

THE RHETORIC OF WRITING:
A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF MODERN WRITING MEMOIRS

A Dissertation

by

LINDSAY PENELOPE ILLICH

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2008

Major Subject: English

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ABSTRACT

The Rhetoric of Writing:

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This dissertation analyzes concepts of the writing self in works about writing by professional creative writers (writers, poets, and essayists). Through a rhetorical analysis of these texts, I observe that writers view the writing self as a complex structure that is fully conscious as a rhetorical agent, an embodied self that interacts with the world and actively chooses linguistic representations of that experience, and maintains a concept of self that is subject to influences which the writers do not fully understand (such as inspiration and insight). The discourse used by writers to describe their writing processes challenges recent critiques of expressionism and the model of social construction that pervades contemporary composition scholarship.

Chapter II examines Virginia Woolf's use of the central metaphor for invention in *A Room of One's Own*, a river, which sharply calls into question a unified view of the self which is central to critiques of expressivism by composition scholars. Woolf's concept of invention requires a negation of the self and harmony with nature (widely conceived as the entire world, including texts). Chapter III, an analysis of two writing memoirs by

contemporary professional creative writers, Annie Dillard's *The Writing Life* and Donald Hall's *Life Work*, finds that Dillard and Hall use metaphors that establish freedom (rhetorical agency) and bodily presence as primary characteristics of their writing processes. Chapter IV, an analysis of two collections of essays about writing by professional creative writers, argues that the writers' use of metaphors of inspiration and instrumental metaphors creates a concept of the writing self that maintains a sense of writerly control (rhetorical agency) alternating with a sense of a diminished control; ultimately, the two concepts coexist in the minds of the writers.

Chapter V proposes that the rhetorical situation of the contemporary composition classroom affects students' creativity adversely. The chapter also suggests further analyses of writing memoirs can provide new ways of understanding writing processes (as opposed to one writing process model) and therefore contribute substantially to composition scholarship and pedagogy.

To Dobie Boone Illich

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
A Brief History Modern Writing Memoirs.....	9
A Brief Overview of Writers on Writing Scholarship in Composition Studies.....	23
Method and Approach	27
II THE EXPRESSIVIST AIM RECONSIDERED: A VIEW FROM <i>A</i> <i>ROOM OF ONE'S OWN</i>	32
Rivers of Invention.....	36
The Eddies of Expressivism.....	57
The Expressivist Aim Reconsidered.....	67
III <i>THE WRITING LIFE AND LIFE WORK: THE WRITING BODIES</i> <i>OF ANNIE DILLARD AND DONALD HALL</i>	74
Getting Started: The Body in Motion.....	78
Writing Exercises, Writing Practices, and Un-Disciplined Bodies	93
Embodiment and Composition Studies.....	102
IV INSPIRATION AND INSTRUMENTALISM: THE <i>NEW YORK</i> <i>TIMES</i> WRITERS ON WRITING SERIES	111

CHAPTER	Page
Current Instrumentalist Tendencies in Composition Scholarship..	112
Instrumental Metaphors for Inspiration in <i>Writers on Writing</i>	119
Quests and Hunts	128
Religious Metaphors for Inspiration.....	135
Instrumentalism and Inspiration in Composition Scholarship	147
 V CONCLUSION: CREATIVITY AND THE COMPOSITION	
CLASSROOM	156
The Practice of Idleness	161
The Practice of Diligent Indolence.....	165
Idling Bodies	170
Conclusion.....	176
WORKS CITED.....	179
VITA.....	194

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Composition studies is a transition mode: process theory is waning while some scholars push for post-process and post-theory in order to discover new directions and new ways of thinking about writing. This dissertation attempts to answer the call for a new direction and new ways of understanding how writers compose by opening the enormous cache of writings about writing in the form of writing memoirs by novelists, essayists, and poets. From these works, we can gain valuable insights about the writing processes of working writers, particularly that writing is more complicated and "creative" than the textbooks steps on the writing process suggest. Also, we can learn something about the nature of creativity and how we might address the lack of creativity in the composition classroom.

The seminal work of process model pedagogy, Janet Emig's *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, published in 1969, opens with a description of the available data sources for the researcher concerned with the composing process: 1) the works by what Emig terms "established writers" appearing in the form of the writers' own accounts of the writing process through diaries, letters, essays, etc; 2) dialogues and interviews such as the ones made famous in *The Paris Review* in which an interviewer delivers a series of questions to writers followed by the writers' responses; 3) literary

This dissertation follows the style of the *MLA Style Manual*.

critics' analyses of the evolution of specific works of literature such as Jerome Beaty's study *Middlemarch, From Notebook to Novel*; 4) the advice given to students in composition textbooks (although Emig doesn't address how directives about writing offer insight about the writing process, unless we are to understand her study as one dealing with the perceptions about writing rather than writing itself); and finally, 5) theoretical and empirical (her word) research about the writing process (she classifies her work in this category).

She dismisses established writers as a source of data for inquiries into the writing process for the following reasons:

1. Established writers are incapable of describing their composing processes.

Here, Emig quotes the novelist Peter de Vries: "Don't ask the cow to analyze the milk" (9).

2. When writers discuss the writing process in modes that *do* have a specific audience, such as an extended autobiography or critical essay—what I call in this dissertation *writing memoirs*—writers are likely to lie because "they fear any conscious, explicit probing into their methods of work" might "spook" their writing (10). In this section, she refers to D. H Lawrence's claim in *Studies in Classic American Literature* that "all of the old American artists were hopeless liars" (9).

3. Established writers' descriptions of writing are *post hoc* endeavors and most likely do not reflect the actualities involved in the writing process because the descriptions are written after the fact.

4. When writers discuss the writing process in expressive modes, i.e. diaries or journals that do not have a specific audience other than the writers themselves, they rarely address the act of writing itself and instead describe the affective aspects associated with writing, such as how they feel when they aren't writing. She argues that "referring to these forms [writing memoirs] *exclusively*, then, is that they focus on *partial phenomena*" (11, emphasis mine). She admits that writing memoirs offer "brilliant" descriptions of "the context, the affective milieu of the writing act" (11). However, she contends, "the act itself remains undescribed" (11).

5. Finally, Emig dismisses writing memoirs as appropriate sources of data on writing research because they represent the limited perspective of one writer, what she describes as data that offers "an N of 1—a singular writer pursuing, particularly if he is a major writer, a unique problem" (9).

Each of these objections is problematic. The first objection, that writers are incapable of describing their writing processes, could be used as a criticism of Emig's work, a work that is based in part on descriptions of the writing process by eight twelfth graders. Her second objection, related to the first objection, that writers lie when they describe writing

processes, reflects a deep historical bias against writers' general veracity—one that can be traced to Plato. However, generally writers' accounts of the act of writing are remarkably similar, a fact that Jane Piirto, author of *"My Teeming Brain": Understanding Creative Writers*, argues throughout her book about accounts of writing. If all writers lied about their creative processes, the descriptions would be more likely to vary widely, and it would be difficult to discuss general issues like writer's block, inspiration, writing rituals, and flow. In a footnote, Emig asserts that "Certain themes emerge from a reading of these studies [writing memoirs]," an assertion that suggests, at least on some level, the writers are truthful in their accounts of writing (14).

The second objection also reflects a general bias against literature that is common in composition studies, partly arising from the institutional politics that forced composition scholars to define themselves *against* their literature counterparts in English departments. It is important to note that Emig's study was instrumental in establishing composition studies as a legitimate field of study; however, now that it is established, a return to primary sources in the form of writing memoirs by novelists and poets will open up composition studies to draw from the large number of these types of works and draw a better picture of what it means to compose.

Emig's third objection raises the question, can we trust the *memories* of writers when they describe what it is like to compose? For every researcher who uses descriptions of experiences by people, this is an issue. But the objection also applies to Emig, who asked one female subject to describe how she composed an imaginative work *that she wrote in the third grade* (103).

The fourth objection is more compelling. Emig claims that the vast majority of writing memoirs focus on partial phenomena, meaning that the context of the writing, including the emotions surrounding the subject matter, are the things discussed rather than the actual writing. Interestingly, Emig's research concludes that what we refer to as writing, the act of inscription, also should include moments during which no composing is actually happening. For example, when a student writer stops composing and looks up in a moment of contemplation, the writer is still writing. Writers, in other words, remain engaged in the writing process even when symbol-making on a page or computer screen isn't occurring. Current research in composition scholarship confirms this conclusion and expands it further. As Nedra Reynolds argues in *Geographies of Writing*, place matters and is an essential component of the writing process.

Finally, Emig's last objection raises concerns about sample sizes if composition researchers use established writers' accounts of the writing process. She claims that the case study method reveals conclusions that only apply to the writer who is being studied. For those who are familiar with *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, this claim may seem particularly peculiar because her sample size is limited to eight students. From this small number of research subjects, Emig draws broad conclusions. Composition scholars have recently begun to question the process model, based in part on the assumption that conclusions about *the process* of writing can be applied to *all* writers in *all* writing situations. Gary Olson in "Toward a Post-Process Composition: Abandoning the Rhetoric of Assertion," writes

the process orientation has its own limitations. Key among these limitations is the fact that the process orientation, as we have conceived it, imagines that the writing process can be described in some way; that is, process theorists assume that we can somehow make statements about the process that would apply to all or most writing situations. (7)

In other words, A Theory of Writing is a flawed goal for composition scholarship. An alternative goal, suggests Olson, would be to discover the multiple and varied ways that writers compose. The conclusions one draws from writing memoirs from poets and novelists would move composition scholarship closer to "a more dialogic, dynamic, open-ended, receptive, nonassertive stance" as advocated by the post-process orientation (15).

As part of her argument that writers' memoirs about writing rarely address the act of writing itself, Emig quotes a passage from Virginia Woolf's *A Writer's Diary* in which Woolf describes the composition of *Jacob's Room*: "It is worth mentioning, for future reference, that the creative power which bubbles so pleasantly in beginning a new book quiets down after a time, and one goes on more steadily," and "Directly one gets to work, one is like a person walking, who has seen the country stretching out before" (11). Emig does not seem to recognize the powerful metaphorical structures at play in these passages. Woolf compares writing to the flow of a river, bubbling at the headwaters and smoothing out as it pushes on toward the sea. In the second quote, the metaphor for writing is walking. More specifically, Woolf understands the process of composing as walking that is geographically situated.

As a student of composition and poetics (and a writer of imaginative works), I am fascinated by Emig's arguments against using writing memoirs as legitimate sources of data for composition scholarship, primarily because the arguments are motivated by assumptions about language that have been recently contested. Emig's objections could be said to be based on a view of language that is primarily positivistic—a windowpane theory of language that assumes a one-to-one correspondence between reality and the representation of reality. Her assumptions are informed by and re-inscribe the chasm between the study of poetics and the study of rhetoric and composition because she does not recognize the rhetoricity of the account given to her by beginning writers. Perhaps one reason Emig chose this position concerned the institutional politics of composition and English studies. Emig was, after all, writing in 1969, a time when composition was still struggling to establish itself as an independent field of study with its own sphere of influence and respect.

Almost forty years after the publication of *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, when creative nonfiction has again become a topic of interest among composition scholars (most notably by scholars such as Cynthia Selfe who studies literacy narratives), and at a time when the post-process movement has opened up new ways of thinking about identity and the writing self, writing memoirs by established writers have yet to be studied as serious contributions to understanding composition, broadly defined. Long before Emig published *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, works by established writers describing the writing process had begun to gain popularity and grow in number. In the 1950's, *The Paris Review* began to interview

writers about their working habits and theories about artistic creation. In 1978, the University of Michigan Press inaugurated its series of books called "Poets on Poetry," founded by Donald Hall and now edited by David Lehman (who also edits the popular "Best American Poetry" series). The Michigan series includes more than ninety books by poets writing about the creative process and poetics. In 1981, an annotated bibliography on the subject was published, David Madden and Richard Powers's *Writer's Revision: An Annotated Bibliography of Articles and Books About Writers' Revision and Their Comments on the Creative Process*. In 1999, Tim Mayers wrote in *CCC* ("(Re)Writing Craft") that "possible intersections between composition and creative writing" could be explored by analyzing writing memoirs, works he calls "craft criticism" in which writers "challenge and unsettle some deeply-embedded, implicit ideas" about writing and explore "the relation of poetic craft to rhetoric" (82, 83, and 88).

One particularly useful method of analysis for writer memoirs comes from composition scholarship's sister discipline, rhetorical criticism. The quotes Emig uses to dispel the notion that writing memoirs can be useful is only one example among many that suggests the metaphors writers use to describe writing point to complex relationships between writers and their perceived agency as creators of texts (the concept of authorship as it is referred to in literary studies), between writers and the way they conceive of writing as reflective of a writing self, between writers and their material bodies, and between writers and their physical and cultural environments. In 1989, Lad Tobin began this work by studying the metaphors student writers used to describe

writing in "Bridging Gaps: Analyzing Our Students' Metaphors for Composing." Also, MFA programs emphasize the practices of writers as a way to understand the composing process. However, this data is primarily anecdotal and has not been subject to rhetorical or linguistic analyses.

We are left, then, with two relevant issues that must be addressed: the extent to which an historically rich and widely available cache of writing memoirs exists for study, and the extent to which writing memoirs have already been studied in composition scholarship.

A Brief History of Modern Writing Memoirs

Written in 1293, Dante's *Vita Nuova* is one of the first works to reflect on the writing process. A mixture of prose and poetry, Dante narrates chronologically his obsession with Beatrice and the 27 poems that resulted from that obsession, starting with the first time he saw Beatrice when he was nine, to being visited by a cloaked man in a dream in which the swaddled child-Beatrice is fed Dante's flaming heart, and finally to Beatrice's death and the end of Dante's obsession with her. The basic structure of the short work is this: (1) a narrated event from Dante's life (such as seeing Beatrice on the street flanked by two older women, or Beatrice publicly deriding Dante for the sustained attention she was receiving from him), (2) Dante's description of writing the poem inspired by the event, (3) the resulting poem, and finally, (4) Dante's explication of the poem. Though the act of writing itself isn't described directly, the general process is. More importantly, *Vita Nuova* introduces one of the major threads in theories of literary

production, life experiences (events, observations, etc.) as sources for a work of composition.

In 1580, Montaigne introduced the vernacular essay and amplified earlier definitions of the genre. For Montaigne, the essay is a way to test himself in a situation or concept—on skepticism, imagination, friendship. Rather than narrate his life chronologically and according to events that he experienced, he uses topics, the rhetorical *topoi* of invention (an influence of Cicero, whom Montaigne read widely). The collective effect of his *Essays* is that Montaigne emerges as a figure with a central consciousness, rather than a subject being acting upon and changing over the course of his life. In other words, the essay as opposed to narration allowed Montaigne to depict himself as having an “essence” or “core” personality as opposed to a dynamic self as seen in chronologically narrated autobiography, a self that is always becoming and teleological. The self as it is represented in the essays, in this sense, is deontological, governed by an internal rule or law.

His essays were also some of the first attempts by an author to describe his own writing process, including how he chose subject matter, how he chose to incorporate the ideas and texts from others, and his working conditions. In his statements about writing he constructs a writing self that vacillates from *embodiment* in his comparisons between writing and physical activity, to *transcendence* in his treatment of writing as done by “another self.” For example, in one passage he draws a comparison between writing and speaking as he defends his use of the essay instead of the conventionally chronologically narrated autobiography: “I am a sworn foe to constraint, assiduity, and perseverance; and

that nothing is so foreign to my style as an extended narrative. So often I break off for lack of breath" (47). In another passage in which he addresses problems of structure and organization in the process of composing, Montaigne compares writing to the aimlessness of a *flaneur* wandering the streets (160). In other passages, however, embodiment gives way to transcendence. By transcendence, I mean a sense that the act of composing occurs while he is somehow *not present*. Consider the following passage in which he contemplates his writing persona:

I am then another self, or because I approach my subject under different circumstances and with other considerations. Hence it is that I may well contradict myself, but the truth, as Demades said, I do not contradict. Could my mind find a firm footing, I should not be making essays, but coming to conclusions; it is, however, always in its apprenticeship and on trial. (235)

One particular issue that Montaigne brings up in the previous passage is the issue of genre. Unlike Dante who merely narrated the circumstances surrounding the production of his poems, which, remember, was one of Emig complaints against writers who write about the composing process, Montaigne includes in his essays the problematic features of textual production: issues of genre, style, organization, and invention, among others.

During the Romantic period, when the concern about the figure of the writer reached new heights, many poets wrote about the process of writing and creativity, dedicating entire essays on the subject rather than intermittently commenting on the writing process in a larger work with another subject matter or as part of a work of

autobiography. Edward Young's "Conjectures on Original Composition" is one of the first works to compare the writing process to plant life: "The mind of a man of genius is a fertile and pleasant field...An original may be said to be of a vegetable nature; it rises spontaneously from the vital root of genius; it grows, it is not made" (Adams 328).

Keats, as well, thought that the organic metaphor was the most accurate description of the writing process: "If poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all" (Adams 492). Shelley, also embracing organicism, extended the metaphor to include the natural processes of the physical world by comparing the mind of the writer during the creative act to "a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within, like the color of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed" (Adams 575).

Extending the metaphor emphasized the primacy and irrational nature of creativity and of the writing self.

Edgar Allan Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition," published in April 1848, ushered in the modern writing memoir as it has come to be written in the twentieth century. As Dana Gioia has noted, the essay was the only one of its kind in nineteenth-century American letters. While the predecessors to Poe did serve to animate theories of literary invention, they also manage to present theories of invention that abstract the writer; the act of writing, the *practice* of writing, isn't described directly (one of Emig's complaints against writers who write about composing). Poe's essay, compared to its precursors, addresses practical composing practices such as deciding what to write and choosing literary devices for effect—the step-by-step process he followed to write "The

Raven."

Equally important to the shift in content of Poe's essay from its precursors in literary criticism and theory, Poe's shift to the practical side of composing, is the historical shift that occurred during the nineteenth century in which writing *as a profession* began to take shape. Before this time, the idea of writing as a something that was *difficult* was rarely mentioned. The concept of writer's block, for example, didn't exist. Only as the writers began to see themselves (as well as the public began to see them) as professionals, did the complaints about writing begin to seem ubiquitous. One way to view this shift is understand writers writing about writing as positioning themselves *against* the non-professional, as experts against the non-experts. Chapter IV of this dissertation, "Inspiration and Instrumentalism," will address this historical shift more fully.

In the introduction, Poe writes that he intends to give the public "a peep behind the scenes" of writing in order to show

the wheels and pinions—the tackle for scene-shifting—the stepladders and demon-traps—the cock feathers, the red paint and the black patches, which, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, constitute the properties of the literary *histrion*. (1618).

His account, meant to rebut Shakespeare's claim that poets write in a "fine frenzy" (in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) reveals a writer for whom composition is a controlled, rational process that proceeds from the general to the specific—a process he compares to solving a mathematical problem.

After deciding on the length of the poem (about a hundred lines), the province of the poem (beauty), and tone of the poem (sadness), Poe considers a literary device that would serve as a "key-note" in the poem, "some pivot upon which the whole structure might turn," and settles on the *refrain* (1620). After considering that the most effective refrain is one that is repeated word for word, he decides that his refrain should consist of one word; specifically, he wanted a word that was sonorous, having ideally the long "o" sound and the consonant "r" sound. The word "Nevermore" was "the very first which presented itself" (1620). Since no reasoning being, according to Poe, would repeat one word over and over, he decides that a raven should speak the word (though he did consider a parrot). Once these things had been decided, the plot of the bereaved lover (beauty and death epitomized in the death of a beautiful woman, according to Poe) is settled, and then, Poe writes the last stanza of the poem, further defining the rhyme and meter that would dictate the composition of the rest of the poem. Next, he decides on the locale of the poem—a chamber—and settles on the specific incidents and questions the bereaved lover asks the bird, then writes those stanzas. Finally, rereading his draft, he decides the poem requires two more stanzas to achieve a proper level of suggestiveness, and he writes them.

At the end of the essay, the "peep behind the scene," the reality show of "The Raven," doesn't so much accomplish the task of de-mystifying the process of composition as refashioning the "fine frenzy" he meant to decry into a hyper-rationalized meting out of a work of art, one that is as difficult to believe. As many readers of the essay comment, Poe's account seems forced, too mechanical and rigid, too linear and

structured. Poe portrays himself as one who fully controls language and his art, an art for which inspiration or epiphany play no part. In *Language As Symbolic Action*, describing Poe's essay, Burke writes:

though he [Poe] might be expected to know more about his procedures than any one else, the general tendency has been to feel that he is making the genesis of the poem look much more deliberate than could possibly be the case, and to assume that he did so either for purposes of showmanship or to compensate for his own personal shortcomings by representing himself as a paragon of rational control. (27)

Burke, sounding so much like Janet Emig, is revealing the dialectic at play in the essay: on one hand, the artist is craftsman; on the other, the artist is midwife to a work that came from nowhere, the “something-out-of-nothing” for which the writing process is sometimes represented as cloaked in mystery. For example, the word “nevermore” simply “presented itself” (1620). What Burke suggests in his “compensation” theory about the essay and the representation of Poe’s writing self is that the artist, by using mechanical metaphors to describe his writing process, is attempting to fashion for himself a more practical, rational account of writing than was the case. As chapter IV in this dissertation argues, such instrumental descriptions of composing often are accompanied by metaphors of the religious, the two antipodes sharing at their core the anxieties writers have about their control or lack of control over their writing process.

In the next generation of American writers, Henry James writes *The Art of the Novel*, published in 1934. The book is a collection of the prefaces he wrote for his novels

in preparation for the New York Edition of his collected works, related to Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition" in that it duplicates the "peep behind the scenes" approach Poe uses for "The Raven" for each of James's novels. In addition to describing his writing processes, James also expands on Poe's theme by describing his consciousness as he composed. In James's words, the prefaces that make up *The Art of the Novel* are examples of a genre he calls "the story of a story." Some of the major subjects covered in the prefaces include: the relation of art and the artist, the finding of subjects, and the growth of subjects (as identified by Richard P. Blackmur in the introduction to the book). James's idea of the genesis and development is based on the concept of "the germ," that "subjects never come ready-made or complete, but always from hints, notes, the merest suggestion" (xv). One example of his germ theory comes from the preface to *Portrait of a Lady*:

Trying to recover here, for recognition, the germ of my idea, I see that it must have consisted not at all in any conceit of a 'plot', nefarious name, in any flash, upon the fancy, of a set of relations, or in any one of those situations that, by a logic of their own, immediately fall, for the fabulist, into movement, into a march or a rush, a patter of quick steps; but altogether in the sense of a single character, the character and aspect of a particular engaging young woman, to which all the usual elements of a 'subject', certainly of a setting, were to need to be superadded. (42)

In chapters 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, and 21, James returns again and again to the germ theory. In the preface for *The Portrait of a Lady*, he theorizes the origin of the germ that grows into the work:

As for the origin of one's wind-blown germs themselves, who shall say, as you ask, where *they* come from? We have to go too far back, too far behind, to say. Isn't it all we can say that they come from every quarter of heaven, that they are *there* at almost any turn of the road? They accumulate, and we are always picking them over, selecting among them. They are the breath of life – by which I mean that life, in its own way, breathes them upon us. They are so, in a manner prescribed and imposed – floated into our minds by the current of life. (43)

In this passage, the metaphor of the germ is complicated by the addition of the metaphor of "the current of life"—or, life is a river. He also referred to the "stream of composition" (the full phrase "I remount the stream of composition," a rather coarse transitional device James is fond of using in the prefaces). Wayne Booth called James a "fountainhead" in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, a work that effectively argued that the rhetorical features of fictions underlie the highly crafted and deliberate nature of composition, but in *The Art of the Novel*, James's own accounts of invention and inspiration cast some doubt about the purposeful writer actively writing without the presence of something else, though even James is unsure about what that something else might be, choosing to articulate the genesis of his works through metaphor, many of which reappear in the works I analyze in this dissertation.

Several themes emerge from James's central metaphors related to composition. The river metaphor, as I mentioned earlier, appears in his discussion of *Portrait of a Lady*. In the preface to *The Aspern Papers*, James returns to the metaphor of the river to represent literary invention, this time to warn of the dangers of the flooded imagination:

Nothing is so easy as improvisation, the running on and on of invention; it is sadly compromised, however, from the moment its stream breaks bounds and gets into flood. Then the waters may spread indeed, gathering houses and herd and crops and cities into their arms and wrenching off, for our amusement, the whole face of the land—only violating by the same stroke our sense of the course and the channel, which is our sense of the uses of a stream and the virtue of a story. (172)

To paraphrase James, he is admonishing writers not to get carried away. His warning strikes at the heart of a two ideas running countercurrent in the memoirs I analyze in this dissertation: the river takes a writer places and in this sense the writer is passive; however, in another sense, a writer's control of his subject and composing process is paramount to the success of the literary work. The idea recurs in other contradictory metaphors, such as the metaphor of the hunt (159 and 311) against the metaphor of the builder (296). In the hunt metaphor, the writer trails the scent passively as a bloodhound (311); in the building metaphor, the writer must painstakingly give order to the "solid blocks of material" (296). The balance of these two ideas, freedom and control, James describes further in a later paragraph of his preface to *The Aspern Papers*:

The thing was to aim at absolute singleness, clearness and roundness, and yet to depend on an imagination working freely, working (call it) with extravagance; by which law it wouldn't be thinkable except as free and wouldn't be amusing except as controlled. (172)

The balance between freedom and control, a contradictory state of being, is the heart of what he refers to throughout the prefaces as the "fun" of composing. But, the state he must maintain, the delicate balance of extravagance and focus, becomes in later prefaces, an economy of the writerly self, one in which the controlled supply of the "explosive principle in one's material" he allows "to flush and colour and animate the disputed value" but ultimately is required to be "kept down," else the "space-hunger and space-cunning" imagination takes over and spoils the work (278). The reward for such an economy, which again reflects how James's sense of writerly self relates to freedom and control, is renewed energy:

the range of choice as to treatment, by which I mean as to my pressing the clear liquor of amusement and refreshment from the golden apple of composition, *that* blest freedom, with its infinite power of renewal, was still my resource, and I felt myself invoke it not in vain. (277)

In this passage, renewal is the reward for the *work* of maintaining the economy of freedom and control. Yet again, a contradiction is revealed: composition is work *and* its own reward (it is pleasurable and renews him), what he calls in the preface to *The Golden Bowl* "the religion of doing," which is a feature of the writer's freedom to "do" what James calls "literary deeds" (347).

The "literary deeds" of writers, and more specifically the "story of the story" James memorialized in *The Art of the Novel*, became the focus of *The Paris Review* interviews, first published in 1953. For the writers who were interviewed in the following issues and the readers of the publication, this feature of the magazine became widely popular. Writers considered it a laurel to be interviewed. The reading public loved the interviews. Viking Press has published the *Writers at Work* interviews from *The Paris Review* in eight hardback volumes since the first issue of *The Paris Review*: 1958, 1963, 1967, 1976, 1981, 1984, 1986, and 1988. *The Paris Review's* complete archives are now available online at *The Paris Review* website: <http://www.parisreview.org/literature.php>.

The appearance of *The Paris Review* interviews marks a tipping point in the publication of works about writing by working writers. In each decade following the first *Paris Review* interviews, the number of full-length writing memoirs and collections of essay-length writing memoirs has multiplied.

Writing memoirs by Ernest Hemingway and John Steinbeck were published in the 1960's (1964 and 1969, respectively). *A Moveable Feast* elegantly describes Hemingway's time in Paris among other literati such as Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, and James Joyce. The opening chapters describe his experiences writing in Parisian cafés and various apartments. In the few paragraphs, several themes emerge: writing about a place from which he is physically removed (writing about Michigan in Paris), learning to forget about a work in progress while away from the writing desk, ending the day knowing where to pick up the next day, writing the "true

sentence" as opposed to the elaborate, ornamental sentence ("All you have to do is write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence that you know." [12]), and getting "lost" in the moment of composition, a state of absorbed concentration during which the writer loses awareness that he or she is composing, a theme that appears in Donald Hall's *Life Work*, discussed in chapter III of this dissertation.

Steinbeck's *Journal of a Novel* is an epistolary account of composing *East of Eden*. The journal and the novel were both kept in the same notebook, the text of the journal on one side and the novel on the other. Addressed to his editor, the letters of the journal describe the day-to-day problems with interruptions and family commitments, the lassitude after a bad day's work at the writing desk or the happiness following a good day's work, structural or character problems with the novel, and general comments about literature. Interestingly, the journal opens on a Monday, and Steinbeck isn't able to work up the momentum to begin writing the novel until Friday:

Just as it always does—the work started without warning. It is always just that way. I must sit a certain length of time before it happens. Yesterday it began to come and I think the form is set now. I know it is for the alternate chapters. I only hope I can do as well with the other parts of the alternate. Now I have sat a week. It is Friday and I have sweated out one page and a half. If I did not know this process so well, I would consider it a week of waste. (12)

Steinbeck, in other words, had *to wait*, a period of time that he would have considered wasted had he not known what he doesn't say in this passage: the waiting is as much a

part of the process of composition and the actual writing itself, a theme that is also addressed by the writers I analyze in this dissertation.

