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My Soul Cries Out: Reimagining Lament for Research and Language Practice with Edwidge Danticat

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MY SOUL CRIES OUT: REIMAGINING LAMENT FOR RESEARCH AND LANGUAGE PRACTICE WITH EDWIDGE DANTICAT

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the implications of the genre of lament for the writing classroom. The thesis will address how Edwidge Danticat, a Haitian author, expresses joy and sorrow in her writing and how she can serve as a model text for students as they write. The thesis will also consider what Danticat's use of language means for the writing classroom, language policies, and the CCCC's "Student's Right To their Own Language" position statement.

As Danticat explores the individual and communal juxtaposition of tragedy and celebration, her writing echoes the varied tenor and emotions of the Psalms. The Psalmic style is less tidy and linear than popular interpretation, and Danticat explores the non-linear tensions between lament and joy. Haunting tales of national and personal life and death, separation and reunion are structurally played across her works. The heartrending sequence of life and death is eloquently explored through personal stories set against larger tales of Haitian immigration. Just as the Psalmist employs the *vav adversative*, or turning movements of joy and lament, Danticat likewise expresses her fluid engagement with the range of human experience (Card 75, 70). Danticat's Psalmic aesthetic and her "fully awake and alive" wrestling with grief and celebration helps readers reconsider personal and national tragedy and triumph in their own writing.

Keywords: Psalmic Aesthetic, lament, grief, invention, writing classroom, Edwidge Danticat

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Living Lament

Besides the ongoing tragedies in the wake of Covid-19 and the current war in Ukraine, I have never felt as much sadness as I experienced while living and teaching in Rwanda. Just twenty years after the genocide, every April for about 100 days the country would go into mourning. Businesses would shut down, the parochial international school where I taught secondary English would close for about 10 days. The people would publicly meet at the stadium as the country broadcasted a sort of yearly national funeral and other weeklong memorial remembrance services. The grief of the country, just "below the waterline" outside these 100 days, broke loose from deep underground and flooded like a tsunami.

One student's father, who had been studying at university in Canada during the 1994 genocide, was the only remaining member of his family. He would become mired in his grief every April and shut himself off from his wife and children. I'll never forget the lament in her voice as she expressed such sorrow and helplessness that she could do nothing about her father's consuming grief. My own experiences of living as a secondary English teacher and expat in East Africa and living through genocide memorials, bombings, and hair-raising political elections made me grapple with grief in a way my fairly sheltered and comfortable western family had never experienced. Besides witnessing national tragedies, the personal loss in relationships as the community

changed and being away from the support system of my family awakened a longing in me to understand the need for lament in life.

What words can help us express what we see and experience when “darkness” seems to be our only friend? For me and for my students, I found that befriending the genre of lament offered much for the classroom. Reading the Psalms and authors who write in a psalmic style and aesthetic, which explored the range of emotion in the human experience, brought both comfort and clarification for myself and my students. Lament, as seen in a "psalmic aesthetic" can include biblical psalms, though it is not exclusive to a Christian framework or the Judeo-Christian literary tradition. A psalmic style is one which holds the tension of grief and celebration in the same narrative. A story told in the psalmic style asks questions about life or suffering, or what it means to be human. Stories written in the “psalmic” either rhetorically or directly invite the audience to a perspective shift, while still infusing the reader with some kind of hope beyond the story itself. Beginning personal and research writing from a place of lament often has led to deeper and more rich research for myself and my students, which can be seen in the classroom stories I share in more detail in Chapter 4. Whether it was voicing our sorrow through reading novels, which explored the range of life experiences of both joy and sorrow, or writing lament poetry, or beginning research from a topic we personally grieved –the genre of lament gave us language for what we often could not express.

Like the writing and research process, the Psalmic style is neither tidy nor linear. Edwidge Danticat and other helpful authors such as Uwem Akpan, Julia Alvarez, Gary Schmidt, William Shakespeare, Sandra Cisneros, Tim O'Brien-- friends for the journey-- have given me language and voice to express sorrows and joys of living, teaching internationally, and working cross-culturally. These authors help to capture the contradictions and tensions in the liminal spaces of being an expat or being in transition. While I walked beside students who lost siblings to cancer or missed important family events like weddings or births, these authors, particularly Danticat, were ones I would return to and make space for in my writing classroom. The haunting tales of national and personal life and death, separation and reunion which are structurally played across Danticat's works, are much like what I've experienced with students in the writing classroom. Danticat's psalmic aesthetic and her fully awake and alive wrestling with grief and celebration help students gain language and expression in the writing classroom.

Thesis Objectives

What might lament, and Danticat's expression of it, offer for research writing and invention? Danticat writes in a way which is both personal narrative and researched autoethnography. As Danticat explores the individual and communal juxtaposition of tragedy and celebration, her writing echoes the varied tenor and emotions of the Psalms. Danticat's writing offers a model for students as they explore what issues grieve them and how to write with hope.

This thesis aims to explore what lament could mean for language and writing in the composition classroom. Making space for diverse voices in the writing classroom can help students gain the vocabulary to articulate what is their due as a writer and a human, or the right to their own language. Using Danticat as our guide, I will examine how exposure to diverse authors and ranges of emotions in writing can liberate students to find the words and right to their own language. By using Danticat as a model text rather than a base or core text, students will still be able to explore how they could model research from Danticat's example, rather than be restricted to only examining the issues Danticat touches on. Rather than reading the entire novel and basing a project off of a core text, model texts are texts in which students read excerpts for inspiration.

In this thesis, I aim to answer the following questions:

1. What can lament as a genre offer the writing classroom?
2. How might using Danticat as a model text facilitate accessing lament as a basis for students' personal research? How does using Danticat as a model text inform research invention more broadly?
3. How does lament meaningfully expand and reimagine the social-justice model of teaching writing to allow for student's right to their own language and topic selection?

Thesis Outline

This thesis will analyze Danticat's psalmic aesthetic and style, namely her use of lament in writing which is both personal narrative and ethnographic research[1]. This thesis will also examine how Haitian author Edwidge Danticat explores the non-linear tensions between life's lament and joy in her writing and its application to the writing classroom. In particular, Chapter 2, "Sacred Sorrow, Sacred Joy," will look at the ethos Danticat gains from writing about her family's personal and national experiences with the immigration system for Haitians in America. In Chapter 2, I demonstrate how to read Danticat rhetorically, which can serve as a springboard for students to consider both how she begins research from a personal sorrow, and to see how she uses language variety to develop her voice[2]. The thesis will then analyze the relationship between language and lament in Chapter 3 to understand how including lament and the affective in the research writing process adds nuance to research not found in the social justice model, as well as helping students discover their own languaging practice. Finally, as an educator and practitioner, I will propose a philosophy for teaching as well as strategies in "Chapter 4: Pedagogical Implications." It is one thing to talk and examine theories, but how could these ideas be embodied and practiced in the writing classroom? In the hopes of giving

[1] More on the differences and similarities between personal narratives and ethnographic research can be found at R.L. Krizek's article "Ethnography as the excavation of personal narrative". See Works Cited for more information.

[2] My activities in the index also teach students how to read Danticat, or other authors, rhetorically.

instructors more handles for practice, in the index there are with suggested "do now" activities and lesson plans for instructors to try out the concepts explored in the previous chapters.

What is lament?

Laments, expressions of grief by and for the community, are found in both sacred and secular texts. More secular laments are explored in an activity in the index. Laments are also found in the 150 poems which make up the Psalter in the Judaic Old Testament, as well as in other biblical texts. In considering laments in sacred texts, Old Testament scholar Ellen F. Davis writes in *Getting Involved with God: Rediscovering the Old Testament* that the "psalms [are the] single best guide to the spiritual life in print" (Davis 7). While many consider the psalms used in the Judaic Old Testament a merely celebratory book, the sheer number of laments outweigh the praises (Davis 14). In fact, as Davis explains, the "psalms are not all rhapsodies of praise, proclaiming God is enthroned in heaven [or that] all is right with the world. Many of them suggest that in fact there is a great deal wrong with the world, and they demand that God do something about it. They are at times, embarrassing" (9). As Michael Card expresses about the psalms and lament psalms in particular in *A Sacred Sorrow,* "we lack the language to describe our desolate place in this frustratingly verdant place" (28). Card suggests the problem with the evangelical North American church is that its failure to lament impedes the ability to know and truly reach out to the poor (29). Encouragingly, Danticat's writing decenters

this shortcoming in its sympathetic and honest engagement to know and understand the needs of refugees and exiles. Rather than simply addressing readers as digesters of her stories, Danticat challenges readers to reconsider the plight of all Haitians. Her spirituality as a writer is integrally woven into the fabric of the narrative and comes out in her lament over the perception of Haitians and immigrants at large. Danticat's writing makes room for what Walter Brueggemann calls the "difficult conversation" (32). For it is "lament [that] expresses one of the most intimate moments of faith–not a denial of it" (32). To lament is to exhibit "supreme honesty … [showing me] whom my faith tells me I can trust" (29-30). As Card explains, "only those "fully awake and alive can engage in lament" (Card 75, 70). In Danticat's lament, the "unacceptable offering" she expresses is to explore what it means to be human (29-30).

This unacceptable offering, "sorrow," when turned is akin to the Hebrew "vav adversative" present in the Psalms (Card 78-79). The English equivalent is a "but" or "still" kind of statement, a reversal. To lament is to express what is wrong with the world, but also to invoke a perspective shift. The "vav" (pronounced "waw"), like in the line of Psalm 121: 1-2: "I look to the hills (mountains), [but] where does my help come from?" To Card, this sixth Hebrew letter which can appear as a short vertical line with a "flag" when written in the serif, is a symbolic "perpetual 'flag' of hope blowing from the east" (Card 78, see fig 1). The grammatical significance of the vav adversative is that it works

commonly as an “and” but also a reversal (78). It is always “abrupt” for it marks the subtle shift, an “invisible line crossed” from “self to Elsewhere” (Card 78).

Figure 1: Sixth Hebrew Letter “Waw”

In Danticat’s writing, these subtle shifts occur seamlessly and countless times throughout her work. Just as the Psalmist employs the *vav adversative*, or turning movements of joy and lament, Danticat likewise expresses her fluid engagement with the range of human experience (Card 75, 70). For instance, she explores a simultaneous loss of her father due to terminal disease as she is pregnant in *Brother I’m Dying*. Also, in *The Dew Breaker,* the stories of each character are both independent and interdependent narratives intricately woven together to show the joy and sorrow of interconnected Haitians. As Helen Pyne-Timothy explains, she writes in a “circular” way which is “timeless” rather than linear (130). In many of her works she “jumps” through time, weaving narrative, news, and Haitian fable, like flicking through photographs. In a similar way, the psalms are less tidy, and less linear, than some analyses wish to make them. For instance, Psalm 13: “But, … I will sing to the LORD because he is good to me” is commonly interpreted as three tidy “movements” towards resolution, which is

perhaps a western construction of the piece (NLT). Reverend Tara Woodward[3], whose Master of Divinity thesis from Princeton Theological Seminary examines the perception of the psalms, explains from the Hebrew translation that there is fluidity to the psalms, which is hardly linear: "what does 'good' mean … does the psalm actually resolve"? In Hebrew, the verse would translate more closely to mean "the Lord dealt bountifully with me." However, to say the Lord "dealt bountifully with me" is at best, ambiguous, for "the action unto the person is unclear" (Woodward, Personal Interview). To *gamal* (or deal) isn't clear if it's a reward. Considering that "I will sing unto the Lord" may be classified as a lament song, that is an unclear resolution or reward (Woodward, Personal Interview). Other verses which explore *gamal* such as Deuteronomy 37, use *gamal,* in the context of weaning or to be weaned (BDB 168). Used in this context, weaning which is both beneficial and necessary, but also, incredibly painful. If Psalm 13 is a lament song, the "resolution is unclear." In other contexts where *gamal* is used such as 1 Samuel and 1-2 Kings, is the dealing for harm or for good? Just as the Psalmic style is less tidy and linear despite popular interpretations, Danticat similarly explores the tensions and circular pattern between lament and joy.

The genre of lament is to acknowledge all that is wrong, with the addition of a vav adversative, or a perspective shift. Lament often carries a negative connotation, but because engaging in lament requires the full emotional spectrum, it is not negative.

[3] From an interview with my sister, Rev. Tara Woodward

Lament invites a change in perspective. This perspective shift, as a vav adversative, is a reorientation, not willfully cheerful or overly optimistic, but a regrounding to help the writer see that not all is lost, even when all is not ideal. To lament is to acknowledge brokenness in systems and worldviews while still maintaining hope for restoration. While Lament is found in the Hebrew psalms, it is also common outside of sacred texts, and outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition. An exploration of other laments outside of the psalms, with accompanying suggested activity for students, can be found in the index.

What might lament offer the writing classroom?

How might the lament genre reimagine research? The genre of Lament is not new, but this ancient form could offer much for students as they grapple with research and the role of the emotive in writing. Similarly, the social role of lament in writing and invention is under-explored. As Anis Bawarshi argues, to teach invention in the context of genre, is to help students understand a "way of being and acting in the world in relation to others within certain circumstances" (15). Students taught invention as part of a genre will be equipped to transfer this knowledge into new rhetorical situations. If students and instructors approach writing instruction from the genre of lament, this can begin a new way of being and acting in research which can help them transfer research invention into new contexts.

Both lament and invention are social acts. Karen Burke LeFevre agrees, arguing in *Invention as a Social Act,* that even when the agent of invention is the individual, "invention is pervasively affected by rela-tionships of that individual to others through lan-guage and other socially shared symbol systems" (1-3). Lament psalms are always

written for the community and in the context of the public. Sadly, as Bawarshi explains, many instructors continue to ignore "the social and rhetorical effects of writing" both on the audience and the writers themselves (153). Writing is not always viewed as "socially embedded" (166). Yet, as Bawarshi argues, writers are affected by their context and the conditions in which they write (153). The genre of lament, rather, works with the social act of invention instead of against it, as it transforms the writer's inquiry from the self to also look outward (153). By teaching students that lament in invention is both private and public, individual and social, both the act of repositioning and expressing, instructors can teach the rhetorical moves our students will need beyond the writing classroom (Bawarshi 154). The repositioning of the writer, which the genre of lament demands, is critical as students explore genre and gain rhetorical flexibility.

The more engaged writers are, the better the writing. Likewise, by examining the role of emotions in research invention and composition, more light will be shed on the role of emotions in writing in general and how emotions engage a writer in the writing process. There is some research on writing transfer, emotions, and the role of the affective in writing. Yet, the role of emotions specifically in the writing classroom remains under-examined.

Reading model texts which explore grief can help us identify and process our own grief. Identifying our own griefs may help us better choose topics with which we will engage well in research writing. Heather Bastian's study of student responses to nontraditional genres advocates working with student feelings rather than "resist[ing],

being disappointed by, or even ignoring" student responses as instructors explore new genres and modalities (7). We cannot predict the genres or issues students will face beyond our classrooms. But by giving ear and eye to the affective in student writing, we are attuned to writing which "an emotional as well as cognitive activity, we feel as well as we think when we write" (McLeod 9). If "emotions are profoundly intertwined with thought" how might they be profoundly intertwined with research topic selection and a base for writing? How might students tap into their emotions during the research process and apply them, negatively or positivity, later? Bastian calls for more work on the study of emotions, in the wilds of the classroom, and particularly in the study of writing (10).

Traditional Approaches to Teaching Danticat

In *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Edwidge Danticat,* several models for teaching undergraduate and graduate students are discussed. However, only three chapters approach using Danticat in the context of the writing classroom. In Chapter 11, Editor Celucian L. Joseph includes two sample syllabi for course models, one of which is for an English Composition II course. Though students do compose in this class, the course content has a large emphasis on literary composition and literary genre analysis, rather than research or argument-based writing (250-256). In Chapter 15 of *Approaches*, another model for teaching Danticat through the lens of writing is proposed. However, again, the curriculum is heavy on literary readings with the primary texts being *Brother I'm Dying* and *Literature: Reading Fiction, Poetry, and Drama* (246). Like Joseph's

proposal, the writing activities remain heavily influenced by literary analysis activities, perhaps more suitable to an Introduction to Literature course rather than a composition or introductory writing course. While readings are important to any writing course, in each course model proposed, the literary readings and reading load appear to outshine the writing activities and objectives. In each course proposed, writing about the reading becomes a secondary activity rather than a primary focus in the course. This style of teaching writing, as secondary to reading, is fairly common among professors, particularly those who do not specialize in composition or rhetoric. However, in this thesis about the use of lament in writing, I suggest that any readings, such as Danticat, remain secondary to writing, and instead serve as model texts, rather than primary texts or focuses for writing.

