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1-1-2004

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Developing a Culture of Reclamation

Integrating History, Poetry and Video

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Abstract

Culture of Reclamation *(Armstrong, Lutze, & Woodworth-Ney, in progress) is a sequence of "videopoems" about Idaho, integrating poetry, historical photographs, music and videography in a video presentation, which also includes historical narrative. Three Idaho scholars in the fields of history, literacy education, and communication—the historian (Laura), poet (Jamie), and videographer (Peter)—collaborated on this cross-disciplinary project to reclaim a portion of the history of this state in a creative and engaging medium.*

Culture of Reclamation *expresses a response to the culture of the early irrigated settlement communities along the Snake and Boise rivers. Between 1894 and 1920, a land rush to the arid western United States occurred as private investors and the federal government built irrigation projects to reclaim the sagebrush desert for farmland. Both men and women settlers contributed to the culture of the early communities, the men with a vision of an irrigated Utopia (Smythe, 1895) and the women with literary endeavors and civic participation (Woodworth-Ney, in progress-b).*

In responding to the landscape and to the creative work of the early settlers, such as Clarence E. Bisbee, Annie Pike Greenwood, Mary Hallock Foote, and numerous clubwomen, we have deepened our sense of belonging to this place. Our work is both professional and personal. Through this project, each of us has developed new ideas about working within our disciplines and discovered creative ways to engage the history and geography of southwestern Idaho.

Our project represents just one example of the potential for university faculty from different field to collaborate on arts-based scholarly projects. According to Diamond and Mullen, "Arts-based inquiry is art pursued for inquiry's sake, not for art's own sake" (1999, p. 25). We also intend our project to serve as a prototype for cross-disciplinary projects in secondary schools. We hope to inform and inspire students in the future to explore the past with imagination as well as historical records.

Keywords: Cross-disciplinary Projects, Southwestern Idaho History, Faculty Collaboration, Secondary Education, Poetry, History, Video

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International Journal of the Humanities, Volume 2, Number 2 • www.Humanities-Journal.com
Copyright © Common Ground • ISSN 1447-9508 (Print) • ISSN 1447-9559 (Online)
Paper presented at the Second International Conference on New Directions in the Humanities,
Monash University Centre in Prato, Italy, 20-23 July 2004 • wwwHumanitiesConference.com

Reclaiming the Past, Engaging a Place

The video *Culture of Reclamation* presents an alternating sequence of historical narration and three videopoems. Our project began with Jamie's writing poetry in response to historical artefacts, which Laura had presented in connection with her research into the irrigated settlements along the Snake River. "The Culture Club, 1909" began in response to historical photographs, "Syringa" in response to the Syringa Club's yearbook from 1908-09, and "Acts of Reclamation" in response to a speech delivered by Elizabeth DeMary to a women's club in 1907.

After drafting each poem, Jamie consulted with Laura to ensure that the poem was consistent with historical information. Next, Jamie and Peter made digital audio recordings of the poems, along with musical selections and sound effects, to integrate with visual images into the videopoems (which have the same titles as the original poems). At the same time, all of us worked together selecting historical photographs to include in the video. We sought some images to evoke a sense of the times and others to serve as literal illustrations of poetic lines. We obtained digitized photographs from the public library in Twin Falls, Idaho, as well as through the websites created by the U.S. Library of Congress, Bureau of Reclamation, and Bureau of Land Management. Peter also shot video of current landscapes and historical documents. Next, Jamie and Peter used Adobe *Premiere* video editing software to integrate the audio and visual components into the final video format. Meanwhile, Laura wrote the narrative sections to provide the historical and geographical contexts of *Culture of Reclamation* and to introduce each videopoem. Finally, we added opening titles and closing credits to the video presentation.

By the time we put the finishing touches on *Culture of Reclamation*, we will have collaborated for two years, thoroughly discussing each phase of the project as it has unfolded. In the process we have used the scholarly tools of our disciplines to contribute to the video presentation. As each of us explains in the next three sections of this paper, creating *Culture of Reclamation* has engaged us as scholars and has strengthened our connection to the land where we live and work.

