounter with [them] is an encounter with an unfinished event and is itself part of this event" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 99). In legal hermeneutics, for example, a judge relates a valid meaning of the law in each case of its application; he "adapts the transmitted law to the needs of the present" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 328). But even though the law is persistently probed and redefined, it nonetheless embodies a meaningful whole; "the judge's judgement does not proceed from an arbitrary and unpredictable decision, but from the just weighing up of the whole" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 329).

To return to Huizhen's work, you are occupied by the attendant fractures of her writing; you are disrupting her work by quibbling over the tangentials niggling at its borders.

Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**Sent:** Monday, January 31, 2000 4:44am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

*Tangentials?* That which borders the work is *tangential*? On the contrary, Hans, the border brings definition and clarity to the pattern. If in fact a work of art is an organic whole, "the structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed," then "a thing whose presence or absence makes no visible difference, is not an organic part of the whole" (Aristotle, cited in Adams, 1971, p. 53). You, Hans, are banishing a domain of Huizhen's language from significance, dividing her words into a false hierarchy of interior and exterior.

Felix

*SUN TZU SAID:  
 A state's impoverishment  
 from its soldiers-  
 When they are distant, there  
 is distant transport.  
 When they are distant and  
 there is distant transport, the  
 hundred clans are  
 impoverished.  
 When soldiers are near,  
 things sell dearly.  
 When things sell dearly,  
 wealth is exhausted.  
 When wealth is exhausted,  
 people are hard-pressed by  
 local taxes (2001, p. 7).*

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 7, 2000 7:56am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

How is it that my configuration of language is false? It is, in fact, thoroughly Chinese; the concepts of interior and exterior are the fulcrum around which Chinese culture rotates. One's public persona, or exterior self, is the skin on the pudding, really; it is the concealed, inner life that holds the meaning.

Essentially, I'm trying to situate myself *within* the language of Huizhen's text rather than transform her into a technician of English grammar.

-Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 9, 2000 2:42am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

But the problem with Huizhen's writing is one of surface structure: you cannot deposit meaning into dilapidated syntax. You of all people know what it is to contend with the complexities of a new language – the idiomatic constructions, the interference from other languages – to say nothing of unwieldy grammar and syntax. And written language in particular poses a challenge because we retain only a limited number of words – those that we "hear in our head" – as we write. A beginning writer holds fewer words than an experienced writer because he often "needs to have letters there as separate items" (Britton, et al, 1975, p. 45), while an experienced writer is able to retain "not only whole words and phrases, but meanings as well, and possibly even general

intentions... so that it is much easier for what is written to have coherence" (Britton, et al, 1975, p. 45). What does this say about a foreigner? Huizhen is trying to manipulate in English concepts that are embedded in her first language. She can't hold onto enough words to sustain an English sentence, let alone a written argument! Read her journal (attached).

I, sometimes, can't outline the main ideas effectively. And sometimes even if I outline my main idea, I feel it is difficult to develop my main idea to a proper paragraph.

Kant says that art "must be capable of 'being regarded as nature' –i.e., please without betraying the constraint of rules" (cited in Gadamer, 1997, p. 52). Huizhen is fully capable of articulating the rules that govern grammatical and syntactic structures, but any appeal to them in her writing cloaks her words, proffered as they are in the tropes of English.  
Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Thursday, February 10, 2000 7:33am

**Subject:** Huizhen

What you are saying is that Huizhen does not inhabit the world of English. And so the task of understanding her writing is to understand it as experience [*Erfahrung*] – as something you undergo. In German, "Erlebnis is something you have, and thus is connected with a subject...*Erfahrung* is something you undergo, so that subjectivity is overcome and drawn into an 'event' (*Geschehen*) of meaning" (Gadamer, 1997, xiv). Huizhen's work resides largely in the fact that her reader experiences something and is changed by it. Written texts are not the tenants of bookshelves; they dwell in readings, and if Huizhen is to become a reader of her own writing, she must enter into the life of her text.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**Sent:** Thursday, February 10, 2000 10:46am

**Subject:** Huizhen

Of course – and I've employed a process approach to writing instruction precisely because writing is experience (something one undergoes, as you would put it). I focus students' attention on *how* to write rather than on *what* to write, leading them through the process of writing (the *Erfahrung*) from the inception of an idea to its refinement into a completed draft.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 11, 2000 7:01am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Yes, indeed. You force their writing into being through a series of procedures distilled from Western constructs.

*SUN TZU SAID:  
 When it has rained  
 upstream, the  
 stream's flow  
 intensifies.  
 Stop fording. Wait for  
 it to calm (2001, p.  
 34).*

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 12, 2000 10:44pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

What? Do you dispute the claims of Peter Elbow and Donald Murray?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 13, 2000 7:00am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

I've never heard of these people.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 15, 2000 11:57pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

They are household names, Hans.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 16, 2000 6:46am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Household names in some households.

Look. I'm merely pointing out that the writing event will not readily assume the positivist gait of science. It cannot be standardised, controlled and regulated – bracketed under universal laws bearing predictions about how a piece comes into being.

Hans

*SUN TZU SAID:  
 As for method-  
 First, measure  
 length.  
 Second, measure  
 volume.  
 Third, count.  
 Fourth, weigh.  
 The fifth is  
 victory  
 (2001, p. 15).*

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 17, 2000 2:21pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

I would say that Donald Murray and Peter Elbow have done just that. They have dismantled the writing process as a child does a Kinex tower; they've established principles governing how effective writers compose. The approach has been tested, Hans, and has gained momentum since the 1970's when researchers began to probe the question of what actually happens when we compose. I don't think Murray and Elbow are adherents of some heuristic praxis intended to bridle the writing process. I think they want to demystify the whole thing to show that words don't just appear on the page.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 18, 2000 7:02am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

How exactly do they intend on demystifying the writing event?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 18, 2000 6:22pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Perhaps *demystify* is a poor choice of words. The point is that these researchers want to move writing theory into the realm of the writer. Janet Emig (1971) was probably one of the first to ask how students actually go about producing a piece of writing. Using a quantitative experimental design, she observed the writing behaviours of eight students as they composed aloud and then documented precisely what happened. Others followed her lead; Donald Graves (1975) had students compose aloud in a case study of second graders, and Sondra Perl (1979) took the same approach with basic college writers. They discovered that the traditional linear model of composition with three successive stages is an illusion bred in traditional rhetorical models.

-Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 20, 2000 7:19am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

How are such complex phenomena reduced to observation in laboratory-like settings? Did these people not consider questions of context?

Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 21, 2000 2:45pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Certainly the research has expanded since the 1970's - questions of meaning, social knowing, and response-centred learning have crowded onto the platform. But it is process writing theory that has domesticated pedagogy; instructors have distilled from it a methodology that is both functional and adaptable.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 22, 2000 7:17am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

And so the process/product polarities are thriving under one roof. I am reminded of John Ciardi's words when asked how he constructs a poem:

You're asking for lies. It's inevitable. I've been asked to do this over and over again, and lies come out.

Let me put it this way. The least a poem can be is an act of skill. An act of skill is one in which you have to do more things at one time than you have time to think about. Riding a bike is an act of skill. If you stop to think of what you're doing at each of the balances, you'd fall off the bike. Then someone would come along and ask you to rationalise what you thought you were doing. Well, you write a poem. And someone comes along and asks you to rationalise what you thought you were doing. You pick out a theme and you're hung with trying to be consistent with the theme you've chosen. You have to doubt every explanation.

