riding, after all, has its pleasures and its aesthetic dimension, as Robert Pirsig's description makes clear. It also has its vulnerabilities. A motorcycle is smaller than other vehicles on the road, and the motorcyclist does not have the protection provided by other vehicles; in this sense, motorcycle riding more closely resembles bike riding or walking than driving. Stephen King's description of his near-fatal accident while walking on a highway in Maine makes clear the vulnerabilities of walkers in the face of powerful machines such as vans. Although motorcycle riders are frequently the victims in accidents—hence the controversy over the need for helmet laws—they are rarely the perpetrators in accidents. They are more like English teachers in an academy dominated by hard scientists than like patriarchs that dominate others. Bob Connors' death reminds us that in the midst of our work on women's special needs and problems, we need to attend to those of men as well.

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**Struggling with Manhood: Remembering Robert Connors**

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Bob, Jim Catano, and I are standing together at the 1998 CCCC convention in Chicago, a little uncertain about how to continue discussing the politics of masculinity, men's studies, and composition. I notice each of us has a beard. Bob and I have just participated in a roundtable with Gesa Kirsch and Eileen Schell focusing on the relationship between women's and men's studies in composition studies; Jim was in the audience. Although Bob is disappointed that only about seventy people were present, I am ecstatic, never before having presented to a group that size. I am the newcomer, the only person on the roundtable without substantial publications and therefore perhaps a bit giddy. Bob and Jim seem frustrated by the profession's disinclination to embrace the issue of masculinity. When I suggest the need for an edited anthology, they both say, "Who's going to do all that work? Not me," and they laugh.

Jim leaves and Bob turns to me. He seems bear-like—both lovable and intimidating. I saw him present at the CCCC convention ten years
earlier, slimmer, and talking about agonistic rhetoric. He would like, he says, to sit down with me sometime to talk more about men’s studies and masculinity. He says that maybe the next CCCC convention we could get together over a meal.

“Sure, I’d like that,” I say. We shake hands.

I never knew Bob Connors well. After his “Teaching and Learning as a Man” appeared in College English, I wrote a response that appeared in the December 1996 “Comment and Response” section. That eventually led to some e-mail exchanges and to an invitation from Bob to participate in the roundtable mentioned above. My reply to his essay was more rebuttal couched as questions than appreciative inquiry, my approach to men’s studies and masculinity differing significantly from Connors’. In many ways I viewed “Teaching and Learning as a Man” as fodder for my own platform; for two years after its publication, almost all of my scholarly writing, in one way or another, challenged the assumptions and ideas in “Teaching.” Bob represented my antithesis—or I transformed him into one—in ways that at present seem overly simplistic to me. This essay is an attempt to set things right, to honor our points of contact and the work Bob Connors did for the profession in the area of masculinity studies.

Bob’s collected works in men’s studies and composition is not large—especially compared to other areas of his scholarship. There are primarily two: “Teaching and Learning as a Man” and a special issue of Pre/Text that he edited entitled Constructing Masculinities. Although small in number, there is indication that his masculinity work has made an impact on the profession—especially “Teaching and Learning as a Man.” That essay is a call to begin to “confront gender issues wholly” in composition by using men’s studies to help us deal with the complexities of teaching writing to young men. Connors raises issues he considers important to male teachers, scholars, and students that he believes feminisms fail to address: what positive role models are available to men who teach writing; how might male teachers mentor male students; and are feminist theories and models of writing appropriate for male students? He invokes both the men’s movement and men’s studies as means of answering these questions.

I can’t help but believe that when Bob published “Teaching,” he must have known the controversy it would create—especially among feminists. College English devoted two sets of responses to the essay, one in the December 1996 issue and one in the April 1997 issue. The first article to appear in response to Connors’ piece was Laura Micciche’s “Male
Plight and Feminist Threat in Composition Studies: A Response to ‘Teaching and Learning as a Man,’” published in the spring 1997 issue of Composition Studies. Both Micciche and Cathleen Breidenbach, whose response is in the April 1997 College English, are critical of Connors’ oversights and representations of feminism, as is Gesa Kirsch’s piece in the December 1996 responses.