Making Connections Though Historical Narrative (Laura)

As an historian, I study the social, cultural, environmental, and political circumstances of pioneers in the irrigated West, including the present-day states of Idaho and Wyoming. During the 1840s and 1850s Oregon Trail travellers hurried through Idaho's Snake River Plain, a hard landscape characterized by deep river canyons, high-altitude sagebrush valleys, and lava deserts (see Figures 1 and 2). Early pioneers viewed the sagebrush deserts of the Interior West as inhospitable and unfit for agriculture. That view changed, however, with passage of desert land legislation and with the advent of large-scale irrigation projects funded by states and the federal government. Irrigation legislation included the Desert Land Act (1877), the Carey Act (1894), and the Newlands Act (1902). The Newlands Act was known as the Reclamation Act, because it was supposed to "reclaim" the desert; this act also created the Reclamation Service, later the Bureau of Reclamation.

Figure 1
Snake River Canyon [Untitled. Clarence E. Bisbee, photographer]. *Twin Falls Public Library, Twin Falls, Idaho, Photo 587.* Used with permission.

Figure 2
First Passenger Train – Barrymore, Idaho, August 9, 1911, Clarence E. Bisbee, photographer. *Twin Falls Public Library, Twin Falls, Idaho, Photo B29.* Used with permission.

The impact of irrigation legislation instigated land rushes not unlike those accompanying the opening of Indian reservations. Communities sprang up virtually over night as prospective settlers arrived to claim their land and wait for the water. Photographers like Clarence Bisbee of the Twin Falls, Idaho, region took photos to chronicle irrigation's promise and to attract new settlers. Bisbee's photographs were used extensively in the booster literature produced by Twin Falls Carey Act projects. Rupert, Idaho, one of the first reclamation settlement communities in the West, reported only a handful of inhabitants in early 1905; eight months later, four hundred people lived there and the local paper declared that "Rupert is on the map, and is out for business, all she can get in a legitimate way" (DeMary, n.d.).

History and Poetry

My research explores the gendered ideology of irrigated settlement and the role women played in the founding of irrigated settlement communities. I presented this research at a conference in 2001, where I met Jamie. Jamie sent me the first draft of "The Culture Club, 1909" only a few days after the conference. The poetry thrilled me because Jamie had produced an evocative image of the analytical research I had presented. My historical inquiry had been driven by questions such as "What was life like for women pioneers on the sagebrush plains of Southern Idaho?" and "How did the experiences of women in irrigated Idaho represent or contradict the experiences of women nationally?" Jamie's poetry answered these questions at an emotional level that the analysis could not reach. It was exciting to see historical research converted to poetry, and even more exciting to experience the process of creating videography.

The first two video poems of *Culture of Reclamation* are based on the lives of clubwomen in irrigated settlements in Idaho. Women like Elizabeth Layton DeMary, founder of the Rupert Culture Club in 1905, and Mary Hallock Foote, the well-known nineteenth-century writer and illustrator, are attractive historical subjects because of the fascinating source material they left behind, but also because they were women whose lives reflected the changing gender roles and complex social movements of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century America. Piecing their story together into a coherent narrative involves meticulous research that often resembles the construction of a jumbled jigsaw puzzle more than it does a process of scientific inquiry. I know, for example, what kinds of activities Elizabeth Layton DeMary and Mary Hallock Foote participated in, but I do not know how they *felt*, except in the few instances where they imparted their feelings directly. Even in those cases they were expressing only what they wanted their audience to know. When Mary Hallock Foote wrote a letter to her friends or relatives, she tailored the letter to their interests, needs, and to her own views about what was important for them to know. Indeed, historians can only know as much as their sources are willing to tell. As prominent historian John Lewis Gaddis has written, "the past. . . is something we can never have" (Gaddis, 2002, p. 3).

