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" UNDERSTANDING THE AESTHETIC EFFECT OF THE FAMILIAR ESSAY
AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE COMPOSITION CLASS "

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Michele Jean Butler
August 1987

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Approved by:




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Date



Helene Koon



Susan Meisenhelder

ABSTRACT

The familiar essay is an informal, open work of non-fiction prose. This kind of essay encourages exploring, testing and playing with ideas rather than proving a thesis. Familiar writers give us a sense of ourselves and our interconnectedness with the rest of our world at a time when our obsession with the high speed transmission of information works to isolate us from one another by minimizing the importance of curiosity, contemplation, interrogation, conversation and discussion. This obsession also takes away some of our freedom because it requires that we accept other's answers rather than discovering our own. The familiar essay can help students learn to find their own answers.

Because the familiar essay is concerned with exploring life's questions rather than providing answers, it does not focus on a supportable thesis. In order to encourage exploration, the familiar essay offers an intimate audience, open form and friendly tone. To varying degrees, these qualities distinguish this essay form from the informational and scientific essay.

While informational and scientific essays hold their readers' interest with assertions and proof, the familiar essay depends on aesthetic appeal which is based on

psychological principles. These psychological principles are the basis for the principles of design and pattern which create aesthetic effect.

Using the familiar essay in the composition class can help students understand that exploration is the only way to formulate ideas that are worth their time and care in writing. This is the first step in the writing process.

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Preface

In the 1800's, Matthew Arnold, the great English critic, poet and educator, described the ideal product of a humanistic education as a well-balanced person who had knowledge, understood how to live with those who shared the world, appreciated beauty and had high standards of moral judgment. It seems to me that Arnold's ideal qualities are the same ones we look for in a liberal education today. These qualities cannot be handed over from teacher to student but are, rather, the hard-won result of the student's exploration of ideas.

Because composition is a basic part of a liberal education, I believe that this exploration should be an important facet of all composition programs. At this time, it appears that the stress on the thesis/support essay overshadows the exploratory aspect of composition. I suggest that one way to encourage exploration and further the ideals of the humanities is through the teaching of the familiar essay.

In the first chapter, I discuss the way the familiar essay deals with life as a series of questions and the problems inherent in our dependency on high speed communication of information.

Chapter 2 introduces some current theories on the subject of audience, particularly those of Walter J. Ong,

Douglas B. Park and James L. Kinneavy. This chapter also uses excerpts from the works of familiar essayists as examples of William Zeiger's definition of the familiar essay's intimate audience.

The following chapter discusses the qualities of the different forms of referential discourse: scientific, informational and exploratory, as explained in Kinneavy's book, *A Theory of Discourse*.

Chapter 4 is concerned with two qualities of the familiar essay, the open form and the familiar tone, which, like the intimate audience, make it an appropriate tool for exploration. This chapter, first of all, deals with Umberto Eco's discussion of the open form in works of art in general and moves to Zeiger's definition of the open form, as seen in the familiar essay in particular.

I approach the tone of the familiar essay by using W.H. Abrams' and Edward M. White's definitions of tone followed by Zeiger's discussion of the "friendly tone." This discussion is supported by my analysis of the different tones employed by a number of familiar essayists.

In Chapter 5, I look at the psychological principles underlying aesthetic appeal, as described by Stephen C. Pepper in *Principles of Art Appreciation*, and introduce Howard C. Brashers' application of Pepper's principles of design and pattern as writing devices.

Chapter 6 analyzes excerpts from familiar essays in order to clarify the uses and effects of the principles of design--contrast, gradation, theme-and-variation and restraint.

In order to show how the principles of pattern--incremental or linear, radial-circular and mytho-literary--unify the principles of design, Chapter 7 also analyzes excerpts from familiar essays.

Finally, Chapter 8 discusses the reasons why exploration, contemplation and inquiry are not being emphasized in composition classes, why the stress on the thesis/support essay leads students away from exploration and what instructors can do to help them understand the importance of this step in the writing process.

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Chapter I

Exploration

Writers of familiar essays are quite like children in their sense of wonder. For example, while adults expediently perform the steps judged necessary in cleaning a fish in order to make it acceptable for a meal, children can be fascinated by this ritual. The danger inherent in the sharp blade, the way the scales slip off the skin like sticky sequins, the rosy cast of the flesh, the slippery feel of the warm entrails, and history in the fish's watchful eye are all objects of wonder. They study this life and death experience leisurely, through sight, smell and touch, with appreciation for the marvelous quality of the event for its own sake. It is one way for children to consider life and their role in it.

In the same way, writers of the familiar essay examine all facets of an idea, both positive and negative, in order to explore life and their beliefs about it. They do not clearly state a thesis and then systematically go about proving it. Rather, they present their ideas by way of incidents, anecdotes, descriptions, and bits of information. Furthermore, these devices are chosen and arranged to guide readers to the essayists' ideas; the essays allow readers to wander through the incidents, etc., exploring the implications so that they can discover meaning for

themselves. For example, in "The Slit," the first essay in The Immense Journey, Loren Eiseley cautions readers that:

Those who accompany me need not look for science in the usual sense, though I have done all in my power to avoid errors in fact. I have given the record of what one man thought as he pursued research and pressed his hands against the confining walls of scientific method in his time. It is not, I must confess at the outset, an account of discovery so much as a confession of ignorance and of the final illumination that sometimes comes to a man when he is no longer careful of his pride. In the last three chapters of the book I have tried to put down such miracles as can be invoked from common earth. But men see differently. I can at best report only from my own wilderness. The important thing is that each man possess such a wilderness and that he consider what marvels are to be observed there. (13)

As Eiseley suggests, the familiar essay gives readers the opportunity to "examine the record of what one man thought," because the form is concerned with finding an attractive idea and playing with it. As readers, we are allowed to explore along with the writer.

In a discussion of Michel de Montaigne's "Essaies," William Zeiger states that the opportunity to explore ideas through classroom writing is uncommon today. He presents a seldom used definition of the verb "to prove" to explain the

usefulness of the familiar essay form. Because Zeiger's definition of the verb expresses the sense of "'testing' rather than of demonstrating validity," Montaigne is an appropriate model. As Zeiger states, "Montaigne 'proved' his ideas in that he tried them out in his essays. He spun out their implications, sampled their suggestions. He did not try to argue or persuade" (455). Because persuasion is not the familiar essayists' main focus, they can approach the audience as allies rather than adversaries. It's as though they're saying "Let's go for a walk; I have something important to show you."

[The range of interests which these writers encompass is amazing. While I've limited my research to "nature writers," I find that they don't necessarily allow themselves to be limited by this term. They probably use the familiar essay form because it gives them the freedom to explore all aspects of life.] They also assume a similar appreciation on the part of the audience, their allies. For instance, Lewis Thomas, in his essay "The Lives of the Cell," opens up his mind to us:

Item. I have been trying to think of the earth as a kind of organism, but it is no go. I cannot think of it this way. It is too big, too complex, with too many working parts lacking visible connections. The other night, driving through a hilly, wooded part of southern New England, I wondered about this. If not like an

organism, what is it like, what is it most like? Then, satisfactorily for that moment, it came to me: it is most like a single cell. (4)

The vulnerability he accepts, in sharing a part of himself, calls for sensitivity on our part. If we are willing to explore ideas sensitively through the eyes of our "guide," we may find a heightened sense of awareness of the world, a sense of all living things, and a feeling of belonging which gives some relief from the isolation perpetuated by the technical world in which we flounder.

The technical world, while providing us with more leisure time, can be very efficient at diminishing the importance of our childlike sense of curiosity by separating us from each other and, in fact, from our sense of self, through its insistence on the importance of, what Zeiger calls, the "rapid development of high speed technological communication, and a corresponding drop in contemplative activity" (457). John Fowles, in The French Lieutenant's Woman, gives this explanation for our love affair with "high speed technological communication":

The supposed great misery of our century is the lack of time; our sense of that, not a disinterested love of science, and certainly not wisdom, is why we devote such a huge proportion of the ingenuity and income of our societies to finding faster way of doing things--as if the final aim of mankind was to grow closer not to a

perfect humanity, but to a perfect lightening flash.

(16)

While there seems to be no way to deter humanity in its pursuit of "a perfect lightning flash," James W. Carey calls for a balance between the technological monologue and the, potentially, more informative human dialogue. He says that forms of "communication that are slower, which are based upon conversation, discussion, and interrogation," are ways to "cultivate different and deeper forms of understanding" (45).

When expediency becomes more important than these "deeper forms of understanding," we lose a measure of our freedom. At one time or another we have all had the realization that "The more we learn, the more we realize how little we know." This happens because real learning always leads us to more questions. Life might be easier if there was just one way to live; but, life is ambiguous, at best, and, as Elaine Maimon says, those who look for the security of certainty often "find themselves living with answers that other people have imposed on them" (6). Maimon goes on to say that one of the advantages to all writing is that, while it can't help us find certainty in an ambiguous world, it can help us figure out strategies to survive without certainty. Rather than meekly accepting other's ideas, this intellectual tool can be used "to develop flexibility, to create ways to test out your own responses and ideas" (7).

The familiar essay form calls for the acceptance and exploration of the ambiguities in life. Its open structure encourages freedom for writers to look at their ideas from all sides without the constraints imposed by the need to make supportable judgments. For example, in "Pieces of the Frame: The Search for Marvin Gardens," John McPhee intersperses descriptions of the decay in Atlantic City, with his narration of a Monopoly game. He presents bits of historical information on the history of the development of the city, gives examples of the decrepit condition of the actual sites named on the property cards of the game, discloses the fact that the one property which is still a thriving neighborhood, Marvin Gardens, is not even in Atlantic City, and uses a mytho-literary pattern to hold everything together. What he doesn't do is clearly state his position and set about proving it. While the essayist has control over the information, incidents, and anecdotes he chooses to present, the open form encourages the readers to explore this information, etc., and to exercise their ability to formulate their own meaning. Within the familiar essay form, the writer feels safe enough to expose his mind at work to an audience who is open to the idea that life is more involved with questions than answers.

Because of its expectation of a friendly audience and safety from censure, it seems to me that the familiar essay is an ideal tool for the beginning composition class. It

encourages students to spend more time exploring all sides of an idea instead of jumping into a half-baked thesis, weakly supported by information which they don't really understand.

Chapter II

Audience

What kind of audience does the familiar essayist use, and how does this audience differ from audiences of other works? In order to understand the familiar essayist's concern for audience it seems appropriate to look at some current theories about audience. For example, Linda Flower emphasizes the desire to connect, over time and space, as the reason for writing anything at all:

You want the reader to share your knowledge and your attitude toward that knowledge. Even if the reader eventually disagrees, you want him or her to be able for the moment to see things as you see them. A good piece of writing closes the gap between you and the reader. (122-23)

The connection, then, comes about not only through the writer's revelations, but also through the reader's understanding of the author's purpose. This understanding requires that the writer be aware of the audience.

The idea of audience awareness is internalized by proficient writers, but many of them would be hard-pressed if asked to define exactly what they mean by "audience."

Walter J. Ong argues that the term itself is not accurate:

More properly, a writer addresses readers. . . .

Audience is a collective noun. There is no such

collective noun for readers. . . . 'Readers' is a plural. Readers do not form a collectivity, acting here and now on one another and on the speaker as members of an audience do. (10-11)

Ong illustrates the difference between "audience" and "reader" when he asks us to imagine a speaker standing in front of an audience of readers with their own texts. Once the speaker asks the audience to read the texts, the whole idea of collectivity falls apart. Each reader mentally pulls out of the audience to form a private relationship with the writer (11). We can see support for Ong's point of view in Flower's statement, when she refers to "a momentary common ground between the reader and the writer." The common ground is shared by one reader and his or her writer.

Douglas B. Park feels that the term "audience" should be retained. He rejects the term "readers" because it is "too obviously literal," and he finds that "'audience,' by its literal inappropriateness is free to carry a much richer set of meanings." He goes on to explain that the difference can be seen in the way that we use the terms to talk about discourse:

Note that we speak of how a discourse may affect its readers or of what a discourse assumes about its readers; but we speak of 'the' audience of a discourse, by which we often mean an ideal conception, something akin to an informing principle in the work. For this

reason we often speak of the audience impersonally as a thing: 'What is the audience?' When we mean by it people outside the text, those people make up a collective entity, exist as an audience, only in terms of their relationship to the text and the relationship of the text to them. (249-50)

While Ong and Park disagree over the use of the terms "audience" and "reader," they come together when they consider what writers do with their audience. Park studies the term in light of the words used to describe what writers do with their audience. "Writers, we most commonly say, adjust to audiences or accommodate them, but we also talk about writers aiming at, assessing, defining, internalizing, construing, representing, imagining, characterizing, inventing, and evoking" (248). Looking at the words "adjust" and "accommodating" at one extreme, as representing the audience as an external entity which "requires appropriate responses and strategies" (248), Park uses Lloyd Bitzer's definition of the rhetorical situation:

The audience, in this view, is a defined presence outside the discourse with certain beliefs, attitudes, and relationships to the speaker or writer and to the situation that require the discourse to have certain characteristics in response. (248)

According to Bitzer, if a writer is dealing with a highly structured rhetorical situation with circumscribed

characteristics, that situation will have a great deal of influence on the style and content of the discourse (248). An example of the highly structured situation would be a scientist writing for other scientists. Although laypersons might read through the scientific work, the requirements of the rhetorical situation, one of which would be scientific terms, would imply that the layperson could not be a part of the audience to the same degree as the trained scientist who is called for in the text.