My own response, written from a profeminist perspective, takes a similar stance. Profeminists who study masculinity acknowledge a debt to feminism; without its theories and insights, the study of gender in its fullest sense would not be possible. And they tend, generally, to focus on critiques of male privilege and sexism. But profeminism is one perspective among many that interpret and explain masculinity. Books such as Kenneth Clatterbaugh’s Contemporary Perspectives on Masculinity and Michael Messner’s Politics of Masculinities identify and evaluate the threads of men’s responses, positive and negative, to the second and third waves of the women’s movement, and to heterosexual, hegemonic masculinity. Clatterbaugh names six perspectives: conservative, profeminist, men’s rights, spiritual, socialist, and group-specific. Messner identifies some of the same and a few more: mythopoetics, Promise Keepers, men’s liberation, men’s rights, profeminists, socialists, racialized identity politics, and gay liberation. My intent here is not to explain each of these perspectives and movements, but to suggest that a number of complex ideologies are tied to manhood. To invoke the men’s movement and men’s studies, as Bob does, then, leads to the question: which movement and which men’s studies? It seems to me that Bob’s work was more or less free-floating, wandering from one masculinist ideology to another without any acknowledgment that differing ideologies exist. Some are anti-feminist, some are profeminist, and some are a mixture of the two. I tried to pin him down at various times and he refused to be pinned.

I intentionally use the wrestling image—being pinned. At the time, I was frustrated that he avoided positioning himself and his work. But now, looking back, I think he simply rejected playing the very typical masculine game I was trying to engage him in: the battle of ideologies. I admit I wanted to be right, and in another sense, the good male. I don’t think Bob was invested in winning. I was, and so I was a bad listener.

Now, when I listen to his work on men’s studies and composition, I hear it say something more complex, something along the lines of what Timothy Beneke, a well-known profeminist, claims: “I start from the recognition that men have enormous work to do to end sexism and that
men’s writing about sexism should serve that end. But I also recognize that men are not likely to venture forth as moral soldiers striving to end sexism unless they perceive it to be in their simple self-interest” (Proving Manhood, U of California P, 1977, xii). And men’s self-interest is tied to the pain and difficulties that compulsive masculinity sometimes causes them. Certainly, Bob’s scholarship focused on the harms of manhood rather than its privilege. In his introduction to the issue of Pre/Text he edited, he cites a litany of wounds tied to masculinity: men attending college in fewer numbers than women; men experiencing more school disciplinary problems than women; men committing more crimes than women, and killing other men in large numbers, and so on. The danger in focusing on how men are harmed by masculinity is, of course, that it is easy to lose sight of men’s entitlement. Bob tried to walk that tightrope. He was not always successful in my view, but I admire his attempt to strike a balance. He is one of the people who have helped me realize that working on masculinity issues is not an either/or proposition, that we somehow have to pay attention to men’s privileged positions at the same time that we consider the ways masculinity damages them.

I do not think that Bob would have ever dared to claim that he had everything figured out about manhood, that he had the answers. More typically questions permeate his work on men’s studies and composition. Conversation defined his interests more than finality, as is clear in his reply to comments made about “Teaching and Learning as a Man.” He writes in his response to Cathleen Breidenbach that he wants the essay “to begin a conversation about the construction of masculinities in the college writing class, not to finish one.” The roundtable I participated in with Bob took place because he and Gesa Kirsch had a lengthy discussion about their responses to one another in which they both realized that their differences were not so extreme.

Bob and I never met at the next year’s CCC convention and had our conversation, and now I feel that loss more than ever. For one reason or another, we drifted our separate ways. But I am comforted by the conversation he began about men’s studies in composition, and by his willingness to make a space for me in the discussion.

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