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Week 5: Wardle and Downs - Williams Reflections

Getting Ready to Read activities – errors I often make in writing: grammar, spelling, punctuation, syntax, wrong choice of words, quotation and citation, etc. Although I know about these errors, I still make them because sometimes I get confused if they are really incorrect because people use them in conversation, on TV or movies. Moreover, it has been a long time since grammar school and I did not learn it well. Wikipedia defines phenomenology as “the philosophical study of the structures of experience and consciousness.” Basically, it is an attempt to objectively study topics that are often regarded as subjective. Phenomenologists believe we can have a greater understanding of nature through analyzing daily human behavior but they do not believe in clinical experiments or scientific methods, only through systematic reflection. By phenomenology of error, Williams means that writers are going to make errors naturally and it is unavoidable. To understand why writers make writing errors, we should analyze this behavior by phenomenological methods.

Questions for Discussion and Journaling – #3. I do agree that “most readers care much more about what the writing says than whether it’s completely mistake-free” (Williams 404). We look at the big picture, not the small punctuation or misspelling of a word. People who are professional writers of books, speeches, news, or teachers who are trained to write properly, would tend to find more errors in writing. It is ingrained in them to notice errors while the rest of us are not even sure if something is really an error. However, I see no point of his categorizing errors by “two variables: Has a rule been violated? And do we respond?” (Williams 413). It

might be straightforward to determine or notice if a rule has been violated, if we are trained professionals; but whether or not we should respond, it is rather subjective.

Applying and Exploring Ideas – #3. In this article, Williams describes a research project where “he [published] an article in a journal and built into it certain errors of grammar and usage” (418). Readers of the article were then asked to report which errors jumped out at them on the first reading. Those that were not noticed should not be what teachers look for first when they read a student’s paper. He tried to find out what errors were worth being noticed and needed corrections, and errors that were forgivable or should be ignored. He sent the article with Maxine Hairston of the University of Texas at Austin with grammatical and usage errors. At the end, he realized this exercise was futile. “The self-conscious report of what should be counted as an error is certainly an unreliable index to the unself-conscious experience” (Williams 419). Now I understand why Williams uses phenomenology to talk about errors. The perception of error is dependent on who the reader is and how he or she reads the writing. The reader may focus more on finding errors, put more value on whether the piece was written correctly, or focus on the content while neglecting some minor errors.

Week 5: Diaz Reflections

Hello Mr. Diaz,

I am honored to read your article, and I admire you so much for sharing the setbacks you have encountered in your writing career, which is exactly what many people experience every day. From your writing, I see that you struggled to get out of a predicament. “It was like [you] had somehow slipped into a No-Writing Twilight Zone, and couldn’t find an exit” (Diaz). You care about numbers—75 pages, five years, 60 months, every day. Time passes by; it quietly slips away mercilessly around us. And I am still standing here.

In fact, I also had such an experience. Eight years ago, by chance, I had an inspiration and wrote a song. At that time, I really fell in love with this melody. I knew it was a good song, but I did not know who to share it with. I occasionally played it to my friends, and they would tell me “Sounds great.” But that was it. I knew I should go a step further and add more harmonies, modulate the piece or add instruments, and even push the piece even more. There were times when I felt like you, when “I wrote, and I wrote, and I wrote, but nothing I produced was worth a damn” (Diaz).

I also seemed to want to give up being a musician and do something else, but I really didn't know what else I could do. Maybe I can find a job, but I will definitely be unhappy and feel lost from being away from music. Just because we are obsessed with music, just like you are obsessed with becoming a writer, we will cherish everything at present. When George Frederic Handel was at the lowest point in his life, he composed the *Messiah* in twenty-four days in his room. With very little sleep and skipped meals, he completed the work. I cannot imagine what kind of space and time he needed to do this. He even gave orders not to allow his servants to disturb his thoughts. I admire Handel’s persistence and perseverance very much. Maybe those

twenty-four days and nights were very long for him or maybe as short as three days. I do not know, but I imagine Handel was just like you, writing until the 24th day when he opened the door and came out and told the servant that he saw heaven! Hallelujah!

One day, our doors will open! After six years, I took my beloved piece titled La Romance to my composition class and asked my professor, Dr. Victoria Bond, to look at it. She loved it so much! I was honored to receive such good comments from Dr. Bond. La Romance will be heard by people at my senior recital.

Best wishes,

MeiChen Liu

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