Linking Past and Future

While we can never truly know how people felt in the past, and we can never actually experience the tastes, smells, and sensations of a past place, the only way to connect to our surroundings and to the future is to learn what we can about the past. Working with Jamie and Peter has taught me that historical inquiry is both evocative and analytical; systematic and emotional. When we read what Mary

Hallock Foote wrote about Kuna, Idaho, we at once understand the landscape, and her experience, better. And if, like Foote, we experience Kuna's landscape, we feel connected to Foote, and to the place's past and to its future: "No one remembers Kuna. It was a place where silence closed about you after the bustle of the train, where a soft, dry wind from great distances hummed through the telegraph wires and a sage road went out of sight in one direction and a new railroad track in another; but that wind had magic in it. It came across immense dry areas without an object to harp upon except man-made wires. There was not a tree in sight – miles and miles of pallid sagebrush: as moonlight unto sunlight is that desert sage to other greens. It gives a great intensity to the blue of the sky and to the deeper blue of the mountains lifting their snow-capped peaks, the highest light along the far horizon" (Foote, 1972, p. 275).

And, as Jamie's poetry so eloquently expresses, we can *feel* something of what Mary Hallock Foote or Elizabeth Layton DeMary might have experienced. When Jamie writes, "Yet the desert air seemed to rise from the water/ With a light, sweet coolness that restored my spirit" in "The Culture Club, 1909" (see Appendix A, lines 59-60), we experience the aridity of the air, the coolness of the breeze, and the calming quality of the canal. While historians are loathe to predict the future, we can understand something about the future in the past—we know that the desert landscape was treeless, and will remain treeless in the future, barring a manmade or climatic change on a grand scale. Indeed, we can "know the future only by the past we project into it" (Gaddis, 2002, p. 3).

In a sense, then, the act of studying and reading the past transports us there. In *Culture of Reclamation*, the historical research, poetry, and photographs collectively transport us to a different time and place, while at the same time they affirm our connection to the modern landscape and to its future. As Jamie has noted, this project is both professional and personal. My great-grandparents homesteaded a dry land farm in southeastern Idaho, amid sagebrush as tall as a man and near a fast-running, warm-water creek brilliant with watercress. I never met these people, but I can connect to them through the landscape and through history. "History, in this sense," John Gaddis has written, "is all we have" (Gaddis, 2002, p. 3). In studying the past of this place, I project for my child his family's past into his future.

History and Evocative Representation

For a professional historian, the personal elements of the research process are usually subsumed by the requirements of the profession. Historians attempt to *find* and *represent* the story of history; they do not *create* it (Novick, 1988, p. 1-2). While historical narratives are limited by the constraints of the research, poetry is not. When linked with poetry and videography, historical research becomes evocative in ways it could not be otherwise. Richardson encourages researchers to use poetry and other literary forms as "evocative representations," which "re-create lived experiences and evoke emotional responses" (1994, p. 521).

Writing the narrative of the project was challenging because I was writing for a non-academic audience with little historical background, and writing text that would be experienced only in audio form. I had to fight against the urge to use language that would not be readily accessible to a listening audience. The exercise of writing for a listening audience, however, has improved the accessibility of all of the historical narratives that I write. Indeed, if history is truly "all we have," it should be both accessible and evocative, as well as analytical and well-researched. History provides a view of what is possible, but the academic field of history has at times alienated the reading public with its detailed, third-person, narrative accounts. As prominent historian Patricia Nelson Limerick has noted about the writing style of professional historians, "the politically correct and the politically incorrect come together in the violence they commit against the English language" (Limerick, 2000, 334). *Culture of Reclamation* offers a way to use historical research to counter the dullness of academic prose and engage audiences in complex and sensual ways–through poetry, photographs, and videography. History once "had its presiding Muse (Clio), a secure place in the culture of the reading public, and a range of rhetorical and stylistic conventions," all of which were absorbed by professionalization (Tosh, 1991, p. 128). Participation in cross-disciplinary projects such as *Culture of Reclamation* revives Clio by emphasizing and affirming history's sometimes neglected but significant evocative nature.

Describing and Interpreting the Past through Poetry (Jamie)

As a poet, I responded to the early settlers' culture on the irrigated sagebrush plain. In editing each poem, I combined a poet's stance in striving for originality, clarity, and technical soundness with a researcher's stance in using a phenomenological approach. According to Van Manen, "Phenomenology asks, 'What is this or that experience like?'" (1990, p. 9). I wrote poetry to explore the question, "What was life like in the early irrigated settlements along the Snake River?" Historical photographs and literature served as "human science data" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 63), to which I responded with poetry—an "evocative representation" of the settlers' lived experience (Richardson, 1994).

