Freshman and Academic Writers: The Process of Productivity

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"Some concerns are shared by writers at all levels."

Since Janet Emit investigated the way professional writers talk about writing and applied her ideas about their writing processes to the writing processes of student writers, we have assumed that professional writers have behaviors that can inform all of us about writing. To learn about writing we study professional writers at work, and when we teach writing we apply what we have learned.[1] While more research needs to be done on the degree and kind of correspondence that actually exists among professional groups and between professional and novice, or student, writers,[2] currently we do accept the notion that some concerns are shared by writers at all levels.

Two such general concerns are writing apprehension and the need for regular writing. These are interrelated. Indeed, skill in dealing with one's writing apprehension may be essential if one is to be a creative as well as a productive writer: according to John A. Daly (cited in Rose, 1985), "a positive attitude about writing is associated with . . . successful development and maintenance of writing skills" (p. 44), and according to Robert Boice (1985), "productivity precedes creativity" (p. 477). In other words, all writers, in all professions and at all levels of proficiency, must learn to control writing apprehension and must learn to write diligently if they are to write successfully.

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[1]See, for instance, essays by Stephen Doheny-Farina and David M. Ciotello; texts by Rise B. Axelrod and Charles R. Cooper, 48-54, and by John C. Bean and John D. Ramage, 1ff.

[2]Investigators who question this correspondence include Maxine Hariston, Jack Selzer and Peter Smagorinsky.

This is true of student as well as professional
writers, yet classroom rhetorics and essay collections
give scant attention to specific methods other than
prewriting exercises that could help students in these
two areas. To gain insight into these practical aspects
of composing, I interviewed a group of scholars in the
humanities about their composing processes, reasoning
that because publication is essential to scholarly life,
academics have a variety of ways to protect themselves
from writing apprehension and maintain productivity.
The following discussion, first, makes some general
observations about the interviews, then provides spe-
cific details about the scholars' preparation, working
habits, revisioning and sense of purpose and authority.
Later it suggests how information and insights about
productivity gained from the interviews can be applied
in freshman composition courses.

At the time of the interviews, five of the seven
scholars were on leave from their respective departments
at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, participating
in a semester of study about mass culture sponsored by
the Center for Twentieth Century Studies at UWM. Another
was in residence there on a fellowship, and the seventh
was attached to the Center. During that semester, they
gave and attended seminars, talked together and, in
general, devoted themselves full-time to scholarly
activity. They had the additional benefits of collegi-
ality in an attractive and quiet part of the campus with
a consciously created climate hospitable to intellectual
activity. All seven were primarily engaged in scholarly
work directed toward publication. In addition, all the
men and women, although young, already were productive
scholars. They edited journals, regularly produced and
published essays and books and frequently were asked to
appear at conferences. They plan to continue this
activity in a variety of fields within the humanities--
French, Spanish, German, history, philosophy, communica-
tion, literature and mass culture.

The scholars were told only that I wanted to talk
to them about the way they began and completed their
scholarly composing tasks. All the interviews followed
the same general format. They consisted of informal
conversations during which I asked the following ques-
tions: (1) How does a typical writing/research project
begin for you? (2) Is there a point at which you set
researching aside and begin writing? (3) How do you go
about composing a text? (4) Do you revise? (5) What is
your writing environment? For instance, where and when
do you write and with what?

The questions were designed to delineate areas of
possible interest for the scholars and give the

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interviewees opportunities to reflect on their own writing processes. In each case, the scholars were encouraged to talk about whatever matters the questions brought to their minds. Although all were able to describe self-consciously created writing habits, most had never previously discussed how they went about writing and none was familiar with contemporary concepts about composing as a process. When I reviewed the interviews, I looked for places of emphasis and for similarities and differences.

These interviews indicate that writers use the prewriting stage of composing not only to reveal content or uncover information for writing projects, but also to produce both physical and mental maps that can guide them through the projects and assure them that the work can be completed successfully. Such maps are new and specific to each project, but they are developed within a disciplinary and personal framework the writers create over time. The maps, along with the writers' personal working habits, appear to contribute to continued productivity. The interviews also suggest that revision is not only a way to discover ideas or perfect the product, but also a strategy writers can use to hold the text open and give themselves both opportunity and permission for the imperfect drafts that may precede more ideal ones. Thus, the very idea of revision suggests that imperfect drafts can be made to meet the writers' expectations eventually. Finally, writers are motivated by a complex set of purposes which includes, but is not limited to, expression of a particular problem. These interviews suggest that one overriding motivation is the writers' view of themselves as writers who do what writers must do: write. That purpose leads to a privileging of the writing task which, in turn, leads to more writing and increased productivity.

Preparation

All seven scholars talked about the way they begin a project as if their responses would be routine, self-evident, even boring, as if they were describing what every writer does. To the contrary, only the stress they put on their initial activities--how one begins is important--and their use of reading in the opening stages of investigation were similar. Each, in fact, described a personal methodology which included discovery, focus and outlining.