At the other extreme, we see the use of terms such as "construe" and "invent." Park agrees with Ong that writers need to fictionalize the audience in some way. We see the results of this fiction "in what the text appears to assume about the knowledge and attitudes of its readers and about their relationships to the writer and the subject matter" (249). Each reader, to different degrees, becomes the audience created by the writer for that particular text. Ong pictures the audience as fictionalized actors with writers "casting them in a made-up role and calling on them to play the role assigned" (17). While Ong's view represents the audience as an entity outside of the text which, because of its make-up, creates certain demands on the writer, Park's view is more oriented "toward the text itself and the audience implied there, a set of suggested or evoked attitudes, interests, reactions, conditions of knowledge which may or may not fit with the qualities of

actual readers or listeners" (249). In the second view, the readers must fictionalize themselves to the point of becoming part of the text, thereby establishing a sense of community encompassing the writer, the text and the audience. Parks concludes that:

'Audience' really uses a very concrete image to evoke a much more abstract and dynamic concept. Whether we mean by 'audience' primarily something in the text or something outside it, 'audience' essentially refers not to people as such but to those apparent aspects of knowledge and motivation in readers and listeners that form the contexts for discourse and the ends of discourse. (249)

James L. Kinneavy expresses Park's idea of audience as "apparent aspects of knowledge" in "the concept of information as improbability or unpredictability":

Improbability here becomes a matter of subjective rather than objective predictability. What might objectively be quite predictable (if all the facts were known) could still be quite unpredictable to the average receptor, and therefore, quite informative. At this level, information becomes a matter of what the receptor knows. (96)

According to Gordon Thomas, "The knowledge that writers assume exists in their audiences works to make possible the very making of meaning" (580). As Kinneavy states, the

writer of scientific discourse is writing to his/her peers and can "consequently make assumptions about the background, vocabulary, logical sophistication, and acquaintance with current contents" (96) in order to "make possible the very making of meaning." But, because the familiar essay depends so heavily on aesthetic effect, the familiar essayist is not so concerned with estimating the audience's information level.

It seems to me that because of its exploratory nature, the invention of an audience for the familiar essay depends more heavily on aspects of motivation. As William Zeiger says, "In order to learn to express thoughts freely and sincerely, the writer needs to address a tolerant, even friendly audience, an audience disposed to accept and consider ideas rather than to suspect and impeach them" (459). Because writers of the familiar essay are not attempting to formulate an argument, they do not have to fictionalize adversaries. This release from the constrictions of considering the opposing side's arguments allows writers to open up to their audiences as friends, with the understanding that they are basically in agreement. This sense of agreement creates the "common ground between the reader and the writer," and this atmosphere of intimacy, according to Zeiger, permits the familiar essay "to extend and enrich the reader's perceptions" (463).

This freedom to view their audience as friends who are basically in agreement with them encourages beginning writers to take more risks in exposing their ideas. They might even begin to show their instructors what they think rather than limiting themselves to what they feel the instructor/audience wants them to think. At the very least, this should give the instructor added insight concerning students' thinking and, therefore, writing problems.

In "The Judgment of the Birds" Loren Eiseley defines his intimate audience as "those who have retained a true taste for the marvelous, and who are capable of discerning in the flow of ordinary events the point at which the mundane world gives way to quite another dimension" (28). Lewis Thomas probably shares Eiseley's definition for his audience, although there are differences, I'm sure, in the actual make-up of audience. [It should be noted, in fact, that Thomas' essays originally appeared in medical journals.] For example, neither writer is difficult to understand, but those readers who have a mental block against scientific terms may be put off by some of Thomas' work, such as this excerpt from "Some Biomythology":

First of all, there is 'Myxotricha paradoxia.' This is the protozoan, not yet as famous as he should be, who seems to be telling us everything about everything, all at once. His cilia are not cilia at all, but individual spirochetes, and at the base of attachment

of each spirochetes, is an oval organelles, embedded in the myxotricha membrane, which is a bacterium. (145) Thomas' essay is as accessible and enjoyable as Eiseley's, and readers who follow it through find this out. But there are those whose "systems shut down" at the sight of "myxotricha paradoxia"; they are not a part of Thomas' audience. On the other hand, some people find Eiseley overly sentimental about nature and would be more apt to be a part of Thomas' audience--or even Edward Abbey's.

Abbey seems far removed from Eiseley in consideration of audience. He comes across as a maverick who writes only for other would-be mavericks. In his introduction to Desert Solitaire, he asserts:

I quite agree that much of this book will seem coarse, rude, bad-tempered, violently prejudiced, unconstructive--even frankly antisocial in its point of view. Serious critics, serious librarians, serious associate professors of English will if they read this work dislike it intensely; at least I hope so. (x)

and:

In the second place most of what I write about in this book is already gone or going under fast. This is not a travel guide but an elegy. A memorial. You're holding a tombstone in your hands. A bloody rock. Don't drop it on your foot--throw it at something big and glassy. What do you have to lose? (xii)

But for all of his assertions that his work is "coarse, rude, etc.", his love and respect for nature shine through as strongly in his work as in Eiseley's. We can see these qualities when we compare an excerpt from Eiseley's essay, "The Judgment of the Birds," with an excerpt from Abbey's essay, "Water." Eiseley describes an incident concerned with bird song:

Till suddenly they took heart and sang from many throats joyously together as birds are known to sing. They sang because life is sweet and sunlight beautiful. They sang under the shadow of the raven. In simple truth they had forgotten the raven, for they were the singers of life, and not of death. (175)

If we look at Eiseley's slightly flowery word choice: "took heart," "joyously," "life is sweet and sunlight beautiful," "singers of life" and the repetition of "they sang," we can see why some readers find him overly sentimental.

Abbey, of course, chooses a group not generally applauded for their beautiful song--croaking frogs:

Why do they sing? What do they have to sing about? . . .
. To human ears their music has a bleak, dismal, tragic quality, dirgelike rather than jubilant. It may nevertheless be the case that these small beings are singing not only to claim their stake in the pond, not only to attract a mate, but also out of spontaneous love and joy, a contrapuntal choral celebration of the

coolness and wetness after weeks of desert fire, for love of their own existence, however brief it may be, and for joy in the common life. (143)

If we compare Eiseley's words to Abbey's: "bleak," "dismal," "tragic," "dirgelike," "claim their stake," the humorous use of alliteration in "contrapuntal choral celebration" and the gruff questions, "Why do they sing? What do they have to sing about?" it is obvious that there are differences in style. But it is also obvious that both writers care deeply about their subjects and that what we're reading in both excerpts is simply good writing. Therefore, the audiences for both may include those who simply appreciate good writing.

Nature writers, using the familiar essay form, show how important nature is to them by the care they take to evoke the same feeling in their audience. Their attempt to pass these feelings on in words is, like the encounters with nature which they describe, a humbling experience because, as John Fowles says in The Tree:

It, this namelessness, is beyond our science and our arts because its secret is being, not saying. Its greatest value to us is that it cannot be reproduced, that this being can be apprehended only by another present being, only by the living senses and consciousness. All experience of it through surrogate and replica, through selected image, gardened word,

through other eyes and minds, betrays or banishes its reality. But this is nature's consolation, its message, and well beyond the Wistman's Wood of its own strict world. It can be known and entered only by each, and in its now; not by you through me, by any you through any me; only by you through yourself, or me through myself. We still have this to learn: the inalienable otherness of each, human and non-human, which may seem the prison of each, but is at heart, in the deepest of those countless million metaphorical trees for which we cannot see the wood, both the justification and the redemption. (91)

This sentiment brings us back to Loren Eiseley's caution to his audience (see 55) that they must not look to him for answers because "The important thing is that each man possess such a wilderness and that he consider what marvels are to be observed there," and to the audience which is open to the idea that life is more involved with questions than answers.

Chapter III

Forms of Referential Discourse

In James L. Kinneavy's book, A Theory of Discourse, the forms of referential discourse: scientific, informational, and exploratory, are distinguished from one another by the degree of objectivity in the communication framework and style and the degree of probability. Scientific discourse concerns itself with the "consideration of one facet of an object and the making of certain kinds of assertions (descriptive, narrative, classificatory, and evaluative) about the facet" (88). The main concern is not with the emotions of the writer or a persuasive influence on the reader, but "the reality under consideration" (88). The scientific essay does not call attention to itself by dint of its literary style; it is the subject matter which is of utmost importance. Elaine Maimon, in her forward to Writing in the Arts and Sciences, explains that the role of the science writer requires the performance of "rituals that establish distance between you and the material you are studying. . . . Theatrical techniques to help you maintain your objective stamp" (5). Maimon distinguishes technical areas of study, with their focus on performance, from liberal areas of study which emphasize invention (6).

This emphasis on invention can be seen in the increased degree of involvement of, what Kinneavy calls, the "encoder

and decoder" (89) in informational discourse. While scientific discourse excludes the personal feelings and emotions of the writer as well as those of the audience as much as possible (88), the medium of information, as exemplified by newspaper writing, has a higher probability of incidents of intrusion by both. Kinneavy explains that the policies of the writer, editor and readers often have a great deal of influence on what is printed in newspapers and, "Because of these forces, mere information often leans much closer to persuasion than does science" (88). The exploratory essay shows a much greater emphasis on the personality of the writer and therefore the audience. It has moved away from the scientific orientation to the "thing" towards an orientation to the "person." "The same author, writing science at one time and exploration at another time, appears as almost two distinct authors" (89).

The differentiation between the three types of referential discourse involving probability leads us back to the concern with questions. According to Kinneavy, "Exploratory discourse fundamentally asks a question. Informative discourse answers it. Scientific discourse proves it" (89). He goes on to say that the exploratory essay is based on the question. It allows the writer the freedom to consider all aspects of an idea with "some initial probability that it might be possible to prove it is true" (89). The informational essay is essentially "the

answer to a set of implicit questions of expectancies; but there is only assertion, not accompanying proof in simple informative discourse. It is stated as certain, but the certainty is not verified" (89). The scientific essay form includes rigid demands for accompanying proof. While the scientific essay cannot eradicate the accidental intrusion of personality in its attempt to provide objectivity, it clearly differs from the informational and the exploratory essay in its demands for proof.

Kinneavy's study leads me to believe that it's only sensible, in the composition class, to begin with the exploratory/familiar essay, which asks the question, move to the informative essay, which answers it, and finish with the scientific essay, which proves the answer. Students who understand the different qualities of each form of referential discourse are better equipped, of course, to meet the demands of all the forms.

Chapter IV

Form and Tone

The familiar essay is more involved in asking questions than supporting answers. For instance, in Lewis Thomas' essay, "A Fear of Pheromones," the first paragraph is full of questions:

What are we going to do if it turns out that we have pheromones? What on earth would we be doing with such things? With the richness of speech, and all our new devices for communication, why would we want to release odors into the air to convey information about anything? We can send notes, telephone, whisper cryptic invitations, announce the giving of parties, even bounce words off the moon and make them carom around the planets. Why a gas, or droplets of moisture made to be deposited on fence posts? (17)

Although familiar essayists don't use the question as a structuring device as often as Thomas does in the preceding paragraph, they do try to help us understand the world by questioning how it works. According to Zeiger, this concern with questions, and the accompanying qualities of open form and friendly tone, make the familiar essay a particularly suitable vehicle of exploration (460). An artist may arrange the design and the pattern which holds it together so that it may be appreciated in its complete, or closed

form, according to the artist's intentions, but, in a sense, all works of art are "open." Umberto Eco says that each addressee changes the work through the relationship between the stimuli presented, the way he/she responds to the creator's choice of patterns, and the person's own "existential credentials," which are made up by the addressee's culture, tastes, inclinations and prejudices. The response to the work is always filtered through the addressee's particular perspective. According to Eco:

The form of the work of art gains its aesthetic validity precisely in proportion to the number of different perspectives from which it can be viewed and understood. These give it a wealth of different resonances and echoes without impairing its original essence. (49)

The open form of some works is, however, more obvious and concrete than the unavoidable "openness" of art in general. Eco calls these works 'unfinished' and refers to the artist who "seems to be handing them on to the performer like the components of a construction kit" (49). Although Eco is using musical composers as examples of proponents of these open works, Jill Scanlan, in her thesis, Playing the Audience: A Reader's Production of Between the Acts, points out that writers, such as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce:

Make readers live through a dialectical experience in which they must frequently negate the closures they

have made and reformulate new conclusions that are never given within the text. In this way, the meaning of the text comes into existence outside the printed page through the reading process. (6)

This kind of open work actually uses composition itself as its subject; the writer is employing particular elements of style in order to write about composing. Composition of this type reflects, in fact magnifies, the ambiguities of life. It creates all sorts of questions in the mind of the receptor. Eco points out the benefits of this type of composition:

The very fact of our uncertainty is itself a positive feature. It invites us to consider 'why' the contemporary artist feels the need to work in this kind of direction, to try to work out what historical evolution of aesthetic sensibility led up to it and which factors in modern culture reinforced it. We are then in a position to surmise how these experiences should be viewed in the spectrum of a theoretical aesthetic. (50)

Eco discusses Pousseur's observations on the poetics of this unfinished work from, "La nuova sensibilita musicale," In Contri Musicali, No. 2 (May 1958): 25. He finds that these works allow the performer to become "the focal point of limitless interrelations" with the freedom to manipulate them into any form he/she chooses, while retaining the

integrity of the text. The absence of "an external 'necessity' which definitively prescribes the organization of the work at hand," while inherently unsettling, intimately involves the reader in the creation of meaning (50).