In responding to the lived experiences documented in historical sources, a poem attempts to reclaim the past. This reclamation is both private and public. It is private in the sense that the poet, by imagining how people, places, and events might have been, establishes a claim to kinship with them. When the poem is shared with an audience, the reclamation becomes public, bringing out a fresh representation of the past, which had been preserved in books, libraries, and other cultural storehouses.

The Culture Club

Two historical photographs inspired the poem "The Culture Club, 1909" (see Appendix A). One shows an unidentified woman holding a book while seated by a canal (see Figure 3). I wondered, "Who was this woman and what brought her here?" In the other photograph, the ladies of The Rupert Culture Club appear in white dresses and fancy hats in the garden of their president, Elizabeth DeMary (see Figure 4).

Figure 3
Woman beside canal [Untitled. Charles Lilybridge, photographer]. *Colorado Historical Society, Photo CHS – L 2647*. Used with permission.

Figure 4
The Rupert Culture Club [Untitled. Photographer unknown]. *DeMary Memorial Library, Rupert, Idaho.* Used with permission.

In the poem a fictional Mrs. Smithfield tells the women in her culture club the story of how her husband persuaded her to sit for a photograph at the opening of the new Sunnywest Canal. She begins with a mild protest to her husband: "How improbable for any woman alone!/ I explained to Mr. Smithfield/ And especially for a lady of our station..." (lines 1-3). The poem concludes with her description of the moment in which her picture was made:

And Ladies, while I sat there

As still as a statue for the longest minute,

… I recalled our lively discussion

Of Mary Hallock Foote's *The Chosen Valley*

At the most recent meeting of our club.

… I felt the slightest motion of a breeze,

Not so much as to blur a curl while the picture was made/

… Yet the desert air seemed to rise from the water

With a light, sweet coolness that restored my spirit. (lines 47-48, 50-52, 56-60)

After drafting the poem, I checked every line with Laura for historical consistency. For example, early in the poem, Mrs. Smithfield refers to her "station." In 1909 "class" probably would have been associated with Communism, not social status. In lines 50-52, Mrs. Smithfield refers to Mary Hallock Foote's novel *The Chosen Valley*, which was published in 1892. Elizabeth DeMary's personal library included volumes of Foote's work. Although the Smithfields are imaginary, historical records defined what was possible for me to imagine about them and their experiences. According to Greene, writers and other authors use their imaginations to "explore what is possible" (2001, p. 163).

Syringa

The poem "Syringa" (see Appendix B) responds to information in the yearbook of The Syringa Club, a women's literary club in Twin Falls, Idaho (Syringa Club, 1908-09). The poem begins with a description of syringa, Idaho's state flower: "White-petalled dream with golden stamens" (line 1), then presents the club:

Syringa Club: women meeting on Tuesdays at 2:30

To culture one's mind in the newly irrigated West

Growing mental flowers in poetry's garden.

Reading lists, not your thoughts, appear in yearbooks,

Potpourri lingering from your bygone hours. (lines 6-10)

The poem questions how the clubwomen reconciled the desert landscape with the landscapes described by the Romantic poets listed on Syringa Club agendas. Alluding to Wordsworth's "I Wander Lonely as a Cloud," the speaker asks, "Did you long to wander alone under the cloudless sky,/ Daffodils bringing visions of syringa to canyon slopes?" (lines 14-15) In the final stanza, the speaker asserts how the women drew strength from Tennyson's poem: "Ulysses stirred you/ To embrace this isolated place, to endure hot dusty wind/ And strive to produce a fruitful life, and never to yield" (lines 28-30).

Like the clubwomen I imagined in "Syringa," women writers living in southern Idaho in the early settlement years generated emotional ties to the landscape. Arriving on the sagebrush plain about 1912, Annie Pike Greenwood viewed the distant mountains: "Mountains that I learned to love!" (Greenwood, 1934, p. 13). Mary Hallock Foote responded to jackrabbits, coyotes, and meadowlarks as "the early poets in a lonely world" (Foote, 1972, p. 326).

Reading Greenwood and Foote, I made strong connections to the land where I've lived for a dozen years. Like Foote, I listen to meadowlarks among the sagebrush, and every few weeks I wake to the song of coyotes calling in the night. When viewing Clarence Bisbee's photograph of Shoshone Falls, I imagine mist billowing from Coleridge's River Alph.