As they begin a project the essential activity is immersion in written material; crystallization of a

"Each described a personal methodology...discovery, focus, and outlining."

central idea begins during this immersion.[3] However, because reading is an ongoing activity for all of them, they find it difficult to recall where and when they began reading for a specific project. It is more accurate to say the central idea is <u>created out of</u> or <u>found within</u> the larger background context.

Background reading takes place in familiar territory. Some researchers read continually in bibliographies and in what one described as journals that have "stuff in them for me." Several writers concentrate particularly on reviews of currently important texts in their field; several read books primarily and copiously--five to ten a week in one case; some purposefully include tangential reading, believing that new ideas are found on the peripheries of previously explored territory.

Focusing is a complex activity which has many variations. The historian noted that his projects begin with a "vague idea" and "grow" on him while he reads: he begins to get an idea that an approach to a topic in the research literature is "wrong." For the twentieth century literary critic, the "basic idea comes even before research." She makes a few notes about this idea on "pieces of paper" to put in a file. Then she begins researching, "testing [the] idea," reading meticulously back twenty to thirty years, trying to discover "everything" that has been written on the topic. This reading is open ended: she says, "I never know when I'm through researching. I've never felt done in my entire life." She stops reading only under pressure of upcoming presentation dates. At this point, she has forgotten the original idea so she returns to her note file and rereads the original notes before she begins to write.

However, researching certainly can be more controlled. The French studies critic reads systematically through a set of texts she considers crucial for her topic, both beginning and ending with the same single book or essay she believes is particularly relevant. Thus, she delineates her subject's boundaries early in her project. Another search method was described by one scholar who reads only until he has a feeling of "confidence" about the argument. That feeling propels him into the organizing task.

To organize and remember parts of the reading material that they believe are valuable, the scholars use various methods, all of which include writing. This writing usually is in the form of notes, marginal, or otherwise: for some it serves only a mnemonic function because the writing itself frequently is discarded or ignored when actual composing takes place. One writer makes quantities of notes, although he seldom returns to read them; another underlines, but never looks back at the underlined material. Another scholar uses his notes to check his first draft; another believes he writes notes and consciously assimilates them so they will be automatically incorporated into his writing. They do keep this writing available, however. For instance, the philosopher has a personal library filing system which he uses to divide the texts minutely, so he can return to them quickly if he wishes; these become a permanent, although non-portable, set of note cards.

All seven create some kind of outline to assist them with their project. However, these outlines are less a pretext than the concrete representation of

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[3]Arieti includes immersion and crystallization as part of the creative process in <u>Creativity: The Magic Synthesis.</u>

the probability that a text exists. As described by the scholars, outlines do not primarily format completed research and thinking. That is, they do not provide a text from which the final writing is transcribed. For the people interviewed, the outlines themselves are generative, suggesting either forms or content. Moreover, the outlines have a temporary quality. Even those who write lengthy, complete outlines know they can, and probably will, easily change ideas or shapes and even reject the entire outline. In fact, the writers' ordering activities often were described in such a way that the ordering appeared to have as much emotional as intellectual significance.

For instance, one writer produces outlines before he begins specific research so that all of his reading, notes and subsequent writing are directive: "When I walk around I outline [the future writing] in my mind. I can't write parts until I have it all in my mind." This writer discovers "topics" which produce a "sketchy" outline which at first includes "everything . . . sense of argument flow . . . full and partial sentences . . . references to specific quotes." Then he cuts as necessary. He says:

Writing the outline is, for me, the key step, the step I worry through, the step where I need a concentrated block of time--two, three hours-- of reading and thinking. . . . It's hard for me not to do the outline all in one piece . . . has to be all at once. . . . I'm trying to think the essay through as a whole [because if not] I might not be able to finish . . . might return to reading.

He says, "being happy with my outlines is my way of telling myself I'm ready." Yet, he also notices that when he writes he may totally recreate this hard-won outline. He believes his most common problem is covering the same point twice.

Another reports once having made a seven-page outline, but having used only ten percent of it. She considers her elaborate outlining work necessary because it always makes her feel "totally in control." She also regards it more negatively as "a way to avoid writing." Others make loose outlines, only a series of points. One writer, while he rejects the word "outline," says that he carries "chapter points" in his head. Several think of their outlines as devices to produce and test the rationale of their arguments. For one, outlines help to uncover hidden structures. One scholar convincingly described his use of outlines as a means of testing his arguments, then confessed with delight that he changes this "rational" outline as he discovers, during the writing, ways to make his arguments respond to a reader's anticipated pleasure, anger or feelings of suspense.

