

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Poetry

Playbook

by Patricia L. Hamilton



"CONSENSUS" BY BEC YOUNG VIA JUST SEEDS OPEN ACCESS GRAPHICS COLLECTION

Playbook

1

Without so much as raising a skeptical eyebrow,
the Director of Composition recounted as if reading a verdict
the lie the cunning freshman boy had just told him:

I'd targeted him from the beginning of the term.
The truth? He'd done nothing distinctive.
But I'd dared to question his polished prose,

which unspooled in a smooth argument until it snapped,
piling into a jumbled heap of words, so I was a pitiless harpy,
talons shredding the prospects of a promising young man.

A shock wave radiated from my gut
to my brain, triggering a landslide in the terrain
of my self-confidence. Somehow, I was the accused.

2

Only after watching decades of news clips—women
in tailored black suits, grim-faced in courtrooms
or before Congress, their eye-witness testimony

eviscerated by slick, smirking men—
did I realize that long-ago episode for what it was:
a scenario from the Playbook.

3

That boy imagined me as the wrong species.
I was a writing spider with infinite patience:
I spun my sticky signature web, then waited.

Daily I surveilled the dim, fifth-floor library stacks
to see if a trio of books had been returned.
Two weeks stretched tediously to three.

Then one day, the web trembled.
With photocopied pages and a rainbow of highlighters,
I tied every plagiarized sentence to its source.

The judiciary council hearing was open-and-shut.
I knew nothing about the Playbook, but I knew everything
about supporting a claim with evidence.

Patricia L. Hamilton is newly retired after thirty-five years in the college classroom. The author of *The Distance to Nightfall* (Main Street Rag Press), she won the Rash Award in Poetry in 2015 and 2017 and has received three Pushcart nominations. Recent work has appeared in *Ibbetson Street*, *Evening Street Review*, *Poetry South*, *Innisfree Poetry Journal*, and *Prime Number Magazine*. She lives with her husband in Jackson, Tennessee.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



This journal is published by [Pitt Open Library Publishing](https://pittopenlibrarypublishing.com/).