Nobody has worked harder than Valery, the French poet, in trying to explain how he produced certain poems. He answers with every qualification in the world – touching this and that but ultimately lying. You have to end up lying. You know that you had something in your mind, but you can never get it straight. (Ciardi, cited in Perl, 1979, p. 4)



As a piece of writing unfolds, Felix, it is the subject matter that becomes accessible to the writer, while the medium which gives him this access – the actual process of writing – withdraws from prominence (Gadamer, 1997, xv) and becomes something quite nebulous.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 25, 2000 2:22pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

But even the most recent studies suggest that a process approach to writing instruction yields improved student work. Did you ever lecture at the University of Calgary while you were in Canada?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 26, 2000 7:12am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

I don't recall having heard of it. Is it a prestigious university?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 27, 2000 2:26pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

No, the place is utterly dismal – buried in snow eight months of the year. But I read of a study conducted there by Paula Saunders and Charles Scialfa (2003). Saunders and Scialfa found that offering tutorial sessions with basic instruction on grammar, sentencing, paragraphing, and organisation significantly influenced student performance on the University's Effective Writing exam. But more important, I think, is that before writing, students were taught how to compose using a process approach. In other words, they weren't simply asked to write an essay; they were shown how to go about writing one.

Perhaps, Hans, you ought to visit a few sites such as *Island Online* or the *National Writing Project*. You'll find an abundance of essays commending process writing. An excellent example is Lynne Clement (1991), who has instructive comments about revising and editing.

Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 28, 2000 7:41am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix-

Look, Felix. You have in your mind a generic essay - complete with scholarly diction, stratified syntax, cohesive paragraphs, and the correct writing process - to which Huizhen's must conform. But her writing should be examined in itself as a unique phenomenon, not objectified and dominated, subsumed under universals where infractions have become contaminants. "However much experimental universals are involved, the aim is not to confirm and extend these universalised experiences in order to attain knowledge of a law - e.g., how men, peoples, and states evolve - but to understand how this man, this people, this state is what it has become or, more generally, how it happened that it is so" (Gadamer, 1997, pp. 4-5).

Hans

*SUN TZU SAID:  
 Foreknowledge cannot be  
 grasped from ghosts and  
 spirits,  
 Cannot be inferred from  
 events,  
 Cannot be projected from  
 calculation.  
 It must be grasped from  
 people's knowledge  
 (2001, p. 59).*

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 29, 2000 4:46pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

That's precisely the point! I tell her *how it happened that it is so* as I guide her through the process. My classroom is a flurry of activity - writing files, idea lists, pieces-in-progress, and drafts ready for publication are strewn about in every direction. Students are in control of the writing act: they choose their own topics, discuss their work with peers, and submit their writing when they feel it is complete. They are composing and revising the very curriculum - and discovering who they are in the process.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 2, 2000 7:55am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

*Gut.* The approach is working well for you, then.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 6, 2000 7:00am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

The only difficulty is that I can't persuade students to rework their drafts. They tinker with a few words, dabble in a few sentences, and then retire the whole process. It's absurd! I've told them that "rewriting isn't virtuous. It isn't something that ought to be done. It is simply something that most writers find they have to do to discover what they have to say and how to say it" (Murray, 1986, p. 436). But typically their other professors ask for a rewrite only when a paper is completely unhinged from rational thought, and I have a nagging feeling that they regard rewriting as a way to elude failure rather than as a critical component of the writing act. They seem more intent on formulating tightly structured outlines and then expanding the outlines into completed drafts. Once the first draft is completed, they abandon it. I've attached a description of one student's writing process to illustrate.

1. Narrow the topic. For example, if I want to write a topic about T.V. I have to decide which aspect of T.V. I'd like to write. I can narrow my topic as *The Negative Influence of T.V. on People*, *The Positive Influence of T.V. on People*, *The Negative Influence of T.V. on Children*, *The Positive Influence of T.V. on Children*.
2. Brainstorm – write down all ideas that come to my mind. When I am writing a topic about T.V., things come to my mind are: news, plays, movies, concerts, sports, education programs both for children and for adults, violence, people's behavior, watching T.V. needs time, it takes our time for outdoor activities, it takes our time for our communicating with our children, other family members, and our friends, it also takes our time for reading so that it decreases our imagination ability and writing ability and so on. In a word, write down whatever comes to your mind.
3. Outline the main ideas. Choose the ideas related to my narrow topic and eliminate useless ideas. And then, from all related ideas, choose the important ideas to make my outline ideas.
4. Develop every outline to a paragraph.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Tuesday, March 7, 2000 7:00am

**Subject:** Huizhen

How curious that your student follows a linear route here - consistent with your Western ideals but quite foreign to her own amorphous style of reasoning. I found the same underlying doctrine in the essay you recommended by Lynne Clement (1991). She seems to think that writing progresses from *big* questions such as "What is good about this story?" or "What don't I understand about this story?" to *smaller* questions about characterisation and setting (para 1). Can a writer not begin with a

character or an image? Must editing always tread on the heels of revising? Isn't editing at times a form of creative relief?

Look. Writing is like conversation. You don't conduct a conversation - you fall into one. And you can't predict what the outcome of a conversation will be any more than you can tell what a draft of writing will become. Instead, you find the piece "taking its own twists and reaching its own conclusion" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 383). Tight control of the writing event - the imposition of formulas for pre-planning, successive drafting, and revision - truncates content from truth.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 10, 2000 7:10am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Hans:

I'm not suggesting that anyone barb Huizhen's writing in formulas. I'm suggesting that Huizhen reformulate her ideas until they evolve into something more stately, something more *English, sapristi!* Britton contends that our most fertile ideas are those sifted through a process of reformulation: "Something that lies behind each re-formulating process is more precious than any formula arrived at, and to cling to the formula rather than undergo again the labor of reformulating may be to rob the idea of its power" (Britton, 1982 p.115).

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 11, 2000 7:16am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

But then the work is never finished; it is always in process, always being reformulated.

-Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 12, 2000 1:56am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Of course! A piece of writing is never complete; rather, at some point, the creative process is "randomly and arbitrarily broken off" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 94). Michelangelo says that art is never finished; it is abandoned.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Monday, March 13, 2000 7:16am

**Subject:** Huizhen

But Huizhen, I would guess, is bewildered by your approach. Huizhen is the product of traditionalist, non-constructivist curricula, where "emphasis on social responsibility and respect for tradition and traditional knowledge leads to more formal instructional assumptions and teacher-focused learning" (Woodrow, 2001, p. 23). Your focus on self-validation and progressive change is a breach of the cultural values implicit in a room occupied by dichotomous communities of discourse.

Hans

*SUN TZU SAID:  
He looks upon the  
troops as his children.  
Thus they can venture  
into deep river valleys  
with him  
(2001, p. 43).*

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**Sent:** Monday, March 13, 2000 1:11pm

**Subject:** Huizhen

Hans:

That is why I have tried to infuse traditional pedagogy into the mini-lessons in the form of work sheets, spelling lists, and cloze exercises. But then I must contend with the research indicative of the limited interchange between grammar instruction and written discourse. Patrick Hartwell (1999) offers compelling evidence of this – he distinguishes between Grammar 1 - the "tacit, unconscious 'knowing how' knowledge" - and Grammar 2 - the "formal, conscious 'knowing about' knowledge" (p. 203). In an experiment, he asked a number of students to put the following words in the correct order:

*French the young girls four*

The students were able to put the adjectives in the correct order but couldn't state the rule regarding the order of adjectives of nationality, age, and number (p. 203). Indeed, Hartwell cites numerous studies which suggest that formal grammar instruction is ineffective in producing competent writing (e.g., DeBoer, 1959; Sherwin, 1969; Scott and Castner, 1983).

Another example is Farr and Daniels' (1986) research indicating that students possess a "tacit unconscious knowing how knowledge." Farr and Daniels use the example of students who consistently omit the standard plural (-s) suffix from their writing, despite explicit teaching of the standard feature for years. These non-standard features rarely occur "100 percent of the time; they usually alternate with the standard variant of the

feature" (p. 32). Now then. If a speaker uses a structure even occasionally, he or she in some sense *knows* it. And if this is true, "then why does the non-standard variant of this feature (i.e., the absence of –s) so persistently occur, for example, in school compositions despite explicit teaching of the standard variant for years?" (p. 32). Farr and Daniels suggest that linguistic rules are deeply ingrained, and that one cannot use conscious strategies to change unconscious processes.