Acts of Reclamation

The poem "Acts of Reclamation" (see Appendix C) explores the reclamation of new lands and the reclamation of the human spirit, which was challenged by life's harsh demands in the irrigated West. The poem started as a response to the presidential speech to the Rupert Culture Club in 1907. Elizabeth DeMary said that the club's organizers "… decided the unspeakable quiet of the desert should be broken …" (DeMary, as cited in Woodworth-Ney, in progress-a). Written from a settler's viewpoint, the poem begins, "Silence lays claim to us like monotonous sky" (line 1).

Other primary sources provided the contexts for "Acts of Reclamation." A photograph of a canal worker holding a shovel (Canal workers, n.d.) and Mary Hallock Foote's illustration *The Irrigating Ditch* (1889) inspired two stanzas which express the settlers' dreams of owning a family farm. The poem ends with the colonists' dream of "planning a perfect society here, a garden Utopia/ To reclaim that portion of our souls lying fallow/ In this still unredeemed land" (lines 30-32). These lines echo Smythe's essay (1895), which presented a vision of planned communities of towns and irrigated family farms where everyone thrives through hard work and ethical behavior.

Collaboration

In working with Laura on "The Culture Club, 1909," "Syringa," and "Acts of Reclamation," I attempted to create historically accurate evocative representations of the lived experiences of the early settlers. I also revised the poems in response to Peter's observations. For example, in the original draft of "The Culture Club, 1909" Mrs. Smithfield asks her husband, "But please if you won't have my picture made/ on Wednesday next at two o'clock in the afternoon." In the final version, I changed the first part of her statement: "But please don't have my picture made…" (Appendix A, lines 29-30). This revision increases the comprehensibility of her

words to a viewing audience without access to the printed text. While maintaining the integrity of each poem as I worked with Peter and Laura, I learned how to revise my poems to meet the needs of this cross-disciplinary project.

Engaging Past and Place through Photographs and Video (Peter)

Poetry is evocative: allusive and elusive. Its images provoke the reader's imagination and provide time and space for it to wander between the lines. The images of Jamie's poems sprang from and conveyed his own interactions with the landscape of Idaho. They were also prompted by Laura's historical research and the archival documents to which she directed him.

Photography

Among those inspirational documents were a few photographs. Photographic documents contain a specificity of place or person, of mood and time. They are visually concrete in ways that poems are not. But these photographs were also provocative for Jamie, texts to be read, pretexts for imagining stories, personalities, life histories.

In our collaboration these provocations were also our anchors, our direct link to the peoples and landscapes of a century ago. Nor were the photographs, and the contemporaneous illustrations and maps we incorporated, incidental to the subjects of our inquiry. Photography and illustrations were a central precipitant of the development of southern Idaho. Developers and promoters promised a garden in the desert. But neither promoter nor potential settler could trust the words of promise alone. Both wanted pictures--limitations on and verification (documentation) of the verbal images. So photographs, drawings and paintings were incorporated into prospecti, brochures and other promotional materials, to assist the visualization process. The photographs of Clarence E. Bisbee, for example, helped make dreams real, helped bring the future into reality.

Now the process is reversed, with photographs taking us back into that world, filling in some of the spaces of the poetry and creating a dialogue with it. Often the photographic images illustrate, clarify, specify the words. Real laborers sweat in the hot sun, society ladies in white dresses seem to blossom in the harsh, uncivil landscape. In other cases the photos contain material that contrasts with or is not assimilable into the poems: the look on a face that distracts from the words, the shape of a ridge that pulls us out of the story into a vague yearning.

The photographs are not just literal illustrations of the poetic lines, but an attempt to create a sense of the times. The few photos that we began with were augmented by other archival photos from the period, particularly governmental documentation of its Herculean efforts to control and channel nature, to wrestle control of water from the wilderness by a massive alteration of the landscape.

Videography

All the old photos were black and white representations of this culture and its raw, uncultured environment. To these we added the contemporaneous coloured illustrations of cultivated bounty that appeared in magazines and brochures.