Notably, in Part IV of *Approaches,* "Citizen-Artist and Teaching as Activism" unpacks how to use Danticat to teach social activism and writing across the disciplines, but neither angle fully explores the implications of Danticat in the writing classroom. Usually, Danticat is merely treated as an additional literary text, as sort of instructor "fan favorite" rather than meaningfully contributing to Writing Program Administrators Outcomes for First-Year Composition and habits of mind in more fully understanding the composing process. While Danticat is analyzed from every angle and theme, no chapters touch at length on the role of the affective in Danticat and the implications for the writing classroom. The role of religion is broadly analyzed, such as the use of religion, prayer, Pentecostalism, or religious themes like redemption and hope (242-248). Despite the

comprehensive analysis of theme and social activism, there is no specific attention to the way religion or spirituality is "worked" out and how that could provide a model text for students in invention for research. In fact, using Danticat as a model text for research, with the exception of feminist ethnography in Camila Alvarez's Chapter 14, is never explored and likewise the use of Danticat for other forms of research, such as autoethnographic research, is never mentioned (318). While Alvarez does propose the question: "how might a teacher use Edwidge Danticat's *Create Dangerously* to teach college writing in the classroom as an activist and connecting practice?" it is not fully explored to allow students to determine what kind of activism and "connection" they might make for themselves and their own research. Instead, the subsequent writing prompts Alvarez proposes demand that students focus their writing on instructor chosen topics: social activism and the environment. Alvarez's prompts, while not bad, appear to be more instructor-oriented than student-oriented as they seem to cater more to her own interests and research agenda rather than meet composition objectives and student-driven research more broadly. For example, in one assignment prompt, Alvarez describes that students in an introductory writing classroom would read a passage from Danticat's *Create Dangerously* and then write a "rhetorical activist writing assignment" (319). At first this seems to help students consider genre as Bawarshi says good transfer does, or helping students to recognize a "way of being and acting in the world in relation to others within certain circumstances" (150). However, Alvarez goes on to explain, the assignment would also focus on both the "displaying" and "witnessing" of the "destruction and beauty of the natural world" by writing multi-genre mini essays which

are also interdisciplinary and self-reflexive and political (150). While Alvarez's prompts do ask students to attend to a specific rhetorical situation about an important and current issue (environmental activism), it seems in the description of her assignment that there is a conflict in assignment goals. Later, Alvarez says the writing assignment will also be art-based research in addition to a response to readings from *Create Dangerously.* The prompt aims to accomplish too much, or certainly more than a student in an introductory writing course could manage effectively or be able to articulate clearly the transferable skills they acquired through the project. While Alvarez means well, and clearly is aiming to keep the projects personally engaging as well as multi-disciplinary while challenging her students to go deeper, it again feels as though there is a conflict in objectives and purpose in the assignment. A conflict in objectives can lead students to find the assignment confusing and frustrating, and they may instead resort to writing about what they think the instructor wants to hear rather than their own ideas or experiences. Alvarez's topic of literature, environment, and experience seems more suited to a special topics in literature course rather than an introductory writing course.

Alternatively, I propose to teach writing and research using lament and model texts like Danticat as a springboard, as is helpful for the students. Like Alvarez, students would use Danticat as a model and guide to see how lament can inform research. However, unlike Alvarez, I would not expect students to respond to the model passages as part of the larger assignment. In the index, I propose sample activities and lessons to help students begin thinking how Danticat could inspire their own research. The personal narrative and ethnographic style of Danticat's writing would more serve as the excavation

of possible research topics and avenues. Students need models which guide by inviting creative brainstorming. Using Danticat as a model, we will begin with her writing as a model text to help them understand the various personal research they could conduct in the areas where they "lament," and then students can move beyond topics Danticat explores to topics which are more personally engaging to them. Lament helps students explore the range of emotions associated with the writing topics that deeply move them. As writers consider beginning research and invention from a place of lament, they can explore both personal and national tragedy and triumph. Using lament in teaching research writing could work both for first year composition as well as for dual-credit secondary educators in English/Language Arts classrooms preparing students for college-level research writing.

Significance of the Study:

Lament to Re-envision the Social Justice Teaching Model

Because invention is socially constructed, is it essential that mentor texts such as Danticat be used in the writing classroom to give students companions for the journey. As LeFevre explains, the inventing self is socially influenced in the writing process anyway, and invention builds on the work of others (35). Invention can be enabled by dialogue, both internal and external, real or imagined (LeFevre 35-36). The standard way to teach research exploration and invention for research is to ask students "what interests them." A more current angle is to relate the research topic to social justice of some kind. Susan Archambault's "Research Exploration Exercise" from Project CORA respins the

research invention process to include a social justice angle. Her activity asks students to consider a problem, the population the problem affects, and how serious the problem is. Unique from other invention exercises found in the Writing Across the Curriculum Clearinghouse book *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 1*, Archambault adds a "moral" dynamic: "where does [your research problem] fall on the moral spectrum?" (1). Her research invention activity also includes a "Social Structures and Social Justice" element, asking students to consider at least two of the following areas: economics, culture, politics, environment, and religion (Archambault 3). She also asks students to consider the "common good" and which populations are most affected by the current status quo. Such exercises could help students situate their research in a wider social context and, if they did not have it before, gain a personal interest or investment.

Likewise, Shane McCoy advocates a "writing for justice" model to advance social justice pedagogies (27). McCoy's model focuses on personal experience, social understanding, and activism to teach writing to "the practice of freedom" instead of institutional conformity, as students "deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world" (27). He explains that his motivation to encourage social justice in the writing classroom is born out of "critical pedagogy's lack of focus on students' experiences [which] motivates me to inquire into how writing pedagogy might function as a vehicle for motivating students to take up social justice in their coursework and everyday lives" (28). He claims his approach is to

subvert capitalist university goals to enlist students as "knowledge producers" and explore their own personal stakes in the issues and topics they write about (29).

McCoy's model, like Archambault's, is initially inspiring. What writing instructor does not envision changed lives and social causes advanced as a result of their instruction? Yet, to teach composition from a social justice model only is not enough. Is the social justice "angle" to advance the agenda of the instructor or the student? What if an instructor disagrees with a social cause a student wants to promote? How "open-minded" to "diverse perspectives" are instructors willing to be? McCoy only discusses students who "saw the light," or wrote narratives of change of perspective. Similarly, Jaclyn Fiscus-Cannaday and Sophia Watson propose a "Special Topics in Composition" model with a focus on the feminist grassroots social justice model. Though this is labeled as a "special topics" course, it does beg the questions: if the course is too instructor-led and students must choose a topic from the instructor-provided list, how much room does that give students to explore their own interests? Will students then just write to "please" the instructor or will they engage meaningfully with the topic? How much of the course is still about the instructor objectives, rather than WAC or WPA objectives?

I am not anti-equality, nor do I think just maintaining the status quo of society is appropriate either. But how much more ethos does Danticat gain from writing about her family's personal and national experiences with the immigration system for Haitians in America than writing about the experiences of immigration for Latinos or Somali

refugees? It is not enough to go up in arms over a social cause, even worthy ones, without the personal investment of lament. To picket and protest the injustices of the Rwandan genocide in the face of my student's drawn and mute father every April is not enough. Writing from a place of lament is to practice hope: both to acknowledge what is unjust in the rhetorical situation while advocating for justice as a result of the research. Students need to engage in the affective and be given opportunities for research invention drawn from personal experience.

Faith Kurtyka proposes a social justice model with more sensitivity than McCoy or Fiscus-Cannaday and Watson. Kurtyka argues for a more balanced perspective in recognizing that change of perspective is slow and that an "epiphany" is not an effective or fair model to judge student writing. Rather than approaching students and research out of a deficit model, Kurtyka advocates using the "Funds of Knowledge" approach to view students as contributors rather than receivers (48). While McCoy does help students situate social justice in the context of their discipline through an activity where they google their discipline + social justice (ie: "chemistry + social justice"), many of the mentioned writing topic prompts remain instructor-led rather than instructor-facilitated with room for student engagement (30). Furthermore, his approach may treat students like inadvertent racists, in the way it assumes students to approach the class from. This is seen in his description of one essay requiring extra secondary research, he describes the purpose of the assignment is for: "students who descend from overly privileged positions

to understand conversations about race, class, and gender" and for "disenfranchised students … to harness personal experiences for critical inquiry" (33). McCoy means well in aiming to cultivate conversations about justice in the composition classroom, but again, he makes large assumptions about the students who walk through his classroom, separating them into two unhelpful categories: overly privileged or disenfranchised. Such a binary stance is unhelpful and from my experiences as an educator, I would advise against making assumptions and categories about the students who walk through our doors. Faith Kurtyka warns against this as the curriculum he proposes preaches to students rather than trying to meet students where they are at. Notably, McCoy's philosophical proposal mentions the "emotion" or affective only four times, as a bit of an afterthought, and in passing, as if disconnected from social justice or motivation for writing about justice issues.

Faith Kurtyka warns of ineffective pedagogy which is "otherwise privileged," because if a curriculum "preaches to students" with the claim of being personal, yet with the underlying assumption that students are "devoid of real experiences of inequality" in their own lives, it fails to move students to action or a change in perspective (Kurtyka). Kurtyka approaches the teaching of social justice in a First-Year curriculum as one which legitimizes student lived experience and aims through a "gradual and nurturing approach" to teach social justice issues without making students feel "guilty or defensive" (50). She proposes a unit which asks students to consider the ways academic discourse is exclusive

and give rise to inequality (50). While most students do not propose changes to the traditional model of ENG 101 courses, unlike McCoy, she aims to not assess the writing based on an "enlightenment" narrative, but more the gradual reality of inequality (50).

While the social justice and power structure analysis angle is a unique approach to research, the approach remains problematic. Kurtyka's model is certainly more inclusive, but like Alvarez, the temptation of this style of writing class might be to choose a topic which is trendy rather than one that personally moves, or grieves, the student researcher. This is where lament, which must be both inward and outward, can take the socially situated act of research invention to include both the personal and national.

Conclusion

The impact of lament on research for the writing classroom is under-explored. To write from a place of lament is a practice of hope in research. By including Danticat as a model to teach research writing and guide through lament, students can more fully engage with their topic selection to be student-driven rather than instructor-led. We often tell students to be the change they wish to see in the world. Lament is one way students can work toward redemption of the injustices they see, and even of the injustices that have affected them personally.

Chapter 2: Sacred Sorrow, Sacred Joy: the Psalmic Aesthetic in Edwidge Danticat

"My father was dying and I was pregnant.
Both struck me as impossibly unreal." (*Brother* 14)
"He loved you so much...he left you with us." (*Brothe*r 77)
"It was a miracle, be it a sad one." (*Dew Breake*r 240)

Edwidge Danticat wrote in *Create Dangerously*, that "all artists have stories," or "creation myths," which "haunt them" (5). For her, it was the execution of Marcel Numa and Louis Drouin, two Haitian revolutionaries, that served as an embodiment of "the heartrending clash of life and death, homeland and exile" (*Create* 5). Similarly, this heartrending clash of life and death is seen in her memoir, *Brother I'm Dying,* the personal story of her family and the larger tale of Haitian immigration. The haunting tale of national and personal tragedies is a structure played out thematically in her other works. The individual and communal juxtaposition of tragedy and celebration are further explored in *The Dew Breaker* and *Create Dangerously*.

For me, reading Danticat is like singing the line from Handel's Messiah, "comfort, comfort ye my people." Grief can be isolating, so singing or reading of someone else's grief and comfort reminds me that we are not alone in the loneliness of lament. For my student whose father had survived the Rwandan Genocide, reading Danticat generously offers hope and communal comfort and models the way writing can be cathartic. Just as Beatrice from *The Dew Breaker* sews wedding dresses as her "salvation," for Danticat and for students, "writing [is] a healing art" both personally and nationally (McEntryre 49). Author and professor Marilyn McEntryre found Danticat's

reflection on her mother's death in *The Art of Death: Writing the Final Story* helpful in processing her own daughter's death, for to write is to speak the will to live (46). As McEntrye explains, the purposes of writers who use lament are "similarly urgent and generous: [for] they map personal journeys in some hope of offering usable guidance, realistic reflection on grief and grace, a stay against the confusions of sentimentality, polite conventions, and fear" for the whole of human experience (46). Though writing about grief is "oddly trendy, " Danticat moves beyond personal "I" tragedies to also examine greater communal "thou" national travesties (McEntyre 46). McEntryre claims Danticat's fascination with writing about life and death stems from something deeper, or "a desire for the holy, for prayer" or "for the kind of writing that becomes prayer" (50). "Grief memoirs," in a similar way to laments, are the "opposite of self-indulgent" as they instead are "a generous offering to the rest of us" (McEntryre 50). Danticat's narrative of lament and praise serves as the perfect template for personal and national sorrows.

Amidst tales of personal and national tragedy, Danticat gives hope and comfort. For Danticat makes "sadness beautiful" as her character Anne in *The Dew Breaker* is described (176). Her family has suffered much, and yet, she is not bitter. How can this be? She holds joy and sorrow together in a way that lingers long after the tale is finished. Her narratives invite the reader into her family and to return to the communal narratives of our communities, because our stories are never about ourselves only. The narrative continues to shake us to the core–readers and writers position their own sufferings in light

of the international tragedy of COVID. Reading her writing is to have balm applied to the deepest wounds of the soul: her Psalmic aesthetic, or the way in which Danticat's writing mirrors the writing of the psalms, gives a template for grief and celebration. Including Danticat as a model to teach research writing gives students a perspective to more fully engage with their topic selection through lament.

The Spirituality of Danticat

To understand the Psalmic at work in Danticat, it is essential to acknowledge the role of spirituality at work in her writing. Danticat's skill as a writer lies in her ability to engage with the whole personhood of the reader or the "physical, mental, and spiritual" aspects of people (Alvarez n.p.). She portrays the characters "within the context of their entirety" (Alvarez n.p.)-- both their spirituality and their exile, or what Danticat terms, "*dyaspora*"(*Create* 49). As Michael Card explains about lament, Danticat writes in the pslamic style of lament because she is not afraid to voice the "unacceptable offering" which is lament (Card 75). She is most "fully awake and alive," engaging in the range of both the human and immigrant experience (Card 70).

Danticat explains that "dyaspora" is a Creole word to describe "any dispersal of people to foreign soils" though it carries personal connotations for her (*Create* 49). Danticat takes *dyaspora* as a specifically Haitian term to describe the thousands of Haitians scattered around the world as well as her personal experience of getting

unvoiced among the national Haitian community for being a "diasporic"—an immigrant-writer who expresses "opposing political views" (*Create* 49-50).

Helen Pyne-Timothy in "Language, Theme and Tone in Edwidge Danticat's Work" expands on the attraction to Danticat's work as an appeal to "primal emotions" (137). In *Brother*, Danticat juxtaposes life and death, hope and grief. Danticat explores the range of human emotions and experiences, including the tensions of opposing primal emotions. In particular, she explores voice and voicelessness in *Brother I'm Dying* by sharing how her uncle literally loses his voice and regains it through a voice box. The emotional spectrum of voice and voicelessness is strung out through the narrative, causing the reader to journey from joy to sorrow alongside the tale. As Marilyn McIntyre explains, it is the way Danticat insists on full acknowledgement of agony before "assigning meaning to it" where the power of her storytelling lies (46). Just as the Biblical Psalms explore the range and depth of emotions, "even for people who live in sure and certain hope of [a Christian] resurrection or life after death" so, too, does Danticat (McIntyre 46). To understand Job, is to come to terms with "the deepest meanings we seek in suffering remain shrouded in mystery, and what we have to learn is not about why, but about Whom"(McIntrye 46). Danticat's work explores the gamut of human experience and is never a bitter "why" but points to a larger and divine Whom in the midst of lament and suffering.