We may still argue that any work demands the "free, inventive" input of the performer "because it cannot be appreciated unless the performer somehow reinvents it in psychological collaboration with the author himself" (50). The difference is that while degrees of "openness" are, of course, inescapable in works of art, much as accidental intrusions of personality naturally limit the objectivity of scientific writing, the creators of the unfinished work consciously use this "openness" as a viable structure. According to Eco, "he subsumes it into a positive aspect of his production, recasting the work so as to expose it to the maximum possible opening" (50).

The familiar essay falls somewhere between the ostensibly "closed" form and the preponderantly "opened" or "unfinished" form. When we talk about the "opened" form of the familiar essay, we are referring to Zeiger's definition of the exploratory essay: "an open work of nonfiction prose. It cultivates ambiguity and complexity to allow more than one reading or response to the work" (462). While the writer of the closed form begins with a thesis to be proved, the writer of the familiar essay may never have a particular

thesis in mind. This writer arranges ideas, experiences, anecdotes around a central idea, but the final assessment or assessments is left open to the receptor (462). Zeiger goes on to say :

This technique consists in creating sufficient complexity and ambiguity to permit a variety of valid interpretations--interpretations which do not exclude, but which compliment and inform each other, so that every reader may give a somewhat different performance of the text without violating its integrity. (462)

It seems to me that this appreciation for the reality of ambiguity in life and the willingness to trust that the receptor is also able to handle this concept create a sense of camaraderie which encourages us to approach the duality of life with childlike wonder instead of fear. In the conclusion of "The Judgment of the Birds" Loren Eiseley expresses his belief in the importance of the open form. When he begins to draw a conclusion from some minor miracles of nature, he hesitates because:

It became plain that something was wrong. The marvel was escaping--a sense of bigness beyond man's power to grasp, the essence of life in its great dealings with the universe. It was better, I decided, for the emissaries returning from the wilderness, even if they were merely descending from a stepladder, to record their marvel, not to define its meaning. In that way,

it would go echoing on through the minds of men, each grasping at that beyond out of which the miracles emerge, and which, once defined, ceases to satisfy the human need for symbols. (178)

While writers of the familiar essay compliment the audience by their trust in our ability to draw our own conclusions, we reciprocate by our sensitivity to their gift of self. This sense of trust calls for, and is supported by, a friendly, conversational tone. Using the phrase "tone of voice," W.H. Abrams says: "the common way a person speaks subtly reveals his concept of the social level, intelligence, and sensitivity of his auditor, his personal relation to him, and the stance he adopts toward him" (125). Critics disagree on the use of the terms "persona," "tone," and "voice," because, "it involves some of the most subtle and difficult concepts in modern philosophy and social psychology--concepts such as 'the self,' 'personal identity,' 'role playing,' 'sincerity'" (123). However, they do agree "that the sense of a convincing authorial presence, whose values, beliefs, and moral vision are the implicit controlling forces throughout a work, serves to persuade the reader to yield to the work" (126).

According to Edward M. White, the sense of the tone of a work is difficult to describe because it has to do with the writer's understanding of his/her relationship to the subject and to the audience. In his introduction to The

Writer's Control of Tone, White says, "For a writer, understanding his own tone is one way of understanding what he has to say about his subject and why he is asking a reader to hear him out" (ix). White goes on to discuss the way that tone overlaps all other considerations of composition. It grows out of the writer's purpose and relationship with the audience and material at hand, he says, and is expressed in the writer's diction, syntax, use of metaphor, point of view, and rhythm. "Tone, then, is a matter of technique which can be discussed clearly, while, at the same time, it is a matter of scarcely understood emotional responses and implicit ideas which technical devices manage to convey" (x).

Science writers, of course, strive for an impersonal, although not indifferent, tone. As Zeiger says, scientific writing is concerned with logic, "the rational order of left-brain, linear, sequential procedure" (461). Informative writers, such as newspaper reporters, strive for an impersonal tone, but the subtle influence of the writer's, editor's and reader's values lead to a less impersonal tone than that employed by science writers. Writers of the familiar essay use a friendly, conversational tone in order to persuade the readers that all responses are welcome and further exploration is encouraged. (463). This tone supports the exploratory nature of the familiar form because, according to Zeiger:

The scene and scope of the familiar essay [is] . . . intuition . . . the free association of right brain, holistic, simultaneous play of alternatives. It is not the writer's reasoning which governs the familiar essay, but the writer's personality. And while reasoning succeeds only when predictable, the personality charms most with its little irrational leaps. Such a context, moreover, provides a fertile field for creativity, permits the mind to examine without penalty or prejudice the most unlikely and even untenable positions, and makes possible the emergence of new ideas and associations. (461)

Henry David Thoreau exhibits a friendly tone in "Ktaadn," when the narrator risks the intimacy of sharing his dream with his audience:

In the night I dreamed of trout-fishing: and, when at length I awoke, it seemed a fable that this painted fish swam there so near my couch, and rose to our hooks the last evening, and I doubted if I had not dreamed it all. So I arose before dawn to test its truth, while my companions were still sleeping. There stood Ktaadn with distinct and cloudless outline in the moonlight; and the rippling of the rapids was the only sound to break the stillness. Standing on the shore, I once more cast my line into the stream, and I found the stream to be real and the fable true. The speckled

trout and silvery roach, like flying-fish, sped swiftly through the moonlight air, describing bright arcs on the dark side of Ktaadn, until moonlight, now fading into daylight, brought satiety to my mind, and the minds of my companions, who had joined me. (124)

Thoreau's diction, which seems almost ceremonial to today's readers, "when at length I awoke, it seemed a fable that this painted fish swam there so near my couch"; "describing bright arcs"; "brought satiety to my mind" helps us define the persona of the narrator as a man who belongs to another, more formal, time. But, because of his willingness to risk intimacy he manages to connect with his audience over time, sharing with us his awe of nature, "There stood Ktaadn with distinct and cloudless outline in the moonlight; and the rippling of the rapids was the only sound to break the stillness." Thoreau's use of the word "there" points out the magnitude of the experience he is about to share with us. We respond, with a certain humility, to the magnitude of the experience coupled with the authorial presence which the name "Thoreau" connotes, by becoming the intimate audience he calls for in this essay.

Although Lewis Thomas' authorial presence is as credible as Thoreau's, he wins the audience through his affectionate, playful tone which is exemplified in "The Music of This Sphere," from The Lives of a Cell:

The thrush in my backyard sings down his nose in meditative, liquid runs of melody, over and over again, and I have the strongest impression that he does this for his own pleasure. Some of the time he seems to be practicing, like a virtuoso in his apartment. He starts a run, reaches a midpoint in the second bar where there should be a set of complex harmonics, stops, and goes back to begin over, dissatisfied. Sometimes he changes his notation so conspicuously that he seems to be improvising sets of variations. It is a meditative, questioning kind of music, and I cannot believe that he is simply saying, 'thrush here.' (25)

We smile at the backyard thrush who "sings down his nose" like an opera singer stuck in a piano bar who knows he belongs in the "Met." Thomas carries the image through the paragraph as the "virtuoso in his apartment" practices "over and over again," changing notation and "improvising sets of variation," yet never quite satisfied, and we willingly join in the fun. Because the witty tone of the piece is so irresistible, we are eager to consider Thomas' unique idea when he states, "I cannot believe that he is simply saying, 'thrush here.'" Thomas gives the bird a human personality with descriptions like: "sings down his nose," "like a virtuoso in his apartment," "improvising sets of variations," and then gently pokes fun at his own creation. The tone causes us to yield to the work.

From the playful affection of Thomas, we move to the passion of Edward Abbey who has created a persona who, supposedly, doesn't give a damn if anyone reads his work. The persona, of course, can't conceal the fact that Abbey cares fervently about the preservation of the important things, the natural things he writes about. In the introduction to Desert Solitaire, Abbey says:

It will be objected that the book deals too much with mere appearances, with the surface of things, and fails to engage and reveal the patterns of unifying relationships which form the true underlying reality of existence. Here I must confess that I know nothing whatever about true underlying reality, having never met any. There are many people who say they have, I know, but they've been luckier than I. (xi)

By using the language of the intellectual snob in the first sentence and apologizing for his ignorance in the second, Abbey creates a sarcastic tone which sets the narrator apart from the "serious critics, serious librarians, serious professors of English" (x), who he defines in the previous paragraph as those he hopes will dislike the book. The last sentence sounds a bit like Mark Twain as it pokes fun at these people, "but they've been luckier than I." People who are in on the joke are Abbey's audience, part of his "gang."

Abbey shifts tone in the next paragraph to share his important ideas with his intimate audience. He goes from

the sarcastic use of pseudo-intellectual language ridiculing snobs to a reverent tone, created by the care he takes in choosing concrete words worthy of his subject:

For my own part I am pleased enough with surfaces--in fact they alone seem to me to be of much importance. Such things for example as the grasp of a child's hand in your own, the flavor of an apple, the embrace of friend or lover, the silk of a girl's thigh, the sunlight on rock and leaves, the feel of music, the bark of a tree, the abrasion of granite and sand, the plunge of clear water into a pool, the face of the wind--what else is there? What else do we need? (xi)

Many people are put off by Abbey's tone, but they haven't taken the time to discover that he has a "Them" tone and an "Us" tone. His sarcastic "Them" tone is reserved for those who don't care enough about the preservation of the important things in life. This tone stands out above the "Us" tone which is sometimes more difficult to detect because his "Us" tone is quiet and matter-of-fact. It's hidden in the concerned way he arranges facts and descriptions, such as the list of sensory images in the preceding paragraph, which is framed by Abbey's assertion, in the first sentence, that surfaces are important and the questions, "What else is there? What else do we need?" at the end. He carefully arranges the surface, in order to allow us an intimate view of his feelings and then trusts us

to find meaning on our own. The familiar form encourages both the writer and the reader to personalize the text by "playing" with the ideas presented--to "prove" them in Montaigne's sense of the word. This "fertile field of creativity," therefore, allows us to cultivate those "different and deeper forms of understanding," which we need to balance the "high speed methods of transmission," which seem to numb our ability to understand one another.

Chapter V

Aesthetic Effect

It is a natural marvel. All of the life of the earth dies, all of the time, in the same volume as the new life that dazzles us each morning, each spring. All we see of this is the odd stump, the fly struggling on the porch floor of the summer house in October, the fragment on the highway. I have lived all my life with an embarrassment of squirrels in my backyard, they are all over the place, all year long, and I have never seen, anywhere, a dead squirrel. (Thomas 115)

This quotation is from Lewis Thomas' essay "Death in the Open," which examines the sense of secrecy surrounding death. The essay is easily understood, but clarity is obviously not the main principle working here. While the reader senses gentle persuasion to join Thomas in considering the ideas presented, the essay is not organized for persuasive force. What the reader initially finds attractive in Thomas' essay is its aesthetic appeal.

Howard C. Brashers explains aesthetic appeal in his essay, "Aesthetic Form in Familiar Essays." Brashers defines aesthetic form as a result of the cooperation and competition between the principles of design and the principles of pattern described by Stephen C. Pepper in Principles of Art Appreciation. Pepper's purpose is to:

Enlarge our understanding of the arts and thereby to increase our appreciation of them. The two aims actually go together and cannot be separated. For art cannot be understood without appreciation, and appreciation depends upon understanding. (3)

Although Pepper deals with painting and music in this work, the basis of appreciation holds true in writing also. In order to get a clearer understanding of how these principles apply to writing we need to understand why any work of art gives us pleasure. Through an understanding of the principles of design and pattern employed in the familiar essay, readers can gain a deeper appreciation of, and pleasure in, this and other forms of writing. As Pepper states:

There are some objects so designed as particularly to stimulate the appreciative attitude, and to hold it steadily once it is attained. These are works of art. And it is there, as we said, that we propose particularly to study. For if we can understand these objects and the ways in which they give us enjoyment and the ways we can get enjoyment out of them, then we shall be able to understand objects of appreciation generally. (4)

If a thing "is liked, it is just what we mean by an object of appreciation," says Pepper (4). He goes on to say that although:

All men's likings are so obviously different. . . . The psychological laws governing human likings and dislikings are the same for all men . . . likes and dislikes can to a considerable degree be predicted. (6)

Pepper explains the basic psychological principles which are responsible for our likes and dislikes and are fundamental considerations in the organization of all works of art. According to Pepper, our responses are subject to these psychological principles because we all "have the same instincts, the same mechanisms of learning, the same emotional mechanisms for meeting conflicts and frustrations" (6-7).

The principle of design takes place in response to the psychological process Pepper calls "aesthetic fatigue." "Attentive fatigue" is a type of aesthetic fatigue which occurs in the brain and affects our attention span. Pepper explains attentive fatigue in this way:

If you enter a room where a clock is ticking loudly, you are at first extremely conscious of the sound. But in a short time you find that you do not notice it any more. Yet if later somebody calls your attention to it, you hear it again as loud as ever. (42)

The reason we stop hearing the clock's tick is that the repetition of the sound loses our attention. When we have attentive fatigue the stimulus is eventually blotted out of consciousness. If the clock stops ticking, we become aware

of the stimulus because of its absence. Absence of the stimulus restores awareness very quickly. This psychological principle demonstrates the importance of contrast as a way of enhancing the receptor's sensitivity to any art--including writing. Pepper explains this idea in musical and visual terms:

Contrasts of intensities like loud and soft, dark and light, or of extensities like large and small, long and short, wide and narrow, or of rhythms like quick and slow are the characteristic contrasts for rearousing attention. (43)

However, it is also applicable to writing in contrasting words, images, anecdotes, ideas and sentence lengths.