In the 1970's and 1980's, six significant works by writers on writing were published: 1) May Sarton's *Journal of a Solitude* (1973), 2) John Gardner's *On Becoming a Novelist* (1983), 3) Eudora Welty's *One Writer's Beginnings* (1984), 4) Brenda Ueland's *If You Want to Write* (1987), 5) Natalie Goldberg's *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within* (1986), and 6) Annie Dillard's *The Writing Life* (1989, a work I analyze in chapter III of this dissertation). The books by Gardner, Ueland, and Goldberg take the pose of instructional advice to novice writers. The works by Sarton, Welty, and Dillard are writing memoirs.

In the 1990's, the following were published: John Jerome's *The Writing Trade: A Year in the Life* (1992), Donald Hall's *Life Work* (1993), Ray Bradbury's *Zen in the Art of Writing* (1994) Anne Lamott's *Bird By Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life* (1995); Donald Maass's *The Career Novelist* (1996), *Why I Write: Thoughts on the Craft of Fiction* (1998) edited by Will Blythe (which includes essays by Norman Mailer, Richard Ford, Pat Conroy, Ann Patchett, Rick Bass, David Foster Wallace, and Jim Harrison, among others), bell hooks's *Remembered Rapture: The Writer at Work* (1999), Frederich Busch's *A Dangerous Profession: A Book About the Writing Life* (1999).

Since then, even more: Stephen King's *On Writing* (2000), *The Spirit of Writing: Classic and Contemporary Essays Celebrating the Writing Life* (2001) edited by Mark Robert Waldman (which includes essays by Annie Dillard, Stephen King, Anne Lamott, Robert Pinsky, Erica Jong, and William Zinsser, among others), Margaret Atwood's

Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing (2002), *The Writing Life: Writers on How They Think and Work* (2003) edited by Marie Arana (a collection of essays from the *Washington Post Book World*), Norman Mailer's *A Spooky Art* (2003), Joyce Carol Oates's *The Faith of a Writer: Life, Craft, Art* (2003), *Toward the Open Field: Poets on the Art of Poetry 1800-1950* (2004) edited by Melissa Kwasny, Bret Lott's *Before We Get Started: A Practical Memoir of the Writer's Life* (2005), *The Very Telling: Conversations with American Writers* (2006) edited by Sarah Anne Johnson. In addition to print works, Oprah Winfrey, as part of Oprah's Book Club, features on her website a Writers on Writing page: http://www.oprah.com/obc/writers/obc_writers_prep.jhtml.

A Brief Overview of Writers on Writing Scholarship in Composition Studies

In the preface to *Shoptalk: Learning to Write With Writers* (1990), Donald Murray writes:

The serious student of writing and the teacher of writing should know that the extensive testimony of writers has largely been ignored by composition researchers. What writers know about their craft has been dismissed, for example, as the "lore of the practitioner." (xiv)

This statement is as true now as it was in 1990, even though there are some important research studies that anticipate the use of writing memoirs by professional creative writers.

One work that demonstrates the possibilities of using writer's accounts of writing processes is Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Booth, through close reading, reveals the highly crafted nature of works of fiction. He discusses authors' narrative

techniques used to achieve rhetorical effects such as an author's choice of perspective (or point of view) for the narrator, which conveys a more or less distant relationship to the implied author, the characters of the story, or the reader. More directly relevant to this study is his inclusion of many works by writers about their writing processes, some of which are prominently featured as epigraphs for chapters. Booth's elaborate bibliography included in the second edition of *The Rhetoric of Fiction* includes *Sherwood Anderson's Notebook*, E. M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*, *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, Edith Wharton's *The Writing of Fiction*, *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Essays and Lectures on Shakespeare*, C. E. Montague's *A Writer's Notes on His Trade*, Joseph Conrad's *Prefaces to His Work*, the Prefaces of Henry James, Virginia Woolf's *The Common Reader* and *The Second Common Reader*, Edward Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition*, Anton Chekhov's *Letters on the Short Story, the Drama and Other Literary Topics*, Ezra Pound's *Make It New*, and Paul Valery's *The Art of Poetry*. Though Booth's study focuses on the symbolic evidence of craft (instead of the material, physical or cognitive processes at work during composition), his study opens up its correlative—a focus on invention and writing processes.

After writing process studies "dried up" by the end of the 1980's (as Russel K. Durst puts it), another strand of composition scholarship related to studies focusing on professional creative writers' writing memoirs began to grow in popularity: the study of the literacy narrative (80). In "Literacy Narratives as Genres of Possibility: Students' Voices, Reflective Writing, and Rhetorical Awareness," Susan DeRosa defines literacy

narrative:

an account of one's experiences with language and writing in specific contexts, and I see literacy narratives as flexible genres, as fluid and changing as the discourses that inform them. Literacy narratives, I suggest, provide writers with a lens through which they may examine their literacy experiences as critical acts of inquiry. In literacy narratives, writers may be self-reflective and critical of their roles and responsibilities as writers, their writing strategies, and their interactions with generic forms, as they (re)position themselves in the discourses of different genres. (De Rosa 3)

Generally, those who study literacy narratives do not include writing memoirs by professional creative writers in the genre, focusing instead on literacy narratives of student writers, a bias I believe is a hold over from Emig's blistering arguments against works on writing by "established writers."

The writing memoirs I analyze do share some important elements with literacy narratives: navigating the symbolic realm of reading and writing, negotiating the constraints of specific genres, and formulating ideas about their responsibilities as writers. However, there is an important distinction: literacy narratives are already *about* literacy in a direct way, while writing memoirs usually lack content that directly addresses language acquisition. Finally, I resist classifying writing memoirs as literacy narratives because the study of literacy narratives brings with it a particular critical lens associated with social constructionism and the critique of expressivism that I attempt to

address. In other words, literacy narratives often describe the powers at play in the social area that affect the writer; however, the actual practice of writing goes undescribed, a similar objection that Emig had of writing memoirs, even though I disagree with her objection.

In 2005, Barbara Tomlinson published the only full-length work in composition scholarship that analyzes what writers have to say about writing processes, *Authors on Writing: Metaphors and Intellectual Labor*, a metaphorical analysis of interviews such as the ones that began appearing in *The Paris Review* in 1953. The work is exceptional. She argues the interview genre affords researchers the opportunity to view the discourse of authorship within a context of a conversation. She argues "sustained study of writers' metaphors about writing processes reveals the existence of a meta-narrative community among writers and in the general culture" (3). Further, analyzing what writers say about writing "might enable us to supplement, revive, or even replace the epistemological tools lost to writers, readers, and teachers because of society's celebration and mystification of authorship" (3).

Tomlinson's work has obvious and applicable value for further studies of writing memoirs, as well as a key limitation. One of her most interesting observations is the identification of a central metaphor for writing, "writing is mining," and the way this metaphor functions to highlight the embodied nature of the act of writing (i.e., the work or labor involved). Pushing up against this metaphor, which is largely a metaphor about the interiority of the writing act, is another system of metaphors, a system Tomlinson calls metaphors of *dynamic discursivity*, such as "the character as co-author" metaphor,

functions to highlight the social nature of the composing process. However, in the concluding chapter, Tomlinson admits that her study focuses almost exclusively on *active* metaphors, i.e., metaphors of *doing*, even though "creativity involves both active and receptive processes" (131). She concludes the book by reporting that even though she has seldom had "experiences of transcribing dictation, working in a trance, receiving the gift of ideas, or being a vehicle for others" that she remains "primed for them" (131). For "inspiration" she keeps on the bulletin board above her writing desk the following excerpt from an interview with Harry Casey (K.C. from *K.C. and the Sunshine Band*):

"I didn't really write [that song]," KC confesses, eyes wide, his hand running through still damp hair..."Some spirit came over the whole room. I mean, my hands were beyond human control...Like an egg was cracked open and all this music came out." He shakes his head and says quietly, "Something much greater than me wrote 'Shake your Booty.'"(131)

Like KC, many writers affirm similar experiences. They feel as if they did not create the work, that it was given to them by an unnamed source. I believe Tomlinson's study is an important first study in the descriptions of writers' writing processes, but as she admits, more work is necessary to fully understand the creative process in composition.

Method and Approach

As I proposed in the beginning of this chapter, there are few studies of works by professional creative writers describing writing processes (works I call writing memoirs). Based on the work by rhetorical scholars such Wayne Booth, composition

scholars such as Cynthia Selfe and Barbara Tomlinson (and even Janet Emig), I believe a rhetorical analysis of writing memoirs is warranted and necessary. By analyzing professional creative writers' accounts of their writing processes, we can begin to uncover the multiple, varied ways writers approach specific writing situations and apply that knowledge to a meaningful understanding of composition.

This dissertation is primarily a work of rhetorical criticism that analyzes writing memoirs. Although it is not an historical study, I will historicize when necessary concepts that emerge in the texts of the primary works (which I list below in the chapter descriptions). As for method, I draw on the work of I. A. Richards, Wayne Booth, and the work on metaphor by Lakoff and Johnson. I will also draw on the work of M. Jimmie Killingsworth, specifically *Appeals in Modern Rhetoric: An Ordinary-Language Approach*, in which he argues that tropes and narrative are some of the most persuasive rhetorical appeals available to speakers and writers. These approaches assume a definition of rhetoric that expands the classical definitions of rhetoric and ethos (Aristotle), invention (Cicero), rhetoric as identification as Burke describes identification—all of which are rooted in situation, in exigencies, as Bitzer argued in "The Rhetorical Situation."

More specifically, the method of analysis in this dissertation focuses on the metaphors writers use when describing the act of writing, an approach that involves identifying the central metaphors writers use and related, satellite metaphors writers use when they address readers. As Lakoff and Johnson have argued, metaphors point to underlying systems of thought, an idea that suggests metaphors reveal attitudes and ideas

that may be unconscious or covert, even to the writers themselves. Richards took the view that metaphor could offer what psychoanalysts could not, that metaphor "will tell us how our mind works" (136). Modern writing memoirs offer a rich reserve of metaphorical description due to the fact that the process of writing is one that is hidden from view and must be described in terms of something else; the something else (the vehicle, to use Richards's terminology)—the metaphors writers use—offer insight into their beliefs about who they are as writers and what they do when they sit down (or stand up, in Hemingway's case) at the writing desk. Metaphors reveal motivations, beliefs, perceptions about a writer's purpose, and ultimately, are constitutive: writing metaphors construct the writing self.

In Chapter II, "The Expressivist Aim Reconsidered: A View from *A Room of One's Own*," I analyze Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* as a writing memoir that contests the traditional concept of invention that views invention as self-expression. I argue that Woolf's concept of invention, in fact, requires a negation of self, a process of experiencing harmony (which includes the entire world, including texts) which results in a special kind of "vision" available to the writer, a "vision" that precludes rhetoric as much as it does interiority. This process emerges from Woolf's central metaphor for the process of composing: rivers—rivers of perception (especially sight), thought, language, texts, and the literary tradition. Finally, I suggest that what has been called expressivist rhetoric is really a mode of invention that historically has been particular to poetics and could be eliminated altogether as a discursive aim even while the poetical inventive pose could be applied to each discursive aim—literary, informative, and persuasive.

In Chapter III, "*A Writing Life and Life Work: The Writing Bodies of Annie Dillard and Donald Hall*," I argue Dillard's and Hall's metaphors for writing and their narratives of poetic origin create a concept of self which maintains freedom (rhetorical agency) and bodily presence as characteristics of their writing processes. In Chapter IV, "Inspiration and Instrumentalism: The *New York Times's* Writing on Writing Series," I argue that instrumental metaphors and metaphors of inspiration implicate one another in a way that complicates both sets of metaphors. Specifically, the essays in *Writers on Writing* create a view of writing that is both instrumentalist and religious, which makes the spectrum an instrument of a false dualism in the discourse about writing by creative writers. The essays, taken together, create a concept of the writing self that maintains a sense of writerly control (rhetorical agency) as well as a sense of a diminished control; ultimately, the two concepts are married in the minds of the writers and scholars alike. Finally, I will argue that there are negative pedagogical consequences (i.e., the effect of students of composition) if composition scholarship continues to insist on an instrumentalist view of writing and the absence of inspiration in the writing process. In the concluding chapter, "Creativity and the Composition Classroom," I argue that the constraints of the composition classroom impede students' creative processes as creative processes articulated by the writers I analyzed in chapters II-IV.

Ultimately, this dissertation takes as its starting point a very specific and fairly limited claim: we can learn something from what professional creative writers have to say about the composing process. This is really no different from what composition

scholars who study literacy narratives claim: reflective works on writing can be used as a basis for a robust approach to composition pedagogy.

CHAPTER II

THE EXPRESSIVIST AIM RECONSIDERED:

A VIEW FROM *A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN*

In the concluding paragraphs of *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf offers a series of conditions that must be fulfilled before Judith Shakespeare can be reborn:

For my belief is that if we live another century or so—I am talking of the common life which is the real life and not of the little separate lives which we live as individuals—and have five hundred a year each of us and rooms of our own; if we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think; if we escape a little from the common sitting-room and see human beings not always in their relation to each other but in relation to reality; and the sky, too, and the trees or whatever it may be in themselves; if we look past Milton's bogey, for no human being should shut out the view; if we face the fact, for it is a fact, that there is no arm to cling to, but that we go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not only to the world of men and women, then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare's sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down. (118)

Taken out of context from the rest of *A Room of One's Own*, the series of dependent clauses could be used to describe what is known as the expressivist orientation in composition studies. The clauses reflect the notion of community in the meaning-

making process (the "common life"), a focus on invention ("habit of freedom," as in free-writing exercises), and an emphasis on the development of voice ("the courage to write what we think"). Based on a surface and incorrect reading of this sentence, Woolf could be considered an expressivist, at least by critics such as Lester Faigley, James Berlin, and Jeanette Harris, for the clauses reflect three key theoretical concepts for which the expressivist orientation is frequently derided:

1. Expressivist rhetoric privileges an Enlightenment theory of individualism and epistemology: the self is unified and is able to discern accurately an objective reality.
2. Expressivist rhetoric conveys a Romantic belief in an autonomous, authentic self apart from or above historical and material circumstances of textual production.
3. Expressive rhetoric uses the metaphors of the window [windowpane theory of language] and vehicle [basically the conduit metaphor] to describe the function of language, an outmoded theory of language that does not reflect current thinking about the social construction of communication.

Interpreted *in* context (which I will do during the course of this chapter), Woolf's sentence in *A Room of One's Own* opens up a means by which expressivism as a rhetorical category, as it has been defined by those working within this critical orientation and those who have defined expressivism who identify themselves as working within other critical orientations (social-epistemic, for example), can be reconsidered. What are the real theoretical and historical under-girdings of what has

been called expressivist rhetoric? While critics claim that expressivist rhetoric maintains a concept of self that is (curiously) based on both Enlightenment and Romantic concepts of a unified, autonomous core, works that have been called expressivist are not based on a simple concept of self. Though singular sentences and quotes can be taken out of context to reflect a notion of the self that is unified and autonomous, and thereby expressivist, Woolf develops and addresses the fact that she does not have a resolution to questions of self, and even claims that writing is categorically *not* self expression. *A Room of One's Own* sharply calls into question the historical concepts upon which critiques of self expressionism are based. On one hand, we could use *A Room of One's Own* as a means to address and to correct current, inadequate theories of expressivist discourse in composition studies. On the other hand, *A Room of One's Own* also establishes the means to call into question the entire category of the expressivist aim of discourse. The study of creative nonfiction writing shows that the rhetoric and poetics of selfhood are far more complex than the compositionist critique of "expressionist" discourse suggests. The complexity appears obviously in modernist writers like Virginia Woolf, who displays many of the features associated with the category of expressivism, but it is likewise apparent in the romantic writers who are considered to be the fountainhead of expressivism, such as Keats (one of Woolf's sources) and even Emerson, whom Berlin identifies as the father of the expressionism.

As a work of composition theory, *A Room of One's Own* has received little attention, an exception being James L. Hoban's "Rhetorical *Topoi* in *A Room of One's Own*," in which he calls Virginia Woolf an "inventive rhetorician" and insists that *A*

Room of One's Own is “a text about rhetoric” (148).¹ I agree, specifically with his claim that Woolf focuses on matters of invention. I argue that Woolf’s concept of invention reverses the inward reflection that is considered part and parcel of the expressivist view. In fact, Woolf’s concept of invention requires a negation of the self, a process of experiencing harmony with nature (the entire world, including texts) which results in a special kind of “vision” available to the writer, a “vision” that precludes rhetoric as much as it does interiority. Negating the self, in other words, is the process of denying a unified self, approaching reality subjectively, and welcoming the influence of historical and material circumstances surrounding writing. This process emerges from Woolf’s central metaphor for the process of invention: rivers—rivers of perception (especially sight), thought, language, texts, and the literary tradition. Finally, I suggest that what has been called expressivist rhetoric is really a mode of invention that historically has been particular to poetics and could be eliminated altogether as a discursive aim even while the poetical inventive pose could be applied to each discursive aim—literary, informative, and persuasive. To demonstrate this argument, I will offer the following examples from Woolf’s texts (primarily *A Room of One's Own*): 1) Woolf’s descriptions of and metaphors relating to invention; 2) Woolf’s definition of reality; and 3) Woolf’s critiques of the works of Shakespeare and others.

¹ Another treatment of Woolf’s *A Room of One's Own* as a work of composition theory is Vara Neverov’s “Reading *A Room of One's Own* as a model of Composition Theory.” Neverov argues that *A Room of One's Own* is about overcoming anxieties about the writing process. She does not, as I do in this chapter, consider the metaphors Woolf uses to describe the writing process; instead, she limits her discussion to Woolf’s obscuring of her authorial identity through the characters of Mary Beton, Mary Seton, and Mary Carmichael.

Rivers of Invention

Woolf's central metaphor for invention, rivers, complicates the notion of unified self often associated with expressivism. Woolf "fishes" for ideas about her (assigned) writing topic, *Women and Fiction*, on the banks of a river at the fictional Oxbridge in the opening chapter of *A Room of One's Own*:

Thought—to call it by a prouder name than it deserved—had let its line down into the stream. It swayed, minute after minute, hither and thither among the reflections and the weeds, letting the water lift it and sink it, until—you know the little tug—the sudden conglomeration of an idea at the end of one's line... (5)

This passage indicates Woolf's approach to the river as a source (or re-source) for writing material. Admitting her idea isn't yet worth frying, she puts the fish-idea back "into her mind," the equivalent of releasing the fish into the river in order that it may grow and develop. In the first example, she "fishes" for ideas in the river; in the latter example, her mind is the river into which she releases her idea. Then, walking along the banks of the river again, her mind flows from idea to idea, winding through mental associations, mimicking the river flowing:

some stray memory of some old essay about revisiting Oxbridge in the long vacation brought Charles Lamb to mind—Saint Charles, said Thackeray, putting a letter of Lamb's to his forehead...For his essays are superior even to Max Beerbohm's, I thought, with all their perfection, because of that wild flash of imagination...Certainly he wrote an essay—

the name escapes me—about a manuscript of one of Milton’s poems which he saw here. It was *Lycidas* perhaps, and Lamb wrote how it shocked him to think it possible that any word in *Lycidas* could have been different from what it is...It then occurred to me that the very manuscript itself which Lamb had looked at was only a few hundred yards away...Moreover, I recollected, as I put this plan into execution, it is in this famous library that the manuscript of Thackeray’s *Esmond* is also preserved...(6-7)

The writer's mind is agile, weaving through the landscape of the English literary tradition. Also emphasized is the potency of her surroundings on the writer's thoughts: the quadrangles of Oxbridge bring to mind Charles Lamb and finally the memory of the library at the college which houses the manuscripts of *Lycidas* and *Esmond*. Here, Woolf takes on the quality of the river as she described it: it reflects whatever it wants to reflect as it moves through the landscape. In her case, the reflection is mental rather than the mirrored surface of the water reflecting the images of flora and the occasional undergraduate rowing through the water. Also, she is physically moving through the landscape: she is walking and thinking. Identifying with the river in this way, she takes on three qualities of “riverness”: just as the river moves through landscape so she is moving through landscape by walking; just as the river’s current circulates so Woolf is moving through discursive connections; and finally, just as the river moves freely, without design, so Woolf allows herself the freedom of reflection (and motion—she is chided for walking on the “turf” reserved for the Beadles' ambulations through campus).

Though the term “stream of consciousness” was already in use when Woolf published *A Room of One’s Own*, she never employs the term to describe her writing process or her representations of mental activity. The first use of the phrase “stream of consciousness” in English was by George Henry Lewes in *Problems of Life and Mind*, in an addendum to a section entitled, “The Sphere of Sense and Logic of Feeling,” Paragraph 132, published in 1880.² Perhaps one reason Woolf refrained from it stems from the abstract and diminutive quality of the phrase: “Stream of consciousness” signifies a constant flow, one that is automatic but trickling—much different from the thundering rush of a river. As a metaphor, it lacks the resonance that metaphors which omit the tenor provide and detaches the “stream” from the realities of real rivers: they can be dammed up, blocked, diverted, or dry. Woolf’s metaphor is more riddling—it doesn’t name the literal topic (consciousness), only the figurative topic (stream or river). As a result, Woolf emphasizes the tenuousness of the flow of invention, a quality that Woolf develops as a part of her theory of invention and which I address later in this chapter. Finally, “stream of consciousness” doesn’t distinguish between kinds of thinking or consciousness; for Woolf, riverness indicates a kind of thinking that is not calculated. Not employing “stream of consciousness” also indicates that Woolf at least partially opposed the idea of a unified consciousness, one of the precepts of

² Though the term has long been attributed to William James, J. Gill Holland discovered the original use of the term. His findings are published in the article “George Henry Lewes and ‘Stream of Consciousness’: The First Use of the Term in English.” *South Atlantic Review*, Vol. 51, No. 1, Jan. 1986, 31-39. For a full treatment of the subject of “stream of consciousness,” see Melvin Friedman’s *Stream of Consciousness: A Study in Literary Method*.

expressionism according to its many critics that connect it to Enlightenment individualism (Berlin, for example).

The river is a metaphor for Woolf, but in the context of *A Room of One's Own*, it is also more than just a metaphor. It suggests a deep identification with rivers as entities she attempts to merge with or emulate during her writing process as an approach to cognition. Elizabeth Waller has commented on this aspect of Woolf's writing when she argues that Woolf had an understanding "that human bodies can merge with a collective earth-body which, via corporeal experience, alters cognitive perception" (138). The effect of merging with the river, an alteration of cognitive perception, is emphasized more than once in *A Room of One's Own*. One example of this merging occurs while the writer is composing at a window and watches the street scene below her:

At this moment, as so often happens in London, there was a complete lull and suspension of traffic. Nothing came down the street; nobody passes. A single leaf detached itself from the plane tree at the end of the street, and in that pause and suspension fell. Somehow it was like a signal falling, a signal pointing to a force in things which one had overlooked. It seemed to point to a river, which flowed past, invisible, round the corner, down the street, and took people and eddied them along, as the stream at Oxbridge had taken the undergraduate in his boat and the dead leaves. Now it was bringing from one side of the street to the other diagonally a girl in patent leather boots, and then a young man in a maroon overcoat; it was also bringing a taxi-cab; and it brought all three together at a point

directly beneath my window; where the taxi stopped; and the girl and the young man stopped; and they got into the taxi; and then the cab glided off as if it were swept on by the current elsewhere. (100)

In this passage, the river is a form that she transposes on the city scene: simply, the river is a metaphor for the street activity. The identification between the street scene and a river, however, alters the writer's perception of the events by making the activities appear synchronized or possessing the rhythmic quality of rushing waters, suggesting that Woolf's river metaphors reveal a connection to nature transcending metaphor. Her identification with rivers or riveriness comes near to regarding the world as a spiritual entity with which she is coming into relationship. Woolf's deep identification with earth could also be referred to as an attitude, one that Killingsworth and Palmer identify as "nature as spirit" in *Ecospeak: Rhetoric and Environmental Politics in America*—an attitude which "places human beings on a par with the rest of nature" characterized by specific types of action including "prayer, meditation, and bearing witness" (12-13). Also, the nature as spirit attitude obviates any interpretation of the self as unified or autonomous; nature as spirit reflects exactly the opposite view of self propagated by Enlightenment approaches to individualism.

Woolf's river metaphors, when they are viewed as an attitude toward nature, concurrently imply an attitude toward the self which is necessary to invention. Specifically, the inventive pose requires a negation of the self. Theorists commonly use "negate" to denote the supplanting of an idea for another idea, as in the sentence, *Evolution does not negate the idea of a prime mover*. When I speak of Woolf negating

the self, this meaning is implied, that of the supplanting of an idea. In her case, negating the self is the means by which blind egotism is supplanted by a clear perception of the world, what she calls "vision" in the closing paragraphs of *A Room of One's Own*. Vision is an inflowing unimpeded by any blocks, dams, filters, or flotsam. In this definition, the world (everything) flows into the eyes like a river, another layer of meaning for Woolf's other river metaphors.

Though Woolf is considered the quintessential Modernist, her insistent rejection of writing in which the self is cynosure owes a debt to both English and American Romanticism. Emerson exuberantly recalls that on Boston Common, "Standing on the bare ground,--my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,--all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me. I am part and particle of God" (10). Emerson's experience on the common is one in which the self is supplanted by a particular kind of seeing, a clear perception that allows an inflowing of "currents." In the section of *Nature* entitled "Language," Emerson asserts that when the writer's life is "in harmony with nature, love of truth and virtue" then the writer's eyes will be purged and will be able to "understand her text" [the book of nature] (25). On the common, Emerson's eye is purged to the point of transparency; concurrently, the self becomes "nothing."

Woolf similarly relates the eye as the aperture through which the flow of nature enters the consciousness of the writer. Emerson's "transparent eyeball" in *A Room of One's Own* becomes "a miraculous glass cabinet" as the writer strolls the quadrangles of

Oxbridge. Recalling Emerson's mention of a warm October in the opening of the essay "Nature," Woolf recounts a harmonious encounter with nature:

The spirit of peace descended like a cloud from heaven, for if the spirit of peace dwells anywhere, it is in the courts and quadrangles of Oxbridge on a fine October morning. Strolling through those colleges past those ancient halls the roughness of the present seemed smoothed away; the body seemed contained in a miraculous glass cabinet through which no sound could penetrate, and the mind, freed from any contact with facts (unless one trespassed on the turf again), was at liberty to settle down upon whatever meditation was in harmony with the moment. (6)

The natural world, when she is in harmony with it, had the effect of clearing away all obstructions that would permit the mind from composing, able in Emerson's words to "see all," a state of mind in which "mean egotism" vanishes. The implication is that the self gets in the way of invention. Also, her insistence on a "harmonious" encounter with nature suggests a subjective state, one in which the experience of nature is mediated by the attitude of the writer. She does not claim an objective perception of reality; rather, reality is perceived as a spirit.

Woolf further clarifies her attitude toward nature and its relationship to writing in her definition of "reality," a keyword that she uses to describe a transformative experience in nature:

What is meant by "reality"? It would seem to be some thing very erratic, very undependable—now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of

newspaper in the street, now in a daffodil in the sun. It lights up a group in a room and stamps some casual saying. It overwhelms one walking beneath the stars and makes the silent world more real than the world of speech—and then there it is again in an omnibus in the uproar of Piccadilly. Sometimes, too, it seems to dwell in shapes too far away for us to discern what their nature is. But whatever it touches, it fixes and makes permanent. That is what remains when the skin of the day has been cast into the hedge; that is what is left of past time and of our loves and hates. Now the writer, as I think, has the chance to live more than other people in the presence of this reality. (114)

Woolf's reality is one that is always "now," and requires a writer who is in proper relation to the world. When a writer is fully present in a place, the effect is like water rushing over her; reality "overwhelms." Woolf's definition of reality further emphasizes her attitude toward nature as spirit because her field of action related to nature in this description of reality is one of meditative witnessing. Like her observation at the windowsill where she experienced the rhythm of the river in the traffic below her, reality, a catchword for harmonious nature, is a key element of her invention. It is also one in which requires the skin to be removed, another kind of negating the self by understanding the world or reality as a body whose meat lies underneath the surface, beneath what we perceive on the surface where the lens is clouded by our "past loves and hates."