Danticat's Psalmic and Spiritual Aesthetic

Danticat's wrestle with voice and identity in *Create Dangerously* further illustrates a kind of spirituality which permeates her work. She recounts the true story of Jean Dominique, a Haitian radio commentator and political activist, in Chapter 3 of *Create Dangerously*, "I am Not a Journalist." Dominique's story of exile and assassination is heartbreaking, even more so as he constantly called for an "end" to the senseless political deaths: "It has to stop" (48). Dominique is in exile, yet lives in a now-and-not yet place for Haiti, even as he prayerfully declares: "My country needs hope" (46). Danticat wrestles with her own sense of self as "dyaspora" who is often silenced and feels as though she is from a country of "uncertainty," lamenting the liminal in-between space of her identity (49-50). Yet, Dominique reminds her "the *Dyaspora* are people with their feet planted in both worlds … There's no need to be ashamed of that. There are more than a million of you. You all are not alone" (51). Danticat recalls in *Brother I'm Dying*: "It's not easy to start over in a new place... Exile is not for everyone. Someone has to stay behind, to receive the letters and greet family members when they come back" (Brother 140). As Danticat reconstructs the fractured pieces of herself, Dominique speaks into her *dignitatius humanea*, the dignity of her humanity and experience as a Haitian-American, a diasporic-exile-immigrant (Shoup n.p.). As a man familiar with exile and migration (both in Haiti and abroad), he embodied *dyaspora*, and lived it as an expression of his future hope for Haiti, having his feet planted firmly in both

the world of his beloved Haiti and internationally to drum up support for the fight against national corruption. Just as with lament, or in the story of Dominique, there is the sorrow of the "now" situation in Haiti while still hoping for change. The spirituality of "I am Not a Journalist" lies in Dominique's embodiment and incarnation of "*guapa*," or to be stunningly courageous, and "beautifully brave" which permeates the tragic tale (47). In many ways, Dominique displays a kind of divine "immanence" in his involvement with the creation of Haiti as a just and free place, especially as legend holds his "ghost" is spotted long after his death (52). Whether his ghost was seen or not, his presence permeates the story with a kind of divinity. Dominique's life and death serve as a kind of metaphor for a "global solidarity" which unites Haitians at "home" in Haiti or abroad. In processing this senseless death of her friend and mentor through alternate "praise" and "lament," she comes to understand that it is the "pieces" of her identity that unify, not fracture her life experience.

Danticat's writing echoes the varied tenor and emotions of the Psalms in that it is told as a story and a straightforward account, both a lament over the hardships of life and a celebration of lives lived. In many ways, reading Danticat is to undergo a kind of spiritual "*examen* or *lectio divina*[4]," as the reader likewise must consider their whole selves and context as they read her work (Alvarez n.p.).

[4] *Examen*, meaning deep reflection and evaluation, is a spiritual practice most commonly found in the Jesuit tradition. This practice where a person reads (or reflects) with the eyes of the heart with the aim to apply what was reflected on to life. Similarly, the literary analysis technique of close reading of any passage or author is like the Catholic practice of *lectio divina*. *Lectio divina*, meaning divine reading, is the

Sorrow and Joy in Danticat

How does Danticat hold the tensions between sorrow and joy? Throughout *Brother I'm Dying*, the motif of life amidst death emerges. Danticat opens the narrative with the juxtaposition of her father's cancer diagnosis alongside the news that she is expecting her daughter: "my father is dying and I'm pregnant" which strikes her as "impossibly unreal" (13-14). Later, Danticat shares her disorientation of the creation of life amidst life's resolution, death, "all of a sudden I couldn't help but think of an alternative scenario, making this happy announcement to an unsick father … perhaps my only unease might have been the mild sense of embarrassment, however celebratory, with one's parents" (46). This motif of birth and death are twin companions throughout *Brother I'm Dying.* Stretching the metaphor of birth, Danticat explores her uncle's rescue of her cousin Marie Micheline, who "attracts bad" but "isn't a bad person" (133). Marie experiences "new" life in Uncle's rescue from her abusive *Macoute* husband: "Papa, even though men cannot give birth, you just gave birth tonight. To me" (86). This scene should be a happy reunion of a prodigal daughter returned to father, but Danticat instead weaves sorrow and joy with poignancy to explore the resurrection of Marie.

Likewise, Danticat holds the tensions between sorrow and joy in the way the characters' lives interconnect. In *Brother I'm Dying*, Danticat weaves the story of her two "fathers," both her biological one and her uncle by also interspersing other family lore in

practice of attending to the text not to dissect it to death but for the purpose of meditation or prayer. Danticat's writing invites this sort of meditative reading and reflection.

the narrative, such as the tale of her brother Bob “gelling” the family together after her immigration to America as a child. In the chapters “The Return” through “Gypsy”, she processes the experience of rejoining her family in New York and saying goodbye to her family who raised her in Haiti (87-112). Even still, she explores the loss of family as she gains her writing skill, as coming to New York inaugurated her role as a writer through the gift of a typewriter. While her brother is able to eat, feast, make her parents happy, Danticat shares her sorrow: “I only remember wishing … that my uncle had cried a torrent of tears” as she and her brother left. Again, this scene should be joyful, as Danticat and her brother are restored to their family in New York, but Danticat shares the shades of sorrow alongside joy as she laments the loss of her Haitian family (her Uncle and Aunt) at the expense of rejoining her parents in America. She recalls that her father’s hug “felt like more. It was, and still remains, the best welcome I’ve ever had in my life” for “it felt like love” even as she laments that her Uncle was unable to speak goodbye to them (114). It is in her father’s closing reassurance of “one papa happy, one papa sad” that she finds comfort for the mixed emotions of leaving and returning (111).

In *The Dew Breaker* the character’s lives are also interwoven with Psalmic joy and sorrow. The “Dew Breaker” is a Haitian creole term for the specialized torturer force who terrorizes Haitians during the regimes of François "Papa Doc"and Jean Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier. For instance, both Dany and the exiled husband of the reunited couple are mysteriously connected to a Dew Breaker who continues to haunt their lives

("Seven" 35-38). The story of both Dany and the husband is a lived expression of Danticat's "resident's anguish and exile's joy" in detailing the interplay between the hardships of separation and coming "home" (*Create Dangerously* 46). Moreover, just as the reunited couple are reconfiguring a life together, the reader learns that Dany is trying to understand his fractured past in "Night Talkers." Dany was orphaned, losing "his family to the dictatorship" and a fire which killed both his parents at the hands of a Dew Breaker (88, 97). He returns to Haiti to tell his aunt, Tante Estina, that he found the Dew Breaker, and to question their involvement in politics (109). However, in the midst of Dany's need to tell Tante Estina, she introduces him to Claude who was "sent back" or expatriated twice, to speak English since he knows little Creole (100). Perhaps Tante Estina, who never fully lets Dany finish his story, senses his need to find solidarity with someone who also lost a parent, like Claude. Yet, Claude's story is equally fractured, as it is revealed he murdered his father (104). Still, through Claude's story, Dany experiences a kind of new life. As Claude explains, "I'm a puzzle and these people are putting me back together" (102). For both Dany and Claude, and more largely Haiti, there is a 'puzzle' that the communal story helps to put back together. Claude's story and Tante's death provides a kind of "salvation" which inhibits Dany from enacting revenge. For Claude, his salvation comes from rejoining his people.

In addition to joy and sorrow, Psalmic fluidity and vav adversative are also noticeable in Danticat's probing of the full sense of humanity in *The Dew Breaker*. As the

main character wrestles with the news her father was a "dew breaker," a torturer, Ka states, "I should have removed the negatives" (23,77). To remove them, he is no longer a victim, he "is a violent man," he did make "one weep," he did "slay men and women," and he did "evil" (23). Yet, for all the horror Ka realizes her father has caused, Danticat instills a sense of humanity in him, "when he smiles the scar shrinks and nearly disappears into the folds of his cheek, which used to make me wish he would never stop smiling" (37). He has done "evil" yet is still human. Danticat reimagines the "humanity" of Ka's father, particularly in considering how it is that Ka's mother has come to love him despite his choices: "Another image of my mother [Anne] now fills my head. … At what point did she decide that she loved him? When did she know that she was supposed to have despised him?" (Gleibermann 6, Danticat 23). As Danticat explains in an interview with Erik Gleibermann in *World Literature Today*, "You have to grant a certain level of humanity to people who maybe, if you met them, you would not think they deserve … how they loved, how they lived, how they compartmentalized these things" (7). As Anne does and her daughter Ka comes to, "on a certain level you have to love them" (Gleibermann 7). No longer can his identity rest in being a Dew Breaker, he is now only known as Ka's father. Her mother explains to Ka that she is his "good angel," his "savior," or in them "it made him stop hurt[ing] the people" (25). Anne lives her life as this subtle and fluid vav adversative. Despite her personal losses or the death of her brother by her husband, Anne makes "sadness beautiful" because she chooses to "revise

who she was now, or who she wanted to become" rather than dwelling in vengeance (176, 241). More importantly, Anne chooses to revise the story to help Ka see the humanity in her own father, beyond his crimes.

The psalmic fluidity of Danticat extends to survey the dichotomies of countryside and the city, and how nature can be a metaphor for transformation. For instance, land serves the symbolic purpose of promise or wholeness. For Danticat, the beauty of the Haitian landscape contrasts with the despair under the rule of a dictatorship. Likewise, in *The Dew Breaker*, after Ka's father kills Anne's brother, she notices the sun rising with "gentleness" which she observes is the opposite of the scar forming across his face (253). These wounds foreshadow a kind of refining wholeness the Dew Breaker will undertake, as he allows Anne's goodness and compassion to seep into him (231). The "land" seems to cleanse and remove bitterness for other characters in *The Dew Breaker*. Though Claude claims reformation in prison, he declares living in the hills of Haiti, "I'm at peace here," and more importantly that he found restoration: "My family seems to have made peace with me" (103). Claude initially is critical of this "peasant" lifestyle, however, it is the very contact with his homeland and people which appears to provide a kind of salvation and purification for him. Dany, too, is saved from avenging the deaths of his parents for having walked up the mountain to visit Tante Estina one final time before her death. She lets him speak, but there is no bitterness at leaving her life on the mountain to raise him after his parent's death at the hands of dew breaker torturers (88, 109-110).

What's more, Tante Estina has no bitterness at their family's political involvement. When Dany asks her, "Were my parents in politics?," she responds "No more than any of us" (109). She recognizes that processing the trauma is like "walking up these mountains and losing something precious halfway. For you, it would be no problem walking back to find it … but for me it would take a lot more time and effort" (109). Perhaps sensing her own end, she does not dwell heavily in the past, though she recognizes that Dany will need to tread up a mountain, literally and figuratively, to process the trauma of his past and re-piece his childhood.

In *Brother I'm Dying*, land also acts as a purifying force. When Mira, Danticat's father, was a child his own father "ordered him to never go down the mountain, away from Beasejour" for the occupying American Marines would capture children for forced labor camps (245). In particular, when Uncle Joseph is forced to go to the market, he observes the American Marines kicking around a head like a soccer ball, acknowledging that "the world outside Beasejour was treacherous indeed" (246-247). People, such as the American Marines and even other Haitians, become less human outside the purifying hills of the countryside. Later, Danticat closes *Brother I'm Dying* by sharing how she imagines her uncle and father to be in a sort of vaguely "Christian" conception of heaven, conceived as inextricable from the landscape of Haiti. Couched between her clinical lab report of her uncle's final moments, her meditative reflection on her father's final days, and a cheeky Granme Melina folktale, she envisions a sort of "new heaven and a new

earth" with a heavenly "New Haiti" (265-267). As she remembers this folktale, of a daughter who refuses to "rejoice" because her father has died, she is reminded twice, and then through the gift of his false teeth, that "we will have the wake to honour him" and that "we will dance and tell stories. For it is not our way to let our grief silence us" (267).

The wake of Danticat's uncle and father finds its vav adversative, or turning point perspective-shifting partner in *Brother I'm Dying,* for it is not the way of stories or psalms to be silenced by grief. She reimagines the afterlife as a "heaven" which is to walk at dawn in a beloved place, alongside those loved as part of a community (268-9). To call out in voices that echo the hills of Haiti, this new Jerusalem: "'*Kote w ye fre m*' Brother, where are you?" and to hear in response "'*Mwen la*. Right here, brother. I'm right here" (269). If these men are separated by countries in life, they are "right here" buried next to each other "right here" in death. Danticat closes the narrative with imagining her father and uncle walking through the "heaven" of Haiti, which is the mountains of Beausejour (269). No longer bound by the sorrows of life, they are unhindered in exile or *dyaspora* from their country.

Danticat's nonlinear narratives take tonal shifts, like the Psalms. There is "vav adversative" at work, or fluidity in the tones between sorrow and joy. Most significantly, in *Brother I'm Dying*, Danticat shifts her tone from family memoir to clinical recounting of her uncle's cruel death, back to hopeful memoir as she concludes her novel. For instance, after relaying from medical transcripts the inhumane treatment her 80-year-old

uncle received at the hands of careless immigration officers and doctors, she moves back into a telling of her father's final days from "Alien 27041999" to "Brother, I'll See You Soon" (214-251). Her father expresses his sorrow, lamenting both at the personal tragedy of his brother's death, but also how his brother's death serves as an allegory for a national Haitian tragedy: "He shouldn't be here [in a cemetery in Queens, New York] … If our country were ever given a chance and allowed to be a country like any other, none of us would live or die here" (251).

Danticat humanizes immigrants, not as people who wish to "take jobs" who should be kept out by "walls" but as those whose home countries were perhaps, not "allowed to be a country like any other" and never "given a chance." As Pyne-Timothy explains in her reading of *Krik? Krak!:* "Exile, no matter how comfortable, cannot compensate for the intrinsic 'honor and respect' that Haitians have for their country" (134). Thus, the prevailing narrative that those in exile or dyaspora wish to "invade" a new country is simply not true. This misconception is further challenged in Dany's return to Haiti to discover his parent's fate, and Claude's forced relocation to the hills after he murdered his father provides a new beginning. As Danticat explores across the span of her work, "heaven" for Dany and his salvation is to be "home" in Haiti. While the tone of Dany's narrative is somber in his loneliness, isolation, and regret, it is also hopeful with notes that redemption and restoration are possible.

The National Lament of Danticat

As Davis explains, "when you lament, [it is to] make the conditions known for which you can praise" (15). Stretching the metaphor of birth, Danticat's father, Mira, seems to suggest he can fully praise once his people are fully acknowledged for their humanity, as seen in his exploits and mistreatment as a taxi cab driver in New York (120-123). Mira shares his mistreatment only in communal settings only at Monday night prayer meetings, often beginning, "even my family hasn't heard this … I didn't want to worry them" (121). Mira's movement from "I" to "thou," or from personal to communal, contextualizes his personal grief as a piece of a more communal or national tragedy at the treatment Haitians at large in America (Card 39). Yet, not every lament Psalm "marks the transition from despair to hope" or from "complaint to praise" (Card 78). For instance, Psalm 39 and 88 have no "return to praise" (Davis 21). Walter Brueggman describes Psalm 88 "an embarrassment to conventional worship" (Mare 1). In legend, though perhaps not in practice (Smith 176), it is said that Psalm 88 is considered too dark to use for Jewish worship and sometimes excluded because of its despair. As Mare explains in "Facing the Deepest Darkness," Psalm 88 is about the "desperate cry of someone who seeks to connect with YHWH, but YHWH keeps silent" (1):

> "Each day I beg for your help, O Lord;
> I lift my hands to you for mercy. …
> O Lord, why do you reject me?

Why do you turn your face away from me? …

You have taken away my companions and loved ones.

Darkness is my closest friend." (Psalm 88 New Living Translation)

However, unlike the "silent" YHWH, the writer voluminously voices the "realism in the life of faith" or the tragedies amidst life's greatest sufferings. Rhetorically, Psalm 88 challenges the deep descent into despair, for why would the psalmist call out to the Lord or name the Lord as "salvation" if the Lord could not save (Wendland 4)? Instead, Psalm 88, and by extension Danticat's work, is a "bold verbal effort to swim out in faith against the stream, as it were, of the rushing waters of adversity that are flowing all around" (Wendland 4). As Wendland explains, "Psalm 88 reminds us that 'the happy ending of most psalms of this type is seen to be a bonus, not a due" (7). Likewise with Danticat, her works remind the reader that happy endings are an unexpected gift, not what's owed or a right. Like the gift of the ending in The *Dew Breaker*, he is "reformed" but still broken and haunted by the choices of his past. Just as the scar on his face will never fully disappear, the Dew Breaker's redemption cannot bring back the dead. His redemption is a gift, not a right.