The most systematic of the seven described an elaborately creative routine which results in an outline composed of organized sets of quotes. She begins her research for a book chapter or a single essay with a list of readings that opens and closes with a seminal item. As she reads, she writes down "quotes" that interest her (four to a page). When she is done, she throws out "what has not drawn [her] interest," finally creating about 300-400 pages of quotes but with "none of [her] own thoughts." These, she spends about ten days typing. They eventually produce an enormous number of index cards, each with a single quote and reference, and, possibly, cross references. She divides the cards into "groups of ideas . . . three, four sets" containing a narrowed number of cards. She thinks of these as a "series of quotes." A final cut eliminates all but about 150-200 "magic" cards. An especially important one might be tacked to a

wall in her working area. Later, she may spread the cards out on a table to familiarize herself with them, but she notes that she does not use the cards from then on, although she may return to the texts themselves as she composes. From this activity she begins her writing. She says she can at this point write the first paragraph, the one which "sets [her] on track."

These varied views suggest that outlines--however they are done--may act as warm-up exercises, helping a writer build energy and confidence for the actual writing; they may be a form of work that is disassociated from the actual event, but necessary to it nevertheless. Thus, outlining and note taking activities for some people appear to be a potent form of invention rather than merely a container for already discovered knowledge. Far from being rigid frames that limit intervention, recursivity and discovery, the outlining procedures described by these practiced writers are flexible tactics that encourage all three. Moreover, the outline seems to be a step that signals readiness. After being immersed in materials and focusing on an idea, the writer uses the outline to signal interiorization of external information. As one suggested, outlines become "part of your being."

These preparatory or prewriting activities are a form of map making. The writers begin with a general mental map of the territory--the idea or subject--to be explored. This map of the place is one shared by the individual's academic writing community, and it covers both content and the way that content is talked about in the discipline. Over this, as on a tissue over a magic slate, the writers, through experience, have created personal, scholarly maps with routes that have led them in the past to information and insights. These contain names of significant journals and names of other writers, places or events where the academics' thoughts have been stimulated in the past and might be productively stimulated once more. As the writers do research, they lay down yet another tissue on the magic writing slate. The traces of earlier maps show through, but the researchers will create a new map over them to describe the particular new project.[4]

Although the term mapping is relatively new to composition and rhetoric, the idea is not. The classical topics (places) provided a mapping scheme, and ancient mnemonic strategy suggested a way these topics could be physically located so they could be recalled in any preplanned arrangement. Later, some renaissance writers used a mapping scheme to describe invention: they saw ideas metaphorically as being located in a landscape. Thus, they enjoyed a notion that equated passive, intellectual pursuit with the more physical and "manly" activity of hunting. In this metaphor, the idea is represented by the prey while fertile, stimulating internal or external sources (places) are represented by burrows in which prey may be hidden, awaiting discovery. The experienced, knowledgeable writer thus became a hunter who tracked ideas through their various favorite hiding places.

Gradually, during prewriting activities, the mapped territory becomes more real: its boundaries and essential markings are gradually more clearly defined. The prey becomes more visible. Outlines, great or small, are like planned routes through the new territory. As routes, they are powerful focusing devices which may be absolutely essential to the complete conceptualization, writing and final products not because they organize subject matter, but because they provide

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[4]See Derrida for a discussion about Freud and the magic writing slate.

assurances. Since the interviews suggest that these outlines serve various purposes for various individuals, perhaps they are necessary not even because they show a specific route, but rather because they prove that the territory of the text actually exists.

That is, because the outline is concrete, it turns possibility into probability; it is a logical, objective sign that signifies a yet only-hoped-for product. The map is a promise that the writing project will lead to a useful product, a magical touchstone that serves to remind the writer, daily throughout the writing, that a satisfactory end is possible. The beginning work--the prewriting, the researching--is essential not only because it produces content, but because it delineates the period of immersion during which writers collect outward signs. These signs of concrete knowledge also provide the necessary emotional security to sustain the writers during the writing.

Working Habits

Writing is an important factor in the lives of scholars: for most of them, it is essential to their professional existence. They privilege it: they have specific habits and particular places which signify "writing work" for them, and they write diligently. Descriptions of the external features of their writing lives show that all have developed work habits which they use consciously, habits which reinforce the writing itself.

When they are engaged in a writing project, the interviewed academic writers reserve specific times of their day for composing, and they use that time rigorously. Most reserve the morning hours for writing because they believe their concentration or creative energy is greatest then. They prefer to use the evening hours for reading; only one of the seven consistently prefers to write late in the day. Several noted that they need to schedule much time in the morning because they warm to the task slowly.

As their projects move toward completion or a deadline is near, the writing seems to create its own energy: all of the seven mentioned putting in long hours writing at that point. The literary scholar regularly writes every morning for two hours, keeping the rest of the day open for other professional concerns, but she also will write through the day when she is on a deadline. Another notes that he prefers writing from 7:30 a.m. to 12 noon, with breaks, but that "going down the home stretch" he also writes from 7 a.m. until 5 p.m. They can put in long hours, working weekends as well as week days. One of the seven reports that he always begins an essay or chapter on a Saturday or Sunday because then he can work all day without interruptions; another will work from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (with a lunch break) every day when possible, but during the academic year must limit herself to Friday, Saturday and Sunday for research and writing.