That the experience of the reality of nature will purge the eye presents a passive element of negating the self. To continue in Woolf's metaphor of the river of language, negating the self is a natural wearing away of the impediments/sediments that lay in the path of the river; it is erosion. Woolf's praise of Shakespeare as "one for whom all impediments had been burned away until he was incandescent," is one example of the passive element of negating the self. Impediments, in her passage about Shakespeare, are the things that the river slowly wears down and finally sweeps away. The river itself does the work of getting rid of the impediments. Incandescent in this context refers to the result of the wearing away of impediments—clear or transparent perception, lucidity.

A second understanding of negating the self is more active on the part of the writer: merging with the waters that are present. Woolf meant the waters to be both the literary tradition and the world of things. To follow through with her metaphor is to understand the true meaning of negating the self: when a tributary flows into the waters of a larger river, the tributary is no longer itself—it becomes the larger river. To negate the self is to merge into something or someone else.

Similar to this second understanding of negating the self is the religious idea of "dying to the self." In a religious context, negating the self is part of the daily practice of Christianity (specifically the protestant tradition), a symbolic "killing" of the self so that the spirit of Christ can live in the heart of the believer, the same practice that Emerson refers to when he claims that "a self denial, no less austere than the saint's, is demanded by the scholar" (425). In this context, the self is emptied out by denying the desires of what is called "the flesh." The symbolic gesture for the death of the self is baptism, a

death by water. Once this symbolic death has occurred, the believer is said to be part of the body of Christ, the collective term for the church. So, too, does the water imagery prevail in Emerson. Denying the self, a person is said to be "aloof from all moorings, and afloat. He will abstain from dogmatism, and recognize all the opposite negations, between which, as walls, his being is swung" (426).

Though Woolf isn't coming out of the religious tradition, the "impediments" she wants, for example, "Mr. A" (the writer Woolf criticizes as boring) to do away with could be understood as similar to the impediments Christians seek to dispel in order that something else (the spirit of Christ) can flow into them (Christ calls himself the "living water"). Mr. A's ubiquitous "I," the reason Woolf decides he is boring, in this context, prevents the inflow of the world and the literary tradition (words, again, being things). Likewise, she refers to works of art not as "singular solitary births" but amassed by the collective body of the literary tradition. Just as the collective term for believers is the body of Christ (ie. the indwelling of Christ includes one in the larger group of believers also possessing the indwelling of Christ) so for Woolf the works of the literary tradition make up a body (her sense of a church), the force of which, like water, dissolve the sediment/impediment of the concept of self. Her definition of the work of art negates the concept of self in the sense that she denies individual genius as the genesis of works of art and replaces it with the collective body (the western literary tradition) out of which flows more works of art (perhaps in what one could understand as a protean version of heteroglossia). She expresses a similar notion in "Letter to a Young Poet" in which she tries to persuade the addressee that he, like all poets, is "a poet in whom live all the poets

of the past, from which all poets in time to come will spring," and that in him, like a Christian who has partaken of the blood of Christ symbolically through Communion, the poets of the past will "stir in your blood and sometimes move your pen a little to the right or to the left" (3).

In both criticisms, that of Mr. A for his overuses of the first person pronoun (and corresponding egotist perspective, that is, a unified Enlightenment self) and her implicit criticism of individual genius when she describes the work of art, Woolf urges the reader to consider the self as an idea, one for which if we relied on vision to confirm it (our eyes facing outward) we would be without proof. Had we never seen our face in a mirror or reflective surface, how would we describe it? We would be unable to do so. Woolf acknowledges this evolutionary fact and uses it to further suggest it is impossible to base writing solely on the idea of self expression. To attempt to do so produces what she calls in Mr.A's work "aridity"—dryness, proof of an “impediment” that prevents a writer from merging with the world by an inflow through the eyes.

When Kinneavy describes expressive discourse in *A Theory of Discourse*, he offers the suicide note as this discourse’s prime example. Though he develops his theory of expressive discourse based on existentialism, and goes on to offer as a prime example *The Declaration of Independence*, the suicide note captures the essence of negating the self that Woolf describes in *A Room of One’s Own*—self annihilation. For existentialists, suicide was the ultimate existential question: should I continue to exist or end it? In this case of the suicide note is the symbolic negation of the self that is followed by the literal annihilation of the self. What does it mean to negate the self if it

is not a literally killing of the self? Symbolically, Woolf negates the concept of self through language. The title itself is a distancing by using the third person. Similarly, the master trope that Burke identifies with distance is irony, easily the most complicated and misunderstood of the tropes (much like expressionism is the most misunderstood tradition in rhetoric). In effect, irony is the hyperbole of metaphor, the superlative nothing. When Woolf praises Shakespeare and Jane Austen, it is for their ability to convey a distance from their subjects, a mastery of the master trope of irony.

Burke also famously states that man is the inventor of the negative.³ Playing on his words, one could say that man's sense of an inner self that expresses interiority is the photo negative of the material self, in which case the negative that Burke speaks of is the not-ness we cannot see yet invent for ourselves. Negating the self is not only realizing that the concept of the self could be an invention but also acting in the world based on the truth of that realization. In other words, negating the self creates the standard of an ethical approach toward others and toward nature.

While she does not use "voice" as a metonym for self, neither does she refer to the process of literary invention as inspiration. Inspiration relies on a concept of self—a self respirating, giving life to the concept of individual genius. Woolf's vision is not inspiration. Woolf's vision provides for the agency of the writer. To write is a way to be in the world, but to do so requires the true vision, outward vision not inward vision. If a writer is "looking within and not without," the writing is marked by "a fixity" and a

³ Umberto Eco's definition of the sign as anything that can be used to tell a lie (in *A Theory of Semiotics*), shares with Burke the same sense of the negative.

"gloom" ("Letter" 6). Her argument: to write well you must gain pure, incandescent sight by seeing as much of the world as you can and submerging yourself in the literary tradition, both of which will act as reagents to wear away the impediments of your idea of self. The idea of self is an impediment or "restricted" as she calls it elsewhere ("Letter" 6).

The significance of this position is that Woolf's invention is on some level arhetorical, a process of rejecting "mean egotism." In other instances in *A Room of One's Own*, her position on rhetoric is more direct. The "fact" that she could not walk freely while she was thinking about her writing topic opposes her writing process. The idea seems self-evident: you cannot compose in an environment of constant interruptions or prescriptive rules (in her case, not being able to walk on the turf). The implications of the example, however, are farther reaching because she defines the "facts" as all things obstructing the writing process. Only when the mind is "freed from any contact with facts" was it able to be "at liberty to settle down upon whatever meditation was in harmony with the moment" (6). Interestingly, Woolf's description of invention as an opposition to facts reverses the conventional rhetorical concepts of invention that define it as a process of discovering the facts of the rhetorical situation. In Woolf's concept of invention, the writer directs her attention away from what is known (the facts) about the subject, allowing herself the "liberty" to wander/wonder.

Woolf's separation of facts from the composing process is similar to the quality that Keats's calls negative capability: "I mean Negative Capability, that is, *when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching*

after fact and reason” (Richter 336). Keats’s definition of negative capability emphasizes not-knowing, or at least a different kind of thinking than what is implied by logic. “[R]eaching after fact and reason” is “irritable.” Keats’s “irritable reaching after fact and reason” can be compared to the state of mind that Woolf associates with facts, one that is “less comfortable than others. In order to keep oneself continuing in them, one is unconsciously holding something back, and gradually the repression becomes an effort” (101). Her discomfort is Keats’s irritation. The “facts” and “reaching after fact and reason” prohibit other ideas from flowing, in other words. She compares it to the state of mind in which the irritations are cleared away, described as the following:

the state of mind in which one could continue without effort because nothing is required to be held back. And this, perhaps, I thought, coming in from the window, is one of them. For certainly when I saw the couple get into the taxi-cab the mind felt as if, after being divided, it had come together again in a natural fusion. (101)

The instance she is referring to is one in which she perceived the traffic below the window as “a river which flowed past, invisibly, round the corner, down the street, and took people and eddied them along, as the stream at Oxbridge had taken the undergraduate in his boat and the dead leaves” (100). If we understand an antonym of “irritable” is “harmony,” then Woolf’s turning away from facts to the “harmony with the moment” and the harmony that she experienced at the window are examples of Woolf, the quintessential Modernist, drawing on the tradition of the English Romantics. Woolf is formulating a theory of invention that calls upon the writer to clear away the

impediments that are getting in the way of invention, another way of stating what Keats stated in the same letter in which he defined negative capability that “with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, *or rather obliterates all consideration*” (Richter 336). Similarly, her praise of Shakespeare was based on what she viewed as his ability, in Keats's terms, to obliterate "all considerations." Keats, in fact, claimed that Shakespeare possessed negative capability "enormously." Like Keats, Woolf used Shakespeare as an exemplar of negating the self. One reason Shakespeare is the ideal exemplar for both Keats and Woolf is the absence of biographical material associated with Shakespeare. He is the blank slate on which Keats and Woolf can credit as being in possession of an ideal inventive method. Of Shakespeare, Woolf comments:

All desire to protest, to preach, to proclaim an injury, to pay off a score, to make the world a witness of some hardship or grievance was fired out of him and consumed. Therefore poetry flows from him free and unimpeded. If ever a human being got his work expressed completely, it was Shakespeare. If ever a mind as incandescent, unimpeded, I thought, turning again to the bookcase, it was Shakespeare's mind. (58-59)

She is repeating more or less Keats's ideal of "negative capability," one that she repeats when she praises Jane Austen:

Without boasting or giving pain to the opposite sex, one may say that *Pride and Prejudice* is a good book. At any rate, one would not have been ashamed to have been caught in the act of writing *Pride and Prejudice*...Here was a woman about the year 1800 writing without hate, without bitterness, without fear, without protest, without preaching. That was how Shakespeare wrote, I thought, looking at *Antony and Cleopatra*; and when people compare Shakespeare and Jane Austen, they may mean

that the minds of both had *consumed all impediments*; and for that reason we do not know Jane Austen and we do not know Shakespeare, and for that reason Jane Austen pervades every word that she wrote, and so does Shakespeare. (71, emphasis mine).

In both instances, Woolf emphasizes that the Shakespeare and Austen in essence turned away from concerns of the self or self expression; neither revealed a sense of personal desire—to preach or protest—or from negative self concepts—fear, for instance. Both writers accomplished the necessity of invention, a negating of the self. Walter Bate's paraphrase of Keats's "negative capability" offers an interesting gloss to Woolf's idea:

In our life of uncertainties, where no one system or formula can explain everything—where even a word is at best, in Bacon's phrase, a "wager of thought"—what is needed is an imaginative openness of mind and heightened receptivity to reality in its full and diverse concreteness. This, however, involves negating one's own ego. (332)

To go a step further, I would suggest that for Woolf and Keats, writing doesn't "involve" negating one's ego but necessitates negating one's ego. Keats's "facts and reasons" and Woolf's "facts" are the things which a writer knows and believes, the systems of knowledge and understanding—what is available to them as a means of communicating. In this way, invention is defined as a negating of rhetoric, rhetoric in the sense of a compartmentalizing system of thought, one that hampers the openness of the mind to perceive the world as "full" (in Bate's term) or unified.

If we extend the definition of rhetoric to include a theory of stasis (as Cicero does in *De Inventione*), we find further evidence in *A Room of One's Own* that invention in the classical sense could be characterized in Keats's terms as the "irritable reaching after facts and reasons." For example, Woolf goes to the British Museum with stasis

questions: “Why did men drink wine and women water? Why was one sex so prosperous and the other so poor? What effect has poverty on fiction? What conditions are necessary for the creation of works of art?” (25). In stasis theory, all of these questions fall under either questions of conjecture (What is its cause? Where did it come from? How did it begin?) or questions of definition (What kind of thing or event is it? To what larger class of things or events does it belong?) (Crowley and Hawhee 49, 50). Woolf was attempting to work through a heuristic system, but in frustration she declared: “But one needed answers, not questions” (25). To state the situation in her own words, she needed to “strain off what was personal and accidental” in order to get to “the essential oil of truth” (99). What she found at the library to her “seemed a pure waste of time,” and casually remarks, “One might as well leave their books unopened” (31).

Her moment of discovery comes to her after she drifts into the idle activity of sketching one of the imagined authors of the books about women. She realizes she has been drawing in anger, and after her anger was “done away with,” she decided that her anger was a reflection of the professors' (she collectively referred to the authors of the books about women as the “professors”) anger, concluding their anger arises from perceived threats to the superiority of men, which “was a jewel to him of the rarest price,” so much so that “he was protecting rather hot-headedly and with too much emphasis” the claim of his superiority. Her observation, she claims, was discovered in “idleness” not during the systematic approach to her topic through a heuristic system: “it is in our idleness, in our dreams, that the submerged truth sometimes comes to the top”

(31-32). Referring back to the river metaphor, Woolf re-emphasizes the importance of getting beyond what is known or believed to discover truth, to invent.

Woolf's most systematic definition of invention appears in the concluding paragraphs of *A Room of One's Own* in an extended periodic sentence, the same sentence I opened this chapter with and to which now I will return, having given proper context to the dependent clauses. With an understanding of Woolf's metaphors for invention, her understanding of the primacy of vision which includes a negation of the self and of rhetoric, the dependent clauses of the sentence create a matrix for understanding invention. She defines the conditions for Judith Shakespeare's rebirth as time ("a century or so"), community ("common life which is the real life"), adequate financial means, "freedom" and "courage to write exactly what we think," an understanding of the relationship between "human beings" and "reality" based on experience outside the "sitting-room," the endowment of nature with an independent identity, an avoidance of those who would seek to block writers' views of reality (Milton's bogey, a phrase that I will interpret shortly), and a proper understanding of writers' relationship to nature and to others (117-118).

The dependent clause that refers to "Milton's bogey" is the most enigmatic of the clauses and has historically been the clause taken out of the context and subsequently misinterpreted. Taken together, the clauses complement one another, emphasizing and reemphasizing the writer's concept of self as it relates to the physical world, to other human beings, and herself as a writer. The proper way to interpret "Milton's bogey" is first to place it in its immediate context (the surrounding clauses and sentence), then

within the context of *A Room of One's Own*, then in the context of other works by Woolf about Milton.

Given the clause's immediate context, between two descriptions of the necessity of endowing nature with an identity, then I believe this clause refers to her personal experience with a "bogey" in the library. When Woolf experienced the river and let her mind wonder about the word changed in Milton's *Lycidas* and she decided to go look at the manuscript in the University library, she was chased away from the library by "a guardian angel barring the way with a flutter of black gown instead of white wings, a deprecating, silvery, kindly gentleman" (6). This is, I believe, is Milton's bogey, the ghostlike Beadle who prohibited her from looking up her reference. "The view" in the clause is precisely "the view" she described while she was walking and thinking about Milton: "The spirit of peace descended like a cloud from heaven, for if the spirit of peace dwells anywhere, it is in the courts and quadrangles of Oxbridge on a fine October morning" (6). It is here that Woolf describes the way a writer experiences contact with the natural world, the experience of "reality" as she defined it as the experience of being a glass cabinet through the mind could apprehend "reality" in its harmonious fullness. "The view" described in the clause is in keeping with Woolf's prior experience of experiencing reality in a state of meditative witnessing. Taken in this context, Milton isn't an antagonistic presence in the sentence. Let me offer further evidence in a description of Milton's *Paradise Lost* that Woolf wrote in her diary in 1918. Recall her praise of Shakespeare and Austen as writers of impersonality in her praise of Milton for his willful blindness, a version of negating the self:

I am struck by the extreme difference between this poem and any other. It lies, I think, in the sublime aloofness and impersonality of the emotion...He deals in horror and immensity and squalor and sublimity but never in the passions of the human heart. Has any great poem ever let in so little light upon one's own joys and sorrows? I get no help in judging life; I scarcely feel that Milton lived or knew men and women; except for the peevish personalities about marriage and the woman's duties. He was the first of the masculinists, but his disparagement rises from his own ill luck and seems even a spiteful last word in his domestic quarrels. But how smooth, strong and elaborate it all is! What poetry! I can conceive that even Shakespeare after this would seem a little trouble, personally hot and imperfect. I can conceive that this is the essence, of which almost all other poetry is dilution. (*Writer's Diary* 5-6)

In keeping with her theory of invention, Woolf thought that Milton was using "writing as an art, not as a method of self-expression" (83). The context created by the surrounding clauses, the work in which the clause appears, and the larger corpus of Woolf's criticism, leads to an interpretation that is literal in this case. Gilbert and Gubar have argued otherwise, using the figure of Milton's bogey as a figure of authorial anxiety for Woolf, like Bloom's *daemon* in his theory of influences (word that means literally an inflowing, though Bloom does not emphasize this point). Gilbert and Gubar's opening paragraph in "Milton's Bogey: Patriarchal Poetry and Women Readers" states that the phrase overshadows any reading except a feminist reading of *A Room of One's Own*:

Shutting out the view, Milton's bogey cuts women off from the spaciousness of possibility, the predominantly male landscapes of fulfillment Woolf has been describing throughout *A Room*. Worse, locking women into "the common sitting room" that denies them individuality, it is a murderous phantom that, if it didn't actually kill 'Judith Shakespeare,' has helped to keep her dead for hundreds of years, over and over again separating her creative spirit from 'the body which she has so often laid down.' (188).

For Gilbert and Gubar, the other clauses in the periodic sentence do not offer much to clarify the "enigmatic" presence of "Milton's bogey." In my reading, her focus in the closing paragraphs is on a call to action directed to the women students in her audience. The women are the agents whom she asks to bear children in "two and threes, not in tens and twelves" (117). She chides them for having made no important discoveries even though two colleges had been admitting women since 1866 (116). Moreover, it isn't Milton's bogey shutting women up in sitting rooms, it is the women themselves; she is telling them to get outdoors and experience "reality," her catchword for harmonious nature. In other words, Gilbert and Gubar do not consider Woolf's metaphors of invention as revelatory of her attitude toward nature as spirit.

Another possible interpretation of "Milton's bogey" that would be in keeping with Woolf's inventive pose that involves a negation of the self is understanding the

bogey as Milton's ultimate egotistic character, Satan. In *Paradise Lost*, Satan's "sin" was ambition, the attempt to elevate rather than negate the self. Curiously, only a negation of the self allows the inventive pose necessary to see nature and others as equal to the self, the "vision" necessary for writing.

The Eddies of Expressivism

Let us now return to the three theoretical concepts that critics (critics who do not claim to work within the expressivist orientation) have used to define the expressivist orientation. First, expressivist rhetoric is said to privilege an Enlightenment theory of individualism and epistemology. Second, expressivist rhetoric adheres to a Romantic belief in a self which is autonomous and authentic, separate from historical and material circumstances of textual production. Finally, expressivist rhetoric views thought as prior to language by employing metaphors of the windowpane and the conduit to describe how language functions. In this section I address each concept by using writers who have been identified as Enlightenment writers, Romantic writers, and I compare the metaphors of the windowpane and the conduit to Woolf's metaphor of the river in order to show that the concept of the self has always been problematical. In essence, critics have constructed expressivist rhetoric as a straw man in order to bolster their own theoretical orientations.

Enlightenment. The two charges against expressivism having to do with the Enlightenment period concern two theories: 1) individualism and 2) epistemology.

Though Berlin never explicitly aligns what he terms "expressionistic" rhetoric in *Rhetoric and Reality*, he does so implicitly in *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures*. There, he positions social-epistemic rhetoric as the critical orientation that offers a critique of Enlightenment similar to critiques found in works by Foucault, Jameson, Lyotard, and Derrida. By calling Enlightenment concepts of the self—the "unified, coherent, autonomous, self-present subject"—the "centerpiece of liberal humanism," Berlin claims that expressivist rhetoric found its roots in liberal humanism (*Rhetorics* 65, *Reality* 73). On the subject of Enlightenment epistemology, Berlin cites the work of Foucault and Lyotard. For Foucault, knowledge-formation is based on institutional discursive and non-discursive practices. The human subject is a *result*. Berlin cites Lyotard as arguing that "the postmodern condition denounces the Enlightenment faith in reason, totalizing truth claims, and historical coherence" (*Rhetorics* 67).

In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf actively resists the notion of a unified subject who is able to discern accurately an objective reality. In the opening pages, she concedes that the "I" of the lecture/essay is merely a textual construction: "'I' is only a convenient term for somebody who has no real being," and parenthetically, the reader can "call me Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or by any name you please—it is not a matter of any importance" (4, 5). Here, she is distancing herself from an identification with the first person narrating *A Room* in a move that is similar to the title of her book: she does not call it *A Room of My Own* or *A Room of Your Own*.

Her Enlightenment counterpart is Montaigne, the Enlightenment writer who originated the essay. His essays are also some of the first descriptions of the writing

process, including how he chooses subject matter, how he chooses to incorporate the ideas and texts from others, and how he works. In his statements about writing he constructs a writing self that vacillates between embodiment (in his comparisons between writing and physical activity) and transcendence in his treatment of writing as done by “another self”:

I am then another self, or because I approach my subject under different circumstances and with other considerations. Hence it is that I may well contradict myself, but the truth, as Demades said, I do not contradict. Could my mind find a firm footing, I should not be making essays, but coming to conclusions; it is, however, always in its apprenticeship and on trial. (235)

Like Woolf who admonished her audience not to look for truth in her lecture because "lies would flow from her lips," Montaigne urges his addressee to separate the notions of self from the writing subject.

Also, Montaigne includes in his essays the problematic features of textual production: issues of genre, style, organization, and invention, among others. Writing is equated with physical activity, something for which Montaigne cannot sustain for an extended period of time (or textual space); he breaks off for “lack of breath.” Later, this notion is elaborated:

I have no other drill sergeant but chance to put order into my writings. As my thoughts come into my head, so I pile them up; sometimes they press on in crowds, sometimes they come dragging in single file. Even if

I have strayed from the road I would have everyone see my natural and ordinary pace. I let myself go forward as I am. (160)

In this quote, writing style is compared to a person's gait. The movement of one leg followed by the swinging pendulum of the other leg and shifting positions again, the movement of walking—writing is tied up with the body, thus Montaigne represents his writing self as an embodied self. Two truths emerge: there is an essential self, and there is no essential self. He is unfettered by the possibility that he is contradicting himself (and also forerunning Whitman's declaration of capacious ambivalence in "Song of Myself"); however, embodiment, at least, requires for Montaigne a body—his own body.

Montaigne writing, however, is also "another self"; his essays lack totalizing thesis statements; his thoughts are as people waiting in a check-out line at the grocery store. Montaigne's writing self, in other words, aligns with the functions of the genre in which he has chosen to write. And though the essays attempted to represent "the true man," they also raise questions about the possibility of an essential, "writerly" core. In the reader's preface, Montaigne tells us that his book can substitute for getting to know him personally, that the book *is* Michel de Montaigne: "In other cases, one may commend the work apart from the workman; not so here; he who touches the one touches the other."

At the time Montaigne was composing his essays, the word "self" in the English language had not yet been invented, or at least had not been used in the modern sense but only in its function as a pronoun (myself). The modern sense of the word wasn't part of the English lexicon until 1674, its earliest record usage: "a secret self I had enclos'd

within / That was not bounded by my clothes or skin," written by Thomas Trayherne in *Poetical Works*. This etymology suggests a concept of the self as much more problematical than Berlin suggests it is when he writes *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Culture*.

Like Woolf, when Montaigne is composing, the result is often a transcendent state in which he is "another self" in which "contradictions" occur. This vein of the writing self is similar to the state of observing the world that Woolf writes about at her windowsill, a world that she saw subjectively organized into a river. In "Letter to a Young Poet," she describes this state as one in which "All you need" is "to stand at the window and let your rhythmical sense open and shut, open and shut, boldly and freely, until one thing melts in another, until the taxis are dancing with daffodils" (9). This state is what she has described elsewhere as experiencing nature as a "harmonious whole." The "contradictions" that Montaigne mentions are a result of the differences between subjective experiences of the world, again calling into question what Berlin calls "Enlightenment epistemologies." In fact, Montaigne's *Essais* and Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* appear to have a striking resemblance to what Lyotard calls a *petit recit*: "a limited and localized account that attempts to come to terms with features of experience that grand narratives exclude" (*Rhetorics* 67).

When critics base their critiques of expressionism on reductive accounts of historical movements such as Enlightenment, the result is a weakening of their own position. In this case, the critique that is based on what is called "Enlightenment epistemology" has been shown to be empty, a straw man.

Romanticism. More than any other historical "ism," critics have cited Romanticism as the originary force behind expressivist rhetoric even though *which* Romanticism, British or American, is rarely cited (Brahminical romanticism being an exception, which Berlin cites in *Rhetoric and Reality* as a source of "expressionistic" rhetoric). Chiefly, the so-called Romantic concept of the autonomous self, the self apart from historical or material circumstances, is the concept that is most criticized in the context of expressivist rhetoric. Berlin cites Emerson as one the main proponent of this concept, and for that reason in addition to the similarities in concepts of the self with Woolf, I discuss Emerson's concept of the self. Also, I discuss a key British Romanticist, Coleridge, and the concepts of self that emerge in *Biographia Literaria*. Again, it is similar to the concept of self found in Woolf. For both Romantics that I consider, what has been called the "autonomous" self is much more problematical than critics who rely on this critique admit. By arguing against Romanticism (and subsequently against expressionism) using reductive or ahistorical ideas, critics have strengthened their own position (what I referred to earlier as a straw man strategy).

I have already developed a connection between Woolf's concept of negating the self, Emerson's vanishing "mean egotism," and Keats's "negative capability," all of which result in the disappearance of the self, a dissolution of "mean egotism" in which a special kind of vision replaces the self. Also included alongside the experiencing of nature in this state is the necessity to become submerged in the waters of the literary tradition. In Emerson's essay "Intellect" this connection is articulated clearly:

Silence is the solvent that destroys personality, and gives us leave to be great and universal. Every man's progress is through a succession of teachers, each of whom seems at the time to have a superlative influence, but it at last gives place to a new. Frankly let him accept all. Jesus says, leave father, mother, house and lands, and follow me. Who leaves all, receives more. This is as true intellectually as morally. Each new mind we approach seems to require an abdication of all our past and present possessions. (426)

Emerson's "silence" that "destroys personality" reflects the notion he expressed in "The Poet": "Man is only half himself, the other half is his expression" (448). In the silence of observation, and with Woolf the silencing of the first person and egotist impulses, the writer negates the self. Emerson here and Woolf elsewhere clearly articulate the constitutive effect of texts. In "Circles," Emerson writes that the self is that which "we seek with insatiable desire" to "forget" in order to be "to be surprised out of our propriety" so that one may "do something without knowing how or why" (414). Similarly, the inventive pose in *A Room of One's Own* charges the writer to negate the self in order to invent, for invention as Woolf conceived it was outside what the writer already knows (an invention in the literal sense).

For Coleridge, a British Romantic, the source of art is the instantaneous union between artist and the world. His explanation of the union comes in his *Biographia Literaria* in which he defines the artist as the conscious subject and the unconscious material world (nature) as object. While Woolf examines invention in the light of

experience and cognition, Coleridge's purpose is to explain how and why this union of subject and object happens, and exploring this question means moving beyond literary criticism and into epistemological problems, one of which is the question of which is first or predominate—the object which exists apart from the subject, or the thinking subject taking in the object. Coleridge accepts both propositions because, he concludes, nature (object) and human consciousness (subject) are identical in *essence*: “There is no first, and no second; both are coinstantaneous and one” (476). Coleridge is attempting to rationalize the union of subject and object, even though they are identical in essence (according to him), and by so doing demonstrate that aesthetics is connected or is a kind of “knowing.” In this formulation, art, and specifically poetry, is a way of knowing the external, objective world—the coming together of the subject and object is experience. Clearly, though, his argument rests on the moment of physical contact between the subject and object—the moment of contact is the moment of knowledge production and literary invention—in other words, the writing process. Much like the poststructuralists, Coleridge’s concept of the writing self is an absent self—or if not absent, then certainly emptied out, in any case, problematical on a much larger scale than any critics of expressionist rhetoric would care to admit. To do so would demonstrate the weakness of their own position and call into question the viability of the category they have called expressivist rhetoric.

The Windowpane Theory of Language. When I explain the windowpane theory of language to undergraduate students, I use the metaphor of the peanut M&M: the

writer's idea is the peanut, and if the chocolate and candy shell could just be "clear enough" we could see the peanut. This is just another way to say that if the language were clear enough we could "see through" the windowpane (language) and view accurately the underlying idea. In social construction, I explain, the shell itself is understood as the meaning. Similar to the windowpane theory of language, the conduit metaphor implies that meanings are placed into linguistic containers and sent to audiences or readers who remove the idea from its container.