To properly lament is to name the desolation before the Divine, and the public, "to implicate God in our suffering" (Davis 22). As Danticat recounts her uncle's horrific and preventable death, along with numerous other personal and national Haitian tragedies, she speaks the Hebrew title for the book of Lamentations, an "*Ekah*" or a

"how" (Card 203). As Davis explains, it is not lament that is tragic, it is "unresolved despair," which is seen neither in Psalm 88 or Danticat (21). Different from tragedy, which can still offer some sort of resolution, unresolved despair offers no hope, meaning, or purpose to the situation. Danticat expands how she comes to see these lament-laden stories, the "heartrending clash of life and death, homeland and exile" ("Create" 5). In "Create Dangerously" Danticat juxtaposes a larger creation myth, or the biblical story of Adam and Eve, as reenacted in Numa and Drounin's death for disobeying a higher authority (5). This story, she describes, "exists beyond the scope of my own life" for Numa and Drounin died so that "other Haitians could live" (7). Their "death" extends beyond the physical to a death of national ties, as they were labeled "foreign rebels" by the dictatorial regime (7). Likewise in *Krik? Krak!,* Pyne-Timothy speaks of the other national horrors experienced by those victims who were tortured and abused during the regime (136).

Yet, Danticat makes a space for the "tremendous agonies" which fill the blank space of personal and national tragedy. Beatrice's story, in *The Dew Breaker,* serves as a metaphor for the national horror of decades of mistreatment Haitians have suffered under cruel local authority and ignored internationally. Danticat describes Beatrice, a Haitian wedding dress designer, as one of those "men and women whose tremendous agonies filled every blank space in their lives" (137). Beatrice is haunted by the "*chouket lawoze*," the horrible "dew breaker" special forces who enacted punishment on Haitians

for the mere sick pleasure of watching them suffer (131). She believes one is "following" her wherever she goes. Both she and Ka's father (an actual "dew breaker") are haunted by the ghosts of this evil. Beatrice perpetually relives a personal nightmare, real or imagined, from which she is unable to escape (131). Even still, Beatrice's profession, designing and sewing wedding dresses, is an extension of her wish for new life and happiness. There is "vav adversative" at work, or fluidity between sorrow and joy. Where she cannot extend a new future to herself, her agony drives her to "mother" into reality the brides who seek her help in the midst of their own unrealistic dress expectations (126). In contrast, Pyne-Timothy reads Aunt Caroline's wedding in *Krik? Krak!* as a "wedding without joy" (136). Yet, Pyne-Timothy is unable to see subtle vav adversative at work in the communal aspect of the piece. It is not a wedding without joy, but a wedding with both joy and sorrow. Even though Caroline was born without a forearm and her wedding might be haunted by ghosts of the past, it is not without joy. Rather, her communities' loss of life is held together with this new joy of her marriage. Communal lamentation is healing, just as communal celebration is restorative. The vav adversative in *Krik? Krak!* reveals joy and sorrow must coexist to be fully understood.

Turning Back Sorrow

To read Danticat is to remember we were "born into a world not meant to inhabit" (Card 20). If Christ's life, as a man of Sorrows, is "an invitation to enter [to faith] through the door of lament," Danticat, the teller of woes and wonders, begins a dialogue on how

to lament personal and national tragedies (Card 31). The language of Revelations 21: 4 and 7:17 contains a promise to Christians that God will "wipe away" sorrows, which translates more fully as not a mere stop gap for sorrow, but a "fierce stamp out" (Card 78-79, 142). While Danticat's works never fully "stamp out" injustice, her anxiety and her hope are inextricably linked. Told as a story-metaphor, the "wake" from the ending of *Brother I'm Dying* shows how grief and silence need to keep company with celebration. For in celebration, the mourner must remember, giving the best honor to what grieves them (Brother 266). Lament can help students keep company with grief and celebration, to give voice to students so that they may not sit in silence any longer, as students consider language and instructors consider what languaging practices students have a right to.

As McEntryre shares, "We need one another's recommendations … perhaps more value in the ordinary human encounters that allow us to find fellow travelers in the Valley of the Shadow and sit and talk with them awhile. Or read their books" (McEntryre 46). Though Danticat's words may not literally contain the "words of eternal life" as the liturgy declares, her writing gives glimmers to them, for she tells stories of anguish without bitterness and makes space for hope in darkness. Through Danticat's example, young writers can also learn how to process grief in telling their own personal and cultural stories without bitterness but with hope.

Chapter 3: What Lament and the Emotive Offers SRTOL and Writing Pedagogy

Student's Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL)

and the Current Classroom Reality

Current SRTOL conversations connect to lament in the writing classroom. The 1974 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) resolution of "Student's Right to Their Own Language" (SRTOL) affirms student's patterns, varieties, and dialects of language as integral to their identity. The current climate and conversations of SRTOL are in need of the language affirming genre of lament, as well as the model text of Danticat. Despite the nearly 40-year-old resolution of STROL, in 2021 when a revisions process was undergone for the Outcomes for First Year Composition in the Writing Program Administrators organization, the contributions of scholars of color to language resolutions were ignored. This intentional oversight, indicative of larger issues within the organization (which they are working to address), illustrates a continued prioritizing of traditional academic writing conventions and resistance to change in allowing students the right to their own language. The 2021 tensions within the Writing Program Administrators (WPA) reveals that new language resolutions are needed as the current resolution has not motivated all institutions or instructors to invite linguistic diversity into their writing classrooms. While this resolution may be enthusiastically adopted or championed by some, the reality is that many institutions and composition curriculums retain a "white-washed" approach to language use in the classroom. As H.G. Widdowson explains in "The Ownership of English," those that feel threatened by the

evolving nature of English believe that "to undermine standard English is to undermine the institution and what it stands for" (379-381). A. Suresh Canagarajah in "The Place of World Englishes in Composition: Pluralization Continued" concurs in the call to "ask serious questions about … whose English and whose interests it serves" (586). Some instructors continue to teach language, insisting on "Standard English" and upholding some "pure" sense of language, when the reality is their insistence on language as a "certain way" is actually an assuaging of their own personal imposter syndrome in the academy. Yet, as Widdowson also reminds us, to insist that English and language be a certain way is to doom it to an eventual death (383). To disregard the "essential dynamism of language" is to cause it to wither away (382). If language scholars have long ago "denied the myth of a standard American dialect" as having validity, then it is time for the composition classroom to catch up to that reality (STROL 1).

Language and the Classroom

Language is designed to engage our and our student's reality. By acknowledging how language is emotive and giving students the space to express language from their diverse backgrounds, whatever might be considered "other"-- be that an idea, a value, or a another person, which might be different or scary– is welcome and made more human and personal in the writing classroom. Deeply listening to students and attending to the other, can help instructors guide students to acquire the skills they will need in the diverse discourse communities encountered beyond their writing classroom. If instructors can

"engage in productive encounters with difference" and facilitate this in their classroom, both with language practices and the affective, they can better understand what draws students to their writing and help them become better at expressing their ideas (Wenger 53, Williams 83). Danticat can provide and model a safe space to encounter ideas and language of difference.

To encourage a variety of languages and languaging in the writing classroom is to merely acknowledge what already is: we and our students come from diverse backgrounds and experiences, and need different language forms to express and share those realities. As Widdowson explains, "all uses of language are creative … in that they draw on linguistic resources to express different perceptions of reality" (384). Vershawn Ashanti Young in "Should Writers Use They Own English" explains the notion of "standard English" is widely contested and frequently used to support "linguistic and racial" discriminiation (61-62). By examining and exposing the hidden assumptions in language usage, the covert power dynamics of language can be addressed as well as the actuality that "human beings use language in a variety of ways" (SRTOL 3). The power dynamics of white-washed language are further explored in Asao Inoue's 2019 Keynote address to the Conference on College Composition and Communication. Inoue argues that the "ways we judge language" as valid or invalid can imprison students of color, and by extension, can imprison students of diverse backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses.

What Inoue (through Krista Ratcliffe and Jacqueliene Jones Royster) in his 2019 CCCC speech proposed was that rather than dismissing student language and experience, to instead practice "deep listening" or "rhetorical listening" (Inoue). One way instructors can promote "deep listening" or "rhetorical listening" is by including diverse texts and authors such as Danticat in courses. The practice of rhetorical listening is to ask, "how do we listen … how do we exchange, negotiate, and collaboratively create perspectives, meaning, and understanding?" (Royster 38). Inoue extends and recasts Mary Rose O'Reilley's idea of rhetorical listening to be beyond a sort of colonial "listen someone into existence" and "encourage a stronger self to emerge." Rather than merely listening to existence and growing this stronger self, Inoue challenges instructors to actually practice the "deep and mindful attending to the other in our presence" (Hahn). Authors like Danticat provide a safe and inviting space for students to engage with the diverse language communities to which they belong because these authors provide a model for what emotive language and dialect could look like. For example, the way that Danticat weaves French, Haitian creole, and American English throughout her narratives, which celebrates her complex identity as an American, a scholar, and Haitian provides a useful model of code mixing and code meshing. In "One Papa Happy, One Papa Sad," Danticat finds herself in the intersection of cultures as she describes, "he spoke to me in French, then repeated himself in English" (98). Later in the chapter, Danticat includes short

snippets of dialogue and slang in multiple languages as she describes her immigration from Haiti to America.

Students and language are silenced and imprisoned when instructors dismiss the role of the emotive or personal stories in writing. Historically, instructors have perceived different emotive language as seen in dialectical differences or in sharing personal stories as unacceptable because it did not conform to what "academic" writing should look like. As Christy L. Wenger describes in her "Feeling Lore" article, one landmark piece by David Bartholomae canonized a constructivist writing approach which advocates that instructors "be dismissive of student's personal lives" (47). Perhaps, also, this distaste for the personal is a subtle way of consciously or unconsciously privileging Standard (white) English language. Despite Bartholomae's now 25-year-old approach sounding antiquated, academia is still often dismissive of student's personal lives.

Making Space for Emotive Language Practices in the Writing Classroom

As a young instructor, I often felt the pressure to uphold a standard of "academia" which disregarded the emotive bodies of my students. My motivation was out of a real anxiety to help students become calloused to what they might encounter (ie: none of this touchy-feely stuff which composition expressivists like Don Murray may encourage). I felt anxious to prepare them for a kind of "academic" writing, which I interpreted as clinical, non-personal and emotive-less, that they might encounter ahead. By giving the direct, or indirect, message that emotions and personal storytelling in "research" writing

are not welcome in the writing classroom, I was effectively telling my students to "be a brain--not a human." I was missing out on the best my students had to offer in their writing–themselves and their lived experiences. I have learned that when the personal is divorced from the academic, instructors convey the message that students will be welcome only if they leave self at the door. If an instructor cannot make room for diverse language and expression in the classroom, they become merely a gatekeeper to academia where only certain backgrounds, emotional expressions (or lack of), and language practices are valued and all others are discarded.

Instructors can promote deep listening and attending to the other in our presence by making space for students to express diverse, and perhaps nonnormative, language and the emotive in their writing. As Canagarajah explains, it is essential, "rather than simply joining a speech community, students should learn to shuttle between communities in contextually relevant ways" (593). An instructor's role is to help students develop the linguistic flexibility to shuttle between speech communities, such as academic discourse and the other discourse communities to which students belonged before class began.

Considering Social Context for Language and Writing

Language is socially constructed and contextual. Considering language practice as part of a social context, rather than insist English remain in the supposedly context-less classroom, can help students find better language to express their culture and identity. As Jasone Cenoz explains, the goal of language is to move from the classroom to street, even

though the current practice is from street to classroom (308). Cenoz reinforces the unsurprising results of Marzieh Sadeghpour and Farzan Sharifian's study which found English instruction ineffective in Australia (or at least less transferable) because instructors and students insisted the language context remain in the classroom rather than the street (254). Part of equipping knowledge, experience, skills and fostering linguistic justice is to help students see the meaningful ways English language is used which does not prioritize a native speaker status. Conversely, language teaching as seen in Cenoz's study of Basque was more effective and moved from classroom to street because it utilized the whole learner as a base for language situations (308). Like Faith Kurtyka, Cenoz found that when instructors viewed students as possessing "Funds of Knowledge," or viewing students as contributors rather than only receivers, they were better able to grasp concepts of language.

Likewise, as Cenoz illustrates, language can flourish when instructors do not insist speakers achieve native-like proficiency. Furthermore, the goal of English instruction should be to focus less on "going native" and more on what Paul Kei Matsuda describes as the effectiveness, appropriateness, strategy, and intelligibility of language usage (149). This is significant for writing in the classroom and makes more space not only for students who speak English as an additional language but also for students whose dialect may not be Standard English. Moreover, the insistence on a monolithic English in Sadeghpour et al.'s article also explains how current practice in Australia

unjustly favors native speaker norms rather than reflecting on the multi-lingual reality of the country. This inaccurate interpretation treats alternative usage of global English as less effective for communication or writing (255). In order to help language and writing to flourish in the composition classroom, instructors need to give students ways to help make language their own.

As seen in East Africa, students best learn language in its social context of the street rather than insisting on learning from the decontextualized classroom. From an informal "street" observation of my time teaching in Kenya, language practice and the use of English seemed to flourish because people made English their own (255). Language historian Edgar Schneider's dynamic model of the development of English as a world language in postcolonial societies provides key insight in understanding the language practice of Kenya and its further implications for the writing classroom. Schneider's model theorizes the evolution of English, showing where language adapts to become a kind of "new English" with its own discursive features. The flourishing of English in Kenya can also be seen in that based on Schneider's five stage model, language in Kenya seemed to reach the fourth level called "endonormative stabilization" where the use of English (and other languages) was self-reliant and self-referential. In Schneider's model, eventually English as a language becomes a new kind of English separate from its colonizers. This means language will best flourish going from the classroom to the street as students adapt English and language to make it their own in

their writing. In Kenya, the language practice of learning both Kiswahili and English in school as well as a local language, utilized the whole learner as a base for speaking situations.

Writing instructors would do well if they similarly utilized the whole learner of their student in the writing classroom, rather than viewing students as deficient or underdeveloped. Similarly, language on the street level of Rwanda seemed to flourish more with the mix of Kinyarwandan, French, Kiswahili, Congolese, Lugandan--all as a result of the Genocide diaspora. Yet, it seemed in my very informal observation that the English language used in business, or international communication, seemed quite stilted and underdeveloped (in a way) because of a subtle insistence to learn English at a native-like, and American, proficiency in Rwanda. This could most often be seen on awkwardly worded government or financial forms, or even on the streets in advertisements as English was made an official language overnight in 2008 to be taught in schools, though it remained in minimal use on a street or personal level. The stilted nature of language and English in Rwanda and the flourishing language reality of Kenya provides a valuable lesson for the composition classroom. Students also can make language their own if instructors do not uphold unrealistic standards or expectations of native-like proficiency, fluidly adjusting it for its new social context.

The Role of the Emotive in Language and Writing

Student writers also have the right to emotive language to express their ideas. It is important for instructors to help students consider semantics, or the meanings which emotionally affect the reader, given beyond words (SRTOL 21). By incorporating lament, which makes space for the whole of lived reality, into the writing classroom, instructors can invite diverse languaging as they engage in the whole lived experience of their students. To engage a student's emotions about the topic they are researching and writing about is to still engage them in the wider community about that topic.

Using Danticat, or texts like Danticat, can help students take the language from the classroom and practice people-centered language in the "streets" of their lives and writing. Danticat further serves as a pioneer in the emotive expression of her ideas. For example, as seen in Chapter 2 of this thesis, Danticat's memoir *Brother I'm Dying* is about her family's experiences in both Haiti and the U.S., as well as a critique of the treatment of Haitians in the U.S. and the inhumane treatment of the U.S. immigration systems to foreigners. Danticat's story laments the treatment of her uncle who is trying to seek asylum in the U.S. after a riot in Haiti. As she shares his experiences, which ultimately ended in his preventable death, the tone of her writing shifts away from personal and urgent in the chapter "No Greater Shame":

> "Can I speak to my uncle? I asked the customs officer, who, it seemed, was patiently waiting for me to get off the phone.

"That's not allowed," he said.

"Please," I said, "He's old and --"

"He'll contact you when he gets to Krome." (Danticat 213).

In the next chapter Danticat's tone shifts to clinical even as she recounts this phone conversation to help the reader experience the horror her uncle endured. Danticat eventually shifts back to personal sorrow as she recounts the aftermath of her uncle's unjust treatment and death at the hands of customs and border protection officers in the U.S. Border Patrol.