Pepper's discussion of the problem of aesthetic fatigue is useful to writers because an understanding of this mutation makes us aware of its effect on readers. The fatigue mutation is deadly to aesthetic appreciation. It kills a reader's sensitivity to our words and, like the ticking clock, eventually blots them from consciousness. Our words become monotonous and, as Pepper says, "monotony is one of the cardinal sins of art" (44). Because this mutation begins as soon as a stimulus is given, aesthetic fatigue is not entirely avoidable. The artist's job is to keep it from going all the way to neutrality or unconsciousness. The methods which all artists use to minimize the effects of aesthetic fatigue: contrast,

gradation, theme-and-variation and restraint are called the principles of design.

Of all of the principles of design, contrast is the most striking because it attacks the tendency for monotony in the simplest, most immediate fashion--it stops the clock's ticking. The disadvantage of this principle is that, overused, it leads to confusion. Our minds will not take in more than four or five disconnected objects without protest (50).

Because readers become irritated by the confusion created by more than five objects of contrast, artists use other principles of design, such as gradation and theme-and-variation because order is an essential part of their makeup. They are not as much a shock to aesthetic fatigue but they can keep the receptor interested in a considerable quantity of aesthetic material because of their greater versatility and capacity (51).

Gradation holds the interest by organizing related ideas or things into a sequence. As long as these related ideas or things follow the gradational sequence, any number of them will work together. This is a great advantage over the limits found in the principle of contrast. Gradation also has the added benefit of climax which the writer can use to avoid monotony and actually increase the receptor's interest (51). Pepper calls this "gradational climax" to distinguish it from the kind of climax found in the

principle of restraint. "If, for any reason, one end of a sensory gradation is more interesting to us than the other, then the gradation from the less to the more interesting end is a gradational climax" (52). Although gradation is superior to contrast because it can unify any number of ideas, it is limited in that the variations must follow the gradational line.

As an organizing principle, theme-and-variation surpasses gradation because it can keep a practically limitless amount of material interesting. It consists of selecting some familiar idea or thing and then varying it in any number of ways. The only limit to this principle is that the receptor must be able to recognize the theme through all the different variations or the connection is broken. This break causes confusion by destroying order and unity. The receptor's recognition of the theme may not always be explicit or even conscious, but it must be felt (52). As Pepper explains:

Probably all richly developed designs contain many such subtle variations. The artist [writer] himself may not have been aware he was making them, but the composition seemed to call for a certain arrangement of lines [ideas] in certain areas and this arrangement on analysis turns out to be a variation of one of the themes in the composition. All parts of the

composition are thus pulled together by a sense of familiarity and family relationship. (52-3)

Pepper makes an important point here. We must remember that these principles of design and pattern are "grounded on basic psychological principles to which every man's responses are subject." Therefore, design and pattern are probably not consciously imposed but rather emerge. For the composition student, a conscious awareness of these principles and an understanding of how they work helps to demystify the writing process--an important key for students who see writing as an insoluble puzzle.

While the first three principles of design assume an interested receptor who needs only to be kept interested, the principle of restraint deals with the fact that interest itself tires (54). An artist uses restraint to distribute interest throughout the whole composition. In his book, Pepper explains that we can recognize the principle of restraint most clearly in temporal works such as music, novels or plays. A well-written play usually builds up tension until the climax near the end. At the very end, interest is finally relaxed and the audience is released with a feeling that there is still more interest which the playwright might have used (54).

The spectator leaves the theater not totally drained, but still interested and perhaps wishing there were more of the play, or reflecting upon it and reliving it

in imagination. This way of handling the spectator's store of interest, playing it out so that there is always more left, is what is meant by the principle of restraint. (55)

Restraint, when used well in writing, is a delight. It makes us anxious to find out what happens next, while at the same time not wanting the experience to end. Restraint keeps us actively involved in the work.

These four principles of design, says Pepper, "are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary they are mutually cooperative, and any considerable work of art employs all of them together" (57). The principles all work to avoid fatigue and monotony, but in order to avoid chaos they must be combined with pattern.

Pepper defines pattern "as the number and arrangement of things that can be taken in intuitively by the attention" (58). We can take in no more than seven or eight separate things intuitively and most of us can't take in more than five. Because Pepper is discussing pattern in the visual arts he illustrates this idea with the following figures (58):

```

X      X
      X
      X
X