Woolf's use of river metaphors subverts these metaphors, including my metaphor of the peanut M&M. In her first description of trying to think of something to say for her lecture on Women and Fiction, Woolf goes to the river to look for ideas. She lowers her line to try and catch what's there for her. The river is the container. What she conveys in this example is the difficulty for the river to "contain" anything. In fact, a river is the worst kind of container because it is always in the process of emptying out into something larger, merging into bigger waters. The second time she contemplates her topic, she takes on the qualities of the river instead of merely looking to it for ideas. In effect, she becomes absorbed into the river, suggesting that language itself is the river and requires a writer to come into contact with it. It also suggests the circularity of the process of textual production: swimming in the river and coming into contact with the world the writer produces another text that is a part of the river (is literally "circulated") in which other writers swim and produce texts.

In both the windowpane theory of language and the conduit metaphor, the writer is deliberate: she places the idea into a container or behind the glass of language. In

Woolf's metaphor, the spontaneity of the process is emphasized. Her experience of the city scene at the windowpane was a spontaneous one. In "Letter to a Young Poet," she calls this state "the wild torrent of spontaneous nonsense which is now" (12). Also using a river metaphor in conjunctive with the concept of spontaneity, Emerson writes in "Intellect" that

the imaginative vocabulary seems to be spontaneous also. It does not flow from experience only or mainly, but from a richer source. Not by conscious imitation of particular forms are the grand strokes of the painter executed, but by repairing to the fountain-head of all forms in his mind.

(423)

Recalling Wordsworth's "spontaneous overflow," the difference between the active writer placing ideas into containers and the passive writer floating down a current rests on the one hand a unified autonomous self, the one of expressivist rhetoric, and on the other, a more complicated version of the self that is acted upon even while it acts in the world.

Again, just as with reductive versions of Enlightenment and Romantic concepts of the self, the representation of expressivist rhetoric as based singularly on metaphors related to the windowpane theory of language is misguided and ultimately false.

The Expressivist Aim Reconsidered

Curiously, some of the criticisms of the expressivist orientation not only are reductive or wrong, but also they often are charged with inflammatory language. Kelly Pender in "Kairos and the Subject of Expressive Discourse," lists the four main critiques of expressionism as follows:

1. Theories of expressive discourse are based on vestiges of realism, humanism, or Romanticism;
2. Theories and practices of expressive discourse imply, if not depend on, an erroneous conception of the relationship between the self and language;
3. Expressive discourse encourages solipsistic kinds of writing that are indebted to bourgeois individualism and to capitalism. Because of this indebtedness, expressive discourse cannot teach the socially constructed and negotiated discourses of the academy;
4. Finally, as a category, expressive discourse does not exist. (92)

This list is based on the critiques of composition scholars such as David Bartholomae, Lester Faigley, James Berlin, and Jeanette Harris. Pender's list succinctly captures the spirit of most critiques of expressivism. For example, James Berlin writing in "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Classroom," charges expressivist orientation with

concerning itself only with the "individual subject" and treating the rest of the world (material, social, linguistic) as means to an end, which is "locating the individual's authentic nature." In other words, expressivist rhetoric is selfish, the goal for which could be described as "mean egotism" to use Emerson's term. Berlin's critiques when compared to the theoretical backdrop of *A Room of One's Own* seem unanalyzed, stretched, disingenuous. Woolf doesn't understand the world or others as means. She insistently asserts through her metaphors and descriptions of composing that the world and others should be treated as ends only, on par with the writer. In terms of an "authentic nature," Woolf actively resists the idea of a unified subject through her insistence of negating the self during the process of composing, supplanting it with an inflowing of vision. Authenticity isn't a subject that she takes up in *A Room of One's Own*. The ideological dimension of *A Room of One's Own* is one that is extremely ethical, granting agency to the self, to the earth, and to others in a way that no other rhetorical orientation has yet to do so.

Just as the narrator in *A Room of One's Own* wondered about the source of the professors' anger toward women, I am likewise curious about the anger toward what has been called "expressivist rhetoric." In *A Room* the narrator analyzes the situation and concludes that the professors are angry at women because they were concerned not with women's inferiority, but with their own "superiority"(35). In other words, "when the professor insisted a little too emphatically upon the superiority of women," he did so because "he was protecting rather hot-headedly" his own position of power over women, an "arduous, difficult, a perpetual struggle" (35). In the same way, we could consider

that when scholars criticize expressivism rather hot-headedly, it is perhaps for the same reason Woolf believed that the professors insisted on the inferiority of women—to strengthen their own orientations.

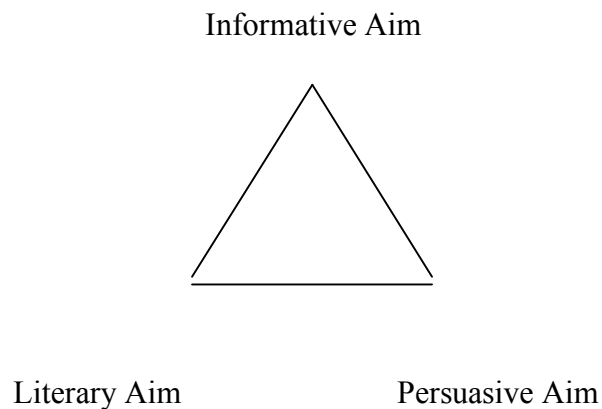
In the communication triangle, persuasion, expression, and information are the three purposes that form its points, corresponding to Aristotle's artistic proofs (pathos, ethos, logos). In Kinneavy's schema, the literary aim is the purpose that lies in the middle of the triangle. It isn't outside the communication triangle, but in the middle it appears as a ship before it goes off the radar in the Bermuda triangle: it's there, but keep your eye on it because it may disappear. The strength and weakness of this visual schema is the physical separation of the literary and expressive aims of communication. First, the schema separates the purpose of literature, form and a focus on language, from the expression of the writer. However, it is the literary aim that remains the odd-aim-out, left in the middle to rot, and primacy is given to expression, even though its roots in the literary tradition render it an empty term when it is separated from the literary aim.

Jeanette Harris offers as an alternative model the dyad of pragmatic discourse and aesthetic discourse, a renaming of rhetoric and poetics. One problem with this model is that it privileges rhetoric as the only discourse that achieves any ends in the world even though all language is symbolic action because of the social associations with the term "pragmatic"—practical, action-oriented, focused on a goal, teleological, as opposed to "poetic"—as in decorative, purposeless, deontological. Harris's model doesn't provide for the possibility of poetics accomplishing anything in the world, or at least anything of value. The actions poetics accomplish need to be explored further--but

it is beyond the scope of my purposes here--but one problem with her critique of expressionism is identified in Peter Elbow's review of the book. Elbow takes Harris to task for making broad generalizations about the history of expressivism as an intellectual movement. Berlin, Elbow noted, gave a "satellite picture" of the field of composition and could be forgiven for summing up Aristotle in a few sentences based on a secondary source; however, Harris dedicated an entire book to one movement within the field and should be held to a higher standard. Could Harris be thinking of "actual readers" when she breezed over the entire Medieval period in two sentences?, Elbow asks. She gives the same treatment to empiricism, romanticism, and psychology, what Elbow refers to as "canned intellectual history" (5). A real critique of expressionism, in other words, would require on the part of its writer "an obligation to understand it and to present it more accurately and in more detail—not just look at it through an inverted telescope as an alien threat" (3-4). His criticism points out a lack of specific detail in Harris's description of expressionism, a weakness that he insists is one of the reasons literary scholars view composition studies with disdain. Britton's model comes closer, I believe, to reflecting honestly the powerful resonance of both what he terms "transactional" discourse and poetic discourse. However, even Britton retains self expression as a middle term in his schema.

The aims approach has implicit weaknesses, as well. One weakness is that it conflates the generative modes with discursive ends. If we consider the persuasive aim contains a subset of rhetorical modes—Aristotelian, Rogerian, the Toulmin approach, etc.—it is no stretch to imagine that within the literary aim there exist subsets, one of

which is the inventive mode that Woolf describes in *A Room*. One approach to this refiguring of the literary aim is to consider Abrams's categories for works of literature: objective, pragmatic, subjective, mimetic. Each can also be defined as a mode of approaching the writing of literature, thus fulfilling a particular literary aim accomplished through a mode. An alternative conception of the communication might situate Woolf's inventive pose as one of the subsets of the literary aim:



The informative aim and the persuasive aim remain in the realm of rhetoric, while the literary aim alone remains in the realm of poetics. This model also reflects more accurately Cicero's definition of the purposes of rhetoric: to please, to teach, and to persuade.

This configuration addresses what I believe is a danger of separating the expressive aim from the literary aim: separated, the two aims reflect a bias for the literary aim over and against composition studies. Perhaps, like Burke, many students of rhetoric began as aesthetes and secretly privilege the literary aim: whereas artists can work from the literary aim, beginning students work from the expressive aim. Woolf

didn't limit the writers she addressed to "literary" writers or even artists; she addressed all writers. *A Room of One's Own* also suggests that the inventive pose, both rhetorical and poetic, requires a negation of the self and its consequential ethical schema of conceiving of the world, others, and other texts as things which flow into the writer unimpeded.

That this model emerges from a reading of *A Room of One's Own* suggests that scholars should study creative nonfiction because it offers valuable insights into our current thinking about invention. Woolf's contribution is not limited to poetics because she describes a method or mode that can be applied to other aims of discourse – persuasive and informative, as well as literary. What she offers enriches what rhetorical scholars and compositionists have often described as prescriptive models of invention: stasis theory and Aristotle's topics, for example. Thus, composition scholars should study *A Room of One's Own* (and related works of literary nonfiction): to recognize the available means of invention; to re-cognize writing as experiential, embodied, and fun; to strengthen institutional alliances between literary studies, composition studies, rhetoric, and creative writing; and finally, to consider the ways in which Woolf's literary invention tacitly implies an ethics that could be applied to discussions of ethics within composition studies.

Woolf's model of literary invention is only one approach to literary invention among many others. Just as composition studies seeks to theorize pedagogical lore it should also seek to theorize the lore involved with the production of literary texts. What exactly is the mechanism that Hemingway refers to as a writer's "built in bullshit

detector"? Can it be cultivated in students? Why did Eudora Welty pin together paragraphs like an elaborate dress pattern? In terms of source material, they abound. Since the *Paris Review* interviews are archived online, composition scholars have much material that could be analyzed in order to offer a theoretically rich discussion of matters of invention. Consider also that almost every practicing writer has written a book about writing. In this light, I consider Aristotle's definition of rhetoric as a charge, that as composition scholars we *must* recognize the available means of persuasion, including what has been overlooked or miscategorized—in this case, expressivist rhetoric.

CHAPTER III

A WRITING LIFE AND LIFE WORK:

THE WRITING BODIES OF ANNIE DILLARD AND DONALD HALL

As a subset of the literary aim, the inventive pose I am calling expressivist invites further investigation into works of literary nonfiction that describe writing processes (writing memoirs). In this chapter, I consider two such works by two living, well known American writers: *The Writing Life* by Annie Dillard, and *Life Work* by Donald Hall. Dillard gained notoriety after her first book, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, was awarded a Pulitzer Prize. Since then, her writing has gained considerable status for its Thoreauvian view of the world. Although *Pilgrim* is a work of nonfiction, Dillard also writes fiction and poetry. Like Dillard, Hall works in multiple genres: criticism, journalism, nonfiction, children's books, and most notably, poetry (a former U.S. Poet Laureate).

I argue Dillard's and Hall's metaphors for writing and their narratives of poetic origin create a concept of self which maintains freedom (rhetorical agency) and bodily presence as characteristics of their writing processes, two concepts that run counter to poststructuralist theories of writing (and in particular Berlin's social-epistemic rhetoric) that deny rhetorical agency and insist that writing inscribes absence rather than presence. Dillard's and Hall's descriptions turn social constructionism on its head because they never deny that their subject positions are anything but discursive while they practice an

active form of subject positioning, a self that is actively constructed rather than passively received. "Putting a book together," Dillard states, "is life at its most free," an act that Hall describes as occupying him "from footsole to skulltop" (11 and 41).

This notion will not be without its detractors. Berlin insists that current thinking about the postmodern subject is a given:

We have already seen that the subject of the rhetorical act is not the unified, coherent, autonomous, transcendent subject of liberal humanism. The subject is instead multiple and conflicted, composed of numerous subject formations and positions. From one perspective, the protean subject is a standard feature of many historical rhetorics in their concern for the speaker's *ethos*, his or her presentation of the appropriate image of his or her character through language, voice, bearing, and the like. For a postmodern rhetoric, the writer and reader or the speaker and listener must likewise be aware that the subject, or producer, of discourse is a construction, a fabrication, established through the devices of signifying practices. (*Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures* 88)

The question that arises for "a postmodern rhetoric" is who exactly is performing the "construction" and "fabrication"? It is unclear whether society or the writer/speaker performs this action because Berlin obscures the agents through the use of passive voice and nominalizations. Perhaps as a measure to pre-empt such criticisms, Berlin qualifies his statement by stating that "each of us displays a measure of singularity" and it is through our "own separate position in networks of intersecting discourses" that

"differences among us as well as possibilities for political agency, for resistance and negotiation in responding to discursive appeals" are created (88). While Berlin admits that historically the protean subject has been part of classical rhetoric's "concern for the speaker's *ethos*" as a persuasive move, that is, establishing a precedent for the socially constructed subject of post-modern rhetoric. However, Berlin conflates a generative model (rhetorical appeals and the history of *ethos*) with an interpretive model that focuses on imperatives: "the writer and reader or the speaker and listener *must* likewise *be aware*" that a rhetor's subject position is constructed whether that construction is a product of historical, economic, social, or political discursive practices (or more likely a matrix of these) (88). However, he does not grant a rhetor the agency to shape that subject position.

Susan Miller's essay appearing at the end of Berlin's *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures* expresses worry over this conflation of interpretive and generative models of rhetoric because "[w]riting taught as reading, that is, accomplishes political stasis" rather than the democratic activism that Berlin claims as the reason social-epistemic rhetoric is necessary (209). More importantly, she argues that writing courses should instead "focus on what powerful writers know and do. They should not, that is, distance students from an ineffable 'authorship,' nor focus on what English teachers want students to 'think' about the readings they now teach" (210).

In the gap between "ineffable authorship" and what "writers know and do" is the writing body—corporeality. Miller's critique points out the limits of social epistemicism: when everything is discourse then nothing is material. As Kristie S.

Fleckenstein notes, Berlin's social epistemicism, "by textualizing that junction between body and sign," elides the body; it "skips over rather than illuminates the dialectic between materiality and language" (283). Only through bodies can a person create and interpret discourse, a notion that Jack Selzer uses to justify the recent collection, *Rhetorical Bodies*. In his words, "Words have been mattering more than matter" (4).

Corollary to the presence of the body in the act of composition is the presence of death that haunts both works. Hall is diagnosed with cancer while he composes *Life Work*. Dillard ends her book with a celebratory narrative of David Rahm, the trick pilot who plunges to his death while writing the skies (recalling Dillard's fear of falling from her sometimes treetop study). Also, both write in liminal places. Dillard often composes in coastal areas in the Northwest United States where she describes the diurnal currents as sometimes so strong that they could carry one off to death; Hall's family farm is imbued with the ghosts of his dead parents and grandparents, and the ground itself is part of the annual cycles of death and rebirth. The presence of life's end is, in other words, a byproduct of the work of writing. As writing bodies, the awareness of the singular nature of existence, the solitude of writing, is never more palpable than when the writers engage the page. While composition studies insist on the collaborative nature of the writing process, Dillard and Hall emphasize the opposite: absolute solitude to the point of existential contemplation of death. Ultimately, the descriptions of motion associated with writing are the intermediate sensations that produce culminating effects I will address in the next two sections of this chapter: a theory of embodiment that accounts for a writer's agency (freedom).

In the titles of their works, Dillard and Hall affirm the active construction of a concept of self that is, above all else, living, but not a living that is beyond place, history, or the physical body, a fact that is emphasized by the repeated references to death, illness, time, struggle, solitude, and revision. Dillard's texts show evidence, in her words, of "bloodstains, teethmarks, gashes, and burns," and Hall's poem "Another Elegy" was completed only after drafting it five hundred times. Ultimately, the concept of self in *The Writing Life* and *Life Work* is the reverse of Christian incarnation: their works are flesh made word.

Getting Started: The Body in Motion

Dillard and Hall both spend lengthy sections of their books discussing what they do in order to get started on their daily writing tasks. They represent the problem of getting started as one of inertia or cold muscles; they must struggle to begin moving/writing. Initiating motion, warming up, stirring the motor, stoking the fire—these figures of speech describe the initial phases of writing as shifting from a state of stillness to a state of motion necessary for writing. Dillard calls it a "task," that requires her "to change intellectual passion to physical energy and some sort of narrative mastery, from a standing start" (49). She accomplishes the conversion of intellectual passion to physical energy that produces a state of motion in a number of ways: "To crank myself up I stood on a jack and ran myself up. I tightened myself like a bolt. I inserted myself in a vise-clamp and wound the handle till the pressure built. I drank coffee in titrated doses" (49). Also, "I pointed myself. I walked to the water. I played the hateful

recorder, washed dishes, drank coffee, stood on a beach log, watched bird" (50). This stage is "the first part" and "could take all morning, or all month" (50). Stacking up verbs in parallel declarative sentences creates a similar rhythm to the kind of rhythm she is trying to achieve to begin writing, like the parallels she describes in a poetry anthology's index of first lines whose strong suggestive parallels she sometimes read so that they may "set" her "off" (50).

In another passage, she uses the trope of hyperbole to emphasize the rhythmic quality associated with writing energy: "If you were a Zulu warrior banging on your shield with your spear for a couple of hours along with a hundred other Zulu warriors, you might be able to prepare yourself to write" (47). The acceleration or momentum to which she is referring is also illustrated in a story she relates about the writer Charlie Butts. Butts, recalls Dillard, "so prizes momentum, and so fears self consciousness, that he writes fiction in a rush of his own devising" (2). Upon returning to his house after errands, he

hurries in the door, and without taking off his coat, sits at a typewriter and retypes in a blur of speed all of the story he has written to date. Impetus propels him to add another sentence or two before he notices he is writing and seizes up. (15-16)

Afterwards, he repeats the process and ekes out another sentence or two, "the way some car engines turn over after the ignition is off" (16). One way of thinking about *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* is a litany of these warm-up activities: looking at bull frogs or the

migratory patterns of ducks, staring at the waves off the coast of Florida until she spots sharks.

A similar rhythm is found in Hall's description of a morning before getting started:

By four-thirty I can wait no longer. I leap out of bed, feed the cat, let the dog out, start the coffee which is timed for five but can be persuaded of an early start, dress, drive two miles for the *Globe*, carry a cup of coffee to Jane, read the paper while I eat a blueberry bagel, then finish my breakfast with skim milk, an apple, and a small peanut butter sandwich. I wake as I eat, drink, and read the paper. As I approach the end of the *Globe*, saving the sports section until last, I feel work-excitement building, joy-pressure mounting—until I need resist it no more but sit at the desk and open the folder that holds the day's beginning, its desire and its hope. (41)

The stress on the verbs in this lyrical passage creates a rhythm like the one in Dillard's list of verbs. Hall describes a sensation like a motor's ignition, the "work-excitement" or "joy pressure" which mounts as he anticipates the work that lies ahead.

The difference between the two writers' emotions as they gear up for writing creates antipodes of feeling. On one hand, Dillard expresses anxiety about getting started. She puns on being caught in "a fool's paragraph" and realizes as she is telling her neighbor about her work that she dreads it as much as a person who works in a factory might hate the prospect of beginning a day's worth of repetitive tasks. She

comments that one reason writers are reluctant to revise or cut early chapters in books because the writer feels gratitude, "relief that he was writing anything at all" (6). Hall, in contrast, has to restrain himself until the "poetry juices" are flowing. Getting started is joyous, exciting, and offers hope and desire to what, readers must assume, would be an otherwise empty and hopeless life. Whether it is Dillard's dread or Hall's joy, both use similar metaphors representing the building up of momentum. Both experience the building up of the sense of motion as energy, the same pith required in physics to move any object.

Specifically, the metaphors Dillard and Hall use to describe getting started suggest that writing is a process that mimics the process of putting a physical body in motion; it is the writing body as machine. For example, one morning after her usual dose of physical and mental activity, she remarks, "This morning, as on so many mornings, I lacked sufficient fuel for liftoff" (50). The writing body is a rocket; in another passage, it is an airplane, and her task is "to keep cranking the flywheel that turns the gears that spin the belt in the engine of belief that keeps you and your desk midair" (11). Alone, these pronouncements would suggest that Dillard, like many post-Enlightenment thinkers, affirms the Cartesian split between body and mind. The "flywheel" and "fuel" are, indeed, metaphors for mental processes, but they also potently suggest the likeness of mental and bodily processes. Only if the metaphors are divorced from Dillard's prior statements about the physicality of getting started could they be used to inform a strictly Cartesian concept of mind and body. Taken together, a more complete picture emerges of the writer: body and mind are unified, inseparable.

The writing body as machine manifests a bit differently in *Life Work*. First, Hall announces in the opening sentence

I've never worked a day in my life. With the trivial exceptions of some teenage summers, I've never worked with my hands or shoulders or legs. I've never stood on the line in Flint among the clangor and stench of embryonic Buicks for ten hours of small operation repeated on a large machine. (3)

In this passage *work*, as a term, denotes physical labor performed for a wage. In this pronouncement Hall, like Dillard, seems to be in the company of much post-Enlightenment thought which separates body and mind; yet, his writing body is often compared to the body of an athlete—specifically, baseball players—George "Shotgun" Shuba, Roger Clemens ("The Rocket"), and Wade Boggs—playing on the common metaphor for athletic performance that equates body and machines. Writing six hundred drafts of the poem "Another Elegy" is compared to George "Shotgun" Shuba's "arduous practice all winter" in which Shuba hauled potatoes all day and swung a bat at a clump he hung on the ceiling 600 times a day (47,200 swings every winter) (38). He quotes Roger Clemens saying, "People write articles about how you're blessed with the right arm... That might be true, for some people, but I had to work to get where I'm at," and describes Clemens's spring training routine in 1992: running before he pitched five innings, doing sit-ups or catching pick-ups on alternating sides of field between innings. He states, "Like Wade Boggs I know not only how many singles I have hit but also what

count I had each single on, where it went, and what kind of pitch I hit. (I know even more detail about striking out with the bases loaded)" (24).

According to Susan Miller in *Rescuing the Subject*, the performing actor as writer is a pervasive metaphor of authorship: "That is, this version of the subject performs an assertion by inscribing language, like an actor who concretizes a script when performing in the face of unstable but enabling theatrical conventions" (15 *Rescuing*). She does, however, qualify this remark by stating the writer "also defers personal desires and motives in favor of highlighting 'the text' that is being performed, but that will be 'fixed' on in this performance" (15). The operative word in Miller's quote is "this," the particular performance fixed in time—the text—suggesting that another will perform the same text again. Like the closing couplet in "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day," the "this" in Miller's quote is the "this" in which writers "claim fixed existence"—"only in grounded and conventional lines on a page" (16, emphasis mine). Carried to its logical end, the acting metaphor complements Dillard's and Hall's description of getting started because, like actors, they warm up before the performance. However, neither writer uses the metaphor explicitly. One reason I believe they resist the acting metaphor is the given-ness of the script implied by the acting-writing metaphor. The reason they must "gear up" or "warm up" is the fact of the text's absence; it doesn't exist—they must make it. Also, the writing memoirs emphasize the other aspects of a writer's life that affect her or him: body chemistry, boredom, frustration, the presence of others. It is as if in the memoirs they are affirming that their writerly-self extends beyond the page, and in fact permeates all other areas of their existence. In the acting-writing metaphor, two

things are de-emphasized that are emphasized in Dillard and Hall: 1) the emotional or affective element of the performance and 2) the physical (or bodily) element of the performance. Finally, it is important to note that the acting-writing metaphor finds its roots in literary criticism and not in the works of writers about writing.

Hall's athlete-writer metaphor is *related* to the actor-writer metaphor, but the emphasis on the body in the athlete-writer metaphor is *more closely related* to the root conceptual metaphor of the body as machine, a machine that produces objects. In the actor-writer metaphor, nothing is made. Texts are recounted, read from dictation, written always already. The capacity to make something new isn't part of the logical equation. Hall's attentiveness to product when he recollects "how many singles" and "the count" for each reflect the notion that he doesn't exist only in the margins of the page that are subject to continual revision but as a conscious self that makes a strict accounting of his works and his life. In a more direct application of the body as machine metaphor is Hall's description of his texts' material production. He often dictates, then sends the tapes to a typist; or he hand-writes his texts and sends them to the typist. The next morning, he picks up the fresh print and makes further revisions by hand then sends the revisions back to the typist. During this process, he sometimes uses more than one research assistant who looks up material at a university library, saving Hall the time on the road driving to Concord or Hanover (50). All of these helpers he refers to as his "staff" whose labor "saves me hours by the dozen—freeing me to work, helping me to manufacture the best day" (50). His machine-body is one to which others attend and

contribute; if his body is a machine then it exists in a small factory with the machine-bodies of others supplementing the work of the central machine.

On the whole, Hall's writing process is much more systematic (hence mechanical) than Dillard's writing process. While they both share in the belief that a certain motion or energy is required, Dillard's text reflects a preoccupation with the idea of controlling the energy: "He [the writer] must be sufficiently excited to rouse himself to the task at hand, and not so excited he cannot sit down to it. He must have faith sufficient to impel and renew the work" (46). The excitement she refers to is the concept of motion, once again. Motion is characterized as an energy, a pressure to be controlled, a frenetic, directionless projection, and a vibration that produces a polyphonic hum or resonating buzz. These attributes share qualities associated with control, repetition, sustenance, and pain—all of which are addressed in the context of the writing process and all of which depend upon an understanding of a concept of writing connate with the body.

The briefest chapter in *A Writing Life* addresses the idea of controlling the energies necessary to writing through a dream Dillard has about her typewriter. Perhaps because she sometimes writes near the Cascades (she mentions that Mount Baker is volcanic), Dillard dreams about an erupting volcano (99). The dreamscape is a two-story house. She is upstairs when she feels the ground begin to shake. Thinking it is an earthquake, she rushes downstairs where she sees the typewriter pouring smoke and ash; the old Smith-Corona is erupting. Peering into its caldera ("the dark hollow in which the keys lie"), sparks burn holes in her shirt while rumblings, exploding and grinding noises,

and sparks shower down on curtains, the pitching table, and Dillard's own shoulders (64). After twenty minutes or so, the eruption subsides. Dillard cleans the lampblack coating the old Smith-Corona and reports, "I have had no trouble with it since. Of course, now I know it can happen" (64). Her dream emphasizes what she is theorizing about in the majority of *The Writing Life*: the body and mind share energies. Though the eruption occurs on the keys of her typewriter, Dillard contends that the typewriter, because she uses it to write, is part of her physical body. The explosion of ash in the volcano metaphor equates body and mind.

The way in which body and mind become connate in Dillard's dream relies on an understanding of the body that can be understood using Gregory Bateson's concept of the body. In his Korzybski Memorial Lecture, he asks, is a blind man's cane is part of him as he walks? Bateson's answer is yes because the cane is part of his *being-in-a-material-place* thereby blurring the boundaries between flesh and technology (in this case, the cane). In the same way, the typewriter in Dillard's dream is part of her writing body for which the dream reveals an anxiety about controlling the energy she uses to write. Writing, she understands the typewriter is an extension of her body. She comments similarly on the way tubes of paint are like fingers for the painter: "they work only if, inside the painter, the neural pathways are wide and clear to the brain. Cell by cell, molecule by molecule, atom by atom, part of the brain changes physical shape to accommodate and fit paint" (59). Likewise, speaking of David Rahm the trick-pilot, Dillard unifies an artist's materials with his body: "Rahm made beauty with his whole body" (95).