But we inserted one other element into this historical documentation and poetic speculation: current video images of Idaho. Despite the dams, the canals, and the farms, ranches and cities they engendered, much of the raw power of the land remains unchanged and untamed. As a videographer, I was able to capture new images of surging rivers, of windswept desert sage. Power lines and fences intruded at times and the sounds of planes, cars and lawn mowers interrupted our recording of the sounds of birds and insects, but we found a modern continuity with Bisbee's photographs. Unlike the early still photos, these video images move: canal water flows past, syringa petals flutter in the wind, clouds scud above. And they are in color: even the muted tones of the desert seem gay and bright in juxtaposition with the old photos. Video images in color vivify the irrigated desert plain as breezes riffle over grassy hills to apple orchards blooming in early spring.

Implicit in Jamie's poetry and even less visible in Laura's narration is the re-contextualization of the past. Historical inquiry is always a contemporary encounter with the past, but the historian's focus on the past often obscures the current context in which it is being undertaken. The full-color video footage is a visible assertion of the difference and continuity between the past subject and the present observer/researcher. The decision to incorporate such footage is a conscious effort to emphasize this relationship.

The challenge I faced as a video editor was to find sufficient visual material to interact with the poetry, especially when the words veered into abstraction or reflected the thoughts of the subjects. In several instances we needed to find more archival photos or had to return to the desert for more footage.

Video Editing

Video editing, like poetry writing, is about finding rhythms. The rhythm of a poem involves both tempo and meter. In video the rhythm depends on shot length but also on qualities of the image as well. The perceived length of a shot depends on how long it takes the viewer to process its information and how much visual stimulation it provides. A shot seems shorter in duration when the image is moving (either subject movement or camera movement), is complex (wider shot, more elements), is difficult (hard to

identify the referent due to unusual angle, unfamiliar form, darkness, or multiple exposure) or is juxtaposed with very different material.

Marrying the rhythms of the poetry to the visual rhythms of the video can be very challenging. For example, a poem can list a series of objects in one sentence (e.g., apple, orange, banana, cucumber) evoking in rapid succession a series of mental images of each object. If we took individual video shots of each of these objects, then edited the shots together into a sequence, it would seem very fast and jarring. If all of these objects were contained in one shot, the viewer could process the information more quickly. In editing this project, we often didn't have one photo that contained all of the elements mentioned in one sentence, so we would have to improvise--either finding a more general image or taking a less literal approach. A long take of a flowing canal or of sagebrush touched by a light wind did not always relate directly to the poet's words, but enhanced the general mood and was sufficiently static to allow the viewer's attention to focus on the words rather than the picture.

In general I try to avoid the repetition of images in my work, but in videopoetry we have found that repetition is necessary--not simply due to a paucity of images, but because recurrent images serve as visual rhymes or perhaps refrains. This was particularly true in "The Culture Club, 1909," where we kept returning to the soothing but unusual image of the woman in her Sunday best sitting by herself, calmly, at the edge of the canal.

The video work on this project was the last element in the collaboration, so, unlike Laura's historical research and even Jamie's poetry, it was conducted within the constraints of a pre-existent framework. Yet the conception from the outset was to allow the images and sounds some autonomy. The selection and ordering of the images was guided by the poetry, but the images also have their own obstinate materiality and specificity. And, incorporating as it does the old photos that prompted Jamie's poetry, the video is a reassertion of the original idea, a spiraling return to the point of departure, a multi-level contemplation and re-contemplation of the meanings preserved in these images.

Making the Future

As teachers and scholars we view the future in terms of our students. We hope that *Culture of Reclamation* can serve as a vehicle for students to make meaningful connections with the past.

Like university scholars, secondary students can benefit from doing research and generating evocative representations in response to historical people and events. In presenting their Multiple Menu Model of differentiated curriculum, Renzulli, Leppien, and Hays state, "It encourages the curriculum writer to offer students opportunities to apply the research methodologies that practicing professionals use in their fields of study" (2000, p. 11). Secondary students can be involved in creating an evocative representation, such as a fictional diary, news article, letter, poem, or some other written document from the viewpoint of someone who lived in a past time and place.