All of the writers interviewed mentioned distinct personal preferences as well as specific ideas about writing equipment and location. Five of them insist on composing longhand using pen or pencil, one prefers the typewriter, and one will either type or write longhand. At the time of the interviews, none used a word processor. Their views about equipment are idiosyncratic, but this does not mean they are arbitrary; the fact that these men and women have clear preferences suggests that their views have some local significance. For example, the philosopher finds himself "distracted by hand and pen movement" when he wants

"to think quickly" and record that thought, so he prefers to type. But for another of the writers, typing is too mechanical, goes too fast: he believes he loses control, is too prone to cliches, he says.

The English scholar does initial drafts longhand, switching to the type-writer when revisions begin. Another views the typewriter as a "morning" instrument and prefers to do his serious writing at night with a pen. He comments that a pen will slide easily over the paper, letting his thoughts appear quickly. He writes by hand at night because he feels the writing becomes more personal, and he professes to be guided by a mental voice which he must translate verbatim into writing.

For two of the writers, the look of the writing is important. One, the French scholar, believes she revises handwritten copy more effectively because handwriting does not look like anything of worth, while typed copy, on the other hand, seems more impressive, more stable. For her, that stability belongs to finished copy. The other gauges closure on the work in terms of his handwriting. That is, he knows that he has a good draft when his writing appears neat and tiny. All of the seven type final drafts and revisions.

The evening writer believes he does his best work nights seated at the dining room table while his wife works at her writing, seated at the other end of the table. However, several writers specifically select closed-off spaces for their writing because they consider themselves very social people, but see writing as pre-eminently antisocial: "My writing area must be inhospitable." One doubts that she could write with others in the room. Several must have the clutter of books, papers and copies of strategic articles around them if they are to write. Most prefer a single work location, although one mentioned that he could write any place, including in cafes or at outside locations when the light is good. Yet, for his serious composing, he expressed a preference for his home where he can write in a "grungy" bathrobe and reward himself periodically with small treats, like a game of chess or a cup of coffee.

One of the writers follows a routine which she clearly regards as signifi-cant to her writing since she described it in great detail. When she has finished working over the material she has chosen to research and created the necessary notes, she makes elaborate calendars which delineate progress through the project; these go on her desk wall. Following her own personal reference system, she marks the calendars and her notes. After that, she writes her text. During the writing and revising, she is guided by her calendar. When she types final drafts, she goes through a similarly closely controlled work schedule, revising in the morning whatever she wrote the previous day.

These working habits appear to assist the writers' concentration and the concentration--intense focusing on a problem--may generate ideas and accompanying strategies for reifying them. So, the habits themselves probably foster continued production. Their value to composing is implicit in the very fact that the writers are conscious of them: they know how they do what they do. Like research techniques and outlining, the habits serve as tacit guarantees that what happened successfully before can happen again. While they are in place, work occurs. In other words, academic writers are like novelists and poets or like athletes and actresses who have superstitions about performances. The scholars certainly are aware that they can write in many different ways, but they have selected certain non-content related practices which they believe work effectively for them, and they want to continue to follow those practices.

Revisioning

The writers interviewed have individual ways of revising, and their remarks often reveal ambiguities in their conceptualization of that part of the composing process. For instance, all of the writers interviewed believe composing is a means of discovery, but they also think of it as a "bottom up" or stylistic process only. They describe this in various ways. Although the historian notes, "I experience the writing of the book in my mind" and comments that he does little "restructuring" because he spends so much time "in [his] head . . . writing ahead," he also regards research and writing as connected. He says that while he "digests" some of the material <u>before</u> he writes, he also keeps "researching past the time I decide to write," because "[I] can't anticipate [the necessary arguments] before doing the writing." His description of writing a book explains these comments.

In January of 1981, he did research accompanied by minor writing activity on a topic. About a year later he rewrote that material for a research seminar, and about six months later he decided to rewrite the material for publication as a journal article. More rewriting occurred about six months after that when he began to view the text not as a discrete entity, but as a book chapter. Finally, he reconceived the chapter, which he had thought would appear in the final third of the book, when he became aware of the fact that it belonged to the introduction. These various steps were accompanied by returns to the sources and rethinking, modified by other tangential writing he did as time passed.

Another of the seven referred to his revisions as being only stylistic, but he described an ongoing discovery process. A philosopher who is currently absorbed in problems of popular culture, he views himself as "basically a talker," and describes himself as writing an entire draft exactly as he talks--"whole cloth." He says that while his first draft is usually verbose, it is clear, and that he rewrites only to improve the style. But, he also goes to work on this "talky" draft with paste and scissors: he cuts, he rearranges and he rewrites. Moreover, throughout this process, he carries a notebook containing ideas and outlines which he consults as he writes. These outlines and notes become "part of [his] being," he says. After the initial "talky" draft, he continues working with ideas in the notebook, and these reworkings also become part of the final draft.