It seems, then, that more teaching of the rules - more Grammar 2 – will not purge writing of error. Yet students do gain a certain self-assurance when their efforts on the worksheets yield higher grades - even if the improvements are modest at best.

Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 14, 2000 7:16am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

It seems to me, Felix, that you are turning Huizhen's writing into an object of scientific investigation; you are compressing her ideas into a matrix of rules and "suspending [her] claim to truth" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 304).

-Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 14, 2000 1:56pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

What would *you* have me do with her? You are spinning Platonic platitudes while my student wallows in noun-marking errors!

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 15, 2000 7:16am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Suppose you must teach her what the speed of light is. How will you do it?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 16, 2000 4:52am



**Subject:** Huizhen

She's Chinese. She knows the speed of light.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Thursday, March 16, 2000 7:39am

**Subject:** Huizhen

All right, then. You must teach her how to play Kriegspiel.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**Sent:** Thursday, March 16, 2000 5:55pm

**Subject:** Huizhen

I would tell her the rules and then I would show her how the pieces move.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Friday, March 17, 2000 6:50am

**Subject:** Huizhen

And then?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**Sent:** Friday, March 17, 2000 7:12am

**Subject:** Huizhen

And then we would play it!

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Friday, March 17, 2000 7:40am

**Subject:** Huizhen

Would you not immerse her into the world of 18<sup>th</sup> century German military schools? Wouldn't you show her maps of the French-Belgium frontier and photos of castles, roadways, coastlines - in short, wouldn't you expose her to the living ancestry of the game? Learning how to play Kriegspiel is

more than a matter of learning the rules – if you want to win, that is (Nasar, 1999).

It is the same with writing. You have called upon a manifesto of rules and techniques to repair Huizhen's writing, but learning how to write – learning how to play the game - is something cultivated over time.

-Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 17, 2000 1:56pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

*Franchement.* It is the procedural drafting that cultivates the meaning-making process!

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 18, 2000 7:10am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Are you quite sure? Because now the work itself has been lost. You've seized it and positioned it at an epistemological distance by converging on the person of the writer. Your approach is reminiscent of Pollock's paint slinging. The work is merely an expression of the creator applying the paint.

Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 20, 2000 3:49am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

My son's grade three class studied Pollock in school, and really, I couldn't distinguish the children's paintings from those of Pollock!

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 20, 2000 7:46am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

You see? We can't understand a work by examining the generation of the work. My concern is not with the "orientation nor even the state of mind of

the creator or of those enjoying the work of art...but [with] the mode of being of the work of art itself" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 101). At issue is not an internal property but what has come into being. Why is your home filled with original art rather than with prints? Because the original has the lifeblood still in it!

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 20, 2000 11:20pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Exactly – the blood of the creator! My son's imitation of *Autumn Rhythm* is not hanging up, but if I owned a Pollock original, it would be hanging. Yet the two pieces are virtually identical!

I tell you, Hans, that having observed the children paint their renditions of *Autumn Rhythm*, I can appreciate more fully the final pieces of work. Some children were as stiff as an Atlantic wind, applying the paint in singular, controlled flicks of the brush. Others whipped the paint about in a frenzy – their smocks resembled Pollock originals.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 21, 2000 7:20am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

And your son? Was he constrained or frenzied?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 21, 2000 11:49am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

I think he is the incarnate Pollock.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 23, 2000 7:55am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

I'm sure of it!

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 24, 2000 7:45am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Look. I cannot agree that an author owns his words - or a painter his art; one cannot employ Schleiermacher's divinatory method to unearth authorial intent. Indeed, "one does not admire the skill with which something is done, as in the case of a highwire artist. This has only secondary interest, as Aristotle explicitly says. Rather, what we experience in a work of art and what invites our attention is how true it is – i.e., to what extent one knows and recognises something and oneself" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 114).

Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 25, 2000 1:09pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Hans:

I would argue that questions about the state of mind of the creator are entirely appropriate in making an aesthetic evaluation. This is because one's impression of a work of art is embodied in beliefs or assumptions about the maker and the circumstances of the work's generation: they are impossible to separate from the art itself. For example, if it is revealed that a painting is a forgery, enjoyment of it is diminished because appreciation of the art is an engagement with the creator, not with the work of art.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 27, 2000 7:46am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

*Denk mal!* It is because the authentic work is a transmitter of truth – like your Persian carpet. A work of art has a life of its own apart from the subjectivity of the creator and the viewer. If we give undue credit to the artist's intent, we can no longer ask what a work of art means in the world, and the work itself cannot express anything substantive. "One way of understanding a work, then, is no less legitimate than another...every encounter with the work has the rank and rights of a new production" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 94).

Moreover, if in a writing workshop every appraisal of a piece of writing is as legitimate as the next, then the teacher's authority is inexorably restrained; authority has been rationed to the peer editors in the classroom. The teacher is reduced to making feeble remarks such as *I felt this as I read*, or *the piece is saying this to me*. But your classroom is a multicultural one, where what a person *is* – his gender, family background, age, and economic status – takes precedence over what he achieves. I'm certain that Huizhen hears the voices of her teachers, who in her eyes hold the knowledge, over the confined and insignificant perceptions of her peers.

Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**Sent:** Tuesday, March 28, 2000 7:19pm

**Subject:** Huizhen

The teacher is not the only person in the classroom who knows something. In fact, Britton (1975) contends that "so long as the teacher is the 'significant other', the audience to whom the writing is primarily directed, his influence on process will be strong. His preferences and dislikes will be considered, even if they are not always respected" (p. 32).

The teacher must foster an environment in which *everyone* has a significant voice so that the evolving drafts can "find their own meaning", as Donald Murray would say. I'm not talking about anarchy; I'm talking about leading students through a series of questions that will challenge them to eventually develop their own repertoire of questions – not the types of questions that you propose, but questions such as *What works in this piece of writing? What doesn't work? What surprised you in this draft? Who is the intended audience?*

I've attached a transcription of one of Donald Murray's conferences – something I think is instructive because Murray is so immensely respectful of his student's integrity as a writer.

I don't like the writing at all in this draft. It's gross.

You think it's all gross?

Yeah.

Well, I don't think it's all gross. Some of it may be gross, but what do you think is less gross?

Well, I suppose that description of how to start that snowmobile works pretty well.

Yes, that piece of writing seems to know what it's doing. Why do you think it does?

Well, it seems to be lined up pretty well. I mean, like it goes along, sort of natural.

That's how it seems to me.

Think maybe I should try to make the rest try to work that way? It's kind of jumbled up now.

Try it if you want. (Donovan and McClelland, 1980, p. 18)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 29, 2000 7:30am

**Subject:** Huizhen

Well, I can hazard a guess at what the word *gross* means. But I wonder how satisfied the student was with that conference. Is the teacher not obliged to provide some sort of direction apart from deflecting the student's ideas? Wouldn't the student rather prefer some sort of intelligent collaboration?

Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 29, 2000 7:19pm

**Subject:** Huizhen

The workshop approach to writing instruction is the epitome of collaborative learning.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Thursday, March 30, 2000 7:30am

**Subject:** Huizhen

If it is meaningful. If it transgresses the limits of the classroom. I know you are fond of Foucault, so I will use him here. He says that the limit and transgression "depend on each other for whatever density of being they possess: a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and, reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusions and shadows" (Foucault, 1977, p. 34). Academic writing, even if it unfolds in a collaborative learning environment, often fixes an illusory limit because it occupies an artificial playing field - the classroom, a space governed by institutionalised standards with the objective of conveying conventionalised epistemologies.