Through such Imaginative Writing Assignments described by literacy educators Readence, Bean, and Baldwin (2001), students are likely to develop an understanding of and empathy for historical people and their experiences in a particular place (Loffer, 1998). Composing an imaginative writing also involves students in using the intellectual tools of more than one discipline, such as history and fiction. As with *Culture of Reclamation*, secondary students can present imaginative texts in media other than the printed page— for example, on a poster or in a PowerPoint or video presentation, which may involve music, dance, drama, and other visual arts. To accomplish this work, the student-artist must learn about the possibilities and constraints of a medium of expression and "to think within a medium" (Eisner, 2002b, p. 13).

Cross-disciplinary projects provide a motive for student engagement (Guthrie & McCann, 1997). Projects that involve students in producing imaginative writing or evocative representations in literary genres, visual arts, or music also may increase students' motivation because creating an imaginative response produces "aesthetic satisfaction," which grows from the challenge of the work as well as the maker's "idea which the work embodies" (Eisner, 2002b, 14). According to Renzulli et al., "Imagination is the key to motivation" (2000, p. 11).

Thus, cross-disciplinary projects based on artistic and literary responses to historical information can motivate students to reclaim the past and encourage them to become lifelong learners in the disciplines we teach. As Eisner states, "it is the aesthetic that provides the natural high and contributes the energy we need to want to pursue an activity again and again" (2002a, p. 582).

Conclusion

Through our cross-disciplinary video project, *Culture of Reclamation*, we developed an arts-based response to the culture of the early irrigated settlement communities along the Snake River in Idaho. As Eisner suggests, aesthetics motivated us to use our imaginations in creating a video. We also engaged this project as residents of the sagebrush plain and as scholars in different disciplines. Laura's work on the project widened her view of her discipline by revealing the evocative, as well as analytical, applications of historical research. As a poet, Jamie learned to write poetry as an "evocative

representation" of historical inquiry; as a literacy educator, he gained insights about cross-disciplinary projects for secondary students. As a documentarist, Peter is committed to exploring the world immediately around him and was delighted to participate in a cross-disciplinary project which provided both historical resonance and a new model of uniting text with image in such exploration. Through our collaboration, we hope to inspire university faculty as well as secondary students to collaborate on imaginative cross-disciplinary projects.

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About the Authors

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Peter Lutze grew up in Oklahoma where his father served as pastor to black parishes. After graduating from Valparaiso University, he obtained an M.FA. in Filmmaking and a J.D. at the University of Wisconsin, where he also completed his doctoral dissertation on the German film director and social theorist, Alexander Kluge. Since

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Appendix A

Text of Videopoem 1
"The Culture Club, 1909" by Jamie Armstrong

How improbable for any woman alone!
I explained to Mr. Smithfield,
And especially for a lady of our station
To be seated as though perched above the canal
Buttoned to the chin in one's Sunday best
Set out in the desert under the hot sun
Just days after labourers and animals
Ceased their rough work and exhausting toil—
To which he said, Ahem!
Then replied, My dear Mrs. Smithfield,
I remind you that we came into this land
To transform the desert into a garden,
And the new Sunnywest Canal,
A river made by the hands of men,
Will transform wilderness into civilization.
Thus, it seems entirely fitting to project officials
That the presence of a lady—yourself—at the Canal
Will likewise bring civilization to the sagebrush.
And, I might add, My Dear (Ladies, no looks now!)
A lady brings Beauty, elegance, and refinement
To the rough finish left at the end of men's work
After all the digging, scraping and hauling are done.
Yes—as I think more on it,
Your image will grace the canal like a statue in a garden,
Such as Ceres and Pomona in marmoreal splendour
Blessing the irrigated farm with overflowing cornucopia
And Goddess Flora making the desert bloom.
Well, I said, I suppose if that is your wish, My Dear—
But if you please, don't have my picture made
On Wednesday next at two o'clock in the afternoon
For it absolutely wouldn't do
To disappoint the ladies of The Culture Club!
To which entreaty he rejoined expansively
That pictures of all the dignitaries would be made
On Sunday next at the ceremony.
Then my picture would be made by the canal
Immediately after the dedication of the dam
Before the picnic is fully underway.
Ladies, as you well can see,
There I sit profiled in my Sunday dress
Staring into vast and empty distances
As if I gazed into our improved future with irrigated lands
(And as the Lord is my witness
I'm thankful for the promise of progress)
But is it not also suitable
To have me placed well above the dusty banks?
And Ladies, while I sat there