Constant reworking of the manuscript, both as the arguments become clear and to make those arguments clearer, is common to all the scholars. The former journalist explained that his first revisions always are organizational, responding to a pattern he gradually discovers in the process of writing. He then considers earlier portions of the text in light of that pattern. At the same time, he also reads continually and, subsequently, revises continually. As he progresses, he laboriously revises his initial outlines, moving from outline to writing to reading to outline, over and over.

Another reported rewriting everything "about three times," although she also noted that she struggles painfully to perfect her opening sentences while she writes them, biting her nails as she does so, experiencing "great anxiety" while writing.

Yet another way of looking at revision was mentioned by one of the language scholars who values writing because he says it reveals something to him he did

not know he knew. He thinks of himself as telling a story in the rhetorical, persuasive and oral tradition and following a linear writing pattern which relies on mental planning and concludes with stylistic revisions only. To do this, he produces a narrative that is developed from points which he has carefully thought out in advance, and revised only when he considers himself finished with the content. Then, he adds transitions and the stylistic language he believes his form of literate work demands. Writing is less interesting to him as a way to develop ideas than as a way to promote them. At the same time, he, like the others, has great regard for the discovery process inherent in writing: he notes that a major idea "drives" him "to paper" because "writing is revelatory [and] leads to subtheses." Perhaps because he has unconsciously worked through the "subtheses" earlier, composing itself does not seem to demand substantial changes in the manuscript for him.

Several of the writers report that although they know they will revise the entire paper later, they also think out ideas and sentences carefully before committing them to the page. This kind of composing goes slowly: "Three pages a day . . . I'd be real happy." Sometimes, however, this slow writing is confined only to beginnings: "It takes me a long time to get started," one noted. First paragraphs may take two hours--"lots of times, I'll be looking for where to begin . . . not so much rewriting . . . writing differently." This writer writes many "first" sentences, but "when I finally write a first sentence which is a good place to begin, the rest just follows." Then "everything gets rewritten about three times except my last pages."

Only the German scholar specifically mentioned using the community provided by his discipline as part of the revising process. He finds commentary from readers useful in assisting his reformulations. This writer writes as he reads and researches because he does not want to lose his original ideas and because writing and research are bound together in his mind. For his work, he maintains an extensive and well organized personal library and bibliographic files. These, along with his good memory, help him to read about one project while writing and reading about another, so that he regards all his work as intertwined.

Like the philosopher, he returns to the sources to check information and find new directions. Frequently, after writing he puts the material away so time can test the ideas. He finds his arrangement as he creates his arguments, although he may later revise that arrangement: sometimes, he discovers that his ending contradicts earlier portions of the manuscript, and this forces him to change the opening. This happens, he believes, because for him, a "book creates itself," flowing from what he discovers in "reading and cognitively." The introduction is written last because "by working through material I understand much better what I wanted to deal with." After his publisher returns his manuscript with readers' comments, he does additional research, more reading and more rewriting. Those comments from the reviewers help him, he says, although he occasionally finds them painful.

Purpose and Authority

While professional and personal cognitive maps and environmental manipulations help keep writers writing, sense of purpose also is important to productivity and completion of specific writing tasks. One of the group mentioned three events that create purpose and stimulate composing for him: he may receive

a commission for a special project; he may be prompted while reading a text that something is wrong with the argument, with the facts or with the presentation; or he may discover a personal need to comprehend and "master" a problem, a need that is both "experiential and cognitive."

First, purpose can be job-related. As noted earlier, writing is essential to the professional life of these people and, consequently, they are motivated by the expectations of the scholarly community that they will be writers. They think of themselves as writers engaged in public acts, and they are aware of the motivating value that identity has for them. As the writer who listed three events noted, the need to write sometimes comes in the form of specific requests from publications, publishers and conference directors. These stimulate composing. Another of the writers mentioned a more subtle expectation, one that provided her with pressure to write on at least one occasion: she recalled that after her first book was published people repeatedly asked her what she was working on, and she was forced to create ideas for her second book in answer to their questions.

The scholars also expressed general notions about the expectations that exist for academics. For instance, "Publication is important because it represents discipline in the profession." In other words, writing is done for practical reasons; it is required of them. They may even consider it the most important aspect of their profession: "I like to write. It is creative and concrete; I regard most of what I do [office work, administrative detail] as a waste of time."

Secondly, they see themselves as engaged in an important dialogue with a community: [Writing is the] "only meaningful way to communicate with other academics," or "Putting on paper is serious, not playful." Moreover, as readers of their own work, they may engage in a professional self-dialogue that helps to sustain a professional persona: "If you can't write, you just don't have anything to say. I like [my ideas], but I don't have real faith in them until I see them in writing."