```

Fig. 1

```

X  X  X X
  X  X X
X  X  X
  X  X

```

Fig. 2

```

X X X
X X X
X X X
X X X

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Fig. 3

We can take in the spots in Fig. 1 and know there are five at a glance but, while we recognize that there are a lot of dots, we do not know intuitively how many there are in Fig. 2 without counting them. If, in Fig. 2, we arbitrarily group the spots in some sort of pattern which the mind can intuitively grasp, we make what is called a "subjective pattern." When the spots are already arranged in a pattern, such as in Fig. 3, and we perceive them in groups of three rows of four figures or four rows of three figures it is called an "objective pattern." An objective pattern is more pleasing to the mind.

The attention impulsively tries to make a pattern out of large groups of things so that we can comprehend them intuitively. We generally try to group things in twos or threes. As Pepper says, "There is a strong tendency, whenever a strain is put upon the attention, to reduce a quantity of things to the simplest groupings possible, and ultimate simplicity is reached when things can be taken as groups of twos and threes" (60).

If no "objective" pattern exists, such as in Fig. 3, our attention does its best to pattern things "subjectively." We naturally try to answer the demands of our attention by ordering things in twos, threes, fours, fives, sixes, or sevens; or into groups of not more than

sevens or eights (61). In a discussion on the importance of pattern, Pepper says:

An objective pattern is particularly congenial to the mind if it is arranged to fit the natural impulse of attention; that is, if it does 'objectively' with the things to be ordered just what the attention would have tried to do with them 'subjectively.' That was why Fig. 3 was so satisfying to the attention in comparison with Fig.2. . . . It pleases the attention to get what it wants. Since this satisfaction is an instance of something liked for itself, it is an aesthetic pleasure. Many objects of common beauty owe their delightfulness very largely to pattern. Not that what most easily satisfies the attention always pleases most. A little suspense, a little search on the part of attention to find the pattern that lies in the object, may often increase the delight. But if no pattern is to be found in an object, then the object is a confusion. It is frustrating, unsatisfactory, and painful.

.

It is a minimum requirement of all objects of delight and beauty that they should avoid confusion and accordingly that they should have pattern. But pattern may also be a source of delight in itself, since it is based on impulse, on certain demands of the attention

which give immediate pleasure in their satisfaction.

(62)

Although pattern and design are often used interchangeably, Pepper defines them as "at once opposed and mutually co-operative modes of aesthetic organization" (58). One checks and compensates for the other; "when pattern overdoes the pursuit of abstract unity it quickly becomes monotonous, and when design overdoes the pursuit of variety it quickly becomes confused" (58). The artist must carefully organize his work in order to avoid aesthetic fatigue.

Brashers incorporates Pepper's principles, which focus on the visual arts, into three objective patterns which writers use as devices to allow intuitive comprehension. These patterning devices are the incremental or linear, radial-circular, and mytho-literary. The incremental or linear pattern, which is the simplest, involves putting one thing after another in a sequence. As long as the incidents and/or anecdotes in the sequence are more or less equal, they will be perceived as a unit. Radial-circular patterns are more complicated because, instead of running linearly, the increments of meaning either radiate toward the idea and then back out from it like spokes connecting to the hub of a wheel or they are arranged as peripheral circles of incident and/or anecdote which circle the hub, idea. In the mytho-literary pattern, incident and anecdote become meaningful

because they repeat or mirror mythology or literature from the past. Of course, if readers aren't familiar with the previous mythology or literature the effect is lost. The use of these patterns allows writers to "produce unity through the action of attention, or, conversely. . . . Keep away the confusion that comes from neglecting the limits of attention" (58). The principle of pattern provides unity to the variety produced by the principle of design.

Brashers states that "These principles can be deliberately and consciously learned and translated into techniques, though the best essays result from them after they have sunk into forgetfulness but continue to operate unconsciously" (147). The principles of design--contrast, gradation, theme-and-variation, and restraint--when used as devices, fight tedium and flatness by "complicating the product; they inject contrast, difference, variety, etc..." (147). Countering the confusion that these methods may cause are the three main kinds of pattern--incremental or linear, radial-circular, and mytho-literary--that help pull the parts together so that we experience the aesthetic form as a whole:

Variety in unity, unity in variety--one of the oldest aesthetic formulas--is determined and controlled by design and pattern, for design produces the variety necessary to gain and hold the attention, pattern makes it all understandable. . . . design and pattern

characterize successful familiar essays and give those essays their aesthetic effect, their impression and resonance of complicated unity and organized variety.

(147)

Chapter VI
Principles of Design

Edward Abbey uses contrast, the first principle of design, in his essay, "Polemic: Industrial Tourism and the National Parks." Here, Abbey warns that the national park system faces eventual destruction because of the onslaught of tourist cars, motorbikes, motorboats, and other vehicles drawn by paved roads and other amenities built by a greedy tourism industry. Abbey uses contrast in texture, idea, and structure.

In looking at the texture of "Polemic: Industrial Tourism and the National Park," we see an obvious contrast between the diction employed to discuss life in the national park before and after industrial tourism. In the first example:

Finally the moon came up, a golden globe behind the rocky fretwork of the horizon, a full and delicate moon that floated lightly as a leaf upon the dark slow current of the night. A face that watched me from the other side. (67)

the "f" and "g" alliteration: "finally," "fretwork," "full," "floated," "face," "from," "golden," "globe"; the lilting music of the "l": "finally," "golden," "globe," "fully," "delicate," "floated," "lightly," "leaf," "slow"; the images of the "golden/globe," "rocky fretwork," "moon/leaf," "the

current of the night"; the personification of the "moon/face" give the pre-industrial park the magic and mystery of a poem. The second example:

Power lines now bisect the scene; a 100-foot, pink water tower looms against the red cliffs; tract-style houses are built to house the 'protectors'; natural campsites along the river are closed off while all campers are now herded into an artificial steel-and-asphalt "campground" in the hottest, windiest spot in the area; historic buildings are razed by bulldozers to save the expense of maintaining them while at the same time hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent on an unneeded paved entrance road. (53)

describes the post-industrial park in restrictive images: "power lines bisect," "tower looms," "tract-style houses," "closed off," "campers herded," "artificial steel-and-asphalt 'campground,'" "buildings razed," "paved entrance road" and harsh, percussive words: "power lines," "bisect," "pink," "steel-and-asphalt," "hottest," "windiest," "spot," "razed," "bulldozers," "expense," "paved." The contrast in diction illustrates Abbey's contrasting feelings about life in the parks before and after industrialization.

The aesthetic effect of contrast, of course, depends heavily upon a sense of balance. The end of the previous quotation exemplifies this idea, on the sentence level: "historic buildings are razed by bulldozers to save the

expense of maintaining them/while at the same time/hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent on an unneeded paved entrance road." The phrase "while at the same time" acts as a fulcrum between the thirteen words on each side of it which contrast the expense of maintaining buildings with the expense of entrance roads.

The consideration of balance is important because, as Brashers states, "contrast operates . . . as a quality of the ideas we are expressing. . . . At its best, contrast defines and delineates idea" (148). In order to define an idea, we need to tell what it is and what it is not. The contrasting anecdote, a staple of the familiar essay, is one way of dramatizing the writer's ideas, and Abbey uses this tool in his essay. Sitting before a fragrant fire, enjoying a solitary evening in the desert, Abbey notices:

A file of deer watching from fifty yards away, three does and a velvet-horned buck, all dark against the sundown sky. They began to move. I whistled and they stopped again, staring at me, 'Come on over,' I said 'have a drink.' They declined, moving off with a casual, unhurried grace, quiet as phantoms, and disappeared beyond the rise. Smiling, thoroughly at peace, I turned back to my drink, the little fire, the subtle transformations of the immense landscape before me. On the program: the rise of the full moon. (49)

In the first anecdote we see Abbey, "shoeless and shirtless," as a part of the natural scene which surrounds him. He illustrates the quiet pleasure an individual can find in accepting nature for what it is. The three does and the buck appear quietly, keeping a polite distance from Abbey, who offers them a drink.

He compares the deer's visit with the visit of three men and a jeep:

It was then I heard the discordant note, the snarling whine of a jeep in low range and four-wheel-drive, coming from an unexpected direction.

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right up to the door of the trailer. It was a gray jeep with a U.S. Government decal on the side--Bureau of Public Roads--and covered with dust. Two empty water bags flapped at the bumper. Inside were three sunburned men in twill britches and engineering boots, and a pile of equipment: transit case, tripod, survey rod, bundles of wooden stakes. (Oh no!) The men got out, dripping with dust, and the driver grinned at me, pointing to his parched open mouth and making horrible gasping noises deep in his throat. 'Okay,' I said, 'Come on in.' (49-50)

The three surveyors are sunburned, "in twill britches and engineering boots." They obviously don't belong. They don't even have sense enough to keep their water bags filled

in the desert and they are burdened down with equipment designed to twist nature into shapes that will provide only financial benefit. The men roar up in the jeep, intruding "right up to the door of the trailer," and they make rude noises to indicate their thirst. On the simplest level of meaning, Abbey is saying that the deer's visit was a good experience and the men's wasn't. But Abbey gives us much more; beyond simple clarity, he uses these contrasting anecdotes for aesthetic effect. Through contrast, Abbey defines his feelings about nature and about the people who would destroy it for financial gain. His use of contrast is successful because the juxtaposition of the two anecdotes helps the reader, as Brashers puts it, "see something he would not otherwise see--which is to say, the contrast makes the statement" (148).

Contrast is also used in irony, parody and satire. We get a sense of this in a number of places in Abbey's essay. For example, in describing the chief of the above-mentioned survey party, he leads us in one direction with seemingly positive adjectives: "He was a pleasant-mannered, soft-spoken civil engineer with an unquestioning dedication to his work," and then covers them with a contrasting generalization, "A very dangerous man" (50).

Moving from the texture to the structure of the essay, Abbey's idea: that the invasion by industrial tourism will

destroy the national parks lends itself, naturally, to the structure of comparison/contrast. According to Brashers:

When contrast is an important element of the quality of idea, it frequently also functions structurally.

Juxtaposing one anecdote against another, one segment of information against another, one paragraph against another, soon becomes the structural rhetoric of comparison/contrast. (148)

Abbey illustrates the structure on many levels. On a personal level, he contrasts his job of park ranger at Arches National Monument before paved roads encouraged industrial tourism:

I like my job. . . . The fringe benefits are priceless: clean air to breathe. . . . Stillness, solitude and space; an unobstructed view every day and every night of sun, sky, stars, clouds, mountains, moon, cliff rock and canyons; a sense of time enough to let thought and feeling range from here to the end of the world and back; the discovery of something intimate--though impossible to name--in the remote.

(45)

and after:

The little campgrounds where I used to putter around reading three-day-old newspapers full of lies and watermelon seeds have now been consolidated into one master campground that looks, during the busy season,

like a suburban village; elaborate house trailers of quilted aluminum crowd upon gigantic camper-trucks of fiberglass and molded plastic, through their windows you will see the blue glow of television and hear the studio laughter of Los Angeles. . . . (51)

He also contrasts the solitude of his camp in Arches National Monument with the "dazzling metropolis of Moab, population 5500," and the friendly atmosphere of the bar he frequents there with the stressful atmosphere in most bars. He expands his contrast by juxtaposing the conditions in many of the post-industrial tourism, national parks with what he sees as sensible proposals to alter the conditions and retain the little bit of wilderness that remains. The comparison/contrast structure of Abbey's essay evolves naturally from contrast, as the principle design. As Brashers says, "When contrast is an important element of the quality of idea, it frequently also functions structurally" (148).

It seems to me that guiding students through an analysis of Abbey's, or other familiar essayists', use of contrast as a design principle would benefit them in a number of ways. By beginning at the simplest level of meaning, the deer's visit was a good experience and the engineers' wasn't, the instructor could lead them to discover how real writers write. Student writers might learn that the aesthetic pleasure derived from the familiar

essay begins with a good idea which merits attention to each step of the writing process. Those who believe that organization runs out of the pens of certain chosen writers along with the ink might begin to understand that, although the idea comes first, revision is an integral part of the writing process.

The instructor's emphasis on analysis can also encourage analytical reading; and, by tracing the familiar writer's process back to the idea, the instructor can help the student writer connect with the professional writer.

While contrast works well in Abbey's essay, different ideas, of course, call for different principles of design. Brashers notes that some writers use gradation to lead readers to discover meaning, although familiar writers use the principle of contrast more frequently than the principle of gradation:

Perhaps the ambition of thought requires more space than many have been willing to give, for the gradation must be made to pay off handsomely in insight; after waiting through so much preparation, the point should be more than merely worth the making. Relatively few writers have managed that and, when they do, they have not wanted to use it all up in so short a space. (150)

A gradation presents a series of ideas or things which are related by a common quality, but which vary from one another in grade, level or degree. Brashers explains that there are

two kinds of gradation, static and dynamic. In static gradations, all parts of the series are perceived at the same time and are, therefore, said to be spatial. All of the different levels of social class would be considered a static gradation. Dynamic gradations, on the other hand, have to do with time passing. The different members of a series are perceived sequentially, one member after another, like the grades we go through in school (149). By putting a person or thing in a gradation, a writer creates aesthetic impact which leads the reader to discover meaning by becoming more of a participant in the process.

Lewis Thomas' essay, "The Lives of a Cell," uses static gradation to impart meaning. Beginning with single cell creatures who "simply vanish totally into their own progeny" (114), Thomas moves upward, in size, from the cycle of slime mold through insects, birds and elephants, discussing their "invisible" deaths. Brashers points out that this use of:

Hierarchy is the key to any graded series, for the series has to be going somewhere. Some end product is always perceivable; indeed, it is only because we perceive the end product that we can establish the series in our own mind, for any tendency presumes a goal. (149)

By placing ourselves in between the two extremes of single cell animals and elephants, we are able to discover Thomas' meaning: we are a part of all life, and death is one of the

natural conditions of that life which we share with our fellow creatures. As Thomas concludes:

We will have to give up the notion that death is catastrophe, or detestable, or avoidable, or even strange. . . . There might be some comfort in the recognition of synchrony, in the formation that we all go down together, in the best of company. (116)

Static gradation helps us to discover Thomas' meaning in the previous essay but dynamic gradation works well in Loren Eiseley's essays because so many of them are concerned with evolution. In "The Slit," he manages to compress the past, present and future into one paragraph. As Eiseley climbs down into a crack in the earth, he leaves the sky, which "seemed already as far off as some century I would never see," and the sunshine of the present day to go into humanity's past, represented by a skull:

It was the face of a creature who had spent his days following his nose, who was led by instinct rather than memory, and whose power of choice was very small.

Though he was not a man, nor a direct human ancestor, there was yet about him, even in the bone, some trace of that low, snuffling world out of which our forebears had so recently emerged. The skull lay tilted in such a manner that it stared, sightless, up at me as though I, too, were already caught a few feet above him in the strata and, in my turn, were staring upward at that

strip of sky which the ages were carrying farther away from me beneath the tumbling debris of falling mountains. The creature had never lived to see a man, and I, what was it I was never going to see? (5)

By using dynamic gradation, Eiseley draws us down into the slit, allowing us to define our relationship to life in the past, as well as in the future, "we are all potential fossils still carrying within our bodies the crudities of former existences, the marks of a world in which living creatures flow with little more consistency than clouds from age to age" (6).