As still as a statue for the longest minute,
Do you know what thought came into my mind?
50 Well, I recalled our lively discussion
Of Mary Hallock Foote's *The Chosen Valley*
At the most recent meeting of our club.
A pleasant thought indeed!
To bring culture to the desert canal
55 Along with (Ahem!) Beauty, elegance and refinement!
I felt the slightest motion of a breeze,
Not so much as to blur a curl while the picture was made
(See how the wave holds its shape with distinction)
Yet the desert air seemed to rise from the water
60 With a light, sweet coolness that restored my spirit.
I could hardly wait until our meeting today
To tell you how it was.

Appendix B

Text of Videopoem 2
"Syringa" by Jamie Armstrong

1 White-petalled dream sprayed with golden stamens
Swirling in fragrance, like plumeria in a lei
Causing palm trees to swish, rattle and rush through you,
A mirage shimmering on the sagebrush plain,
Wild flowering in the new state.

6 Syringa Club: women meeting on Tuesdays at 2:30
To culture one's mind in the newly irrigated West
Growing mental flowers in poetry's garden.
Reading lists, not your thoughts, appear in yearbooks,
Potpourri lingering from your bygone hours.

11 Wordsworth. A solitary reaper's melancholy song—
Her rustic life moving you, removing the day's necessity
Of threshers moving like barn builders from farm to farm.
Did you long to wander alone under the cloudless sky,
Daffodils bringing visions of syringa to canyon slopes?

16 Coleridge. Suffered you to bear the albatross
Of leaving family and the home place for a new life west,
Then affirmed your self in the I Am of Imagination
Making frost at midnight mirror desert stars' dazzle
And River Alph blow billowing mist from Shoshone Falls.

21 Whitman. Assumed what you assumed, every atom
As good belonging to you as to him, all equal in spirit:
Restlessly moving out of the cradle, seeking one's place
And not ceasing till death to flow with the motion of life
—But all not yet equal under the land's highest law.

26 Tennyson. Did you soar on fancy's flight to Camelot?
Ride with the Lady of Shallot? See eagle—thunderbolt—

Fall between black canyon walls? ... Ulysses stirred you
To embrace this isolated place, to endure hot dusty wind
And strive to produce a fruitful life, and never to yield.

Appendix C

Text of Videopoem 3
"Acts of Reclamation" by Jamie Armstrong

An old album tied with a silk bow holds photographs, text and poems. While a boy pumps the pedals on the player piano in his grandmother's parlour, you untie the bow, look into the album and begin to read.

1 Silence lays claim to us like monotonous sky.
Silence fills the river basin with emptiness past loneliness.
Nothing moves out there for hours sometimes,
Where you wait to hear a breeze.

5 Ancient dreams of water called us west:
The Nile's yearly flood drowning the earth;
Our imminent return to The Garden with diverted water
To make the desert bloom.

9 Where the Snake cuts a fry-pan shape across Idaho,
West from the Tetons across lava and sagebrush to the Boise River—
With its narrow corridor of sheltering cottonwoods—
There lies the cradle of reclamation.

13 No cicadas make the treeless desert scream.
No lightning bugs flicker and dive in the stark night.
After a day without speech, silence drones like locusts
In the distance of an unfulfilled mind.

17 The scraper's grating sings to the men like progress
As the blade drags rocks and gravel through volcanic soil.
Horses in traces bring to mind our fathers' teams
Plowing through dark Illinois earth.

21 Sweat beads run down dirt-streaked cheeks and arms
Dripping into the canal bed where he digs and dreams,
Sowing the future's seed from which a man-made river
And his family farm will spring forth.

25 Scientific principles will transform desert into farmland:
Manna released in measured amounts into the canal, past a headgate,
Trickling through the irrigating ditch toward mother and baby
Near her husband who tends the stream.

29 Just as the colonists dreamed a City upon a Hill
We're planning a perfect society here, a garden Utopia,
To reclaim a portion of our souls lying fallow
In this still unredeemed land.