Finally, they find personal rewards in writing. These may consist of satisfactorily solving a problem in writing (the need "to comprehend . . . [a] desire to master") or giving themselves the pleasure of reifying ("Ideas come from far away; writing brings them nearer"); they may be sensual ("I like the way [the finished product] looks.") or moral ("I write because it is one of the most difficult things to do."). One writer, as she described and explained her writing methods, mentioned that she writes with a pen because the pen controls what she calls her elliptical thinking, and, so, forces her to make her thoughts absolutely clear. As she sees her thoughts slowly clarified, she feels great pleasure. She notes that when she arrives at an impasse and works through that she feels as if she has "solved a big problem."

All these aspects of writing help to make the composing task possible. However, all seven academics also are ambivalent about writing. While they valorize the task by giving it prime time in their intellectual day, they do not do that because they particularly like writing or even because they believe they are good writers. They dislike composing, call themselves bad writers, think writing is hard for them. One notes, "I enjoy doing it, but it is frustrating or difficult or awfully hard at times. I don't think it comes easily to me."

One expresses great anxiety about writing. She believes her writing is "pretty bad," thinks her anxiety goes along somehow with the intense concentration necessary for composing. She frankly finds writing hard, although she does not "stop because it is hard." Another is afraid of being misunderstood as a writer, a fear he does not have about himself as a speaker.

As if to counteract these negative feelings, they bring up more positive ones. For instance, one transferred the site of pleasure from the written text to the creation of an idea: "I'm a bad writer, but there is something about the writing process which creates ideas . . . 80 percent of the ideas come to me while I'm writing. . . . The part of writing I enjoy is when I get an idea while I'm writing."

Another sustains himself with past satisfaction: "I don't always like to write. I go through periods of not liking writing . . . a very unsocial activity for a very social person . . . but I have a fantasy about writing; I remember great pleasures of writing, the feeling of it."

Writers continue writing because they have a strong sense of purpose and authority about themselves as writers. This sense comes to professional writers from successful writing, from the outside world which reflects an appropriate image of them as writers. They are able to maintain this sense of themselves as writers although they do not always enjoy writing nor consider themselves natural writers. Their reports about their own writing suggest that the very idea of being a writer is carefully developed and nurtured through constant privileging of the writing task: they are writers and what they do is write.

Applications

This study tells us what <u>some</u> academic writers see themselves doing as they continue to write publishable prose, and it reports some of their writing habits. The methods they describe are idiosyncratic; over time each has found schemes which satisfy particular personal needs and produce useful products. This individual aspect is not surprising: examination of the volumes of <u>Writers at Work</u>: The Paris Review <u>Interviews</u> reveals that personal composing methods are important to writers. However, although the academic writers' statements are personal, they suggest some general insights about productivity.

The interviews suggest that productivity and the ability to overcome apprehension comes partially from the sense writers create about themselves as writers. They are aware that researching/writing methods which produced successful work in the past create paths which will again produce successful writing. This gives them hope as well as imposes a set of boundaries. When they want to write, they create a climate which they know from experience produces writing. As they think about themselves as writers, they valorize the task. This helps them continue writing. We can apply these general insights to our freshman composition courses.

Preparation

As instructors, we can rethink our ideas about the function of preparation to writers. What these interviews suggest is that immersion in information,

outlines and prewriting inventions may be critical not only because content is discovered that way or to "prime the pump," but also because these activities create routes for the composing journey. Once in place, they provide assurances and, sometimes, holistic frameworks. They are signs that make writers feel work can be accomplished. Perhaps there is no writing without this immersion through preparation.

Traditional preparation, however, may not be sufficient for a freshman writer: one significant fact about student writing is made clear, by contrast, in the interviews. Students, by definition, do not have a completed field. Unlike the scholars, who, by definition, have already delineated professional space for themselves, students have no sense of professional language boundaries. In fact, one of the students' primary tasks in composition courses is to develop appropriate diction, form and voice for written communication in a general literate environment. The papers they write in later courses will be records of their continuing efforts to create a more specific place for themselves as they integrate facts, new languages and new forms. In other words, in freshman composition courses even when students are familiar with subject matter and primed for writing, they cannot even begin without the specific contexts, the shared assumptions that communities, professions and disciplines provide.

Yet, students can learn and rehearse preparation tactics by writing within one field: their own. Since all students have familiar, individual knowledge, they can explore that space. And this is the one reason personal writing may have a valid place in a college composition course. After all, invention is a way to inspect any place of knowledge, personal or public, in order to find the burrow of any hidden idea. Seen in this way, the transferable skill students learn in our classes is that of exploring any space and being comfortable with that exploration. Later, both prewriting exercises and library fact finding excursions provide valuable tactics for more academic writing. They do so not only because they generate information, but because they create artificial boundaries for the whole project, boundaries which will help students see an entire project through to completion. Students can learn to prepare these holistic frameworks for discourse not only by using common invention tactics--freewriting, memory probes and fact gathering--but by writing exploratory papers, through discussions and note taking and through reading and annotating. In this way, they learn what's been said, how it's been said and where more might be said.