Henry David Thoreau also uses gradation as a structural principle in "Ktaadn," excerpted from *The Maine Woods*. In this essay, Thoreau discusses the journey through the Maine Woods to the top of Mt. Katahdin. As he ascends the mountain, he describes the changes in vegetation, from thick woods of "yellow birch, spruce, fir, mountain-ash, or round-wood, as the Maine people call it, and moose-wood," up to "walls of rock, which were at first covered with low trees, then with impenetrable thickets of scraggy birches and spruce-trees, and with moss, but at last bare of all vegetation but lichens." . . (127). While the day is clear lower down, as Thoreau reaches the summit he stands alone on bare rock, "deep within the hostile ranks of cloud" (130).

The change in surroundings causes a change in Thoreau's diction. As the landscape becomes more alien and chaotic,

the writer's description fills with references to mythological figures, "Atlas, Vulcan, the Cyclops, and Prometheus. Such was Caucasus and the rock where Prometheus was bound. Aeschylus had no doubt visited such scenery as this. It was vast, titanic, and such as man never inhabits" (130). This climb up Mt. Katahdin, with its gradual change in surroundings, changes Thoreau. Thoreau uses gradation to structure the overall essay in order to help us understand this change. The narrative of the lower regions uses words which describe the kind of nature with which Thoreau is comfortable:

By the side of a cool mountain rill, amid the woods, where the water began to partake of the purity and transparency of the air, we stopped to cook some of our fishes, which we had brought thus far in order to save our hard bread and pork, in the use of which we had put ourselves on short allowance. We soon had a fire blazing and stood around it, under the damp and sombre forest of firs and birches, each with a sharpened stick, three or four feet in length, upon which he had spitted his trout, or roach, previously well gashed and salted, our sticks, radiating like the spokes of a wheel from one centre, and each crowding his particular fish into the most desirable exposure, not with the truest regard always to his neighbor's rights. (126)

In this section Thoreau describes a relationship to nature which is familiar to many of us. As we filter Thoreau's words through our own camping experience, we smell the fresh, transparent air and the fishes cooking over a blazing fire in the middle of a damp forest. We recognize the camaraderie of the campers drawn to the fire, like the spokes of a wheel, good-naturedly jostling each other for the best cooking position. Thoreau's words: "we stopped to cook some of our fishes, which we had brought thus far in order to save our hard bread and pork," and "each crowding his particular fish into the most desirable exposure, not with the truest regard always to his neighbor's rights," create a comfortable scene.

But as Thoreau climbs, he is confronted with real, natural wildness, and the language of the lower regions isn't sufficient to describe what the experience means to him. With Thoreau, we come to appreciate that aspect of nature which is distinctly "unmotherly":

There was clearly felt the presence of a force not bound to be kind to man. It was a place for heathenism and superstitious rites--to be inhabited by men nearer of kin to the rocks and to wild animals than we. . . . Here not even the surface had been scarred by man, but it was a specimen of what God saw fit to make this world. What is this Titan that has possession of me? Talk of mysteries! Think of our life in nature,--

rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! the solid earth!
the actual world! the common sense! Contact!
Contact! who are we? where are we? (135)

The power of the writer's words: "a force not bound to be kind to man," "heathenism," "superstitious rites," "kin to the rocks and to wild animals," "this Titan," "possession," "mysteries," and the repetition of "Contact!" illustrates Thoreau's sense of humility in the face of raw nature. As readers, we discover our meaning from the combination of Thoreau's gradual change in diction, the changes in nature's appearance from place to place, and our own feelings about, and experiences with, nature and mythology.

While the device of gradation is used infrequently, the principle of theme-and-variation is often employed in the familiar essay. On a textural level, this principle uses allusions, quotations, modified proverbs, loaded words, living metaphors and familiar figures of speech. Theme-and-variation is used frequently because, as Brashers states:

In every case the reader recognizes the theme in the culture (assuming of course, that he caught the allusion, the quotation, etc.; if he isn't familiar with the reference, then the whole device is shot down the drain and we have a case of the dull book for the dull reader), and he reacts to this expression of it before him as a variation on that theme, as a new wrinkle in familiarity. (150)

The previously discussed essay by Thoreau uses theme and variation on a textural level. At one point, he refers to a companion as "our Nimrod" (125). This reference lends a note of humor to the essay by relating a hiker who is afraid of a wary moose to the biblical hunter (who was a great-grandson of Noah), and expands our perception of Thoreau's companion. Thoreau also adds an increment of meaning to "the ancient black spruce-trees" by telling us that they were, "old as the flood" (128). Along with these biblical references, mythological allusions such as Chaos, Atlas, Vulcan, and Cyclops, complicate the essay and hold our interest by encouraging our participation through recognition of previously learned information, using that information in new ways, or learning new information.

Using theme and variation on a structural level to illustrate the multiplicity of his idea, Loren Eiseley, in "The Judgment of the Birds," uses a number of anecdotes having to do with the miracles of nature to be found in seemingly ordinary settings. Multiple anecdotes work well, according to Brashers, because:

An anecdote can lead into a subject, or evoke the subject, or offer a related view, or summarize or epitomize the subject. In all such cases, we perceive the anecdote as a variation upon the central idea. The principle that knits together such multiplicity is

their common subject matter, which means that their relationship is conceptual. (150)

By connecting various anecdotes with a common subject matter, Eiseley allows the reader to relate ideas conceptually rather than by mechanically connecting them through the usual expository technique of stating the thesis, method and logic. The variety of anecdotes multiplies the meaning while the "core" idea gives the essay unity. Eiseley tells us that he is setting his anecdotes down:

. . . a matter of pigeons, a flight of chemicals, and a judgment of birds, in the hope that they will come to the eye of those who have retained a true taste for the marvelous, and who are capable of discerning in the flow of ordinary events the point at which the mundane world gives way to quite another dimension. (164)

The most obvious connection between these anecdotes is the prosaic character of the settings in all of the incidents. They become marvelous because of Eiseley's organization and the words he chooses to help us see them through his eyes. In the first anecdote, he imparts a magical quality to pigeons flying around New York City because of his point of view: the window of a high-rise hotel at "The hour just before dawn . . . when men sigh in their sleep." Because of this, "strange inverted angle," Eiseley discovers, for himself and for us, that the pigeons

". . . were taking over the spires of Manhattan. They were pouring upward in a light that was not yet perceptible to human eyes, while far down in the black darkness of the alleys it was still midnight" (166).

Eiseley increases the meaning of the first anecdote by relating it to another one in which a neighborhood crow is overcome by a "strange inverted view," similar to Eiseley's view in the previous incident. Used to flying high-up away from man, the bird's perception of the natural order of things suddenly changes when a dense fog causes him to fly precariously close to Eiseley's head. The writer attributes the terror in the crow's cawing to the fact that ". . . he had perceived a ghastly and, to the crow mind, unnatural sight. He had seen a man walking on air, desecrating the very heart of the crow kingdom, a harbinger of the most profound evil a crow could conceive of--air-walking man" (169). By relating these similar experiences, Eiseley draws the human world closer to the animal world.

While the anecdote of the crow makes a connection between the consciousness of living species, the next anecdote Eiseley uses connects life forms over the dimension of time. Carrying a knapsack of fossilized bones out of the "lifeless" Badlands, as the sun is going down, he sees a flight of birds speeding above him. As he contemplates the dead world all around him:

Fifty million years lay under my feet, fifty million years of bellowing monsters moving in a green world now gone so utterly that its very light was travelling on the farther edge of space. The chemicals of all that vanished age lay about me in the ground.

.

The carbon that had driven them ran blackly in the eroding stone. The stain of iron was in the clays. The iron did not remember the blood it had once moved within, the phosphorus had forgot the savage brain. The little individual moment had ebbed from all those strange combinations of chemicals as it would ebb from our living bodies into the sinks and runnels of oncoming time. (172)

Eiseley realizes that the chemicals of life from fifty million years ago still exist in the birds flying overhead, "There went phosphorus, there went iron, there went carbon, there beat the calcium in those hurrying wings. Alone on a dead planet I watched that incredible miracle speeding past" (172). He does not state the relationship between this anecdote and the previous one, but communicates the relationship by proximity.

Through the order in which Eiseley arranges the first three anecdotes, we may find that humanity's view of itself as master of all it surveys is just a matter of perception; humans and animals are connected in the community of living

things; all living things are connected over time. The arrangement of the next two anecdotes implies a sense of hope for humanity which grows out of its being a part of the community of living things. In the first, Eiseley, by chance, observes a "judgment of life over death" (175). When a huge raven indifferently swallows a tiny nestling, a number of varieties of small birds join the nestling's parents to cry out against the predator. While they are too small to attack the raven, "They fluttered as though to point their wings at the murderer. There was a dim intangible ethic he had violated, that they knew. He was a bird of death" (175). The protest slowly dies out and the little birds gradually pick up the song of a sparrow-- forgetting their pain. "They sang because life is sweet and sunlight beautiful. They sang under the brooding shadow of the raven . . . for they were the singers of life, and not of death" (175).

Although Eiseley finds great meaning in the birds' choice of life over death, questions of logic lead him to doubt himself. In his final anecdote, a persistent spider, spinning her web around a streetlight in the falling snow, brings the message of the birds back to him. It gives him hope, because in the spider he sees the same "kind of heroism, a world where even a spider refuses to lie down and die if a rope can still be spun onto a star" (177). The incident causes Eiseley to see the mind as "a remarkable

thing; it has gotten itself a kind of courage by looking at a spider in a street lamp" (178). He begins to hope that "man," in the end, will show the same sort of courage as the spider and considers setting down the warning, "'In the days of the frost seek a minor sun'" (178), but he decides against it because:

It was better, I decided, for the emissaries returning from the wilderness . . . to record their marvel, not to define its meaning. In that way it would go echoing on through the minds of men, each grasping at that beyond out of which the miracles emerge, and which, once defined, ceases to satisfy the human need for symbols. (178)

Eiseley has, of course, set down the warning in the essay. One reason he does this might have to do with the familiar essayists' perception of a friendly audience (see 60), open to the writers' views. Eiseley refers to his audience as "those who have retained a true taste for the marvelous, and who are capable of discerning in the flow of ordinary events the point at which the mundane world gives way to quite another dimension" (164). He accords "us" the ability to infer the meaning of his multiple anecdotes for ourselves and, therefore, the warning is written down for those who don't have this ability. On the other hand, he may be setting down the warning as a device to point out the efficacy of his use of multiple anecdotes in an essay about

miracles, "No miracle can withstand a radio broadcast, and it is certain that it would be no miracle if it could. One must seek, then, what only the solitary approach can give--a natural revelation" (164). By using theme and variation as a structural principle, Eiseley both conceptually and aesthetically communicates the miracle: humanity can find reason for optimism in its ordinary life because it is a member of the community of life in which the smallest members "refuse to lay down and die."

While the previously discussed principles of design nudge us toward meaning, the final principle of design, restraint, creates interest by holding us back from it. Restraint generates negative and positive devices. According to Brashers, while the negative side is usually unrecognized by readers:

It seeks to avoid excesses--one doesn't want to blurt out everything he has to say at the outset, nor commit mistakes such as overstatement or bombast.

.....

Restrain yourself to good taste and appropriateness to the situation. (151)

the positive side:

Gives restraint its peculiar quality of idea. . .

Positive restraint makes suspense possible and focuses ideas that might otherwise be unnoticed. . . . If you want an audience to notice something, then you tell

them something is coming, give them a taste of it, whet their curiosity as to when it will come, and, when the suspense is high, give it to them. Anticipation makes the impact greater. Weak ideas become stronger when we are restrained into them. (151)

Both the negative and positive devices of restraint are at work in "Rocks," Abbey's essay from Desert Solitaire.

The title and introduction of "Rocks" lead readers to believe that they are about to be given an informative, albeit dry, lesson in the geology of the canyon lands of eastern Utah. In fact, the first paragraph is simply a list of the kinds of rocks and metals indigenous to the region. Abbey then expands his lecture to discuss the abundance of certain types of stones, Indian artifacts and petrified wood in particular areas, and the pack rat mentality of those who want to possess it all. "Silly," he calls it, "but not in the long run harmful. . ." (71). "Silly'" leads readers to believe they're going to find nothing especially dramatic here.

The readers are forced to focus on the seriousness of Abbey's idea in the following paragraph which uses restraint, on a textural level, to create a sense of tension which builds through the rest of the essay. The paragraph begins with another listing: coal in the Roan Cliffs, shale oil at the point where Utah, Colorado and Wyoming meet, gold in the Colorado River, lead, zinc and silver mines and a

rock called carnotite. Suspense begins to build slowly with the repetition of the name, "Carnotite, a greenish-yellow ore, is a complex mineral containing radon gas, vanadium and--uranium" (71). So these are the innocuous-sounding "rocks." Now we are faced with something dangerous. The title takes on new meaning because of Abbey's restraint, the powerful history surrounding the name and, of course, the use of the dash to provide impact.

The impact of the dash is magnified in the transition which begins the next paragraph, "Here was a treasure." This transition, which further emphasizes the importance of uranium, also lets the readers know they're moving closer to Abbey's meaning. With a number of short sketches, describing the experiences of those who search for uranium, Abbey hones our curiosity and whets our appetite for more. We anticipate satisfaction with the transitional paragraph:

Whatever the cost, there was for all who took part the zest of gambling and the exhilaration of adventure into unknown or little known territory. For a few an adventure which became a nightmare. (74)

Because of his diction: "whatever the cost," "zest," "gambling," "exhilaration," "adventure," "nightmare," Abbey lets us know that we're in for some excitement.

The suspense is high, but Abbey holds us back a little longer. Before moving into his most dramatic story, he bridges the gap between it and the aforementioned brief

sketches with a more detailed and exciting story about the adventures of two uranium hunters who lose their equipment, and almost lose their lives, in an attempt to get to the canyon country. The increased detail and excitement of this story grow out of the previous sketches and lead, quite naturally, into the final, most dramatic idea. Abbey combines restraint with gradation in order to increase our understanding of his ideas about uranium. Up to this point, the term has accrued meaning, beyond the first definition of "rock," as a source of "feverish struggle, buying and selling, cheating and swindling, isolation, loneliness, hardship, danger, sudden fortune and sudden disaster" (76).

Abbey has finally come to his most dramatic idea about uranium. The aesthetic effect of climax grows out of the importance of this final idea. The climactic structure is exemplified, on the textural level, by the statement, "there is one question about this search for radiant treasure--the hidden splendor--which nobody ever asked" (76). Abbey follows this statement with a kind of "shaggy dog" story, with increasingly dramatic ideas which, allows readers to discover the "question" for themselves.

Abbey's use of restraint works well in "Rocks" because his idea: that the "rock," uranium, is not worth the hardships which people endure in order to acquire it, is important enough to take the time and effort which restraint requires. By using climax as the main structural device, he

heightens aesthetic effect, ordering his ideas by following a weaker one with a stronger one; he complicates all his ideas which, as Brashers states, is "a positive element of the aesthetic impact" (147), and dramatically emphasizes his main point.

In the composition class, students can be taught to recognize the use of restraint in writing by analyzing an essay such as "Rocks." The instructor can guide students through the essay by asking questions such as, "How did you feel about this essay in the beginning? Did your feelings change by the end? What is the author doing to the audience? How does the author pull us along and keep us interested?" If students discover the principle themselves they may develop a deeper appreciation of writing as art, a growing confidence in their ability to think analytically, a new tool to help them organize their own writing and, most importantly, an awareness that the ability to write well gives them a certain power over their readers.

Chapter VII

Principles of Pattern

According to Brashers, familiar essayists don't really have a choice about using or not using the aforementioned principles of design as devices:

They are so much a part of our process of thinking, of the way we define our experience, or the processes by which we perceive and conceive of ideas, that we cannot escape them. Every string of ideas will generate one or more of these devices in our perception, for the very process of our perception is schooled in a tradition of them. Our only choices are whether we will use them well or ill, whether we will control them or they control us, whether they will work for us or against us. (152)