Hall's reference to "work-excitement" and "joy-pressure" express a similar feeling of impending eruption, though he seems to be in control of the force whereas Dillard seems to be continually in search of a way to arouse the force. Although neither of the writers use explicitly sexual tropes to discuss the writing process, the sexuality of "joy-pressure" and dreams of erupting volcanoes evoke a sexual reading of the energies the writers describe as synonymous with writing. Also, an existing tradition in American literature links the figure of the volcano to poetic voice (thereby further evoking the presence of corporeality). Emerson used the figure of the erupting, flowing volcano in "The American Scholar" to suggest the divinity of man:

The human mind cannot be enshrined in a person, who shall set a barrier on any one side to this unbounded, unboundable empire. It is one central fire, which, flaming now out of the lips of Etna, lightens the capes of Sicily; and now, the throat of Vesuvius, illuminates the towers and vineyards of Naples. It is one light which beams out of a thousand stars. It is one soul which animates all men. (67)

For Emerson, the "lips" of the volcano spill forth the expression of the Over-soul. In this passage, his poetic corresponds with Hall's; that is, the lava *will* flow. The volcano is an active one, like the "active soul" that Emerson praises earlier in the essay (57). Dillard, on the other hand, expresses anxiety, worry about whether or not the volcano will erupt. After her dream, she is reassured (she knows, at least, that the typewriter is capable of eruption). Her worry corresponds to a similar worry of Emily Dickinson. Two Dickinson poems, "The reticent volcano" (1748) and "A still—Volcano—Life—"

(601), rely on the central metaphor of the quiet volcano. In “The reticent volcano,” the volcano has “buckled lips”; in “A still—Volcano—Life—” the volcano has “lips that never lie.” Both Dickinson’s and Emerson’s volcano metaphor, whether dormant or active, create a body-volcano through whose lips flow a message, words. As the metaphor suggests, only when sufficient pressure builds will the rock give way making a passage through which the lava will flow.

Like Woolf’s concern about what gets in the way of writing, the volcano metaphor is in one way about blockages, the things getting in the way of writing. While Woolf insists that it is subjectivity, the self, that blocks the flow of language, Dillard’s insistence that she must rouse herself to the task of writing suggests that it is a lack of energy to break through the conical top of the mountain. Still, and this point cannot be overstressed—neither Woolf nor Dillard claim that the “message” is the expression of the self. Dillard states, “Your freedom as a writer is not freedom of expression in the sense of wild blurting; you may not let rip” (11). Dillard’s physical exercises to animate her body are more like pitching, getting her body to a certain musical pitch before she can write. Hers is a matter of controlling the energies of the body.

Her dream not only reveals a desire to control what may be uncontrollable but also reveals a deeper concern: lurking behind the writing energies (because it is similar to a life-force) is an acute awareness of the body’s demise: physical death. It follows from her metaphors of embodiment that such an awareness would be present in her writing because the body’s opposite isn’t a transcendent soul in Dillard concept of writing; the opposite of embodiment is death. This attentiveness or attitude toward

mortality figures as one of the key requirements of the writing self. For example, Dillard relates the tale of an Algonquin woman who was left with her baby in a camp where everyone else had starved to death one bad winter:

The woman walked from the camp where everyone had died, and found at a lake a cache. The cache contained one small fishhook. It was simple to rig a line, but she had no bait, and no hope of bait. The baby cried. She took a knife and cut a strip from her own thigh. She fished with the worm of her own flesh and caught a jackfish; she fed the child and herself. (12-13)

The story serves as a parable for what is sometimes required of the writer to get started: “You may wonder how you start, how you catch the first one. What do you use for bait?” she asks (12). Her answer is to use your own body, much the way she describes writing as picking at a sore until it bleeds; then, you “write with that blood. If the sore spot is not fatal, if it does not grow and block something, you can use its power for many years, until the heart resorbs it” (20). Referring again to the idea of potential blockages, Dillard suggests that the potentially mutilated or sacrificed body is concurrent with the adrenaline accompanying physical activity (the kind she describes to get started), an idea she mentions again in a reference to another volcano:

If you were an Aztec maiden who knew months in advance that on a certain morning the priests were going to throw you into a hot volcano, and if you spent those months undergoing a series of purification rituals

and drinking dubious liquids, you might, when the time came, be ready to write. (47)

Emphasized in this passage is an awareness of impending death and the activities to prepare one to be a worthy sacrifice. Even though actual death isn't required of the writer, Dillard is remarking on the writer's need to be aware of his or her mortality—not in an abstract way, but in a way that evokes physical danger and the adrenaline that accompanies a fight or flight response in all animals (fighting sentences like an alligator wrestler is another analogy she uses) (75).

In more direct passages, Dillard directs the writer to “write as if you were dying” (68). Likewise, she directs the writer “to assume you write for an audience consisting solely of terminal patients. That is, after all, the case. What would you begin writing if you knew you would die soon? What could you say to a dying person that would not enrage by its triviality” (68). The imperatives could be read as clichés on par with *live each day as if it is your last*. Her *as if* logic, however, is concretized through her constant pointing to the physical body as a participant in the act of composing. Further, her attitude toward death suggests that the writer who becomes momentarily sentient of mortality experiences an opening, a point of departure—in Dillard's words, liftoff.

The culminating effect of putting the body in motion and arousing a real sense of impending death is what Hall terms *absorbedness*. Absorbedness describes a state in which the writer forgets himself, much like the writer Charlie Butts that Dillard includes in *The Writing Life*:

With enthusiasm I agreed with him [about absorbedness], speaking of early morning hours, concentration on the page and its words, total loss of identity, hours that pass like seconds or without any notion of time elapsing: It is always the paradox of contentment—of happiness or joys—that to remain at its pitch it must include no consciousness of itself; you are only content when you have no notion of contentment. (23-24)

Loss of identity and the lack of sense about the passage of time—these are the two key components of Hall's *absorbedness*: "Then I lose myself. In the best part of the best day, absorbedness occupies me from footsole to skulltop. Hours or minutes or days—who cares?—lapse without signifying" (86). It allows him, after he is diagnosed with cancer, to escape from the "dread and suffering" that accompanies the diagnosis. The experience of absorbedness also appears in a later chapter in which Hall describes scythe mowing, an activity during which "one surrenders oneself to the guidance of object and task, where worker and work are one" (86). Scythe mowing

is a rhythmic motion like dancing or lovemaking. It is a studious sweeping crescent in which the trick is to keep the heel (where blade joins snath) close to the ground. I no longer mow with a scythe—a certain recipe for lower-back muscle spasms—but remember it the way the body remembers weights and leanings: riding a bicycle, skiing, casting flies. Finding a meter, one abandons oneself to the swing of it... There is something ecstatic about mowing a scythe. (86)

It is muscle memory that actuates the loss of identity or presence in a place and the loss of time, like a musician playing a memorized piece of music or a pitcher sending the ball to home plate. And just as Dillard's embodied writing called attention to her own mortality so does Hall's absorbedness: "I realized that I had always worked—the real thing, the absorbedness—in defiance of death" (62).

Although Dillard doesn't use the term absorbedness, she does comment on the same kind of experience that the term describes. Specifically, she comments on the lapse, the gap, the unconsciousness of surroundings and the loss of time. While completing *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, she borrowed a small room in a library with a single window. It was the Fourth of July, and she had begged off when invited by her husband and friends to attend the fireworks. She worked instead. She began writing. Later that night she heard a June bug hitting the window repeatedly. She had long since drawn the blinds to prevent herself from daydreaming so she didn't actually see the June bug; she only heard its insistent, hollow knock on the window. After thirty minutes or so, she finally got up to check on what she by this time figured was a behemoth of a June bug:

And there were the fireworks, far away. It was the Fourth of July. I had forgotten...It was the Fourth of July, and I had forgotten all of wide space and all historical time. I opened the blinds a crack like eyelids, and it all came exploding in on me at once—oh yes, the world. (31)

She was astonished at how fully writing occupied her consciousness. At times, the lack of awareness of the material world and her place in it caused problems: a whistle-less

teakettle in an English department resulted in burned coffee. The next time she made coffee, she put a clothespin on her finger to remind her that she had water boiling. The pain of the clothespin would bring her back to the present moment. Her account of being *somewhere else* or unaware of her material reality is predicated by the absorbedness she experiences while she composes.

Writing Exercises, Writing Practices, and Un-Disciplined Bodies

In the last section of this chapter, I discussed one similarity between Annie Dillard's *The Writing Life* and Donald Hall's *Life Work*—both writers' descriptions of commencing the act of composing and the state of mind that accompanies/results from writing, i.e., *absorbedness*. In this section, I discuss another prominent topic that receives both writers' attention in the memoirs: establishing the daily practice of composing. I will compare their discussions of habit, discipline, and schedules to two theorists' concepts of habit and discipline. First, I will draw a comparison between Dillard's and Hall's concept of habit and Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and *body hexis*. Next, I will discuss Dillard's and Hall's descriptions of their writing practices (practice in its most formal definition of a repetitive activity) as *un-disciplined*, a kind of circumvention of the surveilled, disciplined body described in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*. Both discussions will establish the operative element of Dillard's and Hall's writing bodies—freedom, and concurrently, rhetorical agency. Here, I will return to the two writers' preoccupation with death (or dis-embodiment). The attentiveness each writer gives to their awareness of death serves to highlight the fact that embodiment

entails *both* temporality *and* spatiality, bringing Dillard and Hall into conversation with current theories in ecocomposition and postmodern theorists of space and place (such as Michel de Certeau).

Hall's comparison between the writerly self (specifically the writing body) and baseball players (the body of an athlete), as I discussed earlier, is one example of the body-as-machine conceptual metaphor that shows up in his discussion of composing. Another part of writing is also revealed in his comparison: the writer, like the athlete, must practice arduously. Just like the baseball player must swing the bat everyday, the writer must write everyday; thus, the concept of *habit* is a crucial element of the writer's life. Later in the book, Hall gives other examples to illustrate the importance of habit. He recalls Freud, a lover of work, one who "was said to live by the clock" (92). Hall details Freud's workday at fifty:

He went to bed at one in the morning, rose at seven, saw analytic patients from eight to twelve, dined with his family at one, then walked in the city—where he bought cigars, where he did errands like delivering proof—and at three began appointments again. Sometimes he saw patients until nine at night. Supper. Then maybe a card game, maybe another walk with his wife to a café, then reading and writing and editing.
(92)

Like Pasteur and Mann for Dillard, Freud's workday highlights the role of habit—work begets work. The day, the way it is spent, is *cynosure*; it is the *synecdoche* for a life.

Combined with the athlete comparison, the concept of habit encompasses another aspect: a thing done over and over again (a practice) develops muscle-memory. Hall's term *absorbedness*, is, in fact, very similar to the idea of muscle-memory. The writer experiences a loss of ego, a loss of self consciousness, being able to do with your body without conscious thought.

Paradoxically, the way the effects of daily practice (a habit) are described are often contradictory while sharing the same root metaphor—the body as container. In one description, when the writer is engaged in the practice of writing, he or she is *blocking out* everything (the objective world). When Dillard writes about the June bug on her window really being fireworks, she is blocking out an objective reality. On the other hand, when engaged in a practice, the writer is in a state in which everything (the objective world) is able to flow inward (the boundaries between subjective and objective becoming blurred). This meaning is implied by Hall's term *absorbedness*.

One way to resolve this paradox is to consider that both effects occur simultaneously, primarily because both meanings (blocking out and letting in) of the effect of daily practice imply the falling away of distinctions between subject and object. When Dillard states that “a schedule defends against chaos and whim,” she suggests this interpretation (32). “Chaos,” in this case, represents external factors that might distract (thus the need to “block out”) while “whim” represents subjectivity, a drive that excludes everything else in the world except interiority (thus preventing an “inflowing”). The daily practice defends against all kinds of distractions—those resulting from external factors and those which seem to come from the writer herself.

Bourdieu's two concepts *habitus* and *body hexis* are helpful in understanding the paradoxical qualities of daily practice that Hall and Dillard describe in *The Writing Life* and *Life Work*. Expressing a similar view expressed by Lakoff and Johnson, though working within the field of anthropology, Bourdieu states "the very mental structures which come to construct the world of objects are themselves nothing other than constructs derived directly from an individual's practice in a world of objects born from those self-same structures" (Throop and Murphy 188). This is related to Lakoff and Johnson's idea that conceptual metaphors, on the most basic level, derive from the experience of the body in the world (conceptual metaphors that reference verticality, for example), except that Bourdieu is going a bit further in his argument. *Habitus* is the term he uses to refer to this phenomenon, and it is characterized as a 'conductorless orchestration' that, as anthropologists Throop and Murphy describe it, serves to give systematicity, coherence, and consistency to an individual's practices. Throop and Murphy also go on to explain that *body hexis*, Bourdieu's related term, is the performative aspect of *habitus*; in other words, the way a body moves through the world (*body hexis*) is informed by the *modus operandi* of *habitus* (188). *Body hexis* is tied to motor function, postures, gestures, and expressive orientations, and—most interestingly to this chapter—discourse. It is a form of body memory "which is crystallized through practical interaction with the structure of the environmental surround" (188).

On the surface, the complementary concepts *habitus* and *body hexis* seem to dismiss agency, a fact for which Bourdieu's practice theory has often been criticized. The theory is totalizing, and the human subject is thoroughly determined. It is a view of

enculturation, however, that pays special attention to environment, which makes it different from most theories that insist on the separation of mind and body. At this point, Bourdieu differs from Dillard and Hall. However, whereas Bourdieu's practice theory *discounts* agency, Dillard and Hall suggest that daily practice can counteract *habitus*. In other words, change the *body hexis*, the performative function of *habitus*, and the structural dispositions will change, resulting in a state of *absorbedness*, the state during writing that Dillard describes as "something you memorized once and forgot" or "as though I were copying from a folio held open by smiling angels" (76, 29). If *body hexis* is the conditioned result, then why not condition the body differently, they seem to suggest. To use a writing metaphor, Dillard and Hall suggest that *habitus* (which Bourdieu understands to be socially and materially determined) can be rewritten (or overwritten).

A comparison with Bourdieu also reveals the ways in which Dillard and Hall enrich the concept of writing process by adding to it the multiple ways in which the body and world contribute to a practice (for Dillard and Hall, writing). Nedra Reynolds, citing the work of Lester Faigley and Andy Merrifield, argues in *Geographies of Writing* that one reason process theory is lacking is the overemphasis on temporality: "process usually means temporal, and therefore writing becomes a time-bound concept" (5). Also, Dillard's and Hall's understanding of daily practices as rewriting underlying structures or dispositions suggest that rather than being disciplined by external factors, the practice of writing is capable of *undoing* enculturation, an exercise of freedom. In that way, writing is also a practice of *undisciplining* the body in a Foucauldian sense.

Foucault's study of prisons, penal codes, and modern institutions of power in *Discipline and Punish* articulates a relationship between the control of bodies (discipline) and vision (referred to as "gaze" in his book). However, the amount of power that can be exercised is relative to the extent to which the surveilled believe they are being watched. Therefore, architecture plays an important role in the disciplining of bodies, the reason why Foucault notes that "stones can make people docile and knowable" and the reason "prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons (172 and 228). "Discipline," for Foucault, is a codification of time, space, and movement imposed upon a subject by a network of supervisors who are also surveilled. The system resembles, Foucault tells us, a machine, and manifests in codes that regulate where a subject/body works, a time table for specific activities, the temporal elaboration of an act (such as marching to the beat of a drum), and the exhaustive use of a subject.

Relating this to Dillard and Hall's elaboration of a theory of process that includes both the temporal and spatial suggests that the daily practices both writers describe also involve escaping those power structures that discipline their bodies, especially those that function via visibility. Both writers describe writing as a solitary activity, an activity that requires hours, days, and weeks of separation from others. Even though Foucault insists that networks of power based on discipline are enculturated much the same way Bourdieu insists that *habitus* is enculturated and thus *determines* behavior, Dillard's and Hall's language suggests that their writing practices offer a way of escape (pardon my

use of a containment metaphor)—an exercise of freedom. Self-imposed habit for these writers empowers them to fly below the radar so to speak.

Hall describes the work day of sculptor Henry Moore that suggests that the more a writer controls his or her own movements through place and time, the more freedom the writer possesses. Moore is offered to the reader as Freud is, a model of the artist who lives by the clock and the list:

Moore interrupted himself for lunch, tea, drinks, and supper; for mail, although mail was a burden; for the telephone; for the founder's truck that came to haul away a great plaster for casting. All day he rode a bicycle over his acreage in the rolling farmland, patrolling his studios to work on different projects. At night after supper he and Irina might watch a BBC detective mystery, but as he watched he kept a pad open on his lap and made automatic or random marks in pencil—and sometimes ideas derived from his idle doodles. When I last saw him at eighty he had built a new graphic studio next to the house, where he retreated for an hour after television, working again between nine and ten at night. (52)

Here is a portrait of the quotidian. Yet, in it lies a key to the creative life: the schedule is offered as evidence that days spent consecutively in the same way contribute to a rhythm, to the motion required of the writer. Henry Moore, in short, knew the secret of life: "The secret of life is to have a task, something you devote your entire life to, something you bring everything to, every minute of the day for your whole life" (54).

Dillard says it another way:

What then shall I do this morning? How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives. What we do with this hour, and that one, is what we are doing. A schedule defends from chaos and whim. It is a net for catching days. It is a scaffolding on which a worker can stand and labor with both hands at sections of time. A schedule is a mock-up of reason and order—willed, faked, and so brought into being; it is a peace and a haven set into the wreck of time; it is a lifeboat on which you find yourself, decades later, still living. Each day is the same, so you remember the series afterward as a blurred and powerful pattern. (32)

While writing *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, the blurred and powerful pattern consisted of sleeping until noon every day, writing in the afternoon, breaking for an early dinner and a walk. She subsisted, she says, on "that dinner, coffee, Coke, chocolate milk, and Vantage cigarettes" (27). After working until midnight or one or two, she would quit for the day, and when she came home in the middle of the night, she was tired. She "longed for a tolerant giant, a person as big as a house, to hold me and rock me" (27). Willed or faked, the "blurred and powerful pattern" is repeated by both writers' references to daily practice, the habituation necessary to keep "living"—that is, writing.

Days stacked on top of days, of course, result in larger time units—weeks, months, years, decades, units of time that once were planned in to do lists and later, when the time has passed, becomes a tool of accounting. Units of time provide the writers a measurement of productivity, the flipside of the planned schedule. For Hall, the accounting sometimes gives way to goodhearted braggadocio. After all, he says, "I

average four books a year," and "I reckon I publish about one item a week, year-in year-out" (27). Sheepishly, he admits, "Were I fifteen years old, this would be the moment when I would pretend to blow on the backs of my fingernails, then rub them against my chest. Work, work, work." (27). To Hall, "work was holy; work was the daily text of the life lived" (9). Just as Hall has to restrain himself to race to the writing desk at 3:30 am while Dillard has to rouse herself physically to the task, Dillard's accounting of the time it takes to produce a book is much different. In her estimation, producing even one book in a year is an anomaly, a task that she believes only twenty people out of an entire human population of four and half billion can accomplish, to which she adds, "Some people lift cars, too" (13). The average time it takes to write a book, according to Dillard, is between two and ten years.

Yet, just like the embodied energy of the writer also draws into existence the contradiction of that embodied energy (death), Dillard's and Hall's emphasis on the day, the best days when embodiment culminates in work-absorbedness "takes its power and its energy from the urgency of its contradiction"—that is, the worst day (61). The worst day is sometimes depression, but that, Hall tells us, is a condition you can play through (again invoking the writer-athlete metaphor) (113). In an absolute sense, the worst day is sickness or death. He writes in defiance of it. Once again, the concept of embodied process is invoked: the best day culminates in work-absorbedness; its opposite are the failings of the body. In other words, death is the spectre lurking behind these discussions of temporality, the day, weeks, years, how much time it takes to complete a work—because time is limited. Dillard's and Hall's joint agreement in their memoirs

reflects their metaphors of embodiment: writing involves the full consciousness of mortality. Each faces the fact of their terminal existence; to use a term from new criticism, the face of death is a foil for their metaphors of embodiment. The continuous emphasis on mortality serves to highlight the bodily consciousness of their writing tasks.

Further, because both writers' discussion of temporality leads them back to discussions of the body, habituation also adds another layer to their understanding of the writing life, the understanding that embodiment can never be divorced from place. For lack of a better term, Dillard and Hall are referring to "when-where" experiences. Writing, in other words, is never a matter of internal subjectivities but a matter of relations: bodily, geographical, temporal.

Embodiment and Composition Studies

*A god can do it. But will you tell me how
a man can penetrate through the lyre's strings?
Our mind is split.*

Rilke, The Sonnets to Orpheus

In "Writing Bodies: Somatic Mind in Composition Studies," Kristie S. Fleckenstein notes that perspectives on writing in composition studies "all depend on conceptual or epistemological frameworks that disregard physical bodies" (281). The result of "sacrificing bodies" is "we cut ourselves adrift from any organic anchoring in the material reality of flesh" (281). Ominously, Fleckenstein concludes, "without a

corporeal way to address the tragedies and victories that play out in our classrooms, our lives, and our worlds, we cannot change or celebrate our concrete existence" (281).

Specifically, the framework she attributes the dispossessing of bodies in composition studies is James Berlin's social epistemicism, the point of intersection between poststructuralism and social constructionism. Though she limits her critique to epistemicism, several other epistemological frameworks come to mind which have resulted in a theoretical effacement of writers' bodies. Process theory, for example, depends upon a concept of the mind that is separate from the body (and the bodies of others); if the mind were not autonomous then it could not perform mental processes. Also, process theory uses a temporal framework (first, next, then, repeat recursively), a framework that suggests the writing process is a universal truth regardless of place. In other words, this is *the* writing process. Similarly, studies in the collaborative nature of writing emphasize writers working together as one body while serving to deemphasize writers' singularity as individual bodies, past histories, and material circumstances. While theories about the collaborative nature of writing provided a necessary corrective to concepts of writing based on the idea of the solitary writer composing in the garret, collaborative approaches effect a similar de-emphasis of writers' bodies and differing material conditions as process approaches to composition. More recently, as scholars have begun to explore the implications of technology and webbed environments, the materiality of bodies seems to be further abstracted; writers, like caricatured screen avatars, are less and less connected to skin and earth even as they "connect" to the internet and other end-users.

Sharon Crowley's assessment of what she calls "body studies" in composition yields a concurrent view of composition studies' general elision of the body. While the point of Crowley's essay isn't to determine the reasons why composition studies has neglected physical bodies but rather to give an overview of theories of the postmodernism and posthumanism that might be useful to fully embodied theories of writing, she does suggest one reason:

That all parties to discursive transactions are embodied remains unmentioned in either rhetorical theory or composition studies because both fields still cling to liberal-humanist models of the speaking subject—a sovereign, controlling disembodied and individual voice that deploys language in order to effect some predetermined change in an audience.

(177)

Though I do not wish to argue the veracity of her statement or to suggest that the state of composition studies in relation to embodiment is other than hers and Fleckenstein's assessment of it (even though an argument can be made that some scholars such as Selzer and Mountford are bellwethers for a new attention to physicality), in this section of the chapter I reconceptualize the notion of "voice" as one that already has strong ties to corporeality and one that could be further thickened given Dillard's and Hall's narratives of invention.ⁱ

Writing before the time referred to by Crowley as the "posthumanist dispensation," Theresa Enos argues in "Voice as Echo of Delivery, Ethos as

Transforming Process," that *ethos* emerges as a result of voice, voice here importantly corresponding to the historical concept of delivery. In her words,

The twentieth century concept of voice echoing from the art of delivery particularly includes the *conscious* selection of *patterns* that project an ethos. Such stylistic, *rhetorical* choices are, like voice in the ancient art of delivery, stylized verbal *forms*. (186)

The form, she goes on to say, "is closer to the structure of narrative" in the sense that "rhythmic patterns are paramount" in the meaning-making process. In other words, "the conscious re-forming of stylistic patterns shapes not only language use but also meaning" (186). The "speaking style" is one that "groups words in order to enhance rhythmic patterns" (186). Though she does not elaborate on the point, her characterization of "speaking style" and its close association with rhythmic patterns connect the concept of *voice* to activity, motion, energy. Her analysis suggests that voice, the effect of a text seemingly speaking to the reader, arises from the affectation of vocality during invention. Embodiment thus is multidirectional: the experience of embodiment is stylized textually (by a writer) which projects the "voice" heard as readers consume a text.

Style is commonly described in terms that suggest a text's embodied quality or, on the other hand, the distanced, disembodied style. Like good company, a writing style can be engaging, conversational, lively, active, personal, confessional, or welcoming. Alternately, a writing style can be dry, alienating, passive, managerial, flat, sterile, or robotic. In addition to evoking the qualities of embodiment, such terms convey a sense

of *doing things* with other human bodies: conversing, welcoming neighbors into homes, sharing secrets in hushed tones. One way of putting this is to say that the "speaking style" brings before the reader active images; In Roskelly and Ronald's estimation, however, images are static. Enos's point, that of voice is created by rhythmic patterns, emphasizes the body-ness of style. In other words, even phrases devoid of images can project a speaking body because of the rhythmic patterns. You need only remember the opening dactylic foot of Walt Whitman's "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" repeated by the speaker at the beginning of the following two lines—"Out of the"—to understand that while no image is evoked a body-ness is nonetheless effected.

Peter Elbow similarly connects body-ness and voice, and for that reason Kate Ronald and Hephzibah Roskelly have argued that Elbow's work reclaims the *erotic*, a term they derive from the writings of Audre Lorde. Elbow is, like Audre Lorde, "trying to reclaim the body and felt sense in epistemology" by "exercising the use of the *erotic*" (213). Erotic is defined this way: "The erotic refuses the dichotomy between thought and feeling and between the body and the mind" (210). They note that Elbow mostly makes this connection between body-ness and writing through his metaphors, concentrating "on the mouth, the skin, and the eyes, all sites of emotional, erotic, and physical satisfaction and tension" (215). It is the connection to the mouth that Hall believes is the most overtly physical aspect of writing: "When you write a poem, you're not hammering out the sounds with a chisel or spreading them with a brush, but you've got to *feel* them in your mouth. The act of writing a poem is a bodily act as well as a mental and imaginative act" (*Paris Review* 18). In "Goatfoot, Milktongue, Twinbird,"

Hall gives the example of the children's verse "Bah, bah, Blacksheep" as an example of experiencing a poem bodily. Whether or not the reader knows the rhyme is about taxation or not does not reduce the pleasure we receive from it. From this example he develops the concept of "goatfoot," a pleasure that derives from the mouth or orality, "goatfoot," which is the pleasure of the dance and movement, and finally, "twinbird," the pleasure that readers and writers alike derive from the resolution of conflict. *Writing erotically* seems to be about pleasure also for Hall for similar reasons: "The pleasure of writing is that the mind does not wander any more than it does in orgasm—and writing takes longer than orgasm" (*Breakfast* 49).

Her language describing embodied writing resonates with Dillard and Hall:

First, we write as bodies, attending to the undulation of inscription and response. We immerse ourselves in—create a subjectivity out of—our own bodily reactions as writes. *We are* our bodies; we are writing bodies, caught in that slippage between bodies that write as they are written. Therefore, we need to attend to visceral rhythms as we compose writerly identities, readers, and textworlds at a specific time and in a very specific place (body, clothes, room, technology, culture, etc.). (297)

Particularly relevant to this discussion are Flectenstein's evocation of "visceral rhythms" as something writers "need to attend to." She points out the dangers of the social epistemic body as a dispossessed "flurry of floating signifiers" (283). More radically, she argues that the body communicates on the cellular level semiotically; in other words, corporeal texts (how the body talks to itself) use metaphoric logic. Further, anchoring

her argument in Bateson's concept of being-in-a-material-place, she contends that "corporeal and discursive texts transact *continually*" in order to create meaning. While corporeal texts can function independently of discursive texts, she argues, discursive texts cannot be meaningful without the prior corporeal texts (291). For example, she cites Susanne K. Langer's observation that "language evolves out of images, out of corporeal texts, and can never be amputated from its initiating matrix" (292).

From a theoretical standpoint, Fleckenstein's "somatic mind" attempts to reconnect what has historically been discrete—the processes of mind and the processes of the body. While Fleckenstein's "somatic mind" concept perhaps circumvents the individualistic aspect of the voice metaphor, it does not convey the essential quality of the voice metaphor, that of communication. Darsie Bowden's historical exploration of the rise of the voice metaphor describes the voice metaphor similarly: "The voice comes from the body; the body is utterly personal and this personalness somehow, in this pedagogy, is powerful. Spoken language is naturally closer than writing to the lifspring, to consciousness, and to presence" (182). The "somehow," I believe is partly due to the fact that the mouth is a seat of desire for the erotic body, a site of permeability, respiration. Erotic also conveys the idea that the whole of the body is invitational of arousal, the skin itself a plane of nerves through which our bodies commune with our environment. More recently, Debra Hawhee argues in *Bodily Arts* that from its beginnings in antiquity, rhetoric was a body art and that particular bodily features have been "deemphasized and suppressed through centuries of disciplinary specialization and mind-body separation" (Hawhee 155). In a later article ("Rhetoric,

Bodies, and Everyday Life”), Hawhee makes clear that she did not mean for her historical study to be prescriptive. She was not, in other words, suggesting that composition curriculum should involve trips to the gymnasium. However, she sees the possibilities for connecting everyday life with pedagogical aims:

Our classes can really take seriously Aristotle’s notion of rhetoric as an art of discovery. they can do so by attending to the material, mobile activities of everyday lives as lived in cities and parks, streets and museums, and even, yes, hallways, mailrooms, and classrooms, all of which routinely yield something like Aristotle’s ‘available means’ or Booth’s ‘range of resources that human beings share for producing effects.’” (163).