Thus, "prewriting" becomes an enterprise that extends far beyond classroom freewriting. However preparation occurs, students probably must experience a variety of preparation tactics if they are to feel equal to the composing task and, thereby, have a successful experience with it. For instance, gathering of data can have many forms: gathering of personal data, the kind most often produced in freewriting, is only one kind of preparatory activity. Research in library or community is another; the reading of groups of essays about a common topic is a third. In carefully planned class and group discussions students can partially simulate a scholar's depth; during these, they develop a pool of information upon which they can draw when they write. Moreover, in order to provide increased immersion, these discussions can take place both before and after initial drafts on a topic. Students also can write individual responses and discussion summaries to integrate information. An additional tactic, one used by David Bleich at Indiana University, is to require students in classroom discussion groups to assign one person the task of keeping minutes of each discussion. When

minutes are circulated within the group, students can compare their own ideas about the discussion with those of another.

In addition, if outlines do provide writers with a promise that the work can be completed profitably, as the interviews above suggest they do, then we should discuss their tactical importance with our students. The outlines as described are not rigid containers for knowledge, but rather provide possible routes through a difficult and often frightening chore. Ronald T. Kellogg's analysis of drafts and outlines supports this observation. Noting that "[T]he time and effort required by writing makes it a cognitively and emotionally exhausting task," Kellogg shows that use of outlines improved the quality of student written letters (although it had no effect on efficiency) and that use of outlines "correlated positively with writing productivity" for science and engineering faculty (Kellogg, 1987, p. 269). There are cognitive reasons for using outlines. Kellogg suggests that "outlines relieve the strain on working memory by providing an external representation of the planned text": they help in two ways. First, the writer does not have to rely on memory for the text plan as his/her attention shifts from high to low level planning, and, secondly, the writer has more free memory space for information (Kellogg, 1987, p. 295).

As early as the preparation stage, compositional forms may be important to writers. For instance, some of the writers quoted earlier suggest that they need whole forms (either outlines or text) against which they can test the validity of their ideas. While forms and knowledge about how to use them to generate information come through writing and reading experience in specific fields, freshman composition courses can provide analogous experiences. These may include the use of formulas. Here I do not imply that we should replace our current process pedagogy with an archaic methodology, but knowledge of genre or format appears to be essential to all communication. In Paradigms, Thought, and Language, Ivana Markova describes the interactive, formulaic nature of language development (1982, pp. 149-159). Further, William Labov's (1972) investigations in general reveal the underlying generative qualities of form for speakers, and Mary Louise Pratt (1977) has suggested the predictive qualities of form for readers (pp. 54-55). Although we know that when students follow formulaic patterns (the five-paragraph theme, the academic formats) they write stilted, formulaic prose, we also know that patterns provide a background of security for novice writers who cannot immediately manipulate all the variables of composing. We can use forms more effectively in the classroom. For example, in Beat Not the Poor Desk (1981) and The Common Sense (1985), Marie Ponsot and Rosemary Dean show how instructors can inspire confidence in students by working with the many genres students already control and explaining how those can be developed.

Working Habits

Like professional writers, student writers need working habits that lead to successful writing. There is a considerable body of literature about this which we can use to help students create personal working environments in which they see themselves as writers. For example, we can discuss working places, tools and situations. Instructors can describe their own writing scenes or those of professional writers, and they can listen to students describe writing habits. Such discussion is easy to generate because even novice writers have written occasionally in the past and can talk about writing preferences. Further, people like to talk about how they write and most, student or professional, are seldom

asked to do so. Yet, such talk makes novices <u>feel</u> like writers, an emotional attitude that may be essential to development of the kind of authoritative voice David Bartholomae (cited in Rose, 1985) discusses in "Inventing the University." One cannot talk like a writer unless one is able to invent that persona for oneself.

The habitual writing the scholars describe is as useful for student writers as it is for academics. In a study of writing productivity, Boice concludes that "external contingencies that force writing regardless of mood seem to facilitate, not impede, the appearance of creative ideas for writing. . . . A secondary conclusion is that productivity precedes creativity" (Boice, 1985, p. 477). There is, in other words, every reason to encourage students to think about themselves as writers so that they will privilege the task and write: it is writing itself that will produce success. To increase their consciousness about time and writing spaces, students should write at various times of the day for particular lengths of time and honestly record their progress. The recording itself may produce a profitable sense, for the students, of being writers. This further suggests a new role for journals, either personal or responsive.