These principles of design--contrast, gradation, theme-and-variation, and restraint--work for the familiar writers by complicating the style and content of an essay, thereby enriching the ideas and causing the audience to participate more intimately. But if overused, or allowed to take precedence over ideas, these devices can turn complication into chaos and audience participation into frustration and eventual disinterest. Good writers use the other side of aesthetic form, patterning, in order to overcome this tendency toward chaos. Patterning promotes clarity and insight, and creates and magnifies aesthetic force (152).

Brashers defines pattern as "mental connecting tissue" which:

Causes several stimuli to hang together as a perceivable, single thing. The capacity to conceptualize is probably necessary to the human, who is cursed or blessed with memory, so that all the events of the past are potentially present at any moment, the linearity of experience notwithstanding. The power to conceptualize, to pattern, to generalize stimuli reduces the chaos that experience, or even thinking, would otherwise be and makes possible the meanings that humans seem driven to communicate to one another. Pattern is a necessary element of human thought. (152)

If patterns are used well, they can enhance meaning and heighten aesthetic response. If they are used poorly, they can conceal meaning and, therefore, destroy enjoyment. While there are no patterning formulas which guarantee unflinching aesthetic effect, those writers who have an understanding of the three main patterns, which describe how some human thought functions, can use them to aesthetic advantage (152).

In the previously discussed essay, "Polemic: Industrial Tourism and the National Parks," Edward Abbey contrasts anecdotes concerning the conditions at the Arches National monument before and after industrial tourism, strings

together examples of the effects of industrial tourism at a number of other national parks, attacks, point by point, the stance of administrators of the national park service, and proposes a step-by-step plan for saving the parks. He is using an incremental or linear pattern to help readers conceptualize "the most various kinds of materials, material that would otherwise be so chaotic as to defy unified perception" (153).

The incremental or linear is the simplest and most unavoidable pattern. "Whenever we put one thing after another, as we are forced to do with a language that puts one thing after another (that is, with a language and logic that are linear), we use this sort of pattern" (152).

Design devices are probably unavoidable in sequencing. For example, deliberately mixing different ideas is an example of contrast; sequencing matching ideas is repetition of theme; sizing ideas is gradation, "but the sequence is always more than its parts . . . a sequence is always recognizable as an entity in itself, which is to say it fills a pattern" (152).

The sense of unity provided by the incremental or linear pattern is also seen in "The Survival of the Bark Canoe" by John McPhee. In this narrative, McPhee describes a canoe trip down the Penobscot River to the Allagash Lakes, with four companions, including Henri Vaillancourt, the builder of their birch bark canoes. McPhee assumes that

because Vaillancourt knows everything there is to know about building and repairing birch bark canoes, he has also experienced many river trips. In a carefully arranged sequence of anecdotes, McPhee supplies proof of the folly of this assumption.

After revealing how important the canoe trip is to him, McPhee foreshadows the reality of the experience when he discloses a previous misadventure running Skinner's Falls in Delaware. The foreshadowing sets up the rest of the essay where, little by little, along with descriptions of the surroundings and the mood of the group--which are interspersed with motifs on moose, loons, voyageurs, Indians, and Thoreau--McPhee reveals the secret about Henri. All of this information can be held together by an incremental or linear pattern, according to Brashers:

Provided that the string of incidents or anecdotes . . .
. Are more or less of a size they will hang together
and all participate in the general, unified percept.
Between coordinates, mental connecting tissue
inevitably exists: either 'and also . . . and also . .
. and also . . . and also . . . ' (the pattern of a
series of proportioned, non-sequential incidents, or
anecdotes, or examples, or ideas) or 'and then . . .
and then . . . and then . . . ' (the pattern of
personal narrative which is at once narrative,
incremental, and linear). (155)

McPhee continues to connect his anecdotes with the incremental, linear pattern of personal narrative in order to give us more and more insight into Henri's character as we follow the men down the river. His, "familiarity with books appears to be narrow, but he has read Thoreau. . ." (360). He does not, however, hold Thoreau in the same esteem as the others and creates tension in the group when he states that Thoreau was: "far-flung," "a crackpot," "a real feather-brain," "impractical," "extreme," and, worst of all, probably couldn't build a bark canoe. He sums Thoreau up in the words of his Aunt who lives in Concord, "He was a real bum" (363).

The tension builds as Henri reveals that he had a dead bear cub in his room at college because "someone had shot it. . . . I wanted to have the skin. . . . If someone shot it, you know, someone might as well make use of it. . . ." (365). McPhee infers the effect of Henri's statement on the other men by describing the distance between the canoes, "The gap begins to widen again" (365), and openly expresses his shift from respect to disgust in the following, "He takes the lead. He likes to be in the lead. He crosses our bow--so close that we have to stop to let him pass" (365). The increments of information, from the shortest sentence to the longest, increase our understanding of Henri and effectively illustrate McPhee's growing sense of frustration.

McPhee acknowledges the growing tension in a later discussion of the effect of James Dickey's book Deliverance, on people's perception of the danger inherent in canoeing:

A canoe trip is a society so small and isolated that its frictions--and everything else about it--can magnify to stunning size. When trouble comes on a canoe trip, it comes from the inside, from fast-growing hatred among the friends who started. Perhaps Dickey delivered less than he might have when he brought trouble in from the outside. (367)

The transition beginning the next paragraph clearly points out the source of trouble inside McPhee's group and acts as a specific example of the previous statement. "Henri says that his reaction to Deliverance, while seeing the movie, was that he couldn't care less who was doing what to whom but he was shocked and alarmed by what was happening to the canoes" (367).

McPhee further expands our understanding of his impatience with Henri by immediately following Henri's reaction to Deliverance with an outlandish yarn about Dingbat Prouty who pulls himself out of a river and has a smoke while watching the corpses of his companions float by. Another logger, watching Dingbat, calls him a "James Dickey bird" (367). Beyond the appreciation of McPhee's sly sense of humor, this yarn allows readers to make a number of connections which add to the definition of Henri's

character. Because of the close relationship between Henri's statement about Deliverance and the theme of the yarn, as well as the proximity of the two ideas on the page, he becomes a "Dingbat," a "James Dickey bird," with the "James Dickey bird's" predilection for incongruity, and, consequently, the butt of the joke.

This is a good example of the linear pattern because the incidents, anecdotes, examples, and the yarn all "hang together" well and lead up to the climactic incident of this personal narrative when McPhee discovers Henri's lack of experience with canoe trips. The way in which McPhee uses this pattern to sequence his material leads us smoothly to the climax, which causes us to reflect on the earlier segments of information we've been given about Henri, and piques our interest as to what more there is to know about him.

Following the climax, the final incidents concerning Henri mainly serve as evidence which supports the deductions we've made from previous information. For example, when one of the men goes back for Henri's packs, "with a cheerful shrug," we begin to question the men who put up with this arrogant tyrant. He's rude, insensitive and obviously inept, and yet, when he decides to put the canoes out in the dangerously strong wind, they follow him. Why? McPhee has obviously arranged his material to lead us to question the men and, as they struggle to get across Chamberlain Lake, he

asks all the questions himself, shaping them to echo the sound of the gusty wind, rising and dying, and to reflect the linear pattern of rising frustration:

Why do we need these miles now? Why does Henri have this compulsion to move? Is he Patton? Sherman? Hannibal? How 'could' he be, when the only regimentation he can tolerate is the kind he creates as he goes along? These are thoughts not composed in tranquillity but driven into the mind by the frontal wind. Why do we defer to him? Why do we look to his decisions? Is it only because he made the canoes, because the assumption is that he know what is best for them and knows what they can do and ought not to do. . . . A suspicion that has been growing comes out in the wind: Henri's expertise stops 'in the yard'; out here he is as green as his jerky. (373)

In the following segment, McPhee, once again, arranges his sentences to reflect the gusty wind and rising frustration. However, the arrangement also reflects the pattern of this whole personal narrative with, what Brashers calls, "mental connecting tissue . . . 'and then . . . and then . . . and then . . .'" (the pattern of personal narrative which is at once narrative, incremental, and linear)" (153). Henri's decision to follow the difficult crossing of the day by crossing Eagle Lake at night is

accepted, but McPhee describes strong feelings of frustration:

Warren looks around with incredulity, and even apprehension, in his eyes. He appears to be wondering how to make a straitjacket. We got up at five today. We have paddled ten miles into blistering wind and followed that with a portage. Now we are told we are going to set out on another big lake for God knows where in the dark of night. Under the influence of the wind, our affection for our leader has been waning all day, and it now levels out at zero. We turn without comment and walk away. (375)

Although Henri has one worthwhile moment, he is, after all, a "James Dickey bird" and after more incidents of his bossing and cursing the other men, forcing them to carry part of his load, and bragging about his expertise to travellers they encounter, the highly anticipated explosion is rather mild. In the face of Henri's flagrant lack of caution in cutting through high waves on Lake Caucomgomoc, McPhee is:

Ready to shrug and see what happens. Warren, however, is not. Having absorbed Henri in silence for something like a hundred and fifty miles, he now turns suddenly and shouts at the top of his lungs, 'You God-damned lunatic, head for the shore!' (381)

McPhee has built up our perception of Henri Vaillancourt slowly and carefully. The incidents of his increasingly infuriating behavior, coupled with the descriptions of the crew's unrelenting patience, force us to go beyond simple understanding of the writer's main idea. We don't just know what he means, we actually feel the frustration ourselves. McPhee's use of the incremental or linear pattern works well in illustrating the growing change in the perception of Vaillancourt which accompanies the physical changes inherent in a journey from one point to another. Brashers explains that:

The incremental is a rather simple form of pattern, but very important. It has great conceptualizing power. . . . In unifying the harmonious and the disjunctive alike, it performs an aesthetic service that is otherwise unavailable to us. (153)

Because the incremental or linear is the simplest pattern it is generally overused by beginning writers. I think that the advantage of studying this pattern in professional work is that students get the opportunity to see it used purposefully and well. By analyzing work such as McPhee's, students may begin to understand that the anecdotes and examples they use in their own writing should be organized to lead readers to their idea; and, the incremental or linear pattern is one way to unify "the harmonious and disjunctive alike."

The incremental or linear pattern is less complicated than the radial-circular in which:

Successive increments are not drawn for the immediately previous increment, but all are drawn from or revolve around a single central core or idea. If each increment begins by coming back to a central hub and then radiates outward from that hub, like the spokes of a wheel, the pattern is said to be radial. If each increment begins in material apparently peripheral and then relates or points the peripheral material to a central hub, the pattern is said to be circular. (153)

In "The Music of This Sphere," Lewis Thomas establishes his essay's central hub with its title. Thomas explains the title in the first two paragraphs in which he discusses the idea that "as we become crowded together, the sounds we make to each other, in our increasingly complex communication systems, become more random-sounding, accidental or incidental, and we have trouble selecting meaningful signals out of the noise" (22). Animals, as well as humans, get caught up in small talk. According to Thomas, bioacoustics scientists find it difficult to "edit out the parts lacking syntax and sense" (20) in animal sounds because animals also spend a lot of their time in "small talk." Thomas says that the only thing that saves us "from being overwhelmed by nonsense" (22) is music. From this central hub, the writer

radiates outward, discussing the "continual music" that underlies "all the other signals" (22).

In his discussion of the "continual music," Thomas sets up the radial pattern beginning with the sounds made by termites; from there he relates the way: bats, prairie hens, rabbits, mice, insects, fish, gorillas, snakes, turtles, alligators, crocodiles, leeches, toads, birds, and whales make sounds, and points out how some of these sounds may be the "light social conversation, designed to keep the party going" (22). Thomas describes these sounds in musical terms. For example, spectrographic analysis of termite drumming sounds "like notes for a tympany section" (23); bats produce, beyond industrial sounds necessary for survival, "strange, solitary, and lovely bell-like notes" (24); and the death's-head hawk moth uses its proboscis "as a kind of reed instrument" (24).

Focusing on a particular source of continual music, Thomas includes a section on bird songs which reflects the radial pattern of the whole essay. Increments of meaning radiate out from the central idea, "Birdsong has been so much analyzed for its content of business communication that there seems little time left for music, but it is there" (25). The writer increases our understanding by using a number of examples which seem to grow out of this hub:

The thrush in my backyard sings down his nose in meditative, liquid runs of melody, over and over again,

and I have the strongest impression that he does this for his own pleasure. Some of the time he seems to be practicing, like a virtuoso in his apartment. He starts a run, reaches a midpoint in the second bar where there should be a set of complex harmonics, stops, and goes back to begin over, dissatisfied. Sometimes he changes his notation so conspicuously that he seems to be improvising sets of variations. It is a meditative, questioning kind of music, and I cannot believe that he is simply saying, 'thrush here.' (25)

Thomas then goes on to describe the music of the robin, meadow lark, nightingale and the chaffinch. This mirroring of the essay's radial pattern imparts resonance, which increases our aesthetic response.

After birdsong, the next spoke radiating from the hub deals with the sounds which don't seem like music by themselves. But, Thomas says:

If we could listen to them all at once, fully orchestrated, in their immense ensemble, we might become aware of the counterpoint, the balance of tones, and timbres and harmonics, the sonorities. The recorded songs of the humpback whale, filled with tensions and resolution, ambiguities and allusions, incomplete, can be listened to as a 'part' of music, like an isolated section of an orchestra. If we had better hearing, and could discern the descants of sea

birds, the rhythmic tympany of schools of mollusks, or even the distant harmonics of midges hanging over meadows in the sun, the combined sound might lift us off our feet. (26)

This is a clear example of how information works back to the central hub--"the combined sound might lift us off our feet"--and the next increment, or spoke, runs out from there to deal, in more detail, with the previously mentioned "songs of whales."

Thomas admits that the songs of whales and, therefore, by association, the songs of all the creatures, might be merely information necessary to survival but:

The proof is not in, and until it is shown that these long, convoluted, insistent melodies, repeated by different singers with ornamentations of their own, are the means of sending through several hundred miles of undersea such ordinary information as 'whale here,' I shall believe otherwise. (26)

This point of validation is augmented by another spoke or increment of meaning. Thomas' suggestion that an extraterrestrial "Visitor," attempting to make meaning out of all human sounds, might listen to the 14th Quartet and define it as "a communication announcing, 'Beethoven here'" (27) connects humans to all the other creatures whose "music" may be misunderstood, giving readers another bit of information which they can use to formulate meaning.

Thomas follows this somewhat fanciful, extraterrestrial proof with a more scientific point of validation which is the final spoke of the wheel. He states that, "If, as I believe, the urge to make a kind of music is as much a characteristic of biology as our other fundamental functions, there ought to be an explanation for it. Having none at hand, I am free to make one up" (27). He then uses Morowitz' hypothesis, in thermodynamic terms, that "a steady flow of energy from the inexhaustible source of the sun to the unfillable sink of outer space, by way of earth, is mathematically destined to cause the organization of matter into an increasingly ordered state" (27). This explanation is particularly apt as the energy radiating from the sun becomes a metaphor for the radial pattern, graphically suggesting, what Brashers says are "the conceptual relationships that exist between the increments of idea" (153).

Thomas' final example adroitly discusses his idea in terms of radiation, consequently providing us with another metaphor which multiplies aesthetic effect. This final spoke runs back to the central hub, "The Music of This Sphere," by way of a summary conclusion which ends with Thomas' idea that: "A 'grand canonical ensemble' is, oddly enough, the proper term for a quantitative model system in thermodynamics, borrowed from music by way of mathematics. Borrowed back again, provided with notation, it would do for

what I have in mind" (28). The radial pattern works well in this essay because it allows Thomas to interrelate a variety of concepts in six short pages.

