

# From Hawaii to *Kairos*: Alt. Writing and the Ongoing Composition

Myka Vielstimmig \*

Wysocki and Johnson>Eilola

**Personal History: Researching Literature and Curriculum (Literal, Alter, Hyper)**

Nicholas Paley and Janice Jipson

We began working together in 1974. At that time, we were in our mid-20s, teaching as a two-person education department in a small liberal arts college in southern Wisconsin. Our responsibilities ranged across elementary and secondary undergraduate teacher preparation programs and included foundations courses and field placements, teaching methods and curriculum theory. We supervised student teachers at all levels. We were responsible for the administrative management of the program and the concomitant concerns with ensuring appropriate preparation for state teacher certification for our students and with meeting state program requirements. We both had previously earned our Masters degrees in education at the University of Wisconsin and, before

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Paley and Jipson

**WORKS AND DAYS 33/34,35/36 Vol.17&18, 1999-00**

Is that what we're about? I'd rather do like this: "With examples from Vielstimmig's own work, and one rich excerpt from an online journal of 'the Myka Players,' the article shows (while it elaborates) an important concept of postmodern thought in writing instruction, '[the] ongoing composition.' This term, coined by Lanham, later cited by Janangelo, informs the article's sense of alt.writing—and provides another context for deploying it, as well." I like that.



## Vielstimmig

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Do all texts have plots? Aren t you  
muddling genres here?

I am large; I contain multitudes.



Cue house lights.  
 Cue sound one.  
 A dark night in a city that knows how to keep its secrets . . .  
 House lights down.  
 Sound one.

*Bartender, I'd like a manhattan, please.  
 Stop me if you've heard this one,  
 but I feel as though we've met before.  
 Now tell me did you really think I'd fall for that old line?  
 I was not born just yesterday.*

Cue visual one.

*Besides I never talk to strangers anyway.*

Visual One

I wanted to begin with something French and decadent. Something Baudrillardian, noir as I wanna be. But here at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, noir is--well, diverting, amusing, but . . . Nostalgic (and as xenophobic as the French). It doesn't move us forward. To explore the territory ahead--where we see what might be a more visible convergence of rhetoric and poetics, of narrative and exposition, and even of visual aesthetics with all of these--we need to construct a more optimistic postmodernism.



**In a Station of the Metro**

*Ulmer suggests that there are three general ways of constructing information: narrative, exposition, and pattern. In traditional academic texts, exposition has been the privileged mode. But as we move from print-based alphabetic literacy to electronic literacy, we will see a shift in how we represent what we know.*

*Tomow finds the influence of a fragmented "quantum worldview" in the online writing of students, and it's obvious too in many dimensions of popular culture--from body-piercing to beer commercials to the dirt-chic ennui of grunge fashion.*

*In Wendy Bishop's "If Winston Weathers Would Just Write to Me on E-mail," we see the "narrative" of her reading and responding to her students' work. We see Bishop differ and agree with other scholars--"exposition". And right in the middle of the piece we have a "poem". This may be one model of a new essay,*



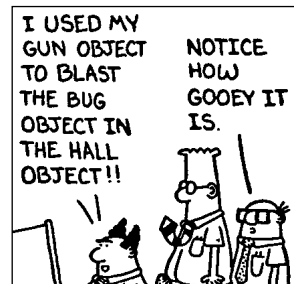
# Vielstimmig

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forma  
reforma  
disforma  
transforma  
conforma  
informa  
forma

Apollinaire



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You mean tech is leading  
to artful?

Technology becomes techne.





Picasso: part of his progression.  
Study, and Les Damoselles  
d Avignon



Michael Spooner  
and Kathleen Yancey  
Postings on a Genre  
of Email

> Kathleen, How does this grab you for  
the opening? <mspooner>

*I was talking with a novelist recently about various kinds of writing—nothing special, just happy-hour talk—and I found my earnest self assuring him that, oh yes, academic writing nowadays will tolerate a number of different styles and voices. (I should know, right? I'm in academic publishing.) He choked; he slapped my arm; he laughed out loud. I don't remember if he spit his drink back in the glass. Silly me, I was serious. And, among other things, I was thinking about this essay/dialogue, in which we're turning discourse conversations of the net—often a rather casual medium—into some fairly stuffed-shirt academic purposes.*

Interesting that you call it an essay/dialogue (nice slide, that one). But many readers will expect a "real" essay here—or, betterwise, an academic essay. And we know what that means: a single voice, a single point (to which all the others are handmaidens), a coherence that's hierarchically anchored.