*SUN TZU SAID:  
Many trees move.  
He is approaching.*

*Many obstacles in thick  
grass.  
He is misleading us.*

*Birds rise up.  
He is concealing himself.*

*Animals are startled.  
He is launching a total  
assault  
(2001, p. 35).*



The point is that we cannot take up Huizhen's writing if it has been abstracted out of time and place. A mature writer has cultivated a sense of place, just as someone who "has a historical sense knows what is possible for an age and what is not, and has a sense of the otherness of the past in relation to the present" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 17). He is in tune with sights and smells and memories, not with mechanisms.  
Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 3, 2000 7:22am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

But this is precisely what teachers like Peter Elbow try to create in their writing workshops – a sense of place.  
Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 4, 2000 7:59am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

By taking the writing event out of the world and confining it to the classroom, you have turned it into "an abstraction that reduces the actual being of the work" (Gadamer, 1997, p.116). Are you familiar with the work of Francois Tochon?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 6, 2000 2:49am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

No, I'm not.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 6, 2000 7:41am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

I've attached his story for you.

At the time an active member of Geneva's authors' society, I was grieved by the disappearance of poetry from urban life. Poetry

interested few people, publishers of poetry barely survived. After all, who had the time to read poetry? It was thus that I conceived the idea of papering the city with poems. The cities of Geneva and Vernier allocated money for the posting of 77 poems on public billboards for a period of one month. The action itself took place in March and April, 1985.

Every poem was inscribed by hand on an original background created in acrylics by the painter Mireille Wagnière (except for ten backgrounds done by the graphic artist Helen Tilbury). This was evanescent artwork: a month later, the poems had been covered over with advertising. Nevertheless, this exercise in action poetry triggered a rash of articles in daily newspapers and magazines and radio and television programs. (Tochon, 2000, para. 9)

Tochon has tried to resurrect "...the great ages in the history of art...in which people without any aesthetic consciousness and without our concept of 'art' surrounded themselves with creations whose function in religious or secular life could be understood by everyone and which gave no one solely aesthetic pleasure" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 81). Urban life today seems to have ineluctably assigned the aesthetic to museums and theatres and concert halls. The work of art has little place in the world beyond its propensity to evoke perceptual pleasure.

Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Saturday, April 29, 2000 9:49pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Hans,

I apologise for my delayed response. I read Tochon's story and got to thinking that perhaps Huizhen needs something more than techniques for effective writing; perhaps she needs something similar to what Lesley Roessing (2004) has constructed in her classroom. Each term, Roessing creates with her students a sort of imaginary community with a physical setting, fictional characters and daily events, and then she has the students write stories and essays about the community - just as though they were living in it.

I don't think I could undertake a project as colossal as that, but I got to thinking that perhaps I could transport my students into a fictional story. I read somewhere that Dickens published his novels in weekly instalments, keeping his readers in suspense each week as they waited to discover how the plot would unfold. So I decided to give my students weekly

*SUN TZU SAID:  
 And so the ch'i of the three  
 armies can be seized.  
 The heart-mind of the  
 commander can be seized.  
 Therefore, morning ch'i is sharp,  
 midday ch'i is lazy  
 evening ch'i is spent.  
 Thus one skilled at employing  
 the military  
 Avoids their sharp ch'i and  
 strikes their lazy and spent ch'i.  
 This is ordering ch'i  
 (2001, p. 28).*

instalments of a simple novel with complex themes - John Steinbeck's (1974) *The Pearl* – to see if heightened interaction with the text would occur as they related their own experiences to the themes of the novel. Then, as they entered the life of the text, they would become composers in their efforts to inhabit the unknown.

Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Sunday, April 30, 2000 8:49am

**Subject:** Huizhen

Yes, your students would *belong* to the text so that they themselves became part of the meaning that they apprehended (Gadamer, 1997, p. 340).

Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**Sent:** Sunday, April 30, 2000 11:03am

**Subject:** Huizhen

Hans:

I've attached Carrie's response to *The Pearl*. You'll see that Carrie takes an efferent stance to the text; she "is focused mainly on building the public meaning that is to be carried away from the reading: actions to be performed, information to be retained, conclusions to be drawn, solutions to be arrived at, analytic concepts to be applied, propositions to be tested" (Hunsberger and Labercane, 2002, p. 125).

I am eager to expand my vocabulary. At the beginning, I tried to put a certain number of new words in to my mind every day and tried to memorize them. But the outcome was not good enough. No matter how hard I work on the new words, They were willing to stay in my memory only for a few days. Then they fled from my mind thoroughly. Finally, I figured out that, unlike the young people, I am too old to fit that method to memorize new words. So I tried to memorize new words from reading. It seems to work well to me. When I read, I can meet some same words very often, and sometimes, I can guess some new words' meaning according to the context. Especially, I can remember in which article I met the new words at the first time when I met them at the second or the third time so that I can try to remember the exact meaning of them. Then it's not easy for them to escape from my mind.

I'm pleased that Carrie is reading outside of the course requirements; she recognises that she is not privileged with the abundant vocabulary required to fully delineate her ideas, and she is doing something about it.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 30, 2000 9:55pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

I have another response written by Huizhen (see attachment). Huizhen is writing about the protagonist's wife, Juana.

She is so quiet and industrious. From all of the description about her action, I can "see" her gracefulness from her manner of doing things, I can "hear" the lovely family song from her quiet advocated action. And I can also "feel" her resolution from her series of decisive actions after her son was hurt by the evil scorpion. I admire the personality of Juana. She is just like the traditional Chinese women who are willing to contribute their entire life to their lovely families...Moved by all of the things, I decided to write my symphony. Imitating the writing style of *The Pearl*, I wrote *A Saturday Morning*.

Huizhen is reading aesthetically, to use Rosenblatt's (1978) term; she "is aware of, is paying some attention to, the actual experiential aspects of the reading, and deriving some satisfaction from them" (p.36).

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 1, 2000 8:09am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

It seems that she has responded in an appropriate manner then, as you would have it.

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 1, 2000 1:47pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

What? Do you mean to say that she has not engaged meaningfully with the text?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 2, 2000 6:49am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

What I mean to say is that Huizhen has a sense for what is right and beautiful. She recognises in Juana the grace and strength of the traditional Chinese woman. She is not guided by the application of rules, yet she is sure of her judgement; her taste "is essentially sure taste, an acceptance and rejection that involves no hesitation, no surreptitious glances at others, no searching for reasons" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 36).

*SUN TZU SAID:  
 These are the  
 victories of the  
 military lineage. They  
 cannot be transmitted  
 in advance (2001, p.  
 5).*

But her response to the text is not an aesthetic one. You have qualified how sophisticated, how deep, and how emotive her response should be. Let's not pretend: your students are expected to *gain* something from their reading. Had Huizhen merely recounted the plot or written a few loose sentences, you would have failed her. It seems to me that "having a set of teaching approaches, guidelines, or expectations for engagement with literature and production of 'reasonable' responses affects the flow, purpose, or stance of reading" (Hunsberger and Labercane, 2002, p. 125). Your students are not writing a retrospective response to reading; they are writing "a response to reading *for a response*" (p. 126).

-Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 3, 2000 12:36am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

I think that most educators encourage their students to read not only for aesthetic enjoyment but for the purpose of communicating their reflections in an "artistic response to the artistic work of others" (Hunsberger and Labercane, 2002, p. 125).

Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 9, 2000 6:09am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Of course. Students must learn to produce rational, articulate pieces of work. But we must consider how best to attain this goal. Let me illustrate. A former colleague of mine, KC, recently had her students paint a mural on a bridge underpass. KC began the project with what she called an *image flood*: she used books, slides, snapshots, magazines, and visits to galleries and museums to illustrate subject matter and creative

techniques. She and her students then visited the community to examine the architecture and local residences, taking photographs and making sketches of the smallest details – gas lamps, wrought iron fences, fish scale shingles. Finally they began work on the mural, and were invited on several occasions to discuss their work with community groups and media. KC took slides of their finished work and presented them at a conference alongside the works of professional artists (Wolfe, 1997).

Do you understand my meaning? The students were plucked from their pedagogical hall of mirrors and yoked into something ongoing – something greater than themselves.

*SUN TZU SAID:  
Not knowing the strategies  
of the feudal lords,  
One cannot ally with them.  
Not knowing the form of  
mountains and forests,  
defiles and gorges, marshes  
and swamps,  
One cannot move the army.  
Not employing local guides,  
One cannot obtain the  
advantage of the ground  
(2001, p. 26).*

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 10, 2000 12:33pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Then I was right to graft Huizhen into a community of texts. Erasmus suggests in *De Copia* that the imitation of texts is indigenous to the writing act:

it will be very helpful for us to emulate and attempt by our own efforts to equal or even to improve upon that passage in any author which appears unusually rich in copia. Moreover, it will be especially useful if we peruse good authors night and day, particularly those who have excelled in copia of speech, such as Cicero, Aulus, Gellius, Apuleius; and with vigilant eyes we should note all figures in them, store up in our memory what we have noted, imitate what we have stored up, and by frequent use make it a habit to have them ready at hand. (cited in Hatlen, 1986, p. 62)

Certainly Huizhen has been exposed to textual imitation as a pedagogical method; she has memorised and recited quotations from Marx, Lenin, and Mao Tse-tung (Lu, 1994, p. 169). Have a look at the attachment.

When I studied writing in China, the first and important step is to recite loudly about half an hour every morning. Another key measure is to remember some famous articles and excellent paragraphs. Teacher forced us to do all of that...If someone can remember three hundred beautiful poems, he become a writer. This is a well-known legend in China.

So then, I'll continue to expose her to scholarly texts until her writing incarnates their style and structure and she gains familiarity with the grammar, vocabulary, and concepts necessary to write reflective prose.

Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Friday, May 12, 2000 7:43am

**Subject:** Huizhen

Bear in mind, however, that imitation involves knowledge of the essence; "in the realm of aesthetic taste, models and patterns certainly have a privileged function; but, as Kant rightly says, they are not for imitation but for following" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 42).

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**Sent:** Saturday, May 13, 2000 7:44am

**Subject:** Huizhen

What do you take me for? I'm not referring to the reproductive work of an impostor; nor do I submit that composition texts which advise students to reproduce models of sentences, paragraphs, and essays, which define writing parameters such as purpose, topic, and audience, render anything other than voiceless essays, rehearsed essays, essays that are, to echo Elbow (1973), "a record of something having gone on" rather than "an expression of something going on" (p. 298).

The imitation that I refer to is Michaelangelo's nude Christ in *Crucifixion* or Mozart's inversions of *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*. It is the evolution of tragedy as Aristotle outlines it in *Poetics*. Look at what Huizhen has written in the attachment.

The reciting method is effective in starting education phase. The method is passed by our ancestor. In the ancient, three-year-old kid should start to recite the poetry and waged his head with the poetry rhythm. In my opinion, reciting and memorizing is necessary and it is also the foundation of the early studying, but the creation is more important. To recite and remember some wonderful things is to let them root in our mind. Once they belong to my own language, I think I can easily write down what I want with perfect words... Imitating texts is for studying article style, seizing some key words usage, or learning a method. It is not the purpose. The true intent is to create more beautiful sentence and paper.

You see? She does not speak of a divestment of spirit and force, of producing a copy; she speaks of an act of interpretation. Look at her use of the words *imitating texts*. Do you think she coined that phrase?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 15, 2000 7:29am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

I think she is coming into conversation with the text (Gadamer, 1997, p. 331).

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 15, 2000 7:43pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Ha! I think you're being visited by Derrida! He has said that his writing is "always an *opening* [*ouverture*], both in the sense of a non-closed system, of the opening *left* to the freedom and rights of the other, but also in the sense of overture [*ouverture*], advance or invitation *made to* the other. The intervention of the other, who perhaps should no longer be called simply the "reader," is an indispensable but always *improbable* counter-signature. It must remain something one cannot anticipate" (Derrida, 1995, para 25).

Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 16, 2000 7:46am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Indeed, but let's not allow Derrida to move us away from the trajectory of the text. Remember that the reader recognises something *in the text*; he knows something again that he has already known (Gadamer, 1997, p.114). The young bartender in Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergere*, for example, strikes us because we recognise in her a palpable melancholy amidst the sparkling bottles of champagne and the glowing chandeliers.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 16, 2000 9:59am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Yes – and more compelling than a painting is a story. Do you know the work of Kenneth Grahame? His lyrical world of talking animals, gushing



rivers and knotted woods brings me back to my childhood on Cape Breton Island.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 17, 2000 7:49am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Cape Breton? You're not native to Quebec?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 17, 2000 11:23am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

I am, but my father worked the mines on Cape Breton for years. We lived in a blue house on Xavier Drive – I still remember it – and at the end of Xavier was a deep wood where my brother and I put up a tent. In the evenings, when dusk provoked the sky into a rage of swirling reds and purples, my brother and I would race through the woods to our tent and nestle deep into our sleeping bags, secure inside the thin canvas walls. And then my brother would read to me - stories of magical lands, talking animals, toys coming to life. I remember watching his face unfold with his stories – his ivory skin and crooked teeth, his small round eyes flickering across the pages. I can never forget!

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 18, 2000 7:11am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Wonderful! You've experienced through reading the joy of recognition, Felix, "the joy of knowing *more* than is already familiar. In recognition what we know emerges, as if illuminated, from all the contingent and variable circumstances that condition it; it is grasped in its essence" (Gadamer, 1997, p.114).

Now. If Huizhen moves about in the life of a text as you have, "a new light will fall on her thoughts" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 386) as she recognises herself in the pages.  
Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 18, 2000 5:56pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Exactly! A transformation will occur as the text interrogates her convictions. She will then produce in English more of the reflective prose obliged by scholarly writing.

Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 19, 2000 6:59am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

You are still trying to possess something, to create a product ready for consumption. What if you ventured into her writing and examined the mode of being of the work itself?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 20, 2000 5:21pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

And what is that mode of being?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 21, 2000 7:51am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

You were quite correct when you said that the writer is a player. It is not so much a matter of the writer expressing himself; rather, something is presenting itself – a game is opening. The work of art – Huizhen's piece of writing - exists in play.

Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 23, 2000 11:22pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

I employed the game metaphor only to emphasise the importance of following rules in the writing process, just as one must follow the rules of

SUN TZU SAID:  
*And so the skilled  
 general forms  
 others yet is  
 without form.  
 (2001, p. 21)*

a game. But the metaphor itself is limited to rules and players and a playing field; let's not extend it beyond its capacity.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 1, 2000 7:54am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix,

Think about what happens when you compose. Do you merely draw from a stock of ideas and scratch them on the paper?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 5, 2000 7:06pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

No. I use a word processor.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 6, 2000 7:51am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

*Ach Du!* I've grown too old for teakettle!