If we now look back at Edward Abbey's essay, "Rocks," we can see that the pattern Abbey uses is clearly circular. The material he uses is all peripheral to the main idea. He begins with an ambiguous title and a first section which is actually a list of rocks. Then he points us, for the first time, to the central hub--uranium. In each of the following sections, Abbey seems to be rambling through bits of information and stories he's heard, but in each instance he returns to the basic motif, uranium.

The radial-circular pattern is particularly valuable, according to Brashers, because:

The several spokes of idea, the circumferential movement of incident, tend toward inclusion and completeness, not limitations; they suggest exhaustion of possible idea on the subject at hand and thus communicate the effect of depth of insight. To hold the world and all in the palm of your hand--to encompass an idea's ramifications all in your brain--what greater aesthetic triumph could one attempt?

(154)

The radial-circular is difficult to understand but I think that guiding students to recognize this pattern in their reading is advantageous. While the least they can

learn is that writing can be organized in different ways to illuminate ideas, some students will grasp the idea quickly and begin to use this tool in order to present their ideas as comprehensively as possible.

While "Radial-circular patterns deal with thought and incident that are generated for the first time; mytho-literary patterns deal with thought and incident that are meaningful because they are being repeated" (154). John McPhee's essay "Pieces of the Frame: The Search for Marvin Gardens" uses the mytho-literary pattern as a unifying device which counterpoints "Pieces of the Frame: Travels in Georgia" and parallels an ongoing monopoly game with the destruction of Atlantic City.

Those who have previously read "Pieces of the Frame: Travels in Georgia" will appreciate the mental connecting tissue between it and "Pieces of the Frame: The Search for Marvin Gardens." The connection is, of course, set up in the title which causes readers to watch for similarities. Both essays deal with the writer's journeys, one in Georgia and the other in Atlantic City. But the adventures are quite different. In Georgia, McPhee takes a bucolic trip with two other conservationists, in order to experience nature and persuade people to register their land with the Natural Areas Council, in an effort to save the remaining wilderness. In "The Search for Marvin Gardens" he travels alone, through the urban blight of Atlantic City, looking

for a place which can only exist outside the city limits. Readers of both essays cannot help but contrast the settings and characters of the two. The journey through Georgia consists of:

A great loop, down out of the river gorges and ravine forests of the mountains, across the granite piedmont and over the sand hills and the red hills to the river swamps and pine flat woods of the coastal plain. . . . Made, in part, in the name of the government, it was a journey that tended to mock the idea of a state--as an unnatural subdivision of the globe, as a metaphor of the human ego sketched on paper and framed in straight lines and in riparian boundaries behind an unalterable coast. . . . The terrain was crisscrossed with geological boundaries--the range of the river frogs. The range of the wildcat was the wildcat's natural state, overlaying segments of tens of thousands of other states, one of which was Georgia. (285)

The language of the "Georgia" piece rolls out like the land itself and the sentences spread over the page like the frogs and wildcats which range over it, giving the essay a free, mellow feeling. This land:"loops," "ranges," "crisscrosses," and "overlays," mocking the human ego which thinks it can hem in the wilderness; keeping it under control, "sketched on paper and framed in straight lines and in riparian boundaries behind an unalterable coast" (285).

In carefully framed Atlantic City:

The physical profile of the streets perpendicular to the shore is something like a playground slide. It begins in the high skyline of Boardwalk hotels, plummets into warrens of 'side-avenue' motels, crosses Pacific, slopes through church missions, convalescent homes, burlesque houses, rooming houses, and liquor stores, crosses Atlantic, and runs level through the bombed-out ghetto as far--Baltic, Mediterranean--as the eye can see. . . . Then, beyond Atlantic Avenue, North Carolina moves on into the vast ghetto, the bulk of the city, and it looks like Metz in 1919, Cologne in 1944. Nothing has actually exploded. It is not bomb damage. It is deep and complex decay. Roofs are off. Bricks are scattered in the street. People sit on porches, six deep, at nine on a Monday morning. (314)

In contrast to the natural freedom exemplified in the diction of the "Georgia" excerpt, the language of "Marvin Gardens" begins with the words of developers, or "framers": "profile," "perpendicular," "skyline," "plummets," "warrens," "slopes," "level," and moves into words which signify destruction: "bombed-out," "ghetto," "exploded," "bomb," "damage," "decay." The words, which begin by framing things in, end up destroying the very things they meant to contain. This piece gives readers a sense of claustrophobia, frustration, hopelessness. Even the longest

sentence feels choppy. McPhee's choice of verbs such as "begins," "plummets," "slopes," "runs," along with the list of places which accompanies them and the number of commas he uses, gives the sentence the rhythm of a march which cannot be stopped. The short, final sentences give impact to the subject being described. McPhee "shows" us his subject, and allows us to find our own meaning because he has respect for his audience. From what he shows us in his description, we can see that the "frame" which is ridiculed in the piece on "Georgia" becomes a destructive tool in "Marvin Gardens." By using the mytho-literary pattern to organize his essay, McPhee is able to contrast the two settings, allowing us to discover the warning within the contrast.

Beyond the setting, the reader of "The Search for Marvin Gardens" recalls the characters of "Travels in Georgia." In the Atlantic City of the present, McPhee deals with ill-defined, nameless: junkies, policemen, soldiers, prisoners, and prostitutes, as well as his "tall, shadowy" opponent. In "Georgia" he deals with well-rounded characters: Carol Ruckdeschel, an attractive, resourceful conservationist; Sam Candler, who gave up a life of wealth to study and live with nature; Jimmy Carter, the Governor of Georgia. There are also a number of minor characters with names like Chap Causey; Arthur and Manny Young; Zebra, a rattlesnake; and Big Man, a red-tailed hawk. These details

give "Georgia" the effect of being in color, while "Marvin Gardens" seems to be in black and white.

By using these essays as subtitles under the main title, "Pieces of the Frame," McPhee guides the reader to discover the irony inherent in the fact that the precisely engineered "playground of the rich," Atlantic City, has been developed into the ground by railroad and real estate investors. Those who read both essays can also see the warning to Georgia, and places like it, about the consequences of letting developers take over the wilderness which is left. As Brashers states, making connections between the past and the present gives the aesthetic effect of universalizing resonance (154).

Another source of irony is the imaginary game of Monopoly which parallels the trip through the decaying streets of Atlantic City. Monopoly, the "cutthroat game of luck," has become a part of our culture and, as such, is used as a device of parody which, according to Brashers, has the "repetitive and persisting overtones" (154) of the mytho-literary pattern: "Irony is usually mytho-literary, and one form, parody, can never escape such patterns, for a parody always has to be a parody 'of' something. . . ." (154).

When McPhee says, "Go. I roll the dice--a six and a two. Through the air I move my token, the flatiron, to Vermont Avenue" (310), the incident is meaningful because

the action is a part of most readers' personal history.

Brashers explains that:

Myths, above all, are stories. The quality of being stories gives them their coherence and unifying power. When they depict actions in symbolic settings, they embody the magic we mean by the word 'mythic.' When they depict characters, scenes, actions from history or literature, they grade off and become 'legendary' or 'literary,' still maintaining their cohering and unifying power. (154)

McPhee juxtaposes the action of the imaginary Monopoly game, "the best-of-seven series for the international singles championship of the world" (311), with the action which brought Atlantic City to its present state of decay. His shadowy opponent, who "will always go for the quick kill" (310), is conceptually related to the developers who initiated the pattern which caused the eventual destruction of the city: R.B. Osburn, the civil engineer who framed it in; and Dwight Bell, William Coffin, John Da Costa, Daniel Deal, William Fleming, Andrew Hay, Joseph Porter, Jonathan Pitney, and Samuel Richards, the "founders, fathers, forerunners, archetypical masters of the quick kill" (312). It is interesting to note that while those who developed Atlantic City as an exclusive playground for the rich are named, those who have to live in the disaster that's left are not named. Perhaps McPhee was placing blame on the

"archetypical masters of the quick kill" whose victims would be nameless because of their insignificance in the drive toward progress. Or he may have been pointing out how these men have become characters in the mythology created by the board game.

McPhee uses the mythology of Monopoly as a structural device. As the monopoly players move their tokens to various streets, McPhee cuts in descriptions of the deterioration of that area, along with some of its history:

His eleven carries his top hat to St. Charles Place, which he buys for \$140.

.

The sidewalks of St. Charles Place have been cracked to shards by through-going weeds. There are no buildings. Mansions, hotels once stood here. (310)

The device causes the piece to vibrate in a number of ways. The readers who have played Monopoly are reminded of how their chosen tokens looked and felt, and they remember the colors of the play money, property cards, houses and hotels they accumulated. All of these things, along with that sense of oneself as entrepreneur, perpetuate the myth of an Atlantic City of great wealth and exclusivity, forever populated by "Brighton-class people."

If you arrived by automobile and tried to register at the Brighton, you were sent away. Brighton-class people came in private railroad cars. Brighton-class

people had other private railroad cars for their horses--dawn rides on the firm sand at the water's edge, skirts flying. Colonel Anthony J. Drexel Biddle--the sort of name that would constrict throats in Philadelphia--lived, much of the year, in Brighton.

(312)

By crosscutting this myth with the reality of present-day Atlantic City, McPhee calls on readers to find meaning between the gaps. He shapes his material in the form of parody, always a form of the mytho-literary pattern.

This crosscutting becomes a mytho-literary device, on another level, for those readers who are familiar with William Faulkner's novel, As I Lay Dying. In it, the author presents the story of the death and attempted burial of Addie Bundren from various points of view. He crosscuts one character's viewpoint with another's and allows readers to discover the meaning in the gaps between the different views. Like McPhee's essay, the novel is caustic and funny, with each element fitting together as neatly as cards in a deck. Those who have read As I Lay Dying, because of their previous experience with crosscutting, have an extra link to the meaning of "Marvin Gardens."

Readers who aren't familiar with the game of Monopoly, will probably have difficulty recognizing the parody in "Marvin Gardens." However, those who have experienced the parlor game, as well as "Travels in Georgia" and As I Lay

Dying, will have, what Brashers refers to as, an "opening, stimulating, multiplying vision" (155). McPhee's choice of the mytho-literary pattern for "Pieces of the Frame: The Search for Marvin Gardens" enhances the essay's aesthetic success.

The mytho-literary pattern is not difficult to understand; but, like the radial-circular pattern, most beginning composition students will probably not be able to use it immediately. However, once again, the ability to recognize the pattern reinforces the idea that there are many available solutions to writing problems and, as Pepper tells us, if we have the ability to understand some works of art "and the ways in which they give us enjoyment and the ways we can get enjoyment out of them, then we shall be able to understand objects of appreciation generally" (4).

Chapter VIII

Using the Familiar Essay in the Classroom

The importance of using the familiar essay in the college classroom should be considered in light of Carey's idea that our society is overly concerned with the high speed transmission of information. Such rejection of slower, but more reflective, methods of communication is apparent in students' demands that they be given only the amount of information necessary to get the degree required for their chosen profession--as quickly as possible. Many of them see no use in exploration, inquiry and dialogue; and, in order to keep enrollment numbers up, many educational systems go along with these students, skirting the duties of liberal educators.

In the composition classroom, the concern with expediency is evident in the strong emphasis placed on the thesis-support essay, an emphasis which, says Zeiger, leads students to believe that the ability to support a thesis is more important than the ability to scrutinize an issue (458). From the first day of class, students look for the teacher's hidden agenda--what she really wants instead of what she says she wants. No matter what the instructor says, according to Zeiger, "as long as the goal and product of writing is to demonstrate the validity of a thesis, the implicit message is that proving is more important than

finding out" (458). What students don't understand is that the process of inquiry is the important first step in demonstrative composition. As Zeiger says, "demonstrative composition depends on the process of inquiry not merely for its thesis, but for all of its subordinate concepts and their interrelationships" (458).

While not denying the importance of the thesis-support essay in a college career, it seems logical to emphasize first things first. If one truly believes that writing is a process, and that inquiry is the first step in that process, then the emphasis on thesis-support should be balanced with at least as much attention to the process of inquiry which produces it (459). According to Zeiger, composition students can't help but benefit from the study of inquiry because, "Writers who know that the first step in writing is exploration, and who consciously begin the writing process not in the middle but at the beginning, steal a march on the less well informed" (458).

One way composition teachers can help students "steal a march on the less well informed" is by teaching the familiar essay with the same emphasis as the expository essay. By spending valuable time studying the familiar essay, rather than simply telling students that they need to research ideas carefully, we can lead students to recognize the importance of exploration in the writing process. The familiar essay, because of its intimate audience, open form,

and friendly tone, encourages students to "prove" an idea in Montaigne's sense of the word, looking at it from all sides and accepting the ambiguities we discover. If we introduce familiar essayists such as: Lewis Thomas, Loren Eiseley, Edward Abbey, John McPhee, Henry David Thoreau as writers whose importance lies in their ability to explore all facets of an idea for its own sake, not just to provide and prove a thesis, students might begin to value such exploration in their own writing.

It is difficult for some students to accept exploration as an important part of the writing process. Many of them, based on their perception of their teacher/audience as the tyrannical opposition who controls their grades, and by extension, their degrees and livelihoods, see this new way of thinking as a risk. In order for exploration to flourish in the classroom, students must have the security of a safe environment which promotes creative thinking. Zeiger discusses Carl Rogers' examination of the attitudes which are the foundation of creative thinking, "'psychological safety' and 'psychological freedom'" (464). Rogers defines psychological safety as an attitude in which:

One feels one's own worth is unconditionally assured, that one fears no judgment or criticism, and that one is understood empathetically. Psychological freedom means that one feels free to express oneself symbolically. (464)

By creating this kind of atmosphere in the classroom, the instructor encourages students to take the risk of expressing ideas which go against the norm; examine unlikely ideas; bring forth ideas heretofore unformed. Zeiger says that "this loving receptivity is the same which Socrates commends in the Phaedrus, as the most appropriate and fruitful for philosophy--an intimacy conducive to 'stargazing'" (464). When students are confident of a friendly reception, they are able to express their ideas in writing which is frank and true; and, this kind of writing encourages readers to actively explore the writer's ideas and accept the ambiguities which they find (464).

Composition teachers can encourage students' "stargazing" by emphasizing the value of the familiar essay's characteristics: the intimate audience, open form, friendly tone. They can become what Zeiger calls the "tolerant, even friendly audience, an audience disposed to accept and consider ideas rather than to suspect and impeach them" (459). As Zeiger suggests, if a two-semester writing program could focus on the familiar essay in the first semester and the expository essay in the second, students might become more confident of their own opinions and learn to recognize the evanescent nature of all opinion. Because of the friendly makeup of the familiar form, they might be more inclined to tolerate other's opinions. They might also acquire a different way of considering their audience which

could keep them from overkill, fawning, and deceit in their writing. A clear understanding of the source of a thesis and its proofs could help them realize that proofs are only as good as the premises from which they evolve (464). In this way, the familiar essay encourages free communication between people, thereby, according to Zeiger, "revitalizing the humanities by restoring the spirit of inquiry to a place of currency and honor" (464).

It seems obvious that using the familiar essay in the college classroom can benefit beginning writers in many ways. It encourages them to explore all facets of an idea and to discover ideas they can believe in. It gives them a concrete process in finding ideas for their thesis/support essays. The familiar essay emphasizes the importance of inventing an audience and organizing material to reach that audience. It also helps them realize that they have a responsibility, as readers, to become the audience called for in others' work. Understanding the aesthetic appeal of the familiar essay makes students aware of the reasons why any work, including their own, produces pleasure, confusion or boredom. This awareness enhances their ability to think analytically, leads to a clearer understanding of how real writers write, gives them a number of tools to use in organizing their own writing and helps them accept revision as an integral part of the writing process.

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