

This unedited transcript is for a webtext interview (conducted by Geoffrey Middlebrook) with Beth Hewett in the 17.1 issue of *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*. For the full webtext, see <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net>.

What do you suggest in response to the theoretical issue that you are outlining?

Well, I think that we need to enter an intense phase of research and instructional training related to the written essay response and critique. I think we need to learn a lot more about what semantic integrity might look like and how students might read and apply it when their job is to do so without the benefit of face-to-face conferences, or even telephones or synchronous chat. [We also need to consider] how we can otherwise improve our response and approach to student writing when almost all of the instruction is text-based.

For example, I'm entering into a study with Therese Thonus about metaphor and how when it's used in a conscious manner, may help or perhaps hinder students as they are learning to revise in response to feedback that they have received.

We also need to look at training. We tend to prepare teachers for all levels of classroom work, face-to-face, and online discussions. We look at the technologies of online platforms, and we even help some people with course design. We need to prepare educators a lot more about responding to writing using writing. We might even think about that as a genre that has to be addressed. I think written response undoubtedly is a key part of the teaching and learning process for any level of composition, but I think it is most important in the online setting.

Is the reading and writing problem you allude to only encountered in an OWI setting?

No. I think students' reading problems in OWI likely occur in any setting, but they may be exacerbated in the online setting. Similarly, I think that teachers' instructional writing problems occur in traditional face-to-face settings, too, and ought to be addressed, but they also are exacerbated in the online writing setting where things are text-heavy.

I think educators in both settings would benefit from the kind of text-focused essay response training that I am suggesting. In both traditional and online writing instructional environments, there is a need for semantic integrity. Teacher preparation for this very basic level of teaching is low, I think. A useful theory of digital response to writing would do well to encourage a program of cross-investigation and training.

It seems OWI presents challenges that are found, but not "exacerbated," as you put it, in a traditional setting. Is this not a reason to avoid online writing instruction? After all, many educators are on the fence about OWI.

If you know me at all, you know that I can't just advocate walking away from OWI. It's a fact—it exists. OWI is practiced. It's preferred by many teachers and tutors and students. And it's just not going to go away.

I think it's our job as researchers and educators to find ways to help this increasingly digital educational venue work well for the wide variety of students who find that online education is their best way into an education.

I also think that we're just starting to scratch the surface. With a stronger effort on the part of more researchers to investigate OWI at the fundamental levels of reading and writing, I think we can improve

our craft. And [we can] help more students to make strides with their writing while they are in our online classes and using our online writing centers.