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 12, 2000 12:40am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

All right. I suppose something more is present, something greater.  
 Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 14, 2000 7:22am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix:

Something is emerging on the page that extends beyond your control. As Heidegger (1971) writes, "Man acts as though *he* were the shaper and

master of language, while in fact *language* remains the master of man" (p. 146). Heidegger is saying that something is happening with a reality that transcends him. It's reminiscent of Derrida's (1985) choice of the term *deconstruction*; he says the word "imposed itself on [him]," and "came to him in an apparently very spontaneous way," while writing *Of Grammatology* (p. 388). Lewis (1966) puts it this way:

In the Author's mind there bubbles up every now and then the material for a story. For me it invariably begins with mental pictures. This ferment leads to nothing unless it is accompanied with the longing for a Form: verse or prose, short story, novel, play or what not. When these two things click you have the Author's impulse complete. It is now a thing inside him pawing to get out. He longs to see that bubbling stuff pouring into that Form as a housewife longs to see the new jam pouring into the clean jam jar. This nags at him all day long and gets in the way of his work and his sleep and his meals. It's like being in love. (p. 35)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 15, 2000 9:11am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Yes, well. I would hardly call the thing a game.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 23, 2000 7:00am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Think of children playing dress-up: they invent characters and costumes and scripts, but more important is the movement of the game itself; it draws them into its dominion and fills them with its spirit (Gadamer, 1997, p.109). It comes into being independently of the will of the players.  
Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 26, 2000 2:00pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

The players are commanded by play as much as they command it?

-----Original Message-----

SUN TZU SAID:  
*The military is without  
fixed shih and without  
lasting form.  
To be able to transform  
with the enemy is what is  
meant by "spiritlike."  
(2001, p. 24)*

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 29, 2000 7:45am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

*Ja, gut* – "What is intended is the to-and-fro movement that is not tied to any goal that would bring it to an end" (Gadamer, 1997, p.103).

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 3, 2000 6:06am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

But surely more is involved. Nietzsche (1966) suggests that

"a living and not a dying body... will have to be an incarnate will to power, it will strive to grow, spread, seize, become predominant - not from any morality or immorality but because it is *living* and because life simply *is* will to power... 'Exploitation'... belongs to the *essence* of what lives, as a basic organic function; it is a consequence of the will to power, which is after all the will to life." (s.259)

*SUN TZU SAID:  
 The rush of water, to the  
 point of tossing rocks  
 about. This is shih.  
 The strike of a hawk, at  
 the killing snap. This is  
 the node.  
 (2001, p. 17)*

I would say that play – if we must use that term - exists in uncertainties and tensions and discourses of exclusion as players strive to fortify their roles and dominate not only other players but the very game itself.

-Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 5, 2000 7:20am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix,

I will agree that play arouses a will to power; however, exploitation does not belong to the *essence* of the game as Nietzsche supposes; rather, "what holds the player in its spell, draws him into play, and keeps him there is the game itself" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 106).

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 10, 2000 11:49pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

But you yourself operate within a closed community of discourse, Hans, whose function is to regulate what can be said by whom. Any mode of speech that does not conform to the rituals of the presiding discourse is suppressed, like the speech of madmen in the middle ages; their words "either fell into a void – rejected the moment they were proffered - or else men deciphered in them a naïve or cunning reason...At all events, whether excluded or secretly invested with reason, the madman's speech did not strictly exist" (Foucault, 1972, p. 217).

Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Sunday, July 16, 2000 7:10am

**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix,

Of course we can be limited by or empowered by the discourses that we deploy. But the chief occupation of any community of discourse, I think, is to find openings in a subject matter through genuine conversation, where the aim is to reach an agreement - not to bully an interlocutor, but to allow the subject matter to come into being.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**Sent:** Thursday, July 20, 2000 9:22pm

**Subject:** Huizhen

Impossible! When did such a conversation ever exist? Conversation is little more than the subjugation of an opponent. It is like children in the schoolyard: there are slaves and there are masters. The masters incarnate a measure of power and exercise it mercilessly; the slaves venerate the very individuals who have wounded their dignity. Your Eurocentric "vision of rational citizens talking as equals...neglects the massive social inequities that prevent just this sort of conversation from taking place" (Herrick, 2001, p. 208).

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Saturday, July 22, 2000 7:29am

**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix,

Certainly there are combative sentiments in my own conversations with Jurgen, Habermas, Hegel, Heidegger, and Plato, but in each

*SUN TZU SAID:  
One skilled at  
moving the  
enemy  
Forms and the  
enemy must  
follow,  
Offers and the  
enemy must take.  
(2001, p. 18)*

conversation also there is an unfolding, just as in our own correspondence the topic is finding its way - it is presenting something. In fact, I would venture to say that presentation is as integral to conversation as performance is to drama or music.  
Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 24, 2000 7:33am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Hans-

Harold Rosen (1980) contends that performance *is* separable from the work, that dramatic behaviour "can and does exist independent of theatres, stages, drama classes and dramatic texts." In fact, he has observed student teachers putting classes of children through "carefully worked out dramatic 'exercises' which were in all respect inferior to what the children would have done spontaneously" (cited in Rasmussen and Wright, 2001, para. 8).

Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 27, 2000 7:47am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix-

Rosen is talking about the imposition of synthetic boundaries, the removal of play from its playing field. You have done the same in your writing courses - you've stationed your students outside of the real experience of the writing event (Gadamer, 1997, p.117). In essence, only *your* response to the writing – the grade – has any import, despite your attempts to allocate authority to peer editors. In fact, I would say that undergraduate writing as a whole has assumed a demeanour that is altogether bereaved of any propensity for contemplation whatsoever.

*SUN TZU SAID:  
Now the general is the  
safeguard of the state.  
If the safeguard is  
complete, the state is  
surely strong.  
If the safeguard is  
flawed, the state is  
surely weak.  
(2001, p. 11)*

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Friday, July 28, 2000 2:02am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Hans,

Certainly something is lost by the time a child reaches secondary education. My son used to draw pictures of his ideas before writing. The

pictures were a sort of rehearsal for the writing act, and the drafts - relieved as they were of pedagogic surveillance - seemed to unravel on their own. But by the time he reached grades four and five, he had learned to operate within an academic community of writers: he could construct sentences with adverbs and adjectives and semicolons and similes, and he could organise those sentences into tight little paragraphs.

But his stories were like sea glass; the colours and edges were gone.

Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Monday, August 7, 2000 7:46am

**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix-

I would say that the pictures were not merely preliminary episodes displaced from the main event; they permeated the writing event itself. Rehearsal *is* the main event coming into being, until, as in the case of a drama, the 'play becomes a play' and is transformed; not the players 'but the audience is to become absorbed' (Gadamer, 1997, p.110).

Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**Sent:** Monday, August 7, 2000 11:56pm

**Subject:** Huizhen

Hans:

Your argument is reminiscent of Plato's iron rings.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Tuesday, August 8, 2000 7:09am

**Subject:** Huizhen

Except that when play becomes a play, "the players (or playwright) no longer exist, only what they are playing" (Gadamer, 1997, p.112).

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@>

**Sent:** Tuesday, August 8, 2000 4:44pm

**Subject:** Huizhen



Do you mean to say that the work is autonomous, incommensurate with the subjective experience of the players and the spectators?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 9, 2000 7:09am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Exactly. "Only now does it emerge as detached from the representing activity of the players and consist in the pure appearance (Erscheinung) of what they are playing. As such, the play – even the unforeseen elements of improvisation – is in principle repeatable and hence permanent. It has the character of a work (Gadamer, 1997, p.110)."

Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 9, 2000 6:44pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Speaking of improvisation, on Saturday evening my wife and I attended a Playback Theatre performance. The actors used no prewritten script; instead, they dramatised a personal story using improvisation and audience participation - the spectators in essence became the players.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, August 11, 2000 7:44am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

And what was your contribution to the story line?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Sunday, August 13, 2000 1:08pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

The actors did not solicit my input, *bon sens*! I suspect that you, Hans, would have made a rich contribution.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, August 14, 2000 7:42am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

*Ach du!*

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, August 14, 2000 10:10pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

I found the experience to be an interesting alternative to traditional Western theatre, which emphasises formalised scripted action. It was reminiscent of the oral tradition, where the storyteller relies on his manipulation of language and dramatic skills in order to relate an anecdote.

-Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 15, 2000 7:34am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Ah, yes. The age-old debate about whether language is better represented by written texts or conversational utterances.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Friday, August 18, 2000 3:40pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

I think that a script without boundaries is somehow more artful than one that is tightly organised; it seems imminent, more intimate with the audience. An improvised script unravels in a shared context, and the words, once uttered, cannot be retrieved.

I've often thought that it is the absence of an interlocutor - the suspension of reader reception - that is stifling Huizhen's voice. Perhaps if she could solicit her affinity for speech in her writing, her ideas - sifted through talk - would begin to evolve; her thoughts would find form in speech.

Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

*SUN TZU SAID:  
 Subtle! Subtle!  
 To the point of formlessness. ≈  
 Spiritlike! Spiritlike!  
 To the point of  
 soundlessness. ≈  
 Thus one can be the enemy's  
 fate star. ≈  
 (2001, p. 21)*

**Sent:** Sunday, August 20, 2000 7:34am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

It seems reasonable to build on oral fluency in order to advance writing proficiency. Certainly an oral context requires less convention than the written word does; in face-to-face conversation, the speaker has access to a wide range of contextual and non-linguistic clues such as gestures, intonation, facial expressions, and shared knowledge and experience.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 22, 2000 11:59am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

You can't make such assumptions in a classroom occupied by multiple communities of discourse, Hans; shared features of understanding are not necessarily present. We in the West are a dialogical society; our highly individualised, fragmented culture and lack of shared assumptions require that we verbalise our intents clearly and explicitly (Golden, Berquist, & Coleman, 1997). Verbal skills are highly prized, and to communicate well is to express oneself logically and persuasively.

The Chinese, however, in their eagerness to avoid confrontation, are cautious in expressing themselves; they suppress their emotions and adjust their views so that they conform to those of others. They value smooth and predictable interaction; oral discourse is governed by formal codes of conduct, ritualistic manners, and strict stylistic patterns of communication (Golden, Berquist, & Coleman, 1997).

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 23, 2000 8:02am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Then what on earth do you hope to achieve by employing peer editing and small group discussions in the classroom?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 23, 2000 12:59pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

I am attempting to construct a sort of classroom script, where language is a shared event, and words and phrases are used over and over again

until they become cemented into the dialogue. When it comes time to write, students are able to *speak onto paper*, as Peter Elbow would say, in a form of expressive writing or *written-down speech*. I have tried to avoid referential speech acts, "the speech by which we participate in the world's affairs – informing people, explaining things, arguing, persuading, asking questions and so on," (Britton, 1975, p. 86) because as I have said, combative forms of social intercourse cause them anxiety. Expressive language, "personal, unique, individual, and subjective" (Britton, 1975, p. 86), is more in keeping with their introspective nature.

Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Thursday, August 24, 2000 7:45am

**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix-

I'm wondering whether the conversation in your class is anything more than "the passing of information from one person to another" (Gadamer, 1997, xv). When true conversation takes place, "some subject matter becomes mutually accessible for two or more people" (Gadamer, 1997, xv). What is important is that through conversation the subject matter is coming into being.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**Sent:** Saturday, August 26, 2000 7:56am

**Subject:** Huizhen

I doubt that anything is *coming into being* in a multi-cultural discussion. As Huizhen has said in her journal, "Chinese student are very shy. They don't like speaking. Therefore, not too much speaking occurs in the classroom in China."

However, one cannot underestimate the value of oral discourse in the writing classroom, if for no other reason than to allow students to practice their spoken English and hopefully to gain some proficiency with the language. They don't tend to use English outside of the classroom; Huizhen says that "the chance is rare with the nature English spoken person," and she seems reluctant to practice with her husband - she says it's unnatural to speak English at home.

Yesterday I had her listen to recordings of our small group discussions, and after hearing herself on tape she was dismayed by her inability to pronounce simple words. I have often wondered about the extent to which

pronunciation affects written discourse. Farr and Daniels (1986) cite the example of a high school student who neglects to mark half of the past-tense verbs in a piece of writing. One could assume that the student does not understand English verb tense, but Farr and Daniels assert that

if the student produces irregular past-tense forms correctly, this, along with the scattering of correctly marked regular forms, suggests that he or she does indeed 'understand' the idea of past tense. Instead, the problem is that certain phonological features in the student's oral language 'encourage' the consonant cluster reductions that are transcribed in the writing, and the student is later only catching a handful of them in the revision stage (p. 80).

The question is then, does pronunciation affect surface structure alone, or does it pervade the deeper mentalities of the writing act?

-Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Thursday, August 31, 2000, 7:18am

**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix,

I think you are trying to isolate and define everything that is problematic in Huizhen's writing. You are taking it apart and trying to repair it piece-by-piece, method-by-method. You've infused reader response theory into the writing process, expecting Huizhen to take an aesthetic stance to the texts but asking her to imitate structures and forms. You have attempted to foster expressive conversation in the classroom but are in fact employing referential speech because you know that writing is something more than written down speech. Your course is brimming with collaborative learning events, but you haven't considered whether real collaboration is going on.

Try to think of Huizhen's writing as an event in the world capable of making claims on us: to understand it is to open it. Look at her final paragraph again:

"The person who lives in the south of the yangtse river speak nothing if he wants to keep the guests, what can we hear just the sound of the little rain". (The rain makes the guest stay one more night).

Do you see something addressing us, calling us into a question?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 4, 2000, 11:55am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Isn't it a matter of *my* posing the questions?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 5, 2000 7:33am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Ah yes, questions such as, *What is the correct verb tense in this passage? Why is the point of view shifting? How will you eliminate the passive voice? What would be a better choice of words in this sentence? Do you think the paragraphs are cohesive? How about adding some examples of "show, don't tell"? Why don't you flesh out this paragraph a little more?* Look. One does not entertain such questions to enter into discourse or gain understanding; they are non-questions - they assume the patronising air of someone who knows a secret but won't tell. You should instead expose your students to a discourse of questions that establish horizons for understanding and open a subject matter so that a conversation can emerge (Johnson, 2000, p. 36).

Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 6, 2000 12:55pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

I haven't the slightest idea of what to ask of Huizhen's piece, or to put it in your words, I don't know what the piece is asking of me. As far as I'm concerned, she might as well be speaking Mandarin - that too is an *event in the world*.

Felix

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 8, 2000 7:44am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix:

Think of her writing not as an autonomous representation of meaning but as something contextually bound, something that brings with it a world

*SUN TZU SAID:  
 Quick to anger, one  
 can be goaded.  
 Pure and honest, one  
 can be shamed.  
 Loving the people,  
 one can be  
 aggravated (2001, p.  
 32).*

horizon. You must "acquire the right horizon of inquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition" (Gadamer, 1997, p.302). In other words, you must begin to discern what is questionable.

Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 11, 2000 8:36am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Do you mean to say that I must be imported into her situation – into her history and culture - in order to understand her text? That I must abandon my prejudices? Impossible! Nietzsche says that *every word* is a prejudice!

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 12, 2000 7:33am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix-

What you are saying is quite true. "Our prejudices constitute the horizon of a particular present, for they represent that beyond which it is impossible to see" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 302). You carry with you a tradition of process writing and error analysis that prevents you from seeing Huizhen's writing; however, it is important to continually test these prejudices as you push the threshold of understanding outward. "A horizon is not a rigid boundary but something that moves with one and invites one to advance further" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 245).