While Danticat's writing is a memoir and personal narrative, it is also a thoroughly researched account of the experience of immigrants being deported. She makes the rhetorical choice to write her uncle's narrative clinically, to sound more objective. However, as people recount medical trauma, they often switch in a similar clinical tone and level of description, which is perhaps a way of dealing, or distancing themselves, with the trauma they experienced. I explore this tonal shift in an activity with students in the index. For example, she switches from personal stories to refer to her uncle by his number rather than his name: "My uncle was now alien 27041999" (214). Danticat continues the clinical telling of her uncle's narrative through clipped dialogue on pages 216-220 and weaving an impersonal "Discretionary Authority Checklist for Alien Applicants" on pages 223-224 rather than the more personal stories and narratives as seen in the other sections of the book. This shift in genre and style helps the reader experience

the horror her uncle endured. Though Danticat tells her uncle's tale from a bird's eye, more objective perspective, her telling is no less emotive. Shock and confusion, despite the minute details, lurk at the surface. Danticat's telling and her emotions, whether distant or raw, are the site of social engagement to critique the U.S. treatment of immigrants and their perceived threat.

When instructors demand students maintain the handbook rules of grammar, they would deny student writers the opportunity to alter tone and engage in emotional connections with their readers. To read Danticat in the classroom, is to provide an "I too" to help students engage in languaging and emotive language reality. Danticat's grammar choices are not, by a handbook rule, technically "correct." Yet, to critique her writerly choices is to silence her sense of how to adjust her tone to the rhetorical situation (SRTOL 14). For instance, her memoir *Brother I'm Dying,* utilizes emotive language, "nonnormative" grammatical sentence structure, and code switching to tell her family's story. Danticat uses non-Standard English grammar to build characterization and realism with her characters stuck between two places, cultures, and languages. Non-standard grammar is seen in her father's dialogue: "You think I can get a visa?" (Danticat 54). While not technically rulebook correct, this phrasing more fully expresses the gravity of his choice to immigrate to the U.S. sight unseen to provide a better life for his family.

The use of nonstandard grammar can be more emotive because it more freely expresses the thoughts of the writer, and the tone can be more conversational and open.

However, Danticat also code switches from English to Haitian Creole. For instance, in the chapter "Goodbye" the characters such as Danticat's Uncle, frequently switch between English, French, and Haitian Creole: "Wi papa" (yes, father) and "Dlo, dlo, dlo pou van" (I have water for sale) "Li mouri" (she's dead) (89, 73). Where Danticat switches out of English it is for a character's benefit to more fully and emotively express their thoughts or circumstances. As SRTOL explains, if a student writes "he had a pain in his neck, the kind you get when you've suffered a bore too long" the writer is attempting an emotional bond with their hearers. Danticat, too, successfully attempts an emotional bond with her hearers through the use of code-switching and grammar outside of Standard English handbook rules. The strength of Danticat's writing lies in her choices to adjust her tone to the rhetorical situation of her readers.

What Danticat and the Emotive Offers STROL

What do emotions offer students as they discover the right to their own language? James MacLynn Wilce argues In *Language and Emotion*, that "emotion talk--like all talk–is a form of action that does things to the world … and is collaborative" rather than merely individual (13). Yet, emotion is not only personal or biological, but helps to "constitute social understandings": to be human is to belong to a group (Wilce 8). Our emotions are sites of social engagements and connections. For Danticat, her writing is an engagement and connection as she weaves both personal and national causes in retelling her family history against the larger history of Haitians and their treatment in the U.S.

Yet, Wilce describes and I discuss earlier, emotion in academic writing has been largely ignored, and the role of affect, silenced (7). Christy L. Wenger concurs in her argument in "Feeling Lore" that current composition practices produce a division between reason and emotion even though students, and writers, are "emoting bodies" (abstract). In her teaching experience, she has found Alison Jaggar's words to be true: "critical reflection on emotions is not a self-indulgent substitute … for political action … it is indispensable for … social transformation" (45). Hope for social transformation, Wenger claims, is only possible when students and writers seriously "entertain emotion and the ways our political practices are inscribed with feeling" (47). Danticat's telling, though not strictly an academic journal article, is a piece written in the hope of social and political transformation, which is more effective for its use of the affective. To insist that Danticat acknowledge her grief about her uncle's tale but then write without emotion would do her writing and processing of social injustice towards Haitians a disservice. To acknowledge a student's emotions is not to "clear" them out in order for the "real" work to begin, as this practice "fails to articulate the meaningful work of feeling in the writing classroom" (46). Rather, Wenger argues, the sites of feeling are where the "real work" is (46). Further engagement with these sites of emotion are necessary for students to write more effectively about social causes which grieve them.

Lament, which uses the emotive, can help students write for transformation instead of merely transmission. For instance, Wenger explains that there is "powerful

linguistic dimension to our emotional awareness, attribution of meanings, and interpretations" (46). If students can become more aware of their feelings during the writing process and more aware of their feelings about their topic, there is room for rich linguistic expression. By attending to the emotive in their writing and more specifically lament, students then could acquire the vocabulary, or gain access to the right to their own language.

Implications of Lament on Student Language Practice

As Amy D. Williams explains, all writing includes a "felt sense" or the "feelings and and non-verbalized perceptions that surround the words or to what the words already present evoke in the writer" (68). To compose is to "draw on sense experience … [that] occurs inside the writer, to what is physically felt" (68). Writing is not a disembodied experience, as the "practices, values, and aspirations" of the writer are integral to their writing (70). What then, could lament offer students in their acquisition of language as emotive bodies who write?

Lament is significant for the writing classroom because the nature of the genre is embodied writing which engages the whole senses and the whole self. The engagement of the whole senses and self is unpacked as it is seen displayed in Danticat's writing in Chapter 2. If instructors can incorporate lament writing practices in invention or as a genre for students to explore, this can help students more effectively and personally engage with their writing topics. Williams's study highlights, unsurprisingly, that

students are significantly more engaged with writing when allowed to write about more personal topics. Williams found that "connection" for students appeared to be a key motivation for writing things out and about something (76, 78). Connection is especially key for academic writing, even while the students Williams surveyed struggled to come to terms with "audience" in their writing, or understanding the social impact of their writing (78). Lament is also crucial in this aspect because it is also a social act. Part of the aesthetic of the biblical Psalms is that the songs (which is another word for psalm) are intended, even while expressing private sorrow or public outcry, to be sung communally (Davis 3-41). The use of the lament genre in the writing classroom can help students come to terms with their audience and understand what social role their writing can have. More on emotional support and metacognition in student writing will be discussed in the pedagogical implications of lament in Chapter 4.

The lament genre also reimagines "serious writing" to help students connect personal and academic writing. Though instructors may feel uncomfortable using more expressivist writing approaches in their classroom that affect could bring, Williams found that the inclusion of affect in research writing led to more fruitful and engaging writing (80-82). Often, even "unpleasurable affects spark[ed] writing" as students explored "emotional trauma, family stress, and personal crisis" in meaningful writing experiences (81). Danticat's work is further helpful as a model text in the way it explores both personal trauma and the immigration crisis in the United States. Also, Williams's

research further supports the idea that "finding ways to couple academic and personal writing in composition classrooms may positively shape both individual student affect toward in-school writing and the overall affective ecology of our classrooms" (82). Lament is a genre that can make space for both personal and academic writing in the composition classroom. Lament in student writing could look like allowing students the right to use personal pronouns to share their reactions to texts or it could take the form of beginning the research process by asking students what problem deeply grieves them, and how that personally can be tied to academic research. As Dr. Janet Graham reminded me: "learning how to leverage pathos is a sophisticated operation that is necessary for persuasion and argument [in writing]. It is what moves people." Again, it's not enough to write with ethos or logos, credibility or logic, because it is pathos that moves people to action. Lament can teach students how to leverage pathos by giving a personal and communal framework.

Emotions, Lament, and Instructor Feedback

Maura Sincoff argues that all writing is born out of relationships (75). By helping students to understand the emotional connection they have with their writing, including word choice and topic selection, instructors can help engage all the dimensions of the writers in their classroom. Rather than judge a student's grammatical correctness on an intake writing survey, Sincoff explains how her purpose as a writing instructor is to respond to the student to show she is willing to listen and accept their feelings, and reflect

back to them what she hears (76). In the index, I suggest a similar activity in a Learner Survey where instructors can practice reflecting back to students what they hear about previous student writing experiences. The role of the writing instructor is to help students become more aware of their emotions during the writing process in order to provide support for students to discover more rich self expression through their writing. Anger and grief are related emotions, where one can express the other. For example, Danticat's memoir oscillates from grief over her uncle's mistreatment to her clinical, and perhaps coldly angry, retelling of his immigration experience. Danticat makes no attempt to hide her feelings in her narrative, though she also doesn't allow her emotions to control her writing to the point where it is unreadable or rant-ish to readers. She is angry, but there is no chip on her shoulder.

Danticat makes space for her emotions which builds rapport with her readers. For instance, nowhere in her retelling of her uncle's unfair treatment in immigration detention does she lapse into a rant about the state of politics or blame for a certain reader. Though it would be easy for Danticat to shift into a tirade about the state of immigration or blame towards political parties in power in the last third of her book (or from chapter "Beating the Darkness" through the closing), which policies and procedures likely caused her uncle's early and untimely death, she doesn't. As she explains why her uncle was detained, her purpose merely seems to be like her uncles': "I can only assume that … he wanted to tell the truth" (215). For both Danticat and her uncle, there seems to be a

longing to tell the truth and a trust to be heard. When I assigned Danticat's memoir to an American literature class, I had one student who was unsympathetic to the plight of exiles and immigrants caught in the middle of the difficulties of immigration in the United States. At first, I was deeply offended and upset by his lack of empathy, which spilled over into his writing and interactions with classmates. Despite wanting to lecture him for what I perceived as cold-heartedness, I realized that he was a pragmatic kind of person, a black-and-white thinker who did not understand why people could not just follow the rules. He, like Danticat and her Uncle, just wanted to hear and be told the truth. After finishing Danticat's *Brother I'm Dying*, he admitted it "wasn't bad" even if it was slow at first and that he actually finished it (high praise from this student!). I noticed in our class discussions that he was much more empathetic to Danticat's story and the plight of immigrants caught in a broken system. Leaving space for his emotions, rather than dismissing and judging him, gave him the right to his own language, even if I didn't agree with his position or his politics. This in turn, meant that in his writing about this text and others, he felt he could be more open and honest instead of writing with the fear that the instructor would have it out for him because she disagreed with his position.

As students work through research invention, drafts, and feedback, it's important to leave spaces for the student writer as an emotive being. For instance, as students are conducting research, emotional construction of sentences and conveying tone in writing, as seen in the SRTOL initiative, are not always grammatically "correct." If instructors

can stay attuned to meaning in writing rather than perfection, they are able to give feedback which is more transferable outside the writing classroom. When instructors attend to what the writer is aiming to stay and allow for new languaging practices as it fits the rhetorical situation, rather than hunker down on and insist upon a certain grammatical construction, students will be given the right to their own emotions and language.

By staying attuned to their own emotions during the feedback process and the emotions of the writer, instructors can promote more just languaging practices. Sincoff advocates for instructors to be more aware of the emotions at play in the classroom. She reminds instructors that they, too, are emotive beings in the writing classroom: "we teachers have our own gamut of emotional responses when guiding students: boredom when the ideas seem stale, frustration when students repeat errors, satisfaction when progress is made. We seldom stop and acknowledge how these feelings play into our feedback" (76). Sincoff calls for greater awareness on the way emotions impact feedback and the climate of the classroom so instructors can respond to writing in "ways that speak to both [students'] heads and hearts" (76). Wenger concurs, in advocating that the role of writing instructors is not to become a therapist to students, but to acknowledge that "feelings … shape our values and senses of reality" (55). She reminds writing instructors that "emotions are always present in the writing classroom, for where there is reasoning and analysis, there is emotion" (51). The beauty of the lament genre is that it already

makes space for analysis, reasoning, and emotions. Lament allows instructors to "receive the language of the student and attempt to work with it" rather than considering emotion feminine and ostracizing students (Wenger 55).

Making space for emotive language in writing and through the genre of lament can help students process the affective at play in their writing. As Williams's study found, reflecting on writing experiences, both positive and negative, helped students see that they do enjoy some types of writing (83). Processing student emotions during the writing process, particularly negative emotions, helped them rework those affects in productive ways, and consider other writing moves available to them, even when they felt constrained by academic genres (83).

Encouraging Empathy Through Diverse Texts

Other ways instructors can promote linguistic justice is to incorporate projects into English curricula which use lament to foster empathy. As Matusda explains, "we would be doing a disservice to our students if we do not equip them with knowledge, experience and skills that they need to navigate through the complex reality of the English-speaking world today" (146). Again, one way to help students see meaningful use of English by nonnative speakers is to incorporate a variety of texts, authors, and readings into their classroom. Helping students to see a diversity of perspectives can also foster empathy, or the capacity to understand, and potentially share, the emotions of others. The work of Devereaux et al. further highlights how students gained empathy

through exposure and reflection (248). Though exposure is not a substitute for the work of promoting real justice, because exposure is not the same as critical engagement, Devereaux et al. explain that when "empathy is repositioned as critical thinking intended to transform one's own conscious, students [and instructors] can move beyond empathy toward equity and justice" (248). Empathy is essential to the work of SRTOL for the ways that it helps students consider political and social ramifications of language, and how English has been used to exclude and silence themselves and others.

Depending on where students live and what cultures and perspectives they are exposed to, promoting justice and equity can prove a challenge for instructors. But the goal of all education, be it writing instruction or another general education course, is to help our students leave our course having thought a little more critically or having examined a new perspective from a different angle. One thing I regularly told a English 102 special topics writing class on Faith and Belief is that people may not agree with their opinion, but it is difficult to disagree with someone's experience. Their opinions may remain the same, but if students can hear the experiences of Danticat and others, empathy can grow and bear fruit as equity and justice. If instructors can foster spaces to listen and engage with the goal of understanding, the goal of STROL may be realized.

Final Thoughts

When instructors recognize the ways that English naturally adapts, they can promote English for all instead of English for a privileged few. Instructors promote

linguistic justice when they encourage curriculum and teaching practices which foster empathy and focus on language effectiveness in its new context rather than unrealistic and unjust standards of "native-like" or "white" academic proficiency. If instructors engage in deep, rhetorical listening to the emotive at work in student writing, a wide and deep space can be cultivated for diverse student language practices. As students discover their right to their own language, and engage in social writing which is both personal and emotive, students become, as Wenger describes, "more compassionate writers" (58). Wenger's research calls for further work in embodied writing pedagogies in analyzing emotions in order to help students write about social causes. Yet, in order for students to engage with social causes, they must become more aware of the emotions at work in their writing. Reading texts like Danticat and engaging with the genre of lament can help students stay attuned to their emotions about the topic and the writing process. Instructors who "engage in productive encounters with difference" in their writing classrooms are more attuned to what motivates their students' writing (Wenger 53, Williams 83). These productive encounters, while not easy and perhaps at first unnatural or uncomfortable, can bear great fruit as instructors encourage and champion students to the right to their own language and their own ideas.

Chapter 4: Pedagogical Implications of Lament on Invention and Writing

Much happened in the eight years I lived outside the United States. The Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements began and gained momentum. New social media platforms came to dominate student discourse. Political officials left office, were elected and impeached, and others elected in their place. There remains racial discrimination and injustice. In my composition courses, when I introduce a persuasive or argument style essay, students frequently request to write about hot button issues. Sometimes it is apparent the student is very invested in the topic, other times it seems the student relies more on the *kairos*, or the current sex appeal of the issue rather than having any personal investment in the topic. The former usually turn out to be much more interesting to read, the latter quickly find a dead end.

Approaching writing philosophy and practice from the place of lament and attending to the affective in student writing leads to more invested research in the writing classroom. Danticat's writing provides a rich model practically and ideologically for invention and voice and allows students to see that there is no topic, emotion, or languaging practice which is invalid. How might traditional research projects and the teaching of writing be reimagined if students were invited to explore through their research something that they lament is wrong with the world? What could the incorporation of authors such as Danticat mean for the writing classroom? Chapter three covered the theoretical implications of lament in the classroom; this chapter will examine

how lament practically impacts the running of the writing classroom and how it could transform the research process.

