



Dyson terms the “image stores” available to young girls to create more “feminist friendly cultural models” (101). GirlZone’s facilitators knew that a hip GrrlFest logo would attract more attention from their young audience, and so they designed a logo that modified the Powerpuff girl into an angry, tough girl, with the motto, “Throw like a girl.” The logo successfully revised popular imagery in order to appeal to young girls at once plugged into consumer culture and searching for ways to define their own identities.

The last chapter examines the troubles GirlZone founders faced when trying to create economic viability. While the first grant they pursued worked, the second did not. The potential funders rejected the grant based on their mistaken belief that Aimee smoked pot. While GirlZone founders were obviously dismayed that grassroots literacy activities can fail based simply on personal prejudices, Sheridan-Rabideau argues that using “strategic rhetoric,” a discourse that avoids overtly political discourse and focuses on “entrepreneurship skills,” might be a means for feminist organizations to attract more funding. She uses the Third Wave Foundation and its discourse as an example of this strategy. Ultimately, GirlZone closed its doors when it lost funding, yet GirlZone’s commitment to the more than one thousand girls and women who participated in workshops, radio shows, festivals, and weekly activities provides clear evidence that it had an important impact on the surrounding community and worked productively to engage an often hostile consumer culture with an empowering feminist message.

This book asks important questions about the function of third wave feminism in the academy and our surrounding communities. As always, I worry that girls will be distracted by commercialized images—respond to the Powerpuff and not her anger—but I think that Sheridan-Rabideau’s analysis marks an important step toward re-imagining a feminist rhetoric for the Third Wave generation.



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Review

Undoing the Silence: Six Tools for Social Change Writing by Louise Dunlap, Oakland, CA: New Village Press, 2007.

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Undoing the Silence: Six Tools for Social Change Writing is a book about writing. It is also a book about the social forces that silence people and what ordinary citizens can accomplish when they are able to break the silence and put their truths, individually and collectively, into print. Louise Dunlap argues that when people are able to name their truths and take action in print to challenge injustices, “*This is what democracy looks like*” (2). Dunlap is determined not only to make readers aware of how they are silenced and silence themselves but also to deliver six practical tools designed to break those silences. Dunlap’s primary audience is career activists and ordinary citizens for whom process writing tools are new and who need a book that functions both as a workbook and reference for using process writing strategies to create change; however, teachers of writing will find Dunlap’s particular spin on these tools refreshing, particularly for coaching students in service-learning courses who are composing documents ranging from grant proposals to public service announcements. In addition, Dunlap’s take on both “The Audience Tool” and “The Feedback Tool” incorporate what some call the rhetoric of listening and contribute to the theory and practice of process writing.

In the first two chapters Dunlap gives us her own history, citing the forces that silenced people in her generation during WWII and the Cold



War, and what happened to her and countless others who found ways to speak up during the Civil Rights era and the Berkeley Free Speech Movement. She likens these periods to our present moment, when the Patriot Act and the Iraq War conspire to create a deadly silence, a cultural paralysis driven by fears of economic insecurity, personal danger, and environmental degradation. Citing dozens of stories, letters, articles, and community efforts from social activists and regular citizens, Dunlap offers a convincing vision that we are not alone and that, in fact, using the tools she offers to create communities that assist us in speaking out is the way into both public discourse and the will to change unjust circumstances.

Drawing on composition theory as well as theories on dialogue, silence, listening and non-adversarial communication, Dunlap introduces a new turn on the writing teacher's basic toolkit as she focuses on Six Tools for Social Change Writing: freewriting, process, thinking, audience, feedback, and word-power. Each chapter explores one tool in relation to breaking silence, offers a variety of exercises to test it, features several vignettes that tell of people who have used the tool, and explains how one tool relates to the others. In addition, Dunlap includes appendices that offer still more examples of documents that activists and citizens have crafted and published, and a "More Resources" section that functions as an annotated bibliography organized into the following categories: Essential Authors on Writing (Peter Elbow, Linda Flower, Pat Schneider); Intuition and Freewriting (Peter Elbow, Pat Belanoff, Sheryl I. Fontaine); Thinking Tools (Ann E. Bertoff); Writing for Specific Audiences (Donald Murray); Feedback, Listening and Non-Adversarial Communication (Ann Ruggles Gere, Thich Nhat Hanh); Editing (Strunk & White, Chicago Manual of Style); Understanding Voice and Silence (Paulo Freire, Audre Lorde, Tillie Olsen); Inspiring Positive Action (Frances Moore Lappe, Linda Stout, Yes! Magazine); and Projects Mentioned (Sustaining the Soul that Serves, Equal Exchange).



What is striking about Dunlap's chapter on "The Freewriting Tool" is how she draws on techniques carefully selected from a range of sources from composition scholars including Peter Elbow, Pat Belanoff and Toby Fulwiler; to social change leadership theorist Katrina Shields' work on using journaling to address oppression, burnout, and conflict resolution in organizations; to the mindfulness techniques of Natalie Goldberg and Jungian work based in therapy and personal growth. Dunlap makes remarkable sense as she reminds us of the importance of accessing the intuitive mind and slipping past the internalized editors who silence us.