Evoking de Certeau by using the phrase “everyday life,” Hawhee connects the rhetorical studies with the work critics like de Certeau are doing in cultural studies, theories that perhaps thicken rhetorical studies’ concepts like voice and embodiment.

In many ways, Dillard and Hall anticipated the current trend in composition studies that seeks to connect composition and the writing body. In addition to a reassessment of the metaphor of voice as connected to delivery and thus the body, Dillard and Hall also anticipate an important shifting emphasis from studies in collaboration to the solitude required of the writer in composition. This shift in emphasis represents a small corrective to the years of attention that collaboration studies received. In addition, the focus on solitude in Dillard and Hall is usually accompanied by a focus on *nature*. The two subjects, solitude and nature, seem to be connected concerns for

both writers, a notion that is beginning to be studied in ecocomposition. Finally, Dillard and Hall, as they describe the writing process in connection with the ultimate mystery—death—suggest that when it comes to writing, mystery is still part of the process. In the next chapter, I discuss essays by writers who also attempt to address the mystery of writing through competing metaphors of inspiration and instrumentalism.

CHAPTER IV

INSPIRATION AND INSTRUMENTALISM: THE *NEW YORK TIMES* WRITERS ON
WRITING SERIES

In the last chapter, I discussed how Annie Dillard and Donald Hall's metaphors for writing create a concept of self which maintains freedom (rhetorical agency) and bodily presence as characteristics of their writing processes. In this chapter, I offer a rhetorical analysis of the *New York Times* essays on writing, a rich source of material by writers originally featured in the *New York Times* and then collected in two volumes (*Writer [on Writing]: Collected Essays from the New York Times*, and *Writers [on Writing]: More Collected Essays from The New York Times, Volume II*).

Contemporary writers' accounts of writing, especially inspiration, though their metaphors for inspiration have undergone a shift away from religious metaphors toward instrumental metaphors, reveal a continuity with religious meanings and understandings of writing and thus indicate a continuing importance of the discourse of inspiration within composition scholarship. One way of understanding inspiration and instrumentalism is to imagine that the two concepts create a spectrum on which the focus of writing shifts from writing as a fully-conscious activity marked by intentionality and agency (on the instrumental end of the spectrum) to writing as an unconscious (or supra-conscious) activity marked by the lack of intentionality and agency (on the inspirational end of the spectrum). Using this approach, I argue that instrumental metaphors and metaphors of inspiration implicate one another in a way that creates a complicated view

of both sets of metaphors. Specifically, the essays in *Writers on Writing* create a view of writing that is both instrumentalist and religious, which makes the spectrum an instrument of a false dualism in the discourse about writing by creative writers. The essays, taken together create a concept of the writing self that maintains a sense of writerly control (rhetorical agency) as well as a sense of a diminished control; ultimately, the two concepts are married in the minds of the writers. Finally, I will argue that there are negative pedagogical consequences (i.e., the effect of students of composition) if composition scholarship continues to insist on an instrumentalist view of writing and the absence of inspiration in the writing process:

- a false sense of control over the writing process;
- a sense of audience awareness that becomes oppressive in the sense that students become inhibited in their writing; and finally,
- a totalizing version of the writing process which denies the unexplained or mysterious aspects of writing.

In other words, theorizing inspiration provides a corrective for the field of composition that has become, in my view, overly instrumental in its approach to the writing process.

Current Instrumentalist Tendencies in Composition Scholarship

Even though composition scholars have traditionally ignored what professional writers have to say about writing and the writing process, especially when it comes to matters like inspiration, how writers interpret the mystery of inspiration continues to capture the attention of a largely non-writing public. The public's fascination with

working writers can be evidenced easily by the popularity of varying *Writers on Writers* series in magazines and newspapers, the questions posed by fans during book promotion events, and the books on writing sold year after year (among them the University of Michigan's writers on writing series initiated and edited by Donald Hall). In the last ten years, the fascination has come to include the visual image of the working writer as well, to which the popularity of the photographer Jill Krementz's *The Writer's Desk* attests, a book of photographs depicting popular writers writing at their desks in their respective homes.

Part of the fascination with working writers that is particularly showcased in Krementz's photographs is the mystery of inspiration. The intent of her book is to satisfy curiosity about the creative process involved with writing, to *see* what the inspired writer *looks* like while she is writing. Eudora Welty's photograph features Welty at her desk, fingers poised above the keys of a black manual typewriter, the sun coming through a set of three windows, white curtains trimmed in feminine ball fringe, tied back to frame Welty's seated profile like stage curtains, and in the foreground the unfocused post of her bedframe from which the photographer takes her aim. Walker Percy is pictured in bed, a side table propped up like a music stand to support what the viewer must assume are his current drafts. Despite his repose, he is fully dressed in a button-down shirt, slacks, and dress shoes; among the bedspread and wool striped throw are newspapers, a *Life* magazine featuring a Dallas Cowboys helmet on the cover, and unopened bills. Above

the bed hangs a crucifix.⁵ Katherine Anne Porter's photograph is a closeup at her desk—her right hand on marked-up copy, her left hand on the keys of her typewriter. She is working on a large table instead of a desk, the top of which is cluttered with paper-clipped drafts, a glue stick still in its packaging, scissors, tape, and open boxes of paper. Visible underneath the table is a large trashcan.

Flipping through the pages of the book, it is clear that the photographer wanted to capture the spectacle of inspiration in a voyeuristic way—a writer caught in the moment, the moment that Barret J. Mandel described in "The Writer Writing Is Not at Home," as "the writer during the actual process of symbol-making" in which he or she "is *not* in that most familiar of all places, his or her conscious mind" (372, emphasis mine). Ultimately, Krementz's purpose was frustrated by her efforts to get writers to pose for her. The result: there is a falseness to the book because of the obviousness of the posing; the writers are decidedly at home. The paradox of the beautiful book of photographs, beautiful and interesting, is that none of the writers are able to pull off looking inspired. They all *look* posed (they are writers, after all, not actors). We have caught none of them in the act. Essentially, the book is a collection of pictures of writers *pretending* to write.

The book works, though, partly because viewers have an idea about what inspiration looks like or *should* look like. What the book doesn't show are the between moments that all writers write about when they write about writing: being asleep and

⁵ "Percy always composed lying down—a habit he acquired while a patient at Trudeau Sanatorium." Caption to the Krementz photograph included in Jay Tolson's *Pilgrim in the Ruins: A Life of Walker Percy* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

dreaming when an idea suddenly appears to you in a dream, taking a shower and thinking about a writing problem and screaming "Aha!" like Archimedes, or the writer who might be just doing *nothing*. All of these anecdotes suggest that writing is more mysterious than most composition scholars would like to admit (Mandel to the contrary). Despite the attention paid to the role of inspiration for the working writer, scholars working in the field of composition are reluctant to address inspiration as a serious part of the writing process, for more or less obvious reasons. Here are a few of those reasons:

1. Inspiration evokes a Romantic tradition that emphasizes originality and authenticity, a position argued by Lester Faigley in "Competing Theories of Process: A Critique and a Proposal."
2. Inspiration aligns composition with a Modernist conception of the writer in which the "moment" of writing is stressed over the collaborative (and social) process of writing, a position argued by, among others, Linda Brodkey in "Modernism and the Scene of Writing."
3. Inspiration privileges what has been alternately termed poetic/expressive/aesthetic discourse over transactional/referential/pragmatic discourse (based on the discourse models of Britton, Sapir, and Harris).
4. Inspiration encourages students to view composition as an emotional endeavor that is disconnected with audiences and purposes, as Kinneavy's discussion of expressive discourse in *A Theory of Discourse* argues.

All of these objections were useful in grounding composition scholarship firmly as an independent academic field. More recently, these objections served to offer alternatives to expressionist perspectives on the writing process, a corrective that allowed for other perspectives to be explored and considered, instead of one perspective having the intellectual monopoly on writing scholarship.

To many scholars, inspiration just sounds hokey. It is a term that is widely used in popular culture by pop psychologists and others of the Hallmark or *Chicken Soup for the Soul* approach to spiritual development or self-improvement, causing academicians to shy away from the term for fear of sliding into the language of popular culture (and away from academic discourse). To put it another way, composition scholars want to sound like scholars, and using a term like inspiration doesn't suggest theoretical robustness. John C. Briggs addresses this fear in his discussion of the term *magic* in "Peter Elbow, Kenneth Burke, and the Idea of Magic":

Of course, the more one waxes eloquent over these phenomena, the more one risks sounding like the self-help artists we see in grocery store book racks. Amidst the array of vegetables and potions, one reads a popular discourse strangely remote from the languages of the academy; but that language offers the means by which many persons begin to develop their own discourses of power (368).

Briggs, like other composition scholars, tends to view perspectives on writing that involve inspiration as opposed to perspectives which rely on instrumental perspectives on writing—that is, perspectives that focus on writing as a craft or skill. The dualism

that is created by this opposition ignores how the two—inspiration and instrumentalism—are actually *related* to one another, as the analysis in this chapter will show.

The presence of instrumental rationality as it was conceived by Habermas in his works in the 1980's is immediately apparent in composition scholarship. Briefly, the aim of instrumental rationality is efficiency, an efficiency born of the advent of the machine and the industrial revolution. In a democracy, "the role of the *citizen* is restructured so that the citizen becomes a client of the system" (Killingsworth and Palmer 167). In composition scholarship, the citizen is the student, who is directed by the instrumental expertise of the composition scholar. In a general sense, the goal of the composition course is to make students competent contributors to the academic discourse community within the course of semester.

With this goal in mind, Stephen North recognized the tendency toward instrumental rationality among composition scholars in *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, a tendency arising from the both the necessity to establish composition studies as field of study and the necessity for practical application of theory; however, North argues that the result of instrumentalism can be observed in conclusions from research that go beyond what the research suggests. James Seitz, discussing Lad Tobin's "Bridging Gaps: Analyzing Our Students' Metaphors for Composing," observes Tobin's instrumentalism, noting that "the opening sentence of his essay indicates an emphasis on utility: 'Like most composition teachers, I have always relied on metaphors to get me out of tight spots'" (291). Later in the essay, Tobin's instrumental approach to students'

metaphors for composing focuses on how students can best "use" metaphor "productively" (446).

Lester Faigley would resist any attempt to classify his "social view" of composition as instrumental, but consider that he, like many composition scholars, ignores the perspectives on writing from practitioners—in this case professional creative writers, a critique he makes of the field of composition:

Researchers and scholars define their own projects in relation to other lines of inquiry and forms of knowledge and thus the relations of knowledges are often ones of *exclusion*. The relations of knowledge within the practitioner community, on the other hand, are ones of *inclusion*. (Fragments 137).

This quote appears within Faigley's discussion of North in *Fragments of Rationality* in service to his discussion of "making contradictions coherent" in composition scholarship and textbooks. However, his critiques of both Baker's *Practical Stylist* and Lanham's *Revising Business Prose* reveal his concern for a unified, totalizing theory of composition—a hallmark of instrumental rationality in composition scholarship. His critiques focus on Baker's "contradicting declarations about writing" (135) and Lanham's dual project of emphasizing efficiency [instrumentalism] and humanism. Both critiques rely on a view of knowledge that is systematic, hierarchical, and serviceable to the field of composition itself as establishing a troop of experts.

Further, when Faigley in another essay ("Judging Writing, Judging Selves") responds to a statement made by one of Wayne Booth's students ("I know I have a long

way to go, but I want to get there"), Faigley asks, "But where is he going?" (119). Faigley admits "the ability to write in certain discourses is highly valued in technologically advanced nations"; even though his pedagogical stance involves teaching students how "to analyze cultural definitions of the self," a goal that seems to *oppose* and instrumentalist conception of writing pedagogy, the analysis of selves retains its usefulness as a *route* for the student to be able to write effectively and efficiently.

Another group of composition scholars, like Faigley, might also resist the label of instrumentalists: scholars whose work has been recently described as "post-process." However, post-process critiques of composition mainly rely on instrumentalist arguments about *applicability* and *usefulness*. Gary Olson writes, "process theorists assume that we can somehow make statements about the process that would apply to all or most of our writing situations" (7). George Pullman, writing in the same collection of essays (*Post-Process Theory: Beyond the Writing-Process Paradigm*), elaborates on the notions of applicability and usefulness in process orientations of composition scholarship: "If the writing process as it is taught can actually obstruct the production of an adequate document in certain circumstances, then it cannot be considered universally applicable; therefore, it cannot be considered a universally valid description of how to write" (27).

Instrumental Metaphors for Inspiration in *Writers on Writing*

In the *New York Times* essay collection, some writers approach the subject of writing with practical advice and descriptions of writing that attempt to demystify the

process, often by the use of instrumental metaphors. Instrumental metaphors include metaphors that figure the imagination as a tool or aid to writing, as in Richard Ford's "Goofing Off While the Muse Recharges," in which the imagination is a tool—a drill—that needs to be recharged after use. Also included in the family of instrumental metaphors are system metaphors in which the writing process is mechanical and can be operated like a machine. Instrumental metaphors emphasize skill, practice, and tools. They conceive of writing democratically, in a sense, because the basic assumption underlying the metaphor is that given the right tools or instruction, almost anyone can write successfully, not just those favored by the muse. The special quality so often invoked by the discourse of the "gifted" or "inspired" writer is absent in instrumentalism. Instead, the writer is able to write because she is a hard worker, has mastered a skill like a carpenter, and deserves the respect for her work because it was achieved through discipline.

In instrumental metaphors, the tenor is often the imagination, as it is in Thomas Fleming's essay, "Instant Novels? In Your Dreams!" in which the imagination is described as an "intellectual tool, closely wedded to the writer's intelligence. What it chooses to imagine for a novel is integrally connected to the essence of what the writer, consciously or unconsciously, wants to say about the subject" (62). The central idea in this view of the imagination as tool is that the imagination is accessible to the writer much like a pencil or other writing instrument. Also, the imagination as tool is *able to access* the secret or otherwise hidden desires of the writer for the work (in Fleming's case, the novel). The imagination as tool, in other words, can *tap into* the unconscious

desires of the writer (which also evokes a set of metaphors about the imagination as hidden reserve of memories, desires, a metaphorical ocean of the subconscious) in order to generate new ideas.

Fleming's distinction between "writer's imagination" and "writer's intelligence" also bears resemblance to an earlier conception of the writer's cognitive processes described by Coleridge as *imagination* (the secondary imagination as it is called in chapter 13 of *Biographia Literaria*) and *fancy*. Like Fleming's distinction, Coleridge's imagination generates new ideas while fancy merely combines or associates existing elements in the writer's mind. Coleridge describes the operation of the imagination as one that is subject to conscious will (as opposed to the primary imagination which is responsible for perception), having a "kind of agency" (321). The imagination "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate" (321). Fleming likens this part of the mind (his "writer's imagination") to the ability to see what is not there, like a set of eyes or glasses that enable the writer to have visions. In the context of his tool-metaphors, the vision metaphors can be properly described as examples of visual aids; the tool in this case is a tool that allows the writer to see. Fleming writes that he "saw a man" when he was writing (64) and, "[s]lowly the character appeared" (64). Because this imagination has the power to create, it is called vital by Coleridge, and the description can be equally applied to Fleming's "writer's imagination" as a tool.

Drawing on the same family of metaphors, Annie Proulx calls herself a "digger" in "Inspiration? Head Down the Back Road, and Stop for the Yard Sales," and admits, "A whole set of metaphoric shovels is part of my tool collection, and for me the research

that underlies the writing is the best part of the scribbling game" (185). Proulx doesn't make the same distinction between generative aspects of the imagination and collecting as Fleming does in his essay. Experience and the reality of the world around her provide her with plenty of material to excavate. She speaks of reality's abundance and inexhaustibility:

The digging itself is never done because the shovel scrapes at life itself. It is not possible to get it all, or even very much of it, but I gather what I can of the rough, tumbling crowd, the lone walkers and the voluble talkers, the high lonesome singers, the messages people write and leave for me to read. (190)

Proulx is an archaeologist in this metaphor, with one important distinction: unlike an archaeologist, Proulx the writer is the intended audience for life's messages. The messages establish an intimate connection whereas an archaeologist digs to make discoveries about cultures and civilizations. Proulx is listening for talkers and singers that speak *to her*.

In addition to tool metaphors, instrumental metaphors also manifest under the guise of system metaphors, a metaphor that explains how an entire system works. For example, Proulx calls writing a "game," a common metaphor to describe the function of language (most famously propagated by Wittgenstein) (85). System metaphors are most commonly discussed in the context of information technology, especially in the design of programs and software. While the "desktop" metaphor for computers (that what you see on the computer screen is the top of a desk) is most often cited as an example of a

system metaphor, the more recent use of the "shopping cart" on retail websites such as Amazon.com is a better illustration of a system metaphor. Browsing the website is equated to shopping in a grocery store where you see products you want and add them to your shopping cart. When you are finished shopping, you pay for your goods and leave. The system, or process, in this metaphor is grocery shopping.

One way to think about system metaphors is as extended versions of tool-metaphors. For example, Ford's essay on the "recharging muse" could also be discussed as a system metaphor in which the entire process of writing is explained through the metaphor of the battery in which the writing of novels is an endeavor which "consumes almost entirely its own resources and generally leaves its author emptied, dazed and bewildered" (70). After the novel is finished, therefore, the writer needs to rest:

Therefore a good spendthrift interval lasting a couple of seasons if not more, or at least until you can no longer stand to read the headlines of the newspaper, much less the articles that follow, can help to freshen the self, to reconfigure the new, while decommissioning worn-out preoccupations, habits, old stylistic tics—in essence help to 'forget' everything in order that you 'invent' something better. (70)

The reference to the passage of time in this example—"a good spendthrift interval lasting a couple of seasons"—helps extend the metaphor from a tool metaphor to a system metaphor for which the entire writing process is described via the battery working inside a machine. The result, the self spent entirely so that a resting period is

required, Ford regards as the way writers "pay reverence to art's sacred incentive—that the whole self, the complete will, be engaged" (70).

The "complete will," as Ford calls it, is a key term for understanding the use of tool and system metaphors because it works both to emphasize the writer's insistence that writing is mechanical if one would just learn the way it works AND to suggest the opposite—there is an element of the irrational and therefore mystical in all of this. For example, Ford says that he never thought of himself "as a man driven to write" (67). Instead, he reasons,

I simply choose to do it, often when I can't be persuaded to do anything else; or when a dank feeling of uselessness comes over me, and I'm at a loss and have time on my hands, such as when the World Series is over. I would argue that only in this state of galvanic repose am I prepared to address the big subjects great literature requires: the affinities between bliss and bales, etc. (67)

The phrase "galvanic repose" suggests just such oppositional thinking. A sudden state of rest is perhaps a state that is unattainable through what the writer calls his "protocol." Instead, he must wait for it to arrive like a change of weather, or the arrival of evil as the writer implies with his reference to "bliss and bales." In this way, Ford's statement about the "reverence to art's sacred incentive" becomes more revealing of the multi-directionality of the tool and system metaphors as a way to make up for the writers' inability to understand their own processes.

Fleming's and Proulx's tool metaphors exhibit a measure of the irrational and mystical, also. In Fleming's case with visual aids, he sometimes refers to the experience of seeing his characters like a messianic vision: "In a swirling moment I suddenly saw the story that had eluded me for so long" (63) and, "[i]n this whirling kaleidoscope Teddy Fleming as the immortal sergeant virtually vanished" (62)—both of which call to mind Yeats's gyre and vorticism, both of which find their roots in mysticism. Annie Proulx's description of the "rough, tumbling crowd, the lone walkers and the voluble talkers, the high lonesome singers" who all write and leave her "messages" to read, too, recalls the religious tradition of receiving a message or someone speaking through another person, suggesting that her tooling around with tool metaphors carries another (perhaps unintended) implication—that writing can take on a religious cast, at times allowing her to hear the "messages" from people who are not present.

The state of "galvanic repose" for Ford, the visions of Fleming, and Proulx's voices all suggest that there is more going on with these writers than just the mastery of a tool or system. For these writers, instrumental metaphors suggest a way that writing is related to using a shovel or recharging the imagination like a battery. However, the metaphors also perhaps draw attention away from the fact that the writers are at a loss to explain exactly how it is they write. In other words, the essays in which the instrumental metaphors appear still appeal to older conceptions of inspiration that rely on a religious or mystical understanding of the term.

Another essay from the collection further illustrates the way in which certain instrumental metaphors can function to support a view of writing that is more

complicated than simply the ability to learn how to use a tool or master a system and might, instead, be dependent upon things which the writers do not understand, taking on elements of the religious. Carolyn Chute, the author of *The Beans of Egypt Maine*, begins her essay, "How Can You Create Fiction When Reality Comes to Call?" with abrupt framing: "This is a very personal and uplifting story of my life as a writer. I will include intimate confessions. The following is a typical day in my life" (35). The text that follows is marked by a style designed to leave the reader feeling rushed and out of breath. Chute deletes most definite and indefinite articles and pairs subjects and verbs tightly together. She keeps paragraphs short when she uses paragraphs (often she uses one sentence paragraphs). The sentence lengths are short, almost telegraphic. The description conveys the intimate chaos of a swarming household, complete with a wailing typewriter:

Guest leaves after another cup of tea.

Dogs line up for their heartworm pills.

Clock coo coos seven times.

Typewriter screams.

I do some dishes and take my bath and clock coo coos eight times and typewriter screams, and one of the Scotties starts to have a grand mal seizure. I hold her so she won't smash her skull on the floor.

Truck pulls up in the yard. Another guest, this a person who has read my book (the one with all the violence and class rage); and she comes in and sits in a rocker after we drive all the barking dogs out the

dog door, except for the one that is dizzy and wet from her seizure, Florence, who I hold.

Husband goes out to split wood. Person tells me her name again and how hard she and her husband work, and yet they are losing everything and experiencing depression and rage, which they never experienced before. They have always been able to "keep up."

Typewriter screams.

I hear nine coo coos.

"Tea?" I ask the guest.

I hold Florence under one arm, make the tea.

Husband rushes in and tells me that Helen has been eating dirt again. This could mean an emergency trip to the vet's to have her pumped out. Helen is one of the Scotties. (37-38)

The typewriter is the baby of the house, demanding attention even while "mother" Chute must also attend to dogs, husband, guests, household—all of which are foregrounded by the coo-cooing clock that keeps announcing the fact that the day is passing the mother by without having accomplished any of her writing tasks. Throughout the course of the essay, the typewriter screams over and over again: "Typewriter with page 1994 of novel screams from another room: I WANT YOU" (35); "Typewriter is starting to gasp and moan" (36); "Typewriter screams" (37); "Upstairs the typewriter is squealing and howling" (37); and, "Typewriter is thumping on the ceiling above" (41).

It is within this "system" of caring for a child (the novel) in the busy household that Chute calls her writing life. Yet, she adamantly attests that she must have solitude in order to write: "I am a person who can't teach writing or make a living in any public way, as I get confused when interrupted or overstimulated. In a classroom or crowded room, I all but blank out" (36). This presents an interesting contradiction: the material circumstances of her life are both overstimulating and the source of constant interruption. Yet, she indeed does write (because we are reading her words), but *when* she does so is mysterious, as if she is outside her life looking in and narrating what is going on like a higher being. Also, given that Chute is a writer whose subjects are class, community, and feminism, it would be difficult to imagine her writing from an isolated vantage point. Her writing (the way it comes about) in this system metaphor is obscured by mystery. The reader is left to assume that Chute writes somewhat *without* her willing.

Quests and Hunts

On the continuum between the writers who describe the act of writing using instrumental metaphors and those who embrace the more mysterious aspects of inspiration are the writers for whom inspiration is a *thing* they have to find, much like an artifact. Like Carolyn Chute describes in "How Can You Create Fiction When Reality Comes to Call?", the psychological state required of the writing process is often in opposition to the quotidian and must be sought. While the thing itself—inspiration—remains shrouded in mystery like the Holy Grail, the way to go about finding it is

becomes an activity for which strategies can be employed successfully. Because these writers often discuss the ways they go about finding inspiration, the metaphors they use can be described as quest metaphors. For example, Carl Hiaasen writes in "Real Life, That Bizarre and Brazen Plagiarist," that he was trying to decide how to kill one of his villains in a recent novel when he decided to look in the newspaper for inspiration. He found a story about dolphins that had been attacking tourists' crotches and became inspired. His character was molested to death by a dolphin. He comments, "Every writer scrounges for inspiration in different places, and there's no shame in raiding the headlines" (90).

Hiaasen's remarks are similar to Annie Proulx's comments about "digging" for inspiration at yard sales and back roads. He draws from the same class of metaphors—instrumental metaphors—since a quest is a kind of system. However, Hiaasen's metaphor differs in tenor. Instead of the *imagination* being the tenor, as it is most instrumental metaphors, the tenor of his metaphor when he "raids" the headlines or "scrounges" for inspiration is an *idea* or *plot*. The distinction is key because it removes the seat of writing from the person of the writer with whom the imagination resides. Instead, writing is a matter of finding ideas in the material world. Quest metaphors, when they are related to writing practices, indicate a movement away from the agency of the writer. Compared to the metaphors in the previous section of the chapter in which the imagination served as tenor, the quest metaphor implies that the writer is not entirely responsible for his or her writing—it is no longer "in" her or him but is somewhere out in the world.

The stress on *ideas* and the writer's quest for them often results in discussion of writing in which "getting an idea" becomes the key for the entire writing process. For these writers, the elusiveness of writing is all about figuring out *what* to write. Allegra Goodman in "Calming the Inner Critic and Getting to Work," is one of the writers who uses this substitution (figuring out what to write about as a general description of the writing process). The obvious problem for her and for writers with similar perspectives who use quest metaphors is what to do when the writer doesn't know what to write about. She describes her strategies as directives in the imperative mood for the aspiring writer:

The only answer is to think and think some more, and then go out and read and look and listen some more. Do not sit and mope. Do not sigh. Do not throw up your hands and give up on the whole project. Do not go back to the drawing board. There is nothing more depressing than an empty drawing board. No, go back to the world which is where all characters originally come from. (71)

The advice involves nothing revolutionary: to immerse yourself in the world is what many writers have suggested fosters the best writing, Whitman and Sartre among them. This perspective suggests that experience serves the writer best.

In the first set of instrumental metaphors, the tool metaphors in which the tenor of the metaphor is the imagination, the writer must retreat from the world to perform the task of writing. In this way, tool metaphors in writing on writing discourse is related to the tradition in which writers are viewed to be isolated. The related images in this

perspective include the writer's garret, Woolf's a room of one's own, and the lonely cabin in the tradition of rustification as preparation for the writing life.

Quest metaphors reverse this formula. The writer goes out into the world, an adventurer. For this reason, Goodman admonishes writers against isolation:

Go back to your library, your forest, your newspapers, your family, your day job, your photos, your music, your maps and jottings of old dreams. All these are teeming with life, and life is the stuff of fiction. There are no guarantees, but if you go out where stories congregate, it's far more likely that characters will come. (74)

Goodman leaves out the obvious indirect object in the last sentence: characters will come *to you*. Here we can begin to speculate the different implications of quest metaphors and the cult of experience that suggests that all you need to go to write is *to live, to have experiences*. To find the place where stories congregate is a matter of mystery. The writer must have experiences, but more importantly recognize "the place where stories congregate" (74). Also, the quest may or may not be successful: the characters are "more likely" to come, but they are not guaranteed to do so.

On the surface, Goodman's advice seems to be practical. Indeed, she gives aspiring writers a list of things to do to get back on track when the ideas just aren't there. Like the instrumental metaphors that involved more than just "recharging" the imagination, quest metaphors involve more than experience or *doing*. The rhetoric of the quest also suggests a poetic in which the writer is a crusader, a hero. The object of the quest, the idea, is holy. The holiness of the idea and the relative *unholiness* of the

writer often results in essays on writing in which the quest for an idea overlaps with the writer's quest for salvation, a metaphoric salvation in which the sinful burden is the absent page, the unwritten work.

Goodman's advice also suggests that the act of writing is more passive than the quest metaphors suggest, and her remarks about going into the forest to find life could be considered part of another metaphor for writing, the hunt metaphor. Writing is sometimes a matter of waiting and invoking.