*SUN TZU SAID:  
 Of the four seasons, none  
 has constant rank.  
 The sun shines short and  
 long.  
 The moon dies and lives.  
 (2001, p. 24)*

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 15, 2000 9:55am  
**Subject:** **From:** Hans-Georg Gadamer **To:** Felix Tholomyes  
**Subject:** Huizhen

The problem is that we occupy closed horizons – in this case, West and East – and so the problem is not "one of tradition, of tracing a line, but one of division, of limits..." (Faucault, 1972, p. 5). I can to an extent move back and forth between the two horizons, but essentially hers is an alien world to me.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Monday, September 18, 2000 7:47am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix,  
 Huizhen's world is not an isolated horizon that you must occupy; rather, your horizon is continually being re-formed as it fuses with hers (Gadamer, 1997, p. 306).  
 Hans

*SUN TZU SAID:  
 Do not repeat the means  
 of victory,  
 But respond to form from  
 the inexhaustible.  
 (2001, p. 23)*

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 28, 2000 7:03am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix,  
 The point is that we want to rise to a "higher universality that overcomes not only our own particularity but also that of the other. The concept of 'horizon' suggests itself because it expresses the superior breadth of vision that the person who is trying to understand must have. To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 305). You know that you can't really evaluate a piece of your own writing until you have untangled yourself from it for awhile. Distance informs our judgement.  
 Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 29, 2000 1:00am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Hans:  
 I don't believe that anyone can transcend his particular circumstances in order to unveil something that is other.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, September 30, 2000 7:46am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix-  
 Think about the movement of conversation: "To reach an understanding in dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into



a communion in which we do not remain what we were" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 379). Transformation into a communion is not an event of reconstructing another's horizon or of alienating oneself from one's own experiences and prejudices; the aim is to speak as the conversation demands rather than as one's own current beliefs demand, to find "a truth that is valid and intelligible" (Gadamer, 1997, p.302).

You must agree that some of your son's paintings merit a frame and some do not. This is not owing to talent alone: you have in your sitting room pictures of stickmen with prostrate strings of hair and fingers extending beyond the knees. You have displayed certain pieces of work because of the truth that they convey.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Monday, October 2, 2000 8:32pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Underlying your desire for truth, Hans, is fear, a compulsion to master and appropriate the unknown, to reduce the strange to something familiar.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 3, 2000 7:11am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix-

Have you ever attended one of Andrew Van Buren's magic shows? Van Buren, you know, is playing with *not* understanding. His illusions are not in themselves magical; what makes them magical is the lack of control we can exert over them and the pleasure we derive from the illusion. Our desire for truth is driven by joy and wonder, not by fear.

Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 4, 2000 3:33pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Now you are beginning to make sense – juxtaposing truth and magic! Truth is nothing more than "A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms -- in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically,

*SUN TZU SAID:  
 They call out at night.  
 They are afraid.*

*The encampment is disorderly  
 The general has no weight.*

*Flags and pennants are move  
 about.  
 There is chaos.  
 (2001, p. 37)*

*SUN TZU SAID:  
 And so the military is based  
 on guile,  
 Acts due to advantage,  
 Transforms by dividing and  
 joining.  
 (2001, p. 27)*

and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins" (Nietzsche, 1954, p. 46-47).

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 6, 2000 7:25am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Yet you are relentless in your search for meaning in Huizhen's writing.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Sunday, October 8, 2000 7:22am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

No, Hans, *you* are the one disseminating the grand narratives; I'm simply not certain that there is a self-present truth in her writing to unveil. Meaning is a bartered commodity, contingent not on a fixed referent but relative to the varying opinions and beliefs of the day. Scientific theories and historical narratives are not the products of literal fact; they are, as Hayden White has suggested, "...verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in sciences" (1978, p. 82).

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 11, 2000 7:55am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Certainly we cannot traverse the layers of historical narrative to arrive at the "truth" of a past event. But even though our access to former events is mediated, we must not commit the error of assuming that truth is a conglomerate of fictitious stories.

Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 12, 2000 9:22am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Hans:

How can it be otherwise? The layers themselves have no relation to an external reality; all "conceptual systems are prone to a falsifying, distorting, *hierarchization*" (Nietzsche, 1968, p.15).

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Saturday, October 14, 2000 7:34am

**Subject:** Huizhen

How do you know?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**Sent:** Monday, October 16, 2000 7:55pm

**Subject:** Huizhen

*Par example:* Spoken and written discourse are invariably regarded as conceptual opposites. Written discourse is thought to be intrinsically valuable and objective; bloated as it is with veritable facts and figures, it is as exacting and decontextualised as the military. The loose, subjective language of spoken discourse, by contrast, is less authoritative, less sublime. But these differences are not universal qualities; they are a measure of the literary focus and social conventions of society. Akinnaso (1985) has found that data generally comes from two discourse types: formal, scholarly prose or scheduled (planned) written narrative, and informal oral conversation or impromptu (unplanned) oral narrative. Yet formalised spoken discourse - divinatorial and ritual speech, for example, exhibits features associated with decontextualisation, and informal written discourse - our e-mail correspondence - contains features typically associated with contextualisation. In reality then, conceptual systems do not mediate truths; they are manufactured in language.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Thursday, October 19, 2000 7:37am

**Subject:** Huizhen

Felix-

You are using language to convince me of the assertion that language does not correspond to reality. But in truth, "things bring themselves to expression in language" (Gadamer, 1976, p. 81); language serves an object by allowing it to come into being. "Experience is not wordless to

*SUN TZU SAID:*

*In spread-out ground do not encamp.*

*In junction ground join with allies.*

*In crossing ground do not linger.*

*In enclosed ground strategize.*

*In death ground do battle.*

(2001, p. 30)

begin with, subsequently becoming an object of reflection by being named, by being subsumed under the universality of the word. Rather, experience of itself seeks and finds words that express it. We seek the right word – i.e., the word that really belongs to the thing – so that in it, the thing comes into language” (Gadamer, 1997, p. 417).

The written text has its being in language; it is not bound to the mind of the author, to the original audience, or to the contemporary reader. Look at Huizhen's writing again. Do you see in it something pressing itself upon us?

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 24, 2000 8:55pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

I suppose the piece has its moments.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 25, 2000 7:29am  
**Subject:** Huizhen

The language is addressing us, isn't it? The *shy maiden* and the *silken thread of rain* are not signs pointing to something absent; they are a summons of Chinese history and culture. Language is not an impotent social construction, sterilised, in Foucault's words, by "the strict, inverted repetition of what has already been said and the simple naming of that which lies at the limit of what we can say" (Foucault, 1977, p. 62). Think of Blake's little lamb: it is ancestral; it invokes a lineage of sacrifice, death, and resurrection. Think of the re-naming of Peter; the entire Christian church is brought forth.

Hans

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 27, 2000 11:30pm  
**Subject:** Huizhen

Hans-

But Huizhen's English, for the most part, is sterile; I am drawn to the surface structure of her language, not to any self-present truth in her words.

*SUN TZU SAID:  
 In day battle use more flags and  
 pennants.  
 In night battle use more drums a  
 bells.  
 Drums and bells, flags and  
 pennants are the means  
 by which one unifies the ears an  
 eyes of the  
 people.  
 (2001, p. 27)*

-----Original Message-----

**From:** "Hans-Georg Gadamer" <gadamer@uni-heidelberg.de>

**To:** "Felix Tholomyes" <ftholomyes@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Saturday, October 28, 2000 7:58am

**Subject:** Huizhen

Perhaps your preconceptions about language have gone unexamined. Your position is essentially static and atomistic and ultimately does not interface with your lived experience as a teacher. You have become alienated from your craft because your world consists of a series of alternating and inexplicable events.

Now, then, Felix, if you regard Huizhen's writing as experience, as something in the world at play, then "the conversation that we are is one that never ends" (Gadamer, 1980, p. 95).

*SUN TZU SAID:  
Therefore, one hundred  
victories in one hundred  
battles is not the most skillful.  
Subduing the other's military  
without  
battle is the most skillful.  
(2001, p. 9)*

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