

ground their study in new psychological models of child development and the neurobiology of attachment. They show how early relational trauma and disturbed attachment can alter brain development, disturb emotion regulation and cognitive processing, and cause relational difficulties. Through a three-phase model of intervention that addresses safety/stabilization, symptom reduction/memory work, and developmental skills, the authors offer an alternative to drug therapy for children who suffer from the complex effects of trauma, abuse, and neglect.

Stein and Kendall emphasize that troubled children must develop emotional intelligence and problem-solving skills as tools for coping with and overcoming the effects of trauma. They also discuss the need for adequate public health policies and resources that challenge mental health professionals to look beyond children and their families to find innovative solutions to the legacy of psychological trauma and childhood abuse.

*Psychological Trauma and the Developing Brain* is a useful resource for professionals working in the field of children's mental health.

## **I Writing: The Politics and Practice of Teaching First-Person Writing**

Karen Surman Paley  
Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 2001

### **Reviewed by Kate Connolly**

Certified to teach English, and having served as Director of Freshman English and Writing at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, Karen Surman Paley reports on an ethnographic study in the classrooms of two English composition professors. The author challenges the common perspective of "expressivist pedagogy as naïve, modernist, self-centered, apolitical and asocial" (139). Throughout Paley's book, the reader has the unique opportunity to "observe" two teachers assist students in their efforts to write personal narratives. Through transcripts of one-to-one student/teacher conferences, classroom discussions, and interviews with faculty and students, Paley demonstrates that personal narrative courses are much more complicated and politicized than they are typically understood to be.

Paley's main thesis is that students who are allowed to write about their lives make significant contributions to the culture of the academy. Through autobiographical narratives, persuasive discussions of social issues, and descriptive essays, private discourse can become public discourse. The key research question guiding Paley's ethnographic study is: how do faculty teach personal narrative without crossing the boundary into psychotherapy? In other words, how do writing teachers balance the "textual moment"—which *can* be assessed

—with the “psychological moment”—which *cannot* be assessed?

By observing the two teachers in their student/teacher conferences, readers gain an appreciation for the delicate balance that exists between encouraging narrative depth and expression while offering technical writing tips. In her classroom, “Helena” uses a social constructionist approach that is suited to the socio-political topics chosen for student narratives. As a result, she finds herself addressing differing political views on issues of homelessness and race. “Debby” adheres more closely to expressionism and enters the private psycho-social domain of her students. She must strike a balance between entering into a psychodrama and addressing technical issues such as grammar.

*I Writing* is a thoughtful study; it offers teachers who use narrative in the classroom useful ways to critique students’ work. One issue that Paley raises is how to grade or assess narrative essays. Due to the highly subjective nature of the work, which often touches on personal trauma, teachers are compelled to walk an ethical line between honouring student disclosure and applying the contract that exists between “teacher as grader” and “student as learner.” More guidance from Paley on how to navigate this potential conflict would have been helpful.

Paley’s writing style engages readers. For the most part, her discussion is passionate, informed, and theoretically grounded. She challenges teachers who bring personal narrative into their classrooms to employ high ethical standards, and to do so with the compassion necessary to encourage students to write of their lives with honesty and depth.

## **Assignment at Vanishing Point**

Jane Satterfield  
Denver, CO: Elixir Press, 2003

### **Reviewed by Monika Lee**

The photo on the front cover of electrical lines extending vertically into space is an apt metaphor for a collection of poems whose direction is consistent and endless. These poems, with their clean density, their elliptical messages, and their exploration of time as linear space reflect an intellect steeped in art, literature, popular culture, and philosophy. The literary echo is pervasive, but not intrusive. The words of Charlotte Bronte, the Velvet Underground, Wittgenstein, Sartre, Baudelaire, de Quincey, and many others merge at the vanishing point of Satterfield’s anticipative voice. The vanishing point is paradoxical, assigned and yet forever reaching into an unattainable future or lost (“Archaeology” or “Stanton Moor”) in an irrecoverable past.

The poems in the first section of the volume lean backward in time. The voice is courageous, honest, and pondering. The purpose of the book declares