Beth Kephart's "As Her Son Creates his Story, a Mother Waits for the Ending," suggests a similar understanding of writing. In the essay, she teaches her son to write fiction, and the operating metaphor is her son as a frustrated hunter:

My son is on the hunt for a surprise ending. He trails up and down the hallway, sighs, goes outside, paces the yard. It is late autumn, the leaves have lately rained down from the trees, and as I watch him through the window, I feel the melancholy of the season, the melancholy of a twelve-year-old boy whose own story cruelly eludes him. (133)

Like the writer for whom Goodman writes to go out into the forests, Kephart's son can't find what it is he is looking for to write about in his story. Also like Goodman's intended audience, Kephart's son is weighted down beneath the burden of the unwritten story. Goodman refers to the depressing state of an empty drawing board, and Kephart observes the growing sadness of her son among the turning leaves of autumn, hunting season.

Instead of telling her son to go to the forest, Kephart has a different set of strategies:

We have sat with the sprawl of his long first draft between us, charting the story's terrain, hypothesizing plot. We have analyzed characters, settings, coincidences, motivations, the frissons between so many telling details; we have sketched out what-ifs with words and symbols. For weeks he has worried his mystery along with a seriousness that has become its own brand of worry, with a singleness of artistic mind that has made me wonder what I was thinking when I first seduced him toward writing. (133)

Kephart's strategies to help her son find the end of his story include those common to the workshop approach to revision that can be found in creative writing classes. They make maps and draw pictures, discuss the literary elements of the story—all within the context of the quest metaphor. They are adventurers in pursuit of a treasure, or prey. But ultimately, Kephart admits, stories are "just beyond us," causing everything a writer writes to be "subject to the scars of so much searching" (134). In other words, the strategies, preparations, worrying, and seeking do not guarantee success. The writer is subject to a force or power greater than herself or himself.

However, Kephart does describe the experience of writing when everything is clicking:

Yes, writing is almost always too hard, except for those breathtaking times when it isn't, except for those almost ineluctable moments of

deliverance when the lair's lamps burn bright, and the air carries a scent, and through the silence one hears the chitterings of language. Writing is almost always too hard, except when the story blows in. (136)

The moment of discovery in the extended quest metaphor is really an arrival, then: "the story blows in." Instead of finding a thing, it finds you. Like a moment of spiritual enlightenment or conversion, she describes hearing voices, the "chitterings of language" (136). Her description evokes a mixture of sensuality and spirituality, of deliverance and ecstasy. The voice speaks, blows in like the Holy Spirit filling the upper room, filling those in it with glossolalia.

Kephart's strategies to find the end of her son's story are the ones that most creative writing teachers would suggest—workshopping, plotting storylines, working on character development. The practical advice, like Goodman's advice, seems practical, and it is on one level. However, the quest metaphor supercedes the practical questing advice because ultimately finding the ending, a generalization of the writing process, is dependent upon the voice that blows in, the arrival of the mysterious, the ineffable. In her words, the "ineluctable moments of deliverance" (136). Again, the language of religious discourse finds itself at the heart of the mystery of inspiration. In this way, Kephart and her son are pilgrims.

The implication of quest metaphor in the discourse of writing about writing suggests the intimate relationship between the discourse of craft and the discourse of inspiration, namely because quest metaphors in these essays almost always begin with the practical. Goodman tells the writer to go back to her day job, and Kephart

hypothesizes plot with her son. In other words, there are things writers can do to help the process along. Reading these essays, the prewriting strategies suggested by Peter Elbow's believing game are called to mind. It is the realm of the imperative mood in which writing is a series of steps to accomplish, the end result being an essay, a story, a poem, a novel. However, in composition scholarship, unlike the writers on writing essays, the directives imply that results are guaranteed. Do x and you will achieve y. When creative writers use quest metaphors, it is accompanied by the idea that the strategies must be used but must be accompanied by an x factor that is undefined, except in the most vague, spiritual terms. Unlike tool metaphors, quest metaphors are not democratic. Not everyone is granted the ears to hear the story that, in Kephart's words, "blows in" (136).

Religious Metaphors for Inspiration

Even though most creative writers largely draw from instrumental and system metaphors in their writing memoirs, some writers also represent the experience of writing as one that is not the product of a set of practices or procedures but as a mysterious experience, an experience that could be characterized as ineffable or beyond rationality. Rather than (or, *in addition to*, as I will discuss) relying on instrumental metaphors for inspiration, these creative writers rely on more traditional, religious understandings of inspiration. Drawing on the Romantic mythos of the writer, inspiration is akin to the breath of God (as its etymology comports) or possession by something or someone other than the writers themselves, all of which calls into question

the subjectivity of the writer. Agency, for this class of writers, is eclipsed by the feeling, vision, or voice that inspires them, much like the experiences of those who have described a religious conversion or contact with the divine, as Timothy Clark argues in *A Theory of Inspiration* (3).

When I discussed writers who use instrumental metaphors, I included among them Thomas Fleming, from whose essay, "Instant Novels? In Your Dreams!" I cited for its extensive instrumental metaphors. Specifically, Fleming discusses the imagination in terms of a tool, a visual aid he uses while writing to imagine plots, characters, and scenes for his novels. However, his representation of the imagination is less clear cut than just his depiction of the imagination as a tool. In fact, the essay is one of a few in the collection in which the writer vacillates between an instrumental understanding of his writing process, one in which the writer discusses writing in terms that emphasize writerly control, and an understanding of his writing process that he admits is beyond his control or understanding.

For Fleming, most of the time the more mysterious aspects of the writing process involve dreams or visions of characters. His first novel began as a dream about a gigantic angel in the sea, rescuing a German U-boat: "This incredible creature embraced the dying boat in its immense arms" (60). He awoke from the dream, raced to his computer, and in an hour had written the first chapter of his 1994 novel, *Loyalties*. His essay in the *Writers on Writing* collection begins with his contemplations about the experience, and before he formulates his theory of the imagination as "intellectual tool," he speculates about the mysteriousness of his dream and the genesis of his novel:

In succeeding years I've puzzled more than once about where this vision from. It utterly defies rational analysis. I was not thinking about writing a novel about the German resistance to Hitler, which is what the book became. I had only the dimmest knowledge about these tragic patriots, gleaned from reading Anthony Cave Brown's *Bodyguard of Lies* two or three years earlier. Why did it erupt in my imagination? (61)

The most salient feature of his account rests with the classification of the idea for his novel as a vision that appeared to him out of nowhere, specifically characterizing its arrival as an "eruption." The concept of writing as "seeing" is a common one historically. Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* was the result of an opium-induced vision, for example. The idea of an "eruption," too, has historical connections, specifically to Wordsworth's description of poetry in his "Prelude" as an "overflow of powerful feelings."

Also, the experience, insists Fleming, "defies rational analysis." Rhetorically, Fleming is positioning his account of writing the first chapters of the novel as something that cannot be understood or explained, which detracts from himself as the agent or producer of the discourse. Like the burning bush, the vision of the U-boat appeared to him, and even *he* doesn't know why or wherefore it did. The account reveals Fleming's awareness that his audience might question the authenticity of this account, and he justifies the audience's doubt by representing his own doubt about the vision. It also reveals that he is aware, perhaps, of existing preconceptions about writers and how they

write. Rather than write from the position of an expert reporting the details of his project, he proceeds from the position as a co-wonderer with his audience.

Fleming's visions are related to instrumental metaphors because he is using the imagination as a tool to see, as I described earlier in the chapter. The relationship between the earlier instrumental metaphors and his religious metaphor of seeing a vision is significant because it marks a blurring between dualistic concepts of inspiration. In a single essay, Fleming shifts from instrumental metaphors to religious ones quite seamlessly. On one hand, his imagination allows him to tap into a cache of visions. On the other hand, he represents his visions as religious in tenor. With these shifting concepts of inspiration, it is possible to read his rhetorical question, "Why did it erupt in my imagination," in multiple ways: on one hand, he is questioning the *reason* or *cause* he had the vision; on the other hand, the question could be read with an emphasis on *my*—"why did it erupt in *my* imagination?"—emphasizing a perspective in which the writer is chosen. Each reading could be cited as support for a view of inspiration that is instrumental or religious. He later admonishes his reader: "Don't ask me how or why these things happen in my head" (64). Again, this could be read in the dual ways the rhetorical question can be read, the "how" being a question instrumental in nature, the "why" a question of purpose related to an idea of chosen-ness in religious discourse.

Fleming's interesting mixing of instrumental and religious metaphors is only one of many essays in the collection that mix the two classes of metaphors in the collection. Hans Koning, for example, in "Summoning the Mystery and Tragedy, but in a Subterranean Way," describes inspired writing (he calls inspired writing *serious writing*)

as the "writing that you have to write, what you hear in your mind" (139). Instead of a vision as Fleming described, Koning's inspiration is a voice he hears. Added to that is the idea of a compulsive drive, the "writing you have to write" is done as if driven to do so by something external. The word is revealed to him like holy scripture was revealed by the Holy Spirit. The writer, in these cases, is a recorder—a vessel filled with a message from God—and to write it down fulfills a divine mission or calling.

The idea of writing as a fulfillment of a calling is supported by Koning's claim that serious writing "should be committed, what they call in France *engagé*" (138). He goes on to describe what he means by this: "It means to me that if you want to write a serious novel, you should not only be out to entertain but you should also, in a hidden way, reflect on the world's justice and injustice, hope and illusion" (138). In other words, Koning's *serious writing* is the kind of writing that is somewhat moralistic in nature, the kind of writing that perhaps requires divine authorship. And as divine authorship usually means that the writer should not take into account the opinions of mere mortals, Koning says, "Don't worry about what editors or reviewers may like or not like," because "[y]our own judgement is independent. You don't accept any suggested change except where you made a factual or grammatical mistake. My motto has been through all these years 'Not a comma'" (139).

All of these ideas suggest that Koning's account of inspiration is one that relies heavily on religious concepts of inspiration; however, because Koning considers serious writing an undertaking of the "world's justice and injustice, hope and illusion," his

version of inspiration is closely tied to a constructionist view of authorship. To illustrate his point, he draws from literary history:

No writer can float in a void above the battle; there are always links. There is a link between the potato famine and James Joyce's *Ulysses*. There is a link between the heroes and heroines of Henry James and the basics of their society; if they had to run off to nine-to-five jobs, they would have lost most of their literary interest. There is even a link between the portraits of Rembrandt and the plundering of the Indies by the Dutch East India Company. To be above politics (politics in the widest sense) doesn't seem meritorious to me. I believe one can only be that way through total indifference to our world, or appalling incomprehension. (139)

The writer, in other words, *should* share these links with culture and history; however, Koning is clear that a writer *can be* indifferent or ignorant of culture and history. The serious writer chooses to be in the world, to be engaged in the world around him, which isn't a clear constructionist viewpoint. In a constructionist view of authorship, producers of discourse are subject to cultural influence like ambient light, absorbing the influences and automatically giving off his or her own radiance, a *mélange* of influences. The process isn't one that depends on a writer's sense of calling or morality; it is automatic, amoral, and absolute. It is a system, or so we are told by cultural theorists, and one that has its own set of instrumental metaphors tied to it. For example, I've used a photosynthesis metaphor to explain it while Koning relies on the metaphor of chains.

Another common metaphor in social construction is digestion: one consumes language and then produces language.

Koning's inspiration for serious writing, then, mixes the religious concept of inspiration as hearing a voice ("what you hear in your mind," according to Koning) and a modified constructionist view of authorship that operates systematically like links in a chain (his "links" in the previous passage). As it is in the case of the previous writer, Fleming, it would be a misreading to classify Koning as a writer who relies strictly on religious metaphors or one who relies strictly on instrumental metaphors. The key sentence in which he defines serious writing—"It is writing that you have to write, what you hear in your mind"—could be cited to support either a religious or a social constructionist perspective on inspiration. In religious discourse, hearing a voice is tantamount to receiving a message from God, one that, if it involves commands, must be followed. In the language of theory, at least from the point of view of social constructionists, you write as a matter of course: you consume language so you must produce language, the latter bearing the mark of the former. Although the two seem to occupy two distinct poles of thought—the ideal and the material—they share a space in Koning's description, suggesting that they share a relationship to one another.

Roxana Robinson's essay, "If You Invent the Story, You're the First to See How It Ends," is another example of a writer who draws from both an instrumental view of inspiration and a view of inspiration that relies on religious metaphor. In addition to voices and visions as in Fleming's and Koning's essay, Robinson views writing as a purging or freeing of impurities or irritants, a process of *sanctification*, to use the

religious term. According to the doctrine of sanctification in Judeo-Christian theology, a believer undergoes a continuous process of becoming more like Christ throughout life. In one passage, her metaphors get even more complicated: the irritant or "sin" is represented as a virus causing physiological symptoms, the diseased body in need of cleansing in order to be balanced, healthy—spiritually and physically:

I write about the things that trouble me. I write about the things that disturb me, the things that won't let me alone, the things that are eating slowly into my brain at three in the morning, the things that unbalance my world. Sometimes these are things I've said or done; sometimes they're things I've heard about or seen. Sometimes they're only a sentence, sometimes scenes, sometimes complete narratives, I carry these things around inside my head until I'm compelled to write them down to get rid of them. I sit down and begin." (193)

Her account shares with Fleming and Koning the idea that writing depends on hearing and seeing (she hears sentences and sees scenes), an idea that is related to religious revelations. She also contends that those sentences and scenes inhabit her; her writing arises from "the things that are eating slowly into my brain"—a compulsion that is strangely biological and inexplicable, unseen. Like mad cow disease, writing (and the subject of writing) is represented as a kind of virus infecting the writer, making her unbalanced. In other words, for Fleming and Koning, the seat of inspiration lies in the eyes and the ears. While Robinson does use those familiar concepts of inspiration, she

more specifically identifies the seat of inspiration as organically systemic. Something inhabits her body, and it is described in physiological terms.

This is a new understanding of the physicality of religious experience and the experience of writing when compared to Fleming and Koning, most notably because the source of inspiration is negative. She doesn't describe the experience as pleasurable. Instead, it is akin to the effect of sin on the spiritual body, causing the need to purge or cleanse herself of the irritant. Because words are involved, another way to think about the writing process is the religious understanding of *confession*—bringing the spiritual body back into a state of balance by iterating the sin.

What links her concept of inspiration as physiological irritant or virus to Fleming's and Koning's concept of visions and voices, however, is similar because the classification of the irritant or sin as a virus diminishes the agency of the writer. Unlike sin, which is the result of *choice*, she contracts an illness whose transmission is beyond her control. The element of writerly control enters the metaphoric equation only when she finally must "free herself" of the virus by writing, a process she likens to forgiveness (193). "Then," she says, "the anxieties subside and let me sleep" (193). This relief is only accomplished when the "troubling moment, the unforgivable statement, the irreversible act" is written in such a way that makes it possible to imagine characters "whose behavior I can forgive" (193).

The instrumental side of Robinson's account of writing concerns her primary subject in her creative writing, the family, "a rich literary source." Her central metaphor for the family as it is related to inspiration is a river:

You can't escape: those early feelings run at full spate for your entire lifetime, even if you can't bear to think of them. Even if you refuse to acknowledge them, they are still there, pulsing and coursing below the surface, in silence and darkness, like an underground river. They govern our surface lives more than we think, and at any moment they may rise up from the darkness into full view, where they will explode into foam and torrents. (194-195)

Later, she discusses writing as discovering and absorbing the stories. Inspiration, in the case of the river metaphor, is a tool that helps her access the "inexhaustible" source of family subject matter, much like the shovel in Annie Proulx's essay.

Because of the inescapability of family bonds and the fact that identity formation is characterized as subject to the experience of the family relationship, Robinson is emphasizing "family" material as common, like *topoi* in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*; thus, *everyone* can draw from this source of inspiration. On one hand, her subjects inhabit her like viruses, like sin, and compel her to write them down in order to regain spiritual and physiological balance. On the other hand, her subject of the family is one from which everyone could draw as source material for their writing, a commonplace, which grants agency to the writer as the discoverer of stories. Robinson balances these two ideas, shifting between them, the source of writing the waters of life below the surface of the skin, in need of purification by the hands of the writer, stories that need to be written "exactly right" (197).

In the two volumes of essays, one essay stands out as relying most exclusively on religious metaphors of inspiration, Susan Richards Shreve's "A Storyteller Finds Comfort in a Cloak of Anonymity." The essay begins with an account of trying to publish "a book from the point of view of a young black woman who has barricaded herself in her college dorm room pursued by a man, either real or imagined, who finally materializes as the father she has never known" (225). Because Shreve assumed the voice of a young African-American woman and her publishing house thought publishing the book would be risky for a number of other reasons, it was turned down for publication. Shreve chose to take on a pseudonym and was successful publishing the novel with another publishing house. She continued writing under a pseudonym because it made writing "[t]he pure, uncomplicated, unself-conscious delight in telling a story" that she had experienced as a child: "unnamed, unidentified, unacknowledged" (226). She describes writing as recapturing "the sense of freedom" that she'd had writing her first book, a "feeling of wonder, abandon, faith and—yes—innocence" (227). Later in the essay, she states, "So much of what we do as writers, no matter how grounded in the particular a story might be, is a leap of faith" (227).

Taken together, the examples of religious discourse in the essay point to Shreve's central metaphor for writing as Christian salvation—the desire "to disappear," to become "unself-conscious," a subsequent "leap of faith" and "abandon" that results in "purity" and "innocence" (226-227). Her account of writing adheres so closely to the idea of Christian salvation that it almost collapses into an instrumental understanding of inspiration: the writer must *work* to gain salvation. The writer must "leap" and

"abandon," for example. To write is to undergo a process of sublimating the ego (in this case, a selfish desire to receive praise). At the close of the essay, the collapse of the religious into the instrumental is completed by her use of a common instrumental metaphor in discussions of writing—physical exercise:

I'm not an athlete, but I do understand what it means to push against your own sense of endurance until a rush of energy takes you just beyond what you thought possible. Writing is like that, especially writing outside the lines. Not always, not often, but when the rush comes, we are taken to a place at once strange and familiar, a place we didn't know we knew. (229)

Like a runner's high, the feeling of writing is a "rush" of energy that extends the writer "beyond what you thought possible" (229). Here, writing is something you do over and over again, and eventually you will experience the "rush," something everyone can do if they just run or write enough (229). Shreve, in pushing her religious metaphor for inspiration to an absolute, ends up transforming it into an instrumental metaphor.

For that reason, Shreve's essay most accurately describes the relationship between religious concepts of inspiration and instrumental concepts of inspiration. Namely, they are not disparate categories; rather, the more exclusively one concept of inspiration is used, the other concept is implied. If the relationship were represented graphically, with each concept on either end of a spectrum, then the more you move to each pole, the more the concept of inspiration bends back toward the other seemingly opposite concept of inspiration. If you rely almost exclusively on religious metaphors, then you have circled back to an instrumental understanding of inspiration. For

example, Fleming's religious visions become the imagination's tools, visual aids, which can be directed and (somewhat) controlled by the writer. On the other hand, a reliance on instrumental metaphors makes the process automatic, completely out of the control of the writer.

Instrumentalism and Inspiration in Composition Scholarship

To illustrate my point, consider Barrett J. Mandel's "The Writer Writing Is Not at Home," the article I referred to in the introduction of the chapter as being the more mysterious or religious concept of inspiration. Mandel characterizes inspiration as "an insight or illumination or creation" (373). He goes on to define "insight":

But insight: what is it, and where? An insight is the flash which organizes time and space anew, occurring when least expected. It is as if consciousness, so occupied with its own dim concerns, never notices that the light surrounding the house is shining steadily and brightly. One of the astonishing elements of an insight is the speed with which it suddenly appears (it has an 'all-at-onceness' about it) and the way it gradually fades into the fabric of so-called reality as it is woven in by consciousness.
(373-374)

Insight, a synonym for inspiration, is a "flash" that "suddenly appears," much like a vision is religious discourse. Mandel's article suggests that writing is the result of an unteachable encounter with magic or the divine. However, the article is concerned with the role of writing teachers as facilitators of insights:

It does not work to teach coherence, unity, and emphasis, since these follow insight. They do not precede it. What works is to stimulate insights by creating contexts in which they are likely to occur. (375)

Some of those "contexts," he goes on that say, include the practices of free writing, rote writing ("the copying of well-written prose passages, selected by the student on the basis of taste and appreciation, and written into a copy book"), modeling, and parodying (376). The goal of these activities is "to create a climate in which nonconscious illumination can occur" (376). The metaphor shifts here. The "flash" here is more like a seed that requires the right kind of environment in which to grow, a "climate" in Mandel's terms. Inspiration can be invited, in other words. There is an element of the instrumental in Mandel's otherwise mysterious concept of inspiration.

To further illustrate my point that concepts of inspiration (both religious and instrumental) co-exist in discourse about writing, consider James A. Berlin's description of epistemic rhetoric in *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985* (what he later called social-epistemic rhetoric). Epistemic rhetoric, according to Berlin, contends, "is the antithesis of the positivistic contention that reality is empirical, with language simply reporting what is determined outside its domain" (165). In other words, knowledge is entirely in the realm of the symbolic:

The epistemic position implies that knowledge is not discovered by reason alone, that cognitive and affective processes are not separate, that intersubjectivity is a condition of all knowledge, and that the contact of minds affects knowledge. (165)

The "contact of minds" is later described as a kind of system, a dialectic: "the dialectic of language between the writer and the material world" "accompanied by a dialectic between the writer and the discourse community in which the writer is taking part" (172). The interplay of world, writer, and discourse community mediated by language is the basis of the epistemic system.

According to Berlin, epistemic rhetoric contends that truth, in its religious sense as a knowledge that exists independently from human understanding, does not exist. Instead, truth is a linguistic construct. Epistemic rhetoric, in this regard, more than any other perspective in composition studies, is further away from religious concepts of inspiration. However, just as the previous passage demonstrates, the discourse of epistemic rhetoric, especially in its discussion of dialectic, devolves into the discourse of religious inspiration. For example, it emphasizes that knowledge isn't based on "reason alone" and involves the "contact of minds" (165). Aside from a religious understanding of a spiritual communion with others, it is difficult to understand what is meant by a "contact of minds" that isn't based on "reason alone." Quoting from Richard Ohmann's "In Lieu of a New Rhetoric," Berlin continues his discussion of the epistemic dialectic:

The second characteristic of modern rhetoric is that it regards the discipline as "the *pursuit* –and not simply the transmission—of truth and right." Truth becomes "not a lump of matter decorated and disguised, but finally delivered intact; rather it is a web of shifting complexities whose pattern emerges only in the process of writing, and is in fact modified by the writing (form is content)." A corollary of this stance is that the

"writer does not begin in secure command of his message, and try to deck it out as beguilingly as possible; he sets his own ideas and feelings in order only as he writes." (169)

In this passage, writing *is* mysterious, and can be compared to the representations of writing by writers who use quest metaphors. The emphasis on pursuit, for example, is one way that epistemic rhetoric is similar to the quest metaphors. Also, in this passage, the description of knowledge as the "pattern" that "emerges" calls to mind the metaphor of vision in the more religious articulations of inspiration. Finally, the description of the writer as "not in secure command of his message" similarly invokes the religious discourse of inspiration.

Within his discussion of epistemic rhetoric, Berlin also quotes a passage from Kenneth Pike's, Alton Becker's, and Richard Young's *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change* to further define the dialectical interchange that is the heart of epistemic rhetoric:

Constantly changing, bafflingly complex, the external world is not a neat, well-ordered place replete with meaning, but an enigma requiring interpretation. This interpretation is the result of a transaction between events in the external world and the mind of the individual—between the world "out there" and the individual's previous experience, knowledge, values, attitudes, and desires. Thus the mirrored world is not just the sum total of eardrum rattles, retinal excitations, and so on; it is a creation that reflects the peculiarities of the perceiver as well as the peculiarities of what is perceived. (25 as qtd in Berlin 172)

In this passage, the language of mystery is evident. The world is an "enigma" in need of interpretation, for example. Interpretation is called a "transaction" but one whose "sum" is more than its parts. In fact, the definition of interpretation whose "sum" is more than its parts approaches a transcendental meaning of the writing process: "it is a creation" (25 as qtd in Berlin 172).

Given the analysis of the essays from the *New York Times Writers on Writing* collection and the metaphor the writers used, we can draw certain conclusions about the common characteristics of both the instrumental concepts of inspiration and the religious concepts of inspiration. At each end of the spectrum, where instrumental metaphors are pushed to their absolute end and religious metaphors are pushed to an absolute end, common characteristics about the writing process emerge:

1. **A diminished sense of the writer's control over the writing process**—In instrumental metaphors the process of writing becomes automatic whereas religious metaphors become to depend upon the efforts of the writer. For each, the shifting degrees of authorial agency indicates a diminishment of the role of agency in the initial phases of the writing process.

2. **Indifference to the desires of readers in the initial phases of composition**—None of the writers analyzed reported that inspiration had anything to do with audience awareness. When readers and the desires of readers

were addressed, it was to express a wish that readers would like the material OR to insist that a concern for readers would dilute the power of the work.

3. A respect for the material and subsequent finished work as *given to the writer*—As the essays showed, even writers who utilize instrumental metaphors acknowledge that they felt a sense that their writing was the result of something more than their just their efforts, especially those who understand ideas as things that have been found as in the quest metaphors.

4. A general view that the process of composition cannot be explained completely and thus requires the use of both instrumental and religious metaphors to describe it—This characteristic perhaps best conveys the value of the continuum between instrumental and religious concepts of inspiration because the writers whose discourse collapses into alternate understandings of inspiration reveals how we might be mistaken as teachers and scholars when we insist on *one* version of inspiration *or* deny the presence of inspiration altogether. From the essays, we see that those who draw on instrumental metaphors also draw on religious metaphors, and the two begin to bleed into one another. They are aware of an audience that realizes the nature of writing isn't as clear cut as just a imagining it as the use of a drill or the appearance of a vision. Acknowledging the mysterious elements in writing only serves to encourage writers (students) who can't explain it either.

Another way to think about the relationship between the differing views of inspiration is to consider the nature of metaphor itself as relying on notions of both instrumentalism and the religious: something understood in terms of something else. An effective metaphor is a matter of belief, a leap of faith to connect one thing to the other. In other words, to explain the imagination is like a drill that needs to be recharged after it is used, the audience needs to believe certain things: the imagination requires energy that lies outside the body, the energy can be replenished, and a person can direct the energy (in this case, a drill) to help accomplish a task. For the metaphor to be effective, in other words, a transcendent moment must occur—the imagination *is* a drill so the imagination takes on the attributes of the drill. The value of the continuum in this sense is an understanding of language and the rhetoricity of metaphor.

Another value of the continuum is the way it reveals the function of quest and hunt metaphors and their potential effectiveness for student writers because of their overlapping understandings of multiple concepts of inspiration. Writing, within the quest metaphor family, is purposeful, meaningful. Although they still retain some elements of the mysterious, quest metaphors suggest that writers are able to employ strategies to get to the object of the quest. This perspective also grants the writer the most agency over the control of the writing process compared to perspectives that stress either instrumental or religious concepts of inspiration. For instance, in a quest, the writer takes on the role of the "hero." Also, quest metaphors, while mixing the instrumental and religious, they do not collapse into an understanding of writing that is automatic.

After analyzing the way the different concepts of inspiration used by practicing creative writers, the objections to it seem to be based on a very superficial understanding of the way the term is used by writers. While some writers discussed flashes of illumination or dreams, those who did so represented the experience as one that occurred within the *process* of writing rather than the "moment" of composition that Brodkey argued was part of a Modernist conception of the writer in "Modernism and the Scene of Writing." Also, the writers' concept of inspiration often involved ideas of borrowing and social engagement instead of originality and authenticity, a position argued by Lester Faigley in "Competing Theories of Process: A Critique and a Proposal." Another common objection to the use of the term inspiration, that inspiration encourages students to view writing as an emotional endeavor, also can be considered as an objection based on either a superficial understanding of the way practicing writers understand inspiration.