Lament's Implications on Invention

It is fairly standard in English Composition or First Year Composition courses to teach research writing in some form. While I have done the usual "invention" exercises to help students come up with meaningful research topics and reframed the traditional research paper as an inquiry and conversation as a semester-long project, even still, some students struggle to find a meaningful topic with which they can engage in a sustained way. How can instructors move students beyond apathy? Incorporating emotion and language of emotion, such as lament, in the invention process may lead to more fruitful writing topics.

Lament is practiced by and for the community--it is both individual and collective. Invention, like lament, is also social, by and for the community. Invention can "remind rhetoric of their location" (Bawarshi 112). As Karen Burke LeFevre explains in *Invention as a Social Act,* the way that invention arises is "as built upon from the works of others" (34). As LeFevre explains, "the creative man does not start from the foot of the mountain again, but from where other people have left off" (34). The best invention for research is created in, by, and for the writing community, beginning where others have left off.

Fairly early on in the semester of an introductory composition course, I have students read Michelle Trim and Megan Lynn Isaac's "Reinventing Invention" and complete the 15 "date" style questions to help them think of a research topic (112-113). The survey begins with fun, almost goofy questions, such as "#4--what is your favorite astral body?" or "#3–what famous person (alive or dead) would you most like to meet?" (113). The survey takes a more serious turn around question number seven. The most effective questions are usually:

7. What profession is the most rewarding?

8. What law would you change and why?

9. What one thing should all children learn?

10. What is the most unjust event in history?

14. What difference in people do you find most troubling?

15. What product would you take off the market if you could? (Trim and Issac 113)

These questions are generally related to a problem the student perceives is wrong with the world, a sort of "grievance" or complaint. It is fascinating to hear the continually diverse responses of students. Trim and Issac suggest instructors modify the list to suit the needs of their classroom, as what is asked is less important than the "potential for stimulating thinking in unexpected ways" (113). For this exercise, I modified Trim and Isaac's list of questions to contain questions which incorporated the affective and lament into the

invention process, as seen in the Invention Activity in the index. New questions included: "#14--what is a problem you see that makes you angry?" and "#15–what is a problem you see that makes you deeply sad or grieves you?" As Catherine Savini in "Looking for Trouble: Finding Your Way into Writing Assignments" suggests, one way to begin difficult writing assignments, such as the determination of a research topic, is to "look for something that troubles you, seek out difficulty, find problems" (52). Because, as she goes on to explain, "All academic disciplines seek to impart in their students the ability to identify, mull over, and sometimes solve challenging problems" (52-53). Identifying a problem, or a "lament," can become part of the writing process. She concludes, "The more [students and writers] practice the process of articulating problems, posing questions, and identifying the stakes, and the more you cultivate your awareness of problems, the more successful you will be at writing academic papers and handling life's complexities" (69). I employ Savini's philosophy in another invention activity in the index for instructors to explore with students in the research invention process. Lament, through the identification of problems, becomes one more inroad into academic writing and research.

What would it look like for students to write and research out of what deeply grieves them? For roughly half of the class I surveyed with these new questions, the problem they identified in these questions became directly tied or thematically related to their topic of research. For instance, one student was upset that people are judged unfairly

and then chose to research perceptions of autism. Another identified that children born to negligent caregivers personally upset them and then chose to research topics related to motherhood and parenting. Of course, not all of the connections are direct, but using lament in the invention process helped many students find a topic which they could create a persuadable argument from and which was deeply and personally meaningful to them. Both students had a more successful, and less frustrating, research experience which I believe is directly tied to a personal engagement with the topic, which helped to sustain them through the difficulties of research.

Role of Emotions and Lament in the Writing Classroom and Transfer

Can a student's emotion about the topic motivate their research and possibly invite transfer beyond the course? Transfer is the ability to take what is learned in one course, situation, or setting and apply it to new writing situations or settings. Dana Lynn Driscoll and Roger Powell's study on the *States, Traits, and Dispositions* discusses the impact of emotion on writing and the ability to transfer knowledge into new writing situations. Driscoll and Powell's study reveals that negative emotions toward a writing project can "lead to a refusal to transfer" (16). They argue it is essential to teach students better self-monitoring and management strategies for disruptive emotions such as hate, fear, dislike and circumstantial emotions such as confusion and frustration. Students' ability to monitor difficult emotions increases as they grow through more college writing experiences (16). The study also found that students best transfer knowledge to other

courses when there are positive emotions which are associated with the class or course content (15). Students in the study were found to be rational interpreters, emotional interpreters, or emotional managers. Rational Interpreters rarely interpret writing projects through the lens of emotions; their emotions do not impact transfer of writing (10). Emotional interpreters take the negative or positive emotions from the writing project and transfer those to the new writing setting. This transfer of emotions for emotional interpreters means that transfer of writing knowledge and skills is inhibited as these students are unable, or refuse, to overcome negative emotions and cannot transfer new knowledge into new settings. Emotional managers are able to manage their emotions, negative or positive. These students can overcome negative emotions or positively channel the negative emotions and still transfer writing knowledge, despite frustrations, into new writing settings (Driscoll and Powell 10-15).

Driscoll and Powell's findings have key implications for research and writing projects that begin from a place of lament, as seen in Danticat. Their study reveals that a research project rooted in lament could lead to meaningful projects, so long as instructors provide support for the intense emotions which may arise, and students not become too frustrated with the writing process. Thus, instructors should aim to help students become more effective emotional managers by including metacognitive reflection exercises such as those suggested by Margaret Poncin Reeves, or the activities listed in the index, alongside traditional writing projects. Using Danticat again as a model, in her writing,

she could very easily have become overwhelmed with the retelling of her uncle's story and chosen to abandon the memoir. Yet, instead, she is able to effectively manage her emotions, even while processing them, through her writing. Eduardo González Cabañes' study of the emotions that statistics students have during the invention writing process echoes Driscoll and Powell. His study found that using emotions, such as grief, can lead to creative problem solving and skills learned during the invention process. González-Cabañes' further argues that using strong emotions like grief as the catalyst for research is necessary for the maintenance of social justice and which could promote justice in writing (1). Significantly, Danticat's work advocates for the rights of immigrants and humanizes the immigration crisis in the United States. Furthermore, Danticat's work englightens the plight of Haitians who are usually cast as illegal immigrants in media rather than refugees seeking political and economic asylum. Again, Danticat effectively manages her emotions to not become overwhelmed in the telling of her story. Using Danticat in the classroom and unpacking with students the greater context of her writing can provide a model for how to manage intense emotions associated with research projects.

As seen in the example of Danticat, attending to the affective in the writing process, through the use of lament in invention and reflection can help students choose more meaningful topics as well as promote writing knowledge transfer. For instance, González-Cabañes's study examined seven epistemic emotions associated with learning

and transfer: “surprise, curiosity, enjoyment, confusion, anxiety, frustration and boredom” (4). His study found that “novelty” and “creativity” might lead students to feel high levels of curiosity and enjoyment, motivating emotions. Students who felt over-challenged by the task and overloaded cognitively during the invention may “experience confusion, anxiety, and frustration” (4). However, if the negative emotion is experienced transitionally, such as in the process of solving the problem, students were able to overcome frustration and confusion and productively contribute to solving the problem without fear of failure. If instructors can help students frame emotions in the writing process around the process of solving problems, especially social injustices, they will be more likely to overcome the negative cognitions inevitable to the writing process and persist in their writing.

Lament offers a safe space to explore and reflect on the intensity of emotions which arise before, during, and after the writing process. In both Driscoll and González-Cabañes, metacognition, or students thinking about their emotions and thoughts in regard to the research topic, is key to project success (15, see Works Cited for additional resources). Driscoll and Powell further argue, writing projects need not all be beds of roses, or only positive emotions, but that students need “safe spaces where they can learn to adapt to a variety of emotions” and acquire emotional management skills (16). Just as Driscoll’s emotional managers are able to reframe negative emotions, and productively

channel them for good, so too does lament offer a safe space for the rechanneling of emotions so that they may be managed (15).

Application into the Writing Classroom: Other Strategies For Instructors

Know your Students: Learner Surveys

Also, at the beginning of each semester, I post a learner profile survey on Canvas, our university's learning management system (which is also included in the index), that asks basic questions about students as learners and writers. The survey serves many purposes in that it gives students the opportunity to practice using the LMS system in a low-stakes way. Also, it gives me the opportunity to preview their writing and reflective writing, learn about them as a student, and hear about how to best support them throughout the course. Almost every student who takes this informal learning and learner profile survey responds that they do best with, and most enjoy, writing projects where they get to choose their topic. Seasoned instructors would agree that students have greater "buy-in" if they have some say in topic selection. It is essential for instructors to know where students are coming from in order to better support them throughout lament in the research writing process. By gaining a bit of insight into the previous writing and learning as well as personal experiences of students, instructors can anticipate and tailor instruction to better suit the needs of their students, and help them manage difficult emotions which may arise in the research process.

Incorporate Self-Reflection About Writing

If instructors can model before students how they feel about their own writing, and where appropriate, share emotions about the writing process and through their own writing, as Danticat does, this can serve as a model for students to become more effective emotional managers throughout the writing process. As Williams explains, "I encourage my students to reflect on their writing experiences, both orally and in writing. This allows them to recognize positive and negative affects or emotions they experience while writing. Williams continues, this reflective writing can also be beneficial as some students uncover "the realization that they do, indeed, enjoy some kinds of writing" (Williams 83).

I wrote this thesis while completing coursework and teaching college composition as part of my graduate assistantship. While messy, students seemed to respond well to hearing about my own experiences of learning how to write and how to be a student. As we walked through Margaret Poncin Reeve's "Reflective writing" reflection, modified for students to also reflect on instructor feedback, I gave metacommentary for each of the categories (see fig 2):

Reflect on your writing process

*If applicable--reflect on instructor feedback with the same questions.

What do you need to do to continue growing in your writing?

	Drafting	Peer Review	Instructor Review
Recalling	What steps did I go through to complete my draft?	What comments did my peers make?	What comments did my instructor make?
Reacting	How do I feel about my completed draft?	How do I feel about the feedback I received?	How do I feel about the feedback I received?
Connecting	What might this mean for my next paper or writing project?	How does this compare to feedback I've received in the past?	How does this compare to feedback I've received in the past?
Theorizing	What might this tell me about myself as a writer?	What does this teach me about giving or receiving feedback?	What does this teach me about giving or receiving feedback?

Figure 2: Sample Metacognitive exercise students can complete after a writing project, adapted from Reeve.

Specifically, I gave commentary about a current (at that time) writing project I was in the middle of: a research survey proposal I was in the third round of revisions for and felt frustrated with. As we walked through each of the columns, I asked the class, "Does anyone else feel, after reading a peer comment or instructor suggestion, like this?: 'I don't know how to fix (fill-in-the-blank) issue" or 'I don't know what you mean by "such and such" comment. '" Several students nodded. I then talked the students through some options: One, they could throw in the towel, ignore the feedback or give up on the project, which is very much what I wanted to do with my unpassed IRB application. Or, they could ask for help and say: "show me what you mean by that" such as the times I got extra help with my writing projects or begged editors to help with this thesis. It can feel uncomfortable to talk about your own writing and emotions about your writing before students. Instructors can be mindful to do so in appropriate and effective ways which still maintain their professionalism. But if "writing is relationship," as Maura Sincoff suggests, then it is not just important but necessary for students to see as modeled before them how to work through the affective in their writing.

Sincoff unpacks how students feel an instructor likes or does not like them based on their grade, regardless of the reality, if a student feels upset with teacher feedback, their frustration and anger might also be rooted in grief or a mask for another emotion. Sincoff suggests that, when students become angry or upset with received feedback, to make sure they feel heard (79). Sometimes "student anger" is a mask for something else, such as "anxiety about disappointing [others], fear of not being good enough, or a host of other concerns" (79). Attending to the student's emotion about their writing and feedback

can help promote better language practice and give students both more voice and the ability to transfer knowledge into new writing situations.

Instructor Feedback Practices

A practice which may promote SRTOL (Student's Right to their Own Language) includes treating the writing process as a dialogue rather than a one time assessment (77-78). Sincoff encourages marginal notes and all-caps annotations during the writing process to transform writing back into the communal and interactive process. A practice I have found helpful in writing instruction is to tell students what "worked well" and what "areas for growth" they may want to attend to. What is most effective with this kind of end-comment feedback is to keep feedback specific, give actionable items, and ask questions. Framing the comment, even in the genre of end-comment, as a dialogue rather than final pronouncement about a student's writing helps students acquire language for what they are aiming to do in the writing draft. For instance, one comment in the first round of student papers which emerged was, "take a big-picture view of your paragraphs, could they be re-arranged to build to your main conclusion?" This kind of similar comment on many papers was also a good wake-up call for me as the instructor to create some sort of class activity which would help students to practice large organizational revisions of their written work. Another effective way to keep feedback as a dialogue is to actively look for something the student did well. It is easy to focus on all the problems, and in some drafts of student work, there are many problems. If instructors can remember what it was like to be a young writer and how they feel when their work is encouraged,

practicing gratitude for what a student did well can help the student writer feel their writing skills are progressing. If instructors can provide linguistic support and differentiated strategies which promote dialogue, students can gain languaging skills and express what is their right to their own language and ideas.

Implications for Future Research

Attending to the affective through lament as seen in Danticat's writing, can become a sort of vav adversative catalyst, or turning point, for the writing classroom. The intersectionality of religion, emotions, and transfer as it relates to composition is beneficial to instructors and students pending more research. Even still, more research with emotions in the invention stage of writing and how it impacts transfer is still needed. There is little research on the role emotions play throughout the writing process as it relates to transfer of writing skills. The role of emotions in transfer is a growing field. For example, in González-Cabañes study of emotions associated with writing, he did not include sadness, despair, or grief over the problem, which leaves further room for research. While González-Cabañes did cite enjoyment and curiosity as emotions in writing which would match the joy found in Danticat, the lack of sadness cognitions is significant. Could lament or grief be another epistemic emotion associated with both invention and learning transfer? There is much to be discovered. Along the lines of lament, the place of faith or how spirituality impacts writing and plays a role is under-examined. While this thesis aims to look at the implications of lament on Danticat and the

writing classroom, more work is needed to understand the role of religion and faith in the field of composition.

Finally, while it is common to use exemplar and model texts in creative writing classrooms, there remain gaps in research on the impact of model literary texts for traditional composition classes. While model texts are also common in secondary English classrooms, more research is needed to understand how literary texts can provide a gateway for research and composition as a smaller part in the larger whole of teaching writing. Furthermore, there is little research on the use of Danticat or similar authors such as Uwem Akpan or Julia Alvarez for composition classes such as English 101 or 102, or their equivalents. Secondary English classrooms are more all-encompassing in the approach of teaching composition as it relates more holistically to all communication, not only writing. The university composition classroom may find valuable insight and inspiration in the way secondary English classrooms utilize literary texts to approach research and composition as a smaller part in the larger whole of teaching writing. There is also little research on the impact of authors of color or diverse cultures and how the use of a diverse range of texts promote empathy and cultivates a culture of diversity in language use in writing. While *Approaches to Danticat* initiated many groundbreaking conversations about the use of a literary text outside of traditional literary courses, more work is needed at the collegiate level.

Final Thoughts

Traditional research projects and the teaching of writing are reimagined when students are invited to explore through their research through lament. Approaching writing philosophy and practice from the place of lament and attending to the affective in student writing leads to more invested research in the writing classroom. Danticat's writing serves as a rich model text pedagogically and philosophically for the writing classroom in its treatment of both personal and national topics. Language is designed to engage our and our student's reality. By acknowledging how language is emotive and giving students the space to express language from their diverse backgrounds, the "other" is welcome in the writing classroom.

In my own experiences teaching abroad, engagement with lament in the composition process made for rich and deep learning. Making space for students' emotions during the writing process while helping them move toward being more effective emotional managers created the possibility for the transfer of writing skills into new contexts. Students will become more engaged and more engaging writers if they connect profoundly to the content. One of the best avenues to reach that personal connection is choosing research topics through lament, where they can work from a place of the topics that really matter to them. Using authors like Danticat will help students see that such a connection is possible.