We couldn't say this in one voice. We—Griffin, Sabine, and Georgia notwithstanding—aren't one; we don't have identical points of view. This could have been an

Kathleen Yancey and Michael Spooner discovered a common affinity for the net while Kathleen was developing her collection, *Profiles in the Writing Classroom: An Introduction*, and Michael was Senior Editor at NCTE. They have written together on email. First the concluding chapter for Kathleen's *Voices on Voice*, and then the present text. Michael from his desk in Logan, where (when he isn't emailing) he directs the Utah State University Press, and Kathleen from an English Department computer lab at UNC Charlotte, where she teaches (when she isn't emailing). Their current project is an exploration of collaboration—where else?—online.



My right side didn't get the  
handout joke because my  
left side needed the assistance. I read the handout  
as a gloss.

(How many sides does a  
postmodern have?)



Myka V. s first submission to Kairos

**Not a Cosmic Convergence:  
Rhetorics, Poetics, Performance, and the Web**

or *Writing with My Eyes Open*  
(or *Never Talk to Strangers*)

Myka Vielstimmig



Cue house lights.  
Cue sound one.  
A dark night in a city that knows how to keep its secrets .  
...  
House lights down.  
Sound one.

*Bar tender, I'd like a manhattan, please.  
Stop me if you've heard this one,  
but I feel as though we've met before.  
Now tell me did you really think I'd fall for that old line?  
I was not born just yesterday.*

Cue visual one.

*besides I never talk to strangers anyway.*

Visual One.

I wanted to begin with something French and decadent. Something Baudrillardian, noir as I wanna be. But here at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, noir is--well, diverting, amusing, but...

Sign the parts?, asks I.  
Nope. Can't do it. I ain't  
signing no parts, no way,  
not today, not tomorrow,  
says I. Welllllllll, ok,  
says they.

We didn't sign the voices; we let the characters sort themselves out via type colors and fonts. In fact, we slipped in three new fonts and one new visual, just to be passive aggressive. We added a cast party. Very fun.

We're back to a piece of the ongoing composition, with monuments from earlier versions embedded like found objects. Like readymades . . .

Selected pages from the last version submitted to Kairos  
for the published webtext, see <http://english.ttu.edu/kairos/3.2>

[Intro](#) | [Handout](#) | [Bio](#) | [Works Cited](#) | [Cast Party](#)  
[one](#) | [two](#) | [three](#) | [four](#) | [five](#) | [six](#) | [seven](#) | [eight](#)



**Not a Cosmic Convergence:  
Rhetorics, Poetics, Performance,  
and the Web**  
*(Well, not necessarily . . .)*  
**or *Writing with My Eyes Open***  
*(or *Never Talk to Strangers* )*

**Myka Vielstimmig**

Matrise: Interior with  
violin (detail)

5 seconds, people . . .  
Cue house lights.  
Cue sound one. 3, 2, and

*Wait—first . . .  
A little  
Introduction  
for the Kairos  
reader.*

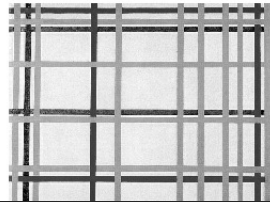
"A dark night in a city that:

[Intro](#) | [Handout](#) | [Bio](#) | [Works Cited](#) | [Cast Party](#)  
[one](#) | [two](#) | [three](#) | [four](#) | [five](#) | [six](#) | [seven](#) | [eight](#)

**Bartender, I'd like a ma  
Stop me if you've heard th  
Now tell me did you rea  
yesterday.**

**VII**

They make new and difficult  
demands on readers.  
--Kirsch



It's a fair point, and I like the irony  
that not so long ago, many C&W  
theorists were close to certain that  
the net was ushering in a new age  
of radical democracy. Still, and  
obviously, "fascism," in this  
discussion, has to be understood  
as a strategic hyperbole: surely  
there is no escape from choosing

**Visual Ten, please,  
and cue Sound Seven.**

and/or structuring in any act of  
creation. Sometimes a writer is  
only a writer.

**Cast Party**



Matrise: Interior with Violin

So, not a cosmic convergence-- Jackson Pollack  
notwithstanding.

Yes! Did you like that last one? Very funny, I thought.

Well, Not *Necessarily* a Cosmic Convergence (who's afraid of  
synchronicity?)

**Hand me a beer, will ya?**

Exactly! Why *not* convergence?

I still don't get it. I mean, who was I supposed to be?

**Can you just reach me a . . .**

*OK --> Writing with My Eyes Open (I still like that one.)*

*or: Never Talk to Strangers (did you ever hear Waits and Bette Midler  
do that tune? dyn-o-mite.)*

**Can I get a . . . ?**

*And what's with the pictures interrupting all the time?*

I never cared for the Cubists. So pre-postmodern. Tsk tsk.

**Cue the beer, please?**

.Cornell for  
ed.

**Huff huff.  
= interpretive  
responsibility?**







**Vielstimmig**

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# III

## **Pixels of Heroes and Heroines**

*Literature Hits Cyberspace*