Rather than sounding "hokey," the continuing use of the term inspiration and the religious discourse that it draws from reveals a profound awareness of the limitations of relying on a purely instrumental approach to writing. Brent Royster, in "Inspiration, Creativity, and Crisis," like many scholars, argues that "[c]laims of inspiration discount the vast milieu of cultural influences that defines creative work" (30). However, the essays that discuss inspiration within the writing process acknowledge cultural influences. In many ways, the writers' accounts of their experiences writing, because they do not estrange the instrumental and the religious, seem to be more *real* than other models of the writing process. With this in mind, it is arguable that composition

scholarship would benefit from a re-evaluation of inspiration as an element in the writing process that isn't estranged from instrumental metaphors for writing. Also, as the essays on writing demonstrate, a writer's metaphors for writing and inspiration help to define the writer's own sense of purpose and value, two things that students in composition classes mostly lack when it comes to their views on themselves as writers and about the writing they produce. If writing scholarship began to recognize that reflective writing on the writing process invests writers with purpose and value, scholarship might also begin to consider students' metaphors for writing as a basis on which to build sound theories of writing and to consider the analysis of student metaphors for writing as an activity that is worthy of addressing in a classroom setting.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION:

CREATIVITY AND THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

Writing is busy idleness.—Goethe (11 Winokur)

The topic for this dissertation arose partly out of what I view as disparities between my practices as a creative writer and the scholarship on writing process that I (tried to) use as a basis for my pedagogical practices in the composition classroom. Like David W. Smit, author of *The End of Composition Studies*, I noticed that

much of the discussion and application of the "process approach" seems to imply a fairly straightforward linear model of composition—invention, planning, drafting, revising, editing—and we can all cite exceptions to this model in our own experience and in the published accounts of professional writers. (63)

For the first several years I taught composition, I blamed my lack of knowledge for the disparities. I thought my own practices *must be* substandard or unprofessional compared to what was described as The Writing Process. At the time, I was unpublished (aside from a student-run literary magazine at a community college), and I was a new graduate student enamored of theory, scholarship, and the institutional credentials of composition scholars in the field. I reasoned with myself that the experts knew what they were talking about, and I should try to get on board with their theories and pedagogical

practices. As a graduate student, I read and learned much about composition. I gained valuable knowledge and valuable insights about the composing process and the ways composition has been taught since it was institutionalized more than a century ago. The unease I felt subsided.

That is, until a funny exchange I had with a fellow graduate student. We were finishing up our last seminar papers to complete our coursework and finally starting to work on our dissertations. We were lamenting the repetition of specific words in our own papers and in the articles and books we were reading to prepare our papers: *reveal*, *subvert*, *agency*, *ostensibly*, etc. We called these words "sounds from the academic swamp." We pictured a swamp with frogs on lily pads, each with their own academic word to rib-bit over and over again. I relate this story because it is one that many of us share: the moment, a tipping point of sorts, when we realize that we're smart enough to recognize disparities, problems, gaps in scholarship—the moment we finally feel confident enough about our knowledge of the field to say, *hey, this isn't right*. I started to think about those disparities again.

While writing the chapters of this dissertation, I began to think about the ways the rhetorical situation of the composition classroom, specifically the constraints of the composition classroom, *impede* creativity. Composition is a required or *core curriculum* class consisting of an instructor (sometimes a graduate student, sometimes an adjunct instructor, rarely a seasoned professor or full-time faculty member, at least not in large or high-prestige research universities) and students numbering 15-30, who are usually in one of their first few semesters as college students and usually are taking full loads at the

institution (at least 12 hours, although 15 is becoming a new norm for institutions offering a flat rate tuition). Many of those students participate in extracurricular activities or hold down jobs to supplement their incomes.

Over the course of the 14-16 week semester, students compose 3-5 essays, all of which have specific assignment requirements, including due dates. Sometimes the topics for the essays are given. Sometimes a specific mode is required (narration, example, definition, process, etc). Even though modes have fallen out of favor in composition scholarship, they are still assigned in many programs, especially the high number of programs not directed or staffed by composition specialists. Composition classes are usually smaller than their core curriculum lecture-based counterparts (history, etc.), and for this reason the classrooms are usually smaller, consisting of individual desks or tables, perhaps computers if they are taught in a computer classroom. Even on workshop days, however, anyone passing by the classroom could look in and recognize the power structure at play by the design of the classroom: rows of desks facing toward the front, a lectern and chalkboard at the front of the room, perhaps "no food or drink" signs hung neatly on monochromatic walls. In some classrooms, like the ones I taught my first composition class in, the desks are bolted to the floor. From the hallway, you could see the doorways of dozens of identical classrooms stretched out in hive-like fashion around the corner of a building named (appropriately) Blocker Building.

All of these elements contribute to the overall rhetorical situation of the composition classroom. The exigencies are multi-dimensional: the exigence created by the course's required status, the exigence created by each writing assignment (a

fabricated exigence that students often comment on when I explain the concept: for example, when I ask what about this issue requires your address of it *now*, a student responded—*because I have a paper to write*). The persons involved, an instructor and students, including their roles and differences in power, are part of the rhetorical situation. After all, instructors issue grades to students, a fact that we as instructors sometimes forget while students never seem to forget it. The location, the classroom, as well as where the students write while they are away from the classroom, are also part of the rhetorically situated classroom, as the work of Nedra Reynolds has shown.

The constraints of the conventional composition classroom work in collusion to hinder student writers' creativity. This dissertation has identified active and passive writing practices by many professional creative writers. Among the many practices identified, three of them are repeated by multiple writers: the practice of idleness, the practice of *diligent indolence*, and the practice of physical activity or exercise as part of their daily writing process (specifically rhythmic activities, such as walking). The way composition courses are designed and executed as part of an institutional program make the possibility of implementing these practices (or even encouraging our students to practice them) highly unlikely and impractical. As Donald Murray has noted: "often these conditions and the assignments [of writing classes] are inappropriate if you know what writers do and how they do it" (xiv). In this concluding chapter of the dissertation, I discuss the practice of idleness, the practice of diligent indolence, and the practice of physical activity and show how, in the case of these limited but important aspects of creativity, the composition classroom *undermines* creativity.

What do I mean by creativity? The term is highly contested, as Wendy Bishop points out in *Keywords in Creative Writing*—so contested, in fact, that I have avoided the term until now. Creativity is usually defined along two lines: originality and functionality. Since every writing task or problem has its own set of constraints, every act of composition constitutes an original solution to a specific problem. Functionality is the aspect of creativity that is impeded by the rhetorical situation of the composition classroom. In terms of functionality, creativity means the creative pose, an attitude that fosters the act of composing. It includes a sense of ownership over what the writer is producing, a heightened level of engagement or motivation, and also the ability to complete a writing assignment to the writers' own satisfaction. In this way, *creative* isn't an antipode of *analytical*. The critical thinking skills that students develop over the course of their education are creative skills: the creative person is someone who applies "a logic, method, or set of techniques to a given domain of expertise" (Simonton qtd. in Bishop 71). In a more reflective sense, creativity also implies a relationship to the self: "personal creativity is a continuous process of bringing forth a changing vision of oneself, and of oneself in relation to the world" (Miller qtd. in Bishop 75).

Studies on creativity have identified five steps in the creative process: 1) a period of *preparation*, during which a person is "becoming immersed, consciously or not, in a set of problematic issues that are interesting and arouse curiosity"; 2) a period of *incubation*, "during which ideas churn around below the threshold of consciousness" and "unusual connections are likely to be made"; 3) a moment of *insight* or "Aha!" moment (like the instant Archimedes stepped into the bath and realized the answer to his

problem); 4) a period of *evaluation*, during which a person evaluates the importance of the problem; and finally, 5) *elaboration*, which in the case of writing means the execution, the act of writing (Csikszentmihalyi 79). Even though this model has problems similar to the problems of the writing process as they have been described by composition scholars (mainly due to the prescriptive nature and linearity of the steps), the steps in the creative process provides a useful starting point to discuss the problems with creativity in the composition classroom.

The Practice of Idleness

The watershed moment for Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* occurred while she was doodling in the British Museum after having given up on discovering a writing topic:

But while I pondered I had unconsciously, in my listlessness, in my desperation, been drawing a picture where I should, like my neighbour, have been writing a conclusion. I had been drawing a face, a figure. It was the face and the figure of Professor von X engaged in writing his monumental work entitled THE MENTAL, MORAL, AND PHYSICAL INFERIORITY OF THE FEMALE SEX. (31)

She goes on to say: "Drawing pictures was an idle way of finishing an unprofitable morning's work. Yet it is in our idleness, in our dreams, that the submerged truth sometimes comes to the top." (31). Idleness, for Woolf, is the opposite of work; it is time spent aimlessly.

Woolf's realization that idleness yielded ideas lays bare a contradiction: one invents when thinking and doing something other than *trying* to invent. A writing task is at hand, but it is laid aside mentally. In those idle moments *when one isn't thinking about the writing problem* (like taking a shower), the solution occurs. Of idleness and invention, Annie Dillard says, "I walked to the water. I played the hateful recorder, washed dishes, drank coffee, stood on a beach log, watched bird," until she could begin writing. The process "could take all morning, or all month" (50). Like Whitmanian loafing, beginning to write sometimes means the writer must *stop* thinking about what needs to be done.

The necessity of idleness described by writers such as Woolf and Dillard corresponds to the period of incubation prescribed in the creativity models. It is the most mysterious part of the creative process, and partly for the mysterious nature of it, is considered the *most* creative of the steps. Csikszentmihalyi refers to the incubation step as a "dark" space because a person usually "does not remember any intermediate conscious mental steps" before arriving at a solution or idea (98). He quotes physicist Freeman Dyson on the relationship between incubation and idleness:

I am fooling around not doing anything, which probably means that this is a creative period, although of course you don't know until afterward. I think that it is very important to be idle. I mean, they always say that Shakespeare was idle between plays. I am not comparing myself to Shakespeare, but people who keep themselves busy all of the time are generally not creative. So I am not ashamed of being idle. (98-99)

Two things are important in this passage. First, busyness is opposed to idleness. Second, the author (a physicist) reveals a bias against idleness through his hedging in the last sentence. The last sentence reflects the cultural bias against idleness. He is saying, look, I know idleness is a pejorative concept, but I can justify idleness if it is in the service of creativity. In other words, the author believes idleness deserves legitimacy.

Here it is important to note that the demands of the composition classroom mirror the demands and values not only of the university but also of the demands and values of our culture (like the ones expressed by Dyson): efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness. Scott McCracken in "Idleness for All," notes that "[a]cademic life is part of a larger culture of work that values visible products and perpetual motion" (65). The student is always doing in the composition class—attending lectures, studying for tests, writing drafts for papers, workshopping drafts of his or her peers, researching topics, preparing works cited pages, and "reflecting" (another activity that is required by most composition teachers, although rarely with the results that true reflection offers). As a teacher, I feel obligated to cram-pack my syllabus with work because I believe we (the class) have a lot of ground to cover over the course of one semester. I don't want to waste any time. I want to see *results*. I want to see drafts, revised drafts, and responsiveness to my comments on students' previous drafts and essays. It is worth noting that Lakoff and Johnson identified the TIME IS MONEY metaphor as a root conceptual metaphor, a metaphor that even I draw on when thinking about things such as course design (*wasting* time or *spending* time, for example).

A well-intentioned teacher such as myself, however, manages to efface the creativity necessary for students of composition when busyness takes over the class. Take, for example, "prewriting activities"—invention strategies or heuristics designed, like brainstorming or thought-mapping, to elicit student responses. Prewriting, which encompasses four of the five steps in the creative process according to creativity studies, is a stage in the writing process similar to every stages of the writing process—*now do x and you will get to step y*. Another strategy I use when students appear in my office in need of a topic is to look of the UPENN calls for papers. The message I'm inadvertently sending students is that invention can be faked. If you can't find a topic, then look for someone or something to give it to you. I have never recommended idleness.

Although process pedagogy insists that the writing process is recursive, it does not acknowledge that sometimes a writer must be *passive*. The writer, sometimes, should be *idle*, according to what other writers have to say. However, to suggest idleness to students would reveal the profound artificiality of the composition class: the fake exigencies, the due dates that reflect a university semester calendar (having a few essays graded before the drop date so students can decide whether to stay in the class or withdraw, for example), and the idea that if students attend to the procedures outlined in the writing *process* then a *product* is guaranteed (the final draft of an essay). The draft is due Friday, so hurry up!

The Practice of Diligent Indolence

In Richard Ford's essay for the *New York Times Writers on Writing Series*, "Goofing Off While the Muse Recharges," he describes his strategy for getting started on a writing project:

I simply choose to do it [writing], often when I can't be persuaded to do anything else; or when a dank feeling of uselessness comes over me, and I'm at a loss and have time on my hands, such as when the World Series is over. I would argue that only in this state of *galvanic repose* am I prepared to address the big subjects great literature requires: the affinities between bliss and bales, etc. (67, emphasis mine)

The phrase "galvanic repose" is the key to understanding this passage. *Galvanic* is associated with surprise and illumination. *Repose*, on the other hand, is a state of peace. Together, the phrase reflects an attitude of expectant idleness very similar to what John Keats described as *diligent indolence*: "How happy is such a voyage of concentration, what delicious diligent Indolence!" (1). According to Luisa Camaiora, Keats's concept of diligent indolence constituted the creative process. The "indolent mood" wasn't an "absence of reactions," but one in which "the essential factor is a capacity for reception, a receptivity as minute as it is far reaching" (183).

Walter Benjamin also reflects on the contradiction that idleness imposes on the creative process in *The Arcades Project*. His concept of idleness accounts for the resulting productivity associated with idle moments. In one version of his account of

idleness and productivity, he describes the hunt as an appropriate metaphor, a metaphor used by many of the writers I discussed in this dissertation. He says:

The hunter must know about the hoof of the animal whose trail he is on; he must know the hour when that animal goes to drink; he must know the course of the river to which it turns, and the location of the ford by which he himself can get across. (qtd in McCracken 72-73)

In other words, the hunter must be attentive and concentrate; ultimately, however, the hunter must wait: "They are a product of chance, and have about them the essential interminability that distinguishes the preferred obligations of the idler" (qtd in McCracken 73). Appropriately, as McCracken notes, Benjamin "connects the primitive hunter with the modern student" (73).

The hunter-as-writer is a motif that appears in the descriptions of writing in chapter IV of this dissertation. Allegra Goodman in "Calming the Inner Critic and Getting to Work," is one of the writers who uses the metaphor of the hunt in the context of diligent indolence:

The only answer is to think and think some more, and then go out and read and look and listen some more. Do not sit and mope. Do not sigh. Do not throw up your hands and give up on the whole project. Do not go back to the drawing board. There is nothing more depressing than an empty drawing board. No, go back to the world which is where all characters originally come from. (71)

In a more direct passage, she tells writers to go to the source, where characters congregate, like telling a hunter to go to the watering hole:

Go back to your library, your forest, your newspapers, your family, your day job, your photos, your music, your maps and jottings of old dreams. All these are teeming with life, and life is the stuff of fiction. There are no guarantees, but if you go out where stories congregate, it's far more likely that characters will come. (74)

Key in this passage is the emphasis on the passiveness of the writer's task: it is *likely* but not *guaranteed* that one will find the characters.

Beth Kephart's "As Her Son Creates his Story, a Mother Waits for the Ending," suggests a similar understanding of writing. In the essay, she teaches her son to write fiction, and the operating metaphor is her son as a hunter:

My son is on the hunt for a surprise ending. He trails up and down the hallway, sighs, goes outside, paces the yard. It is late autumn, the leaves have lately rained down from the trees, and as I watch him through the window, I feel the melancholy of the season, the melancholy of a twelve-year-old boy whose own story cruelly eludes him. (133)

Kephart's son is, in effect, performing the practices Goodman admonishes writers to perform when they experience writers' block. Yet, the story remains elusive, and Kephart's son, like many of our students, is frustrated and depressed about his failure to execute his writing project to his own satisfaction. Before concluding, Kephart reminds

herself and her readers of the other times, when waiting has proven effective, that sometimes writing is hard, "when the air carries a scent" and "the story blows in" (136).

Though none of the writers I analyzed called this part of creative process *meditation*, diligent indolence shares with meditation some key attributes. To meditate requires time and a relaxing environment. It requires deep breathing and relaxing one's muscles. Finally, one must be able to simultaneously focus his or her attention while focusing on nothing, a characteristic of meditation that is most like diligent indolence. Keats's "Ode to Indolence" reflects this meditative state:

Ripe was the drowsy hour;
 The blissful cloud of summer-indolence
 Benumb'd my eyes, my pulse grew less and less,
 Pain had no sting, and pleasure's wreath no flower.
 O, why did ye not melt, and leave my sense
 Unhaunted quite of all—but nothingness.

In other words, the meditative state is one in which a person is relaxed but attentive.

The idea of diligent indolence, like Camaiora noted, carries with it the idea of receptivity, of being ready for something to be given. Lewis Hyde, author of *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, expresses a similar idea when he states in the introduction that a creative work is "a gift, not a commodity" (xi). Because a gift is given and not earned, an artist "is happy to labor all day with no hope of production, nothing to sell, nothing to show off, just fish thrown back into the sea as soon as they are caught" (148). The gift of the work of art, however, is "lost in self-consciousness":

To count, measure, reckon value, or seek the cause of a think, is to step outside the circles, to cease being "all of a piece" with the flow of gifts and become, instead one part of the whole reflecting upon another part. We participate in the esemplastic power of a gift by way of a particular kind of unconsciousness, then: unanalytic, undialectical consciousness.

(152)

Although his book doesn't discuss the *how* of artistic creation, it is clear for Hyde that the creative process requires the kind of "letting go" that is produced by conscious unconsciousness, by diligent indolence. A commodity is produced by labor, but a gift is received with grace.

In the composition classroom, there is no time for thoughtful waiting or hunting for ideas or the receiving of gifts. In addition to the due dates for essays, there are often intermediate due dates: a day when you must settle on a topic (my students write topic approval memos), a date when an annotated bibliography is due, as well as the date when drafts are due for peer review. All of this is to say: we are driven by the clock in composition classes. As much as we preach process, we are all product-model babies, encouraging our students not to wait but to just do it in the most commodity-driven, corporate-industrial kind of way.

Also, composition scholarship is haunted by the ghost of expressivism. James Moffat, in "Writing, Inner Speech, and Meditation," and Donald R. Gallehr in "Wait and the Writing Will Come: Meditation and the Composing Process," make the connection between writing and meditative practices. In "What is the Sound of No Hand Writing,"

Gallehr describes the use of secularized Zen koans in his writing classes. Instead of going in depth into meditative practice with students, Gallehr focuses on the "mind clearing, concentration, and holistic or intuitive thinking exercises" that he believes "to be essential habits of mind in any field, including, for example, baseball" (101).

As a graduate student, I imagined the expressivist classroom as one with candles and incense, students holding hands and meditating together, a hangover from the sixties led by nostalgic instructors lately incorporated into the academic establishment. Frankly, it seemed creepy, laced with a false spiritualism that didn't seem relevant to composition scholarship. Expressivism, for reasons related to these (and others which I detailed in chapter II), has been criticized harshly since the early 1990's and even before. However, in light of the descriptions of writing by professional creative writers, it seems that at least *some* of the insights provided by the expressivist orientation, especially those that cultivate focused attention, clarity, and a mental if not spiritual practice, need revisiting, such as the dada moment in composition discussed in Geoffrey Sirc's *English Composition as a Happening*.

Idling Bodies

The practice of meditation as it is related to the practice of diligent indolence also adds to an understanding of the creative process that is discussed by many writers in this dissertation, the relationship of the body to invention. It seems improbable that a work like *A Room of One's Own*, so interested in personal spaces, spends so much time

devoted to the theme of idly rambling the concourses of Oxbridge and London, but *A Room of One's Own* does just that.

The importance of Woolf's ramblings involve more than just the mere act of walking, however. Her encounters on the roads of Oxbridge and London are part of her exercise of experiencing reality, and ultimately experiencing harmony with nature.

Recalling Emerson's mention of a warm October in the opening of the essay "Nature,"

Woolf recounts a harmonious encounter with nature by walking:

The spirit of peace descended like a cloud from heaven, for if the spirit of peace dwells anywhere, it is in the courts and quadrangles of Oxbridge on a fine October morning. Strolling through those colleges past those ancient halls the roughness of the present seemed smoothed away; the body seemed contained in a miraculous glass cabinet through which no sound could penetrate, and the mind, freed from any contact with facts (unless one trespassed on the turf again), was at liberty to settle down upon whatever meditation was in harmony with the moment. (6)

Woolf further clarifies her attitude toward walking, thinking, and nature and their relationship to writing in her definition of "reality," a keyword that she uses to describe a transformative experience in nature:

What is meant by "reality"? It would seem to be some thing very erratic, very undependable—now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper in the street, now in a daffodil in the sun. It lights up a group in a room and stamps some casual saying. It overwhelms one walking

beneath the stars and makes the silent world more real than the world of speech—and then there it is again in an omnibus in the uproar of Piccadilly. Sometimes, too, it seems to dwell in shapes too far away for us to discern what their nature is. But whatever it touches, it fixes and makes permanent. That is what remains when the skin of the day has been cast into the hedge; that is what is left of past time and of our loves and hates. Now the writer, as I think, has the chance to live more than other people in the presence of this reality. (114)

Rather than staying in one's own room, Woolf is admonishing writers to go out into the world (in this example, on foot) and experience the sounds, sites, and smells that the road has to offer. For Woolf, the idle ramble through nature is beneficial to the writer because of what it has to offer.

The writers I analyzed in this dissertation also referred to the importance of the energy of the body, its rhythms specifically, when they discussed their own composing processes. For Annie Dillard, the body's energies must be fired in order to write, much like an engine or a rocket. The acceleration or momentum to which she is referring is also illustrated in a story she relates about the writer Charlie Butts, who fakes momentum by creating errands for himself, all in an effort to gain a sense of impetus in which the rush of the body overrides his own self-consciousness about what he's writing (2). Upon returning to his house after errands, he "hurries in the door, and without taking off his coat, sits at a typewriter" and writes until "he notices he is writing and seizes up" (15-16).

Dillard's account emphasizes the physicality of the practice of writing, one not unlike the body performing exercises that require a warm-up period or a car that needs to idle before cruising the highway.

Donald Hall, rather than discussing the methods he uses to gear up for writing, describes the bodily effects of being fully absorbed in the writing process, what he calls *absorbedness*, the state Charlie Butts tries to maintain in order to write. One description of the experience of absorbedness appears in a later chapter of *Life Work* in which Hall describes scythe mowing, an activity during which “one surrenders oneself to the guidance of object and task, where worker and work are one” (86). Scythe mowing

is a rhythmic motion like dancing or lovemaking. It is a studious sweeping crescent in which the trick is to keep the heel (where blade joins snath) close to the ground. I no longer mow with a scythe—a certain recipe for lower-back muscle spasms—but remember it the way the body remembers weights and leanings: riding a bicycle, skiing, casting flies. Finding a meter, one abandons oneself to the swing of it... There is something ecstatic about mowing a scythe. (86)

It is muscle memory that actuates the loss of identity or presence in a place and the loss of time, like a musician playing a memorized piece of music or a pitcher sending the ball to home plate. Writing, which the mention of lovemaking makes clear, is erotic. It is an embodied practice. Like Peter Elbow, who Roskelly and Ronald note as making this connection between body-ness and writing through his metaphors, concentrates his metaphors "on the mouth, the skin, and the eyes, all sites of emotional, erotic, and

physical satisfaction and tension" (215). It is the connection to the mouth that Hall believes is the most overtly physical aspect of writing: "When you write a poem, you're not hammering out the sounds with a chisel or spreading them with a brush, but you've got to *feel* them in your mouth. The act of writing a poem is a bodily act as well as a mental and imaginative act" (*Paris Review* 18).

In "Body Studies in Rhetoric and Composition," Sharon Crowley reasons that the body has remained unmentioned in rhetoric and composition "because both fields still cling to liberal-humanist models of the speaking subject—a sovereign, controlling disembodied and individual voice that deploys language in order to effect some predetermined change in an audience" (177). On this issue, the issue of the body, I cannot think of anything I actively *do* to discourage students from making the connection between the body and composing. However, this lack of anything is precisely the point. Perhaps we can begin to include examples and exercises that highlight the connection between the body and composing. In creative writing classes, one technique that is used is a modified freewriting in which students write as fast as they can, often with accompanying music such as "The William Tell Overture." As a writer who often (and am now) composes while music plays, I can attest that the rhythms of the music I listen to show up in the cadences of my compositions. Also, I am a writer who does her best work in the context of life practices that attend to the body, a fact that I have never shared with my students, and until now have never theorized about in an academic setting, but one I believe is a profoundly important component of creativity.

Another suggestion made by Marianthe Karanikas in "Spiritual Empowerment in the Technical Writing Class," is an activity that highlights breathing and concentration through the act of eating, an exercise that writing teacher Renee Gatsis uses. As part of an assignment to write an advertisement and a *Consumer Reports* report, students bring to class their favorite foods. After carefully eating the items, "mindfully, one mouthful at a time," slowly and with deliberate concentration and breathing techniques, being aware of "the experience of biting, tasting, chewing, and swallowing in the moment it happens," students draft descriptions of the foods (164). Karanikas notes that this kind of focused activity "can help students not only to be better negotiators but also to think and write more clearly" (166).

Students in composition classrooms are still bodies, still in the sense of inactivity, but also still in the sense that they *are* bodies, rather than an abstracted notion of body in the phrase *student body* (as Crowley mentions). When we ask them to invent, they are still bodies--tired from lack of sleep, some unable to pay attention, and some simply unaware, like I was, of the relationship between the body and the act of composition.

Another consideration that needs to be explored further in scholarship through the lens of body studies is the fact that many of our composition students are newly displaced bodies, meaning that most are in new environments—new cities, a dorm room, a new campus. Many of the writers I studied in this dissertation discussed the importance of an established place for writing, whether it is the home or home office, a cabin in the woods, or a library carrel. The most important part of the writing place was

the level of comfort established by routine, a *habitus*, as Bourdieu described it (see Nedra Reynolds). Many composition students are facing more than just the challenge of writing assignments; they are coming to terms with their own bodies in new places and the establishment of new habits and routines.

Conclusion

One of the aspects of creativity discussed in the introduction dealt with creativity as a process by which one engages in "a continuous process of bringing forth a changing vision of oneself, and of oneself in relation to the world" (Miller as qtd. in Bishop 75). This aspect of creativity is one that presents the most problematic feature of creativity and the composition classroom. It is problematic for two reasons. First, because of the artificiality of exigencies, students are compelled to lie when we ask them to reflect or write papers about personal experience, especially about learning processes. Second, it is problematic if we consider that, when as teachers we present writing as a subject for which we claim absolute authority in our methods, we lie. Writing remains mysterious, and we know this even when we present it as an activity that is *easy*, when we claim that if students would only do the work we ask them to do, then they will be successful writers. Both lies, those of students and teachers, are discussed at length by John Boe in "The Degrees of the Lie."

A changing vision of oneself ultimately requires vulnerability and motivation, two attributes that have received little attention in composition scholarship. Vulnerability is related to the idea of being receptive to one's surroundings and the

revelations that coming into contact with the world will be rendered. Motivation, a psychological and spiritual state, is the difference that makes a difference in teaching composition. More work needs to be done to show the relationships between these two elements of creativity and the success of students in the composition classroom.

If spirituality seems to be an unsettling term to use in an academic setting, then Wendy Bishop's thoughts on spirituality might provide some consolation. She wrote about her own presumptions about the term, along with words like *emotion* and *intuition*, in "Teaching Lives: Thoughts on Reweaving Our Spirits," in which she focuses on the spiritual and therefore *creative* properties of teaching composition. As a teacher, she says

I was interested in *knowing* in the self-sustaining, getting-connected-with-a-world-bigger-than-I-am sense, in the, well, *spiritual sense*. I now gravitate to this word *spiritual* because it clarifies certain aspects of my life and points to experiences larger than affect and larger than mind. That is, mind combined with affect creates an exciting experiential tapestry. For me, that tapestry represents the university campus, and the university presents one form of real life, where writing is meditation and teaching is a spiritual journey, benefiting both teacher and student.

How long it's taken me to say so! (129).

Bishop is addressing the sensitivity that some scholars have with the term spirituality, and she does so with the purpose of telling her audience that composition matters to her—matters more to her than even the word vocation implies, the reason "I return

faithfully to the classroom year after year" (130). Also, as she explains at the end of the article, she explores the essence of spirituality *because* of its connection with creativity. She wants to "(re)consider the active, creative well-springs of all passionately engaged writers and writing" (135). Finally, she explores spirituality because "We need to question seriously the ways we make students (first-year and graduate) produce texts we don't value and the way we agree to do this ourselves for academic purposes" (134).

Bishop's subjects are weighty—value, purpose, spirituality. Her reflection on purposeful and spiritual engagement in the writing classroom points ultimately to the essential lack in composition studies—an articulation of *what* we do, *why* we do it, and the meaningless of what we do and why we do it if not from a humanist perspective. The writers I studied in this dissertation grappled with these issues, as well, because they believe the act of writing is something bigger than themselves—although few referred to the bigness of their projects as spiritual. As composition scholars, what is left to be done, and what is beyond of the scope of this dissertation, is to explore what it means to be fully-engaged practitioners as well as fully-engaged students of the mysteriousness of what we call writing.

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