APPENDIX: Activities and Lesson Plans Index

Note to instructors: These activities and lesson plans are aligned with the Writing Program Administrator's Outcomes for First-Year Composition. They are also in line with the work Asao B. Inoue is pioneering currently (in 2021-22) for more inclusive language standards. Inoue outlines the following outcomes for linguistic justice in the writing classroom:

- Listening first to others and listening to the places that afford us exchanges
- Acting compassionately toward others, finding compromise, and offering self-sacrifice as the basis of the ethical
- Finding middle grounds through deep humility and resisting agon[5] and position-taking
- Enacting reciprocity, gift-giving, and the protection of everyone in a place, which includes protecting that place because it is vital and consubstantial to everyone – it too is alive (and a life) and deserves respect not exploitation or the denial of its own sacredness
- Considering the conditions and consequences of our languaging as more important than any individual's motives or reasons
- Accounting for each person's politics and social positioning in language exchanges
- Crafting sustainable gift-giving discourse – that is, languaging that sustains, does no harm, and always tries to heal
- Cultivating a willingness to sit bravely in the company of paradox

In particular, these activities and lesson align with Inoue's outcomes:

1. Listening first to others and listening to the places that afford us exchanges
    - *Activity 1-Learner Survey*: by having students complete a brief survey about their previous learning and writing experiences, instructors can practice listening first and listening for places to create dialogue in class.
    - *Activity 2-Feel/Need Check-in:* Instructors can give students a space to reflect back how they feel about the feedback they have received. Writing can feel one-directional, but it is best in composition courses if writing is seen as part of a larger dialogue. Making spaces for students to reflect on feedback and their feelings about feedback and the writing process, as well as what they need, can afford better exchanges and dialogue in the composition process.
2. Acting compassionately toward others, finding compromise, and offering self-sacrifice as the basis of the ethical
    - *Lesson Plan 3-Invention with Lament:* Students can practice acting

[5] *Agon* is an ancient Greek term for a conflict, struggle or contest. Inoue seems to suggest in his use of the term that instructors would do best to avoid polarizing binaries and conflicts which can arise from taking, or insisting students take, a side to the exclusion of other viewpoints and positions. For more help on how to do this in the writing classroom, see Jim Beitler and Richard Gibson's book *Charitable Writing: Cultivating Virtue through Our Words.*

compassionately towards themselves and others as they listen to the laments writing in this activity.

3. Finding middle grounds through deep humility and resisting agon and position-taking
    - *Lesson Plan 3-Invention with Lament:* To properly lament is to grieve what isn't right, but to entrust that there can still be hope. Lament invites a perspective shift which resists side-taking and cultivates humility.
4. Enacting reciprocity, gift-giving, and the protection of everyone in a place, which includes protecting that place because it is vital and consubstantial to everyone – it too is alive (and a life) and deserves respect not exploitation or the denial of its own sacredness
    - *Activity 2-Feel/Need Check-in:* Instructors can model reciprocity and honor students' space by helping them to acknowledge what they feel and need throughout the writing process.
    - *Lesson Plan 1-Languaging with Danticat:* Students can explore how language shapes humanity and what it means to be alive. By exploring how model texts use language to give voice or silence, students can consider how their language acknowledges or dismisses the sacredness of the other (or what is different from them).
    - *Lesson Plan 2-Intro to Lament:* To lament is to acknowledge that all living things are sacred, and that the world is not as it should be. Students can explore how space or place was not protected and the writer's grief at the loss of a sacred, divine thing.
    - *Lesson Plan 3-Invention with Lament:* Students can explore how space or place was not protected in a topic that matters personally to them and how they can trust that a different outcome is possible, perhaps even through their research topic.
5. Considering the conditions and consequences of our languaging as more important than any individual's motives or reasons
    - *Lesson Plan 1-Languaging with Danticat:* Students and instructors can examine the use of language across multiple texts to look at the conditions and consequences of the communication act, even if they do not agree with the motive or reason. Reading model texts through the lens of a writer can help students see what writerly moves others are making and that they themselves could make.
    - *Lesson Plan 2-Intro to Lament:* This activity examines sacred and secular laments across a range of mediums. While students can research the conditions which created the lament, it is less important that students "agree" with the writer or know their motives/reasons for lament,and more what the conditions for creating a lament and its consequences are.
6. Accounting for each person's politics and social positioning in language exchanges
    - *Lesson Plan 1-Languaging with Danticat:* Students can consider how Danticat and other authors have a perspective and worldview shaped by

their varied and rich life experience, rather than simply dismissing opinions they disagree with as "biased." Students will be able to see how politics and positions can impact language.
    - *Lesson Plan 2-Intro to Lament:* As students research and analyze the laments, they can understand how politics and social positions impacted the language of the lament, or "language" (some examples are visual) of the communication situation.
7. Crafting sustainable gift-giving discourse – that is, languaging that sustains, does no harm, and always tries to heal
    - *Activity 1-Learner Survey:* Practicing listening to students is to create a culture of giving and receiving. It also affords the instructor an opportunity to reflect on their own practices–in what ways have they structured feedback or activities to heal or sustain? When have they "done harm" advertently or inadvertently? I've found the learner surveys to be enlightening to my own teaching practices.
    - *Activity 2-Feel/Need Check-in*: The practice of encouraging dialogue about writing and feedback can work toward promoting gift giving discourse in the classroom. I often have students write a reflection note in which if I missed something in the initial feedback of an essay they can have a chance to explain the moves they were trying to make in their writing. It's helpful for students to see that writing is never one-and-done, but a perpetual or sustained conversation.
    - *Lesson Plan 1-Languaging with Danticat:* Students will see how model texts use language and be able to explore what moves they could emulate through these authors to find their own voice and language which best expresses themselves and their ideas.
    - *Lesson Plan 3-Invention with Lament:* As students explore personal laments and their implications for research, they are invited in the ways giving topics and ideas voice can sustain and heal.
8. Cultivating a willingness to sit bravely in the company of paradox
    - *Activity 2-Feel/Need Check-in:* Though it can be uncomfortable for instructors to get feedback about the feedback they gave or peers gave. Instructors can invite students to sit in paradox feelings and emotions as they work out what they feel and need in the writing process.
    - *Lesson Plan 2-Intro to Lament:* Lament is a natural space for students to sit bravely in the company of paradox. To properly lament is to sit in paradox, acknowledging what is wrong with the world while still hoping for alternative outcomes. Lament also invites the writer and the reader to the paradox of a perspective shift.
    - *Lesson Plan 3-Invention with Lament:* Students will sit in the paradox which makes up the genre of lament as they write their own personal lament and consider its implications for future research.

For more information, see:

Inoue, Asao B. “Blogbook -- Decolonizing Our Languaging’, *Asao B. Inoue's Infrequent Words* Blog. http://asaobinoue.blogspot.com/2022/01/blogbook-decolonizing-our-languaging.html. Accessed 17 Jan. 2022.

Activity 1: Learner Survey

Note to Instructors: *This survey is designed as an introductory assignment to a first-year writing course. Instructors should plan to have students complete this by the end of the first week of class. In order to promote linguistic justice in the classroom and help students acquire the right to their own language, it is essential to understand where students are coming from, what educational practices gave them voice in their writing and where they felt silenced. If instructors can attend compassionately to the ways students have been formed by helpful (or less supportive) practices, this can better inform their own practice.*

It’s best if the survey is kept confidential, or between only the instructor and the student, and if instructors respond via comments or, if their LMS allows via audio or video, to the student. Throughout the semester, this survey can be referred back to in order to better understand where students are coming from and how instructors might better support them throughout the course and projects.

Standards (from WPA):

- Reflect on the development of composing practices and how those practices influence their work
- Experience the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes (with the instructor)

Outcomes from Inoue:

- Listening first to others and listening to the places that afford us exchanges
- Crafting sustainable gift-giving discourse – that is, languaging that sustains, does no harm, and always tries to heal

Directions: The following questions are to help the instructor get to know you as a learner and better support you throughout the course. Please complete by the end of the first week of class. Only the instructor will see your responses.

1. What are your preferred name and pronouns? What do you like to be called/what do you go by? If possible, please edit the LMS (learning management system) to reflect your preferences. (*note to instructors: include a link/video of instructions for students to modify the LMS*)

2. **Learning Success:**

a. What are 2-3 things your instructor(s) have done that helped you succeed in a class? Consider what is helpful for classes both in person and online.
b. What are things your instructor(s) have done that prevented you from being more successful?
c. Is there anything I, your instructor, should be aware of with regard to you and your learning style?

3. **Describe your previous writing experiences:**
    a. What have you written for fun?
    b. For academics?
    c. Where have you felt successful?
    d. What helped you improve your writing and what prevented improvement?

4. Define your goals for this semester, and tell us what we (your classmates, your instructor) can do to help you reach them.

Activity 2: Writing Process Check-in: How Do I Feel? What Do I Need?

Note to Instructors: *Use the following activity with students to check in how they feel about their project drafts during the writing process or after they have received feedback on their project. The inspiration from this activity came from Sandy Trzcinski's original "I feel, I need" Chart which was modified to fit the writing classroom rather than a counseling session. This activity is not a replacement for therapy should the writing process create any triggers or resurface any traumas. I would encourage instructors to include contact information for campus counseling should triggers arise with this activity. However, this activity can help students sort through the emotions they feel during the writing process. If instructors can provide supports for both positive and negative cognitions, students will be more likely to transfer knowledge and skills about writing/communication into new rhetorical situations.*

Standards (from WPA):

- Reflect on the development of composing practices and how those practices influence their work
- To review work-in-progress for the purpose of developing ideas before surface-level editing

Outcomes from Inoue

- Listening first to others and listening to the places that afford us exchanges
- Enacting reciprocity, gift-giving, and the protection of everyone in a place, which includes protecting that place because it is vital and consubstantial to everyone –

it too is alive (and a life) and deserves respect not exploitation or the denial of its own sacredness
- Crafting sustainable gift-giving discourse – that is, languaging that sustains, does no harm, and always tries to heal
- Cultivating a willingness to sit bravely in the company of paradox

Directions for Students:

1. How do you feel about your draft? Circle the word/emoji for how you feel about how your writing project is going.
2. What do you need: from yourself, your peers, or the instructor?
   *Note--the need columns do not necessarily correspond with the feel columns, though they can if you wish. You do not have to stay in the same column/ categories.

Ie: You could ***feel*** **frustrated** because a reader/ the instructor didn't understand what you were trying to do / say in your essay and ***need*** **to be heard.**

Reflection–Using the chart below:

A. What steps might you take to meet your needs?
B. What might you need from others or help with?
C. How can you communicate those needs to peers, the instructor, a writing tutor?
D. How can you use how you feel and what you need to creatively solve a problem in your topic or in your writing?

I FEEL ...				
Mad 	**Sad** 	**Glad** 	**Afraid** 	**Ashamed** 
Annoyed Irritated Offended Resistant Trapped Uptight Angry Aggressive	Alone Hurt Disappointed Discouraged Hopeless Crushed Grieved Used	Appreciated Relieved Satisfied Confident Enthusiastic Content Optimistic Hopeful	Overwhelmed Confused Panicky Terrified Apprehensive Anxious Unsure Stuck	Embarrassed Guilty Caught Exposed Misunderstood Inadequate Humiliated Lost

Furious Contemptuous	Defeated Depressed	Capable Supported	Cautious Cornered	Insecure Small
I NEED … FROM ...				
Structure Space Consistency Choice Independence Collaboration Humor Rest Security	Fun Appreciation Attention Grace Support Acceptance Encouragement Empathy Recharging	Kindness Respect To be heard Understanding Belonging Inclusion Growth Celebration Recognition	Honesty Courage Awareness Help Change Challenge Creativity Reflection Beauty	Inspiration Closure Variety Activity Freedom Clarity Comfort Opportunity Hope

Activity Thanks: Special thanks to Sandy Trzcinski for her original "I feel, I need" Chart.

Other Helpful Sources

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Lesson Plan 1: Languaging with Danticat and Others: Acquiring the Right to Own Language

Note to Instructors: *This lesson is designed to help students explore voice and language in the writing classroom. Students will explore various texts which challenge Standard*

English assumptions and where authors "break" traditional views of academic language. Students will then practice experimenting with languaging and form to develop their own academic voice.

Objectives:

- Understand how language shifts to meet purpose
- Identify purposeful shifts in language to meet the needs of the rhetorical situation
- Experiments with various languaging practices to meet needs of new rhetorical situations and explore academic voice

Standards: (from WPA Outcomes)

- Experience the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes
- Reflect on the development of composing practices and how those practices influence their work
- Gain experience reading and composing in several genres to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers' and writers' practices and purposes
- Develop facility in responding to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure

Outcomes from Inoue

- Considering the conditions and consequences of our languaging as more important than any individual's motives or reasons
- Accounting for each person's politics and social positioning in language exchanges
- Crafting sustainable gift-giving discourse – that is, languaging that sustains, does no harm, and always tries to heal
- Enacting reciprocity, gift-giving, and the protection of everyone in a place, which includes protecting that place because it is vital and consubstantial to everyone – it too is alive (and a life) and deserves respect not exploitation or the denial of its own sacredness

Procedures:

Step 1: Language use in Model Texts (15-20 min)

1. Read Model Texts*

*can be assigned as homework before class, though it might be more effective (and actually read) if assigned in class.

In small groups, have students read:

- "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" by Gloria Anzaldua
- "Should Writers Use They Own English?" by Vershawn Ashanti Young

2. Discuss texts: (with help from Lessner)

- Identify the rhetorical situation of each piece: who is the intended audience? What's the context/culture? What is the author's purpose?
- What is the rhetorical situation in which the writers find themselves using different language forms? (Rhetorical situation refers to the context, intended audience, and purpose for writing.)
- Do the writings attempt to invoke an emotional response (pathos) from its readers?
- What makes the writings credible (ethos) to speak about language practices as a condition of access into a community?
- Does the author make any logical appeals (logos) to persuade readers?
- Describe the language of the pieces. Are they formal, informal? Academic? Personal? Identify examples of each.
- What might the pieces say about the use of language in writing?
- Why do you think Anzaldua chose to code-switch between English and Spanish and Young chose to code-switch between Standard English and AAVE?
- Discuss code-meshing, code-switching and translanguaging.
- How do the essays speak to education, language attitudes, and other issues today?

Step 3: Analysis with Danticat (15-20 min)

1. Read passages from Danticat's *Brother I'm Dying* or *The Dew Breaker*.
    a. Possible Selections from *Brother I'm Dying* could include: "One Papa Happy, One Papa Sad" or "Gypsy" or "Transition"
    - Compare and contrast Danticat to Anzaldua and Young.
    - Note Danticat's use of language:
        i. What does she do?
        ii. How does she mix language?
        iii. What are her purposes?
    - What is gained or lost by Danticat's choice to use English and Creole?
    - Other observations (can use the questions above from Anzaldua/Young)

Step 4: Languaging (20-30 min)

1. Read Achebe quote:
    - "Writer[s] should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience … I feel that English will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. **But it will have to be a new English**, still in full communion with its ancestral home and altered to suit its new African surroundings." --Chinua Achebe

2. Discuss Achebe quote "New English."

- Have you ever felt freedom with language? (able to express what you want to say and have the words to say it) When or why?
- Have you ever felt constricted by language? Did you ever feel you needed a "new" English to be able to fully express your ideas? Why or why not?
- Reflect on Danticat's chapter "Gypsy"--how did the gift of the typewriter both give freedom and constriction with her words?

3. Examine STROL standard:
   - Read Standard. Can be found at: https://prod-ncte-cdn.azureedge.net/nctefiles/groups/cccc/newsrtol.pdf or the summary: https://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/srtolsummary
   - Answer Young's title question: Should writers be able to use their own language in writing? Why or why not?
   - What could that mean for you and your writing or for academic writing? What's "academic?"

Step 5: Application (20 min)

1. Practice/Language Experimentation: take a text (activity inspired from TSIS Ch 9 Voice) and rewrite in two languaging forms.
   *note: can be assigned as homework
   a. Rewrite the passage to include formal and informal language
   b. Rewrite the passage to codemesh "academic English" (formal language) and another dialect or language you can speak (AAVE, text lingo, "car guy" talk, another language such as Spanish or Swahili)
   c. Reflect: what might code meshing, switching or translanguaging offer for writing?

Optional/Additional Resource: Birkenstein and Graff's *They Say / I Say* Chapter 9 on Voice has additional activities to help students explore how to add their own voice to their writing.