In the chapter that follows, "The Process Tool," Dunlap revisits the best of the 1970s process movement. Warning readers against "the dangerous method" of using a single draft to get it right the first time and often at the last minute, she introduces writing as a process and encourages readers to try what she calls the "five core activities" with the promise that "you can trust yourself to finish even challenging pieces of writing without agony" (9) because, taken in manageable stages, even complicated writing projects benefit from "mad drafts" and other strategies that keep the inner and outer judges at bay. Though old news to those in composition, the stories Dunlap tells about introducing career activists and citizen groups to these methods make it clear her primary audience is those for whom process writing is a new idea. Teachers of composition will find that Dunlap's diagrams make it easy for students of writing to arrange and rearrange what Dunlap offers into tailor-made processes adapted to a wide variety of writing projects, from public service announcements to grant proposals.

"The Thinking Tool" chapter presents a Centaur of sorts, a hybrid that invites writers to immerse themselves in the tensions between logical rhetorical analysis and more intuitive approaches. Dunlap introduces a way to harness both sides of the brain to organize and deliver a message or argument, drawing on Ann E. Bertoff's use of dialogic thinking and metaphor. Dunlap discusses a range of familiar invention



strategies—freewriting, clustering, questions, interviewing, mapping, grids, diagrams, outlines, metaphors, drawing, and storytelling—and shows how they can be put to use in fresh ways to negotiate four stages of thinking and composing: Generate and Deepen Ideas; Organize and Connect; Sharpen Your Argument; and [Get] Back to the Roots [of meaning in the argument]. Perhaps the most delightful and useful tool of the lot is WIRMI, an acronym for “What I Really Mean Is . . .” Meant to detangle the worst muddle of a paragraph, WIRMI helps writers get to the point without sacrificing the root meaning of the work.

In “The Audience Tool” chapter Dunlap adapts Linda Flower’s work in *Problem Solving Strategies for Writing* to create an “Audience Analysis Grid” that can be used to assess an audience’s knowledge, values, attitudes, beliefs, needs and expectations and to map those against the writer’s own goals. Dunlap explores how to use this grid to connect with difficult audiences and multiple audiences, as well as address power differentials and find common ground. Rogerian theory on addressing conflict rounds out this extensively researched and illustrated chapter, making “The Audience Tool” accessible in a new way to those who are visual learners.

Perhaps the most innovative chapter, “The Feedback Tool,” challenges writing teachers and community activists to take responsibility for their own reader-responses. The practice of separating out observations from evaluations is the heart of the chapter. Dunlap seamlessly pulls together the composition theories of Ann Ruggles Gere’s *Writing Groups: History, Theory, and Implications*, Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff’s work in *Sharing and Responding*, and a variety of theories on listening and non-adversarial communication popularized by Marshall Rosenberg and Thich Nhat Hanh. Using “listening and awareness, not rules, judgment or analysis” (152), Dunlap coaches writers to engage in deep revision rather than defensive posturing. This time-intensive tool works best in groups committed to its use, although Dunlap provides



a way to use the Feedback Tool in other situations, such as exchanges between employers and employees. The Feedback Tool employs three separate 20-minute activities. “The Reading Phase” includes the writer reading the piece aloud while the group members make notes or underline passages on the copies provided, paying particular attention to the parts of the text that affect them, using awareness rather than analysis to do so. In “The Interview Phase” the writer interviews the group members using the following questions: What words and phrases stand out for you? What message came through? Can you tell us the story of your experience as you read? What is your metaphor for the writing? The third phase, telling “the story of your experience as you read,” turns out to be the most difficult and novel for group members and the most rewarding for the writer. The translation of analysis and evaluation into direct observation and “I” statements is not an easy skill, but well worth the effort, as it forces writers to focus on what the writer needs to revise in any given text.

The final phase is the “Response and Discussion Phase” when the group asks the writer, “How are you feeling about the feedback? What is it bringing up for you and are there any dilemmas you want our help with?” (153). Collaborative and democratic, the Feedback Tool guides us to work with another to develop effective writing that can and does create change. Borrowing strategies from counseling, negotiation, non-adversarial communication, Dunlap shows through stories how the Feedback Tool works in the affective as well as the cognitive realms. This sort of feedback points concretely to what works and what doesn’t, instead of the less precise feedback provided by abstract judgments and evaluations.

Undoing the Silence does not offer much in the way of new information to scholars of composition and rhetoric; it is more a practical toolkit for community activists and regular citizens interested in using writing or those of us teaching writing for social change. Dunlap reminds us that at the heart of each tool discussed is the belief that we can speak out of



whatever culturally or individually imposed silences we face as writers. She frames writing as a social endeavor grounded in democratic practices, and therefore a kind of democracy itself. Fusing theory and practice, reflection and action, Dunlap builds bridges between composition theory and social activism to offer process writing to everyday citizens who want to make a difference.



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