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Lesson Plan 2: Introduction to Lament and Lament Invention

Note to Instructors: *Students may be unfamiliar with the genre of lament or it's place for their research. This lesson plan aims to help students identify features of the genre of lament by noting the ways Danticat uses the affective (emotion) in the tone of her writing. After students identify different tones in Danticat's writing, they will read a short passage describing the purposes for lament and then brainstorm how lament could help them with their research project. If students need more help with lament before brainstorming, you might have students practice writing a lament (see Lesson 3). Students may also benefit from looking at modern laments, which is also done in Lesson 3.*

Objectives:

- Identify tone/affective shift in Danticat
- Explain how Danticat's affective/tonal choices contributes to her writing's purpose
- Brainstorm possible research topics using Danticat as a model

Standards (From WPA Outcomes)

- Gain experience reading and composing in several genres to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers' and writers' practices and purposes
- Develop facility in responding to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure
- Read a diverse range of texts, attending especially to relationships between assertion and evidence, to patterns of organization, to the interplay between verbal and nonverbal elements, and to how these features function for different audiences and situations

Outcomes from Inoue:

- Enacting reciprocity, gift-giving, and the protection of everyone in a place, which includes protecting that place because it is vital and consubstantial to everyone – it too is alive (and a life) and deserves respect not exploitation or the denial of its own sacredness
- Considering the conditions and consequences of our languaging as more important than any individual's motives or reasons
- Accounting for each person's politics and social positioning in language exchanges
- Cultivating a willingness to sit bravely in the company of parado

Procedures

Step 1: Review Tone (10 min)

1. Explain:
    - Tone is an author's attitude toward his or her audience and characters. It is an integral part of an author's style.
    - Like the tone of a speaker's voice, the tone of an author's words expresses the writer's feelings. The difficult aspect of determining tone through mere words is not hearing those cues that we have been accustomed to in speech that suggest a particular attitude, whether it is anger, joy, or sarcasm. In other words, there is no voice inflection to obscure or carry meaning.
    - Good authors rarely use only one tone in their writings. Complex attitudes might include a changing attitude (tone shift) or one attitude toward the reader and another attitude toward the subject (split tone) (The College Board AP Vertical).
2. Display "Handout 1" Tone Words for students and discuss and compare the connotation and denotation of the words.

Step 2: Identify Tone in Danticat (20 min)

1. Give out "Part 1: Identifying Tone and Emotion in Writing"
2. Have students select a passage from Edwidge Danticat's *Brother I'm Dying* and identify tone and emotion. Explain to students the relationship between tone, emotion, and affective. Selected passages are listed on the handout as a guide. Feel free to apply the exercise to other writers.
3. Have students discuss the emotions which arise in Danticat's writing and the rhetorical situation of her writing.

Step 3: Introduce Lament (15-20 min)

1. Have students read "Part 2: Journey into Lament." Have students define Lament in their own words and explain to a classmate. If helpful, look up the definition of "Lament" on wikipedia and discuss the origins of lament.
2. Have students complete the reflection questions or assign as homework. Discuss the implications of lament on research and how students can consider their audience as they approach their research topic.

Student Handout
Directions for Students:

Part 1: Identifying Tone and Emotion in Writing

1. What is "tone?" Write a definition in your own words.

2. Select a passage from Danticat's *Brother I'm Dying* and note five (5) or more emotive tones as well as the author's purpose which emerge from the passage. Use the tone list (Handout 1) below to help guide you:
   Passage Recommendations:
   - "One Papa Happy, One Papa Sad"
   - "Alien 27041999"
   - "Transition"

Danticat excerpt	**Tone/Emotion**	**Category**	**Author's Purpose**
Example A. "One Papa Happy, One Papa Sad" B. "Alien 27041999" C. "Transition"	a.Sorrowful b.Clinical c.Hopeful/ethereal	a.Negative b.Neutral c.Positive	A.to explore her homes B.emotional disconnection with what happens to her uncle, aiming to remain unbiased C.Reflecting on hope and the metaphor of life and death together

3. Read aloud your passages to a classmate and discuss:
   - What emotions (affects) arise from the tones of the passages?
   - What is the rhetorical situation of Danticat's writing? Who might her intended audience be? What might her purpose be? How is her writing shaped by the context and culture?
   - Where do you see Danticat express sorrow or celebration in her writing? List examples in this passage or in others.
   - Where do you see Danticat struggle in her writing to understand her experience? List examples.
   - What might Danticat's language use and struggle to capture the experience tell you about writing or your own experiences of writing?

Handout 1: Tone/Attitude Vocabulary List*

Positive	Humor-Irony	Neutral	Upset-Sad-Worry	Negative
Amiable	Amused	Apathetic	Aggravated	Accusing
Amused	Bantering	Authoritative	Agitated	Admonitory
Appreciative	Bitter	Baffled	Anxious	Aggravated
Benevolent	Caustic	Callous	Apologetic	Agitated
Brave	Comical	Candid	Apprehensive	Angry
Calm	Critical	Ceremonial	Concerned	Apathetic
Cheerful/Cheery	Cynical	Clinical	Confused	Arrogant
Compassionate	Disdainful	Consoling	Dejected	Belligerent
Complimentary	Dramatic	Contemplative	Despairing	Bitter
Confident	Droll	Conventional	Disturbed	Boring
Consoling	Facetious	Detached	Embarrassed	Brash
Content	Flippant	Didactic	Fearful	Childish
Dreamy	Giddy	Disbelieving	Gloomy	Coarse
Ecstatic	Haughty	Earnest	Grave	Cold
Elated	Humorous	Expectant	Hollow	Condemnatory
Encouraging	Insolent	Factual	Hopeless	Condescending
Energetic	Ironic	Fervent	Judgmental	Contradictory
Enthusiastic	Irreverent	Formal	Malicious	Critical
Excited	Joking	Forthright	Melancholy	Desperate
Exuberant	Mock-heroic	Frivolous	Miserable	Disappointed
Friendly	Mock-serious	Humble	Morose	Disgruntled
Happy	Mocking	Incredulous	Mournful	Disgusted
Hopeful	Patriotic	Informative	Nervous	Disinterested
Jovial	Patronizing	Inquisitive	Numb	Furious
Joyful	Pretentious	Instructive	Ominous	Harsh
Jubilant	Provocative	Lyrical	Paranoid	Hateful
Lighthearted	Pompous	Matter-of-fact	Pessimistic	Haughty
Loving	Ribald	Meditative	Pitiful	Hurtful
Optimistic	Ridiculing	Nostalgic	Poignant	Indignant
Passionate	Sad	Objective	Regretful	Inflammatory
Peaceful	Sarcastic	Pleading	Remorseful	Insulting
Playful	Sardonic	Questioning	Resigned	Irritated
Pleasant	Satiric	Reflective	Sad	Manipulative
Proud	Scornful	Reminiscent	Serious	Obnoxious
Relaxed	Sharp	Resigned	Sober	Outraged
Reverent	Shocking	Restrained	Solemn	Passive
Romantic	Silly	Sentimental	Somber	Quarrelsome
Soothing	Taunting	Serious	Staid	Shameful
Surprised	Teasing	Sincere	Upset	Superficial
Sweet	Whimsical	Unemotional	Urgent	Surly
Sympathetic	Wry	Uninterested	Vexed	Threatening
Vibrant		Wistful	Zealous	Tired
Whimsical				Wrathful

Part 2: "Journey" Into Lament: Starting Research

"Deception. Discord. Despair. Disaster. Death. These are deep wounds. What are we supposed to do with our pain, anger, grief, and confusion?" (Walker). Can you bring these things before the audience of your writing?

What is Lament? Look up a definition and write it in your own words. Explain it to a classmate.

Lament is not about getting things off your chest. It's about casting your anxieties and trusting. Mere complaining indicates a lack of relationship with ourselves and our world. Because lament is a form of prayer or meditation. Lament can help you explore the condition of the world and ask your audience to sincerely take a look at changing things. Writing is relationship. To lament is to be utterly honest with your audience because we trust them. Lament affirms that suffering is real and spiritually significant, but not hopeless. Lament in research is to affirm that not all is right in the world and that these injustices are significant, but not without remedy. Lament in writing is a form of language which can bend the ear and pull the heart of our audience (edited from Walker to focus on writing).

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are you angered or grieved by—in your life or in the world around you? List 5-7 "laments" problems you see in your life or in the world around you?
2. The best research is motivated intrinsically, or because we have a personal connection or interest in the topic. To move beyond mere complaining about the problem, we have to identify the problem and work toward its solution. Star 2-3 from your list which you'd like to learn more about.
3. How can your list motivate further investigation or research? How can your list be a starting place for research? How might you approach this topic to "bend the ear and pull the heart" of your audience to consider this topic or problem from a new angle or in a new light?

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Lesson Plan 3: Invention With Lament

Note to Instructors: *This lesson plan can help students understand the features of the genre of lament and use lament in the invention process, or as a starting place for research in their writing. Instructors may find it more helpful to define the genre of lament before identifying tone in Danticat. As helpful, combine with activities from Lesson Plan 2.*

Objectives

- Examine traditional and modern laments to understand the discursive features of the genre
- Compare traditional and modern laments to a passage in Danticat
- Write a lament, based on model texts examined
- Identify a problem (lament) for a possible research topic

Standards (from WPA Outcomes)

- Gain experience negotiating variations in genre conventions
- Learn common formats and/or design features for different kinds of texts
- Use composing processes and tools as a means to discover and reconsider ideas

Outcomes from Inoue

- Acting compassionately toward others, finding compromise, and offering self-sacrifice as the basis of the ethical
- Finding middle grounds through deep humility and resisting agon and position-taking
- Enacting reciprocity, gift-giving, and the protection of everyone in a place, which includes protecting that place because it is vital and consubstantial to everyone – it too is alive (and a life) and deserves respect not exploitation or the denial of its own sacredness
- Crafting sustainable gift-giving discourse – that is, languaging that sustains, does no harm, and always tries to heal
- Cultivating a willingness to sit bravely in the company of paradox

Procedures

Step 1: Group Work/Jigsaw-Features of the Lament Genre (15-20 min)

1. Have students read over the definition of "lament" from poets.org.
2. Have students examine lament examples, both ancient and modern (see potential list) to identify features of the lament genre.
3. Discuss findings as a class
4. Create a class list of features of the lament genre. Ie: communal versus personal, endings with hope, range of emotions, affirmation of trust, complaints, metaphors/literary devices used, petition/request explored etc,
5. Then, based on the features students notice from the traditional and modern laments, identify a passage from Danticat's *Brother I'm Dying* which sounds like a lament. Compare Danticat to the traditional and modern examples.

Step 2: Write a Lament (15-20 min)

1. Identify features of laments and write a list as a class together. The instructor might recap from the list gathered in Step 1.
2. If students need more help, have them look up "A Written Lament" which explores biblical lament.
3. Write a lament, using the form provided or other forms.
4. Have students share, as they feel comfortable. Instructors may also ask students to underline one line they would feel comfortable to share and then go around and have students share their line.

Step 3: Looking for Lament (15-20 min)*

1. Have students fill out the "Looking for Lament" brainstorming sheet for a potential research topic. *This can also be assigned for homework.

Handout 1: Lament Genre Analysis

Directions:

1. Read over the definition of "lament" from poets.org. See: https://poets.org/glossary/lament
2. Look over traditional and modern laments to understand features of the genre. Use the chart to help you analyze the texts. Choose one ancient and one modern lament. Feel free to veer off this list, just consult the instructor before you get started.
3. Then, based on the features you notice from the traditional and modern laments, identify a passage from Danticat's *Brother I'm Dying* which sounds like a lament. Compare Danticat to your traditional and modern examples.

Text suggestions: (feel free to veer off the list)

Traditional

- Biblical:
    - Lamentations
    - Psalms* (there are many types, here are two major categories)
        - Corporate (Communal)--12, 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 90, 94, 123, 126, 129
        - Personal– Psalm 3, 4, 5, 7, 9-10, 13, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 36, 39, 40:12-17, 41, 42-43, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 64, 69, 70, 71, 77, 86, 89, 120, 139, 141, 142

- Greek women's laments
- Rumi's: "Who are We in This Complicated World?"
- List from Poets.org:
    - Lament for the Destruction of Ur
    - One of the Mesopotamian Laments
    - Anglo-Saxon poem "Deor's Lament"

    - Yosef Ibn Avitor's "Lament for the Jews of Zion" (eleventh century)
    - "The Hag of Beare" (ninth century)
    - Polish poet Jan Kochanowski's *Laments* (1580)
- Others:
    - Anne Bradstreet "Verses upon the Burning of our House" (1666)
    - "Lament for Art O'Leary" by Eibhlin Dubh Ni Chonaill (1773)
    - Percy Bysshe Shelley "A Lament" (1824)

Modern (current century)

- Banksy's work, especially "Crazy Horse"
- Picasso's *Guernica*
- Song lyrics from Zulu singers Ladysmith Black Mambazo, especially "Homeless" or any work written during Apartheid
- *Requiem Rwanda,* by Laura Apol

Genre Features	**Text 1: Traditional**	**Text 2: Modern**	**Text 3: Danticat passage**
Text Name:			
Audience Who is it written for and why would they want to read it? **Who** specifically is the reader? Are there multiple readers? (any hidden audiences?) **What** do your readers already know about the subject? What do you know about their values, expectations, and knowledge of the content? Does the message need to be modified for international readers? Are there cultural issues that need to be addressed or avoided?			
Audience + Religion/belief Who is part of the belief system?			

Who would find the text most helpful? Clergy? Lay Members? How do you know?			
Purpose: What is the purpose of this document? What is the reason for communicating? (demonstrate knowledge of a concept, persuade to support a cause, etc.) What will the audience expect from this kind of communication? What is the event or occasion that requires a response? What kind of response does it require? Is it a type of text? (an argument, an explanation, a description) or does it require multiple responses?			
Organization How is that response organized—chronologically, in topical sections, in order of importance? What are the design and layout features of this document?			
Language: How formal/informal is the language? Is specialized vocabulary used? What? (give examples) What other language features do you notice?			
Anything else you noticed? (differences or similarities?)			

Handout 2: Write a Lament

Directions:

1. Review back over traditional and modern laments and then write a lament.Write a poem of lament, asking for help and relief to the problems in life or around you. There are many forms. Here is one (from "A Written Lament"):

Invocation	1. What injustice do you notice in the world? 2. What is your cry for help? 3. What goodness or justice have you seen in the past?
Complaint	1. What is the external or internal problem? Metaphors (or other literary devices) for describing the problem: Ie: wilderness, wasteland, an empty room, fog, walking on eggshells etc)
Affirmation of Trust	1. How have others proved trustworthy? 2. What other injustices have been "righted" in the past?
Petition	Fill in the blank: 1. Save __ from ___ 2. Deliver ___ from ___ 3. For ____ has intervened in the past by …
Statement of Confidence	"I will hope in …" How can you hope?
Vow of Praise or Gratitude or Resolution	What can you give thanks for? What can you proclaim to be true? Is resolution possible? How so?

2. **Poetry:** Pay attention to the devices you noted in traditional and modern laments and experiment or use those forms to write your Lament in poetic form. Use imagery, specific and concrete language, and other forms to help express your ideas. As you feel comfortable, share with a friend, or the class.

3. **Title:** Go back and give a title for your lament.

Handout 3: Looking for Lament: Identifying a Problem for Research

(with help from Savini 53)

Directions: Laments are sung (or written) out a problem and what is at stake. Catherine Savini in "Looking for Trouble" claims "Problems motivate good papers, and good problems will lead you to your thesis or argument" (55). Persuasive, argument writing is born out of a problem, the questions which arise from the problem and what is at stake. Use the following activities to help you discover what "problem" you'd like to do your research project about.

Problem:	
Look for Tensions:	1. *Juxtapose ideas and identify tensions or contradictions in terms of their ideas and/ or definitions of key concepts related to the problem/position.* 2. *Identify conflict between your own experiences and the theo-ries or arguments offered by media, society, or sources.* 3. *Identify troubling assumptions that underlie the central arguments or ideas of the problem/position.* 4. *Note a gap or something relevant the problem/position overlooks.*
Cause of Problem/Position:	
What's the scope/frequency of the problem/position?	*(geographic, regime-type, temporal, socio-demo- graphic, or other terms, as appropriate)*
What factors contribute to the problem/position?	*(identify political, social, cultural, economic or other factors that appear to contribute to its increase or decrease of the problem/position)*
Pose Questions that emerge from the problem: (3 or more)	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

What is at stake?	1. 2. 3.
So what? Why does it matter? Who could the audience be?	
"What will you gain from answering your question or what will be lost if you do not answer your question?" –Joseph Williams (Savini 59)	
Gained	
Lost	

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Other great Invention Activities can be found at:

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