Revisioning

Other suggestions for the freshman composition course lie in the remarks of the scholarly writers about revision. These writers obviously value revision as a writing strategy and have many tactics for applying it to their own texts. They hold their texts open, although they may have complex outlines or even have to rewrite those outlines first. In fact, the reports suggest that writers who know a text is revisable can have many ways to hold that text open, thus giving themselves time to bring it closer to their desires and expectations. Seeing a text as temporary appears to override negative reactions to initial imperfections in that text; seeing a text as impermanent may give writers the power to make changes. As valuable as this concept may be for the scholars, it suggests greater value for novices. Freshmen, having learned the importance of the printed word through rote learning of textbooks, may believe more in their own words--once written--than in their thoughts, which seem fleeting. However, to compare thoughts to unrevised words well may be devastating for them. In a complex and important study about writing apprehension, John A. Daly notes what he terms "comparison deficiency."

> As writers compose and review what they have written, they go through
> a process of comparing their intentions with their actual products.
> Apprehension in part arises and is maintained when writers consistently
> believe that what they have written inadequately matches what they had
> in mind as they composed . . . a deficiency in the written product is
> perceived. A consistent sense of this deficiency, over time, is
> punishing. (Daly, cited in Rose, 1985, p. 63)

One way to release the apprehension caused by such comparisons is to under-stand that writing is non-permanent, totally open and agreeable to changes which might bring it closer to intentions. To experience this, students can summarize their writing and write statements about their own original intentions and compare that information with summations of the same text made by peers. With these concrete artifacts in mind, they can make revisions that support their own inten-tions, or they can make revisions that reflect altered intentions.

It seems to me particularly important to regard revising techniques, as well as outlines and working habits, as both open and closed systems, open as long as the writer needs that flexibility, but closed when the writer chooses or time demands. Open, infinitely revisable tactics may be particularly important for novice writers and for some kinds of professional writers. Glen J. Broadhead and Richard C. Freed, who studied the composing strategies of professional writers in a management consulting firm, found that those writers used a "highly staged," rather than "recursive" model. The authors suggest that student writers, on the other hand, may be highly recursive and that "as writers become more skilled and more efficient in at least some kinds of on-the-job writing, they become more highly staged" (Broadhead & Freed, 1986, pp. 131-133).

As teachers, we should be aware that students, as well as all professionals, need to develop alternative revision tactics. For example, they will need to produce writing that is completed as well as writing that is good and meaningful. Students should know which writing tasks always will require many revisions and demand much time for discovery and which usually can be done quickly with little revising. They also need to know that when they master some forms, revising time may be less. To assist them, instructors can listen to the methods students report using in various writing situations and suggest alternative approaches for better individual results. If students can differentiate among composing tasks, they may better understand the discovery aspect of composing.

Purpose and Authority

The academic writers identify themselves as such and create occasions for their continued writing. One cause for their writing is assignments they receive because of this identity. Of course, we know that students in freshman composition courses do not necessarily call themselves writers simply because they are given writing assignments; nor do teachers make such assignments because students are writers. In fact, student writing assignments are the result of students not being writers. We can alter that given situation somewhat if we help students discover themselves as slightly different kinds of writers--as college students who write because that is what college students must do. In other words, they, as other professional writers, must become that which the role designates.

For the academic writers in the discussion, composing is highly conscious: they all know what it is they do. Freshmen writers can also learn about their own writing strategy. To do this they may need to keep a reflective journal of prewriting and writing tactics and record successful results. Also they can organize these journal notes and write essays about their own processes as they observed them during previous essay writing assignments. Students can be encouraged to keep records about writing apprehensions: in doing so they can discover what does and does not work for them.

To simulate the fertile feeling of composing within a community, instructors can create community dialogue in which students may find points of agreement or disagreement and participate through writing. Groups of essays about a similar subject can produce these differences of opinion. Thus, a traditional collection of essays can function as a source of community dialogue that students extend, together and individually. Writing of group papers has a place here; moreover, peer and tutorial reading can be used not only for correction or revision, but because such activity brings greater involvement.

Finally, students can discover personal rewards in writing, if they record the way each piece of their own writing has changed or influenced them or has affected their view of the topic. Even simple experiential statements about writing can suggest the inner changes that occur when writing takes place.

This essay has proceeded on the assumption that a study of academic writers --who are established and work professionally at writing--has something significant to offer novices. It has suggested that because students need to feel like writers they should emulate some of the writing experiences of scholars. It has not shown why it is important for them to feel like writers. The answer to that lies in invention and has to do with authority. Bartholomae (cited in Rose, 1985) says this about the matter:

> *To speak with authority they [student writers] have to speak not only in another's voice but through another's code; and they not only have to do this, they have to speak in the voice and through the codes of those of us with power and wisdom; and they not only have to do this, they have to do it before they know what they are doing, before they have a project to participate in, and before, at least in terms of our disciplines, they have anything to say. (Rose, 1985, p. 156)*

Thus, for us, as readers, students invent themselves to resemble us. And, as Bartholomae also says, it is from this position that they will begin to find their own voices. What academic writers experience as they express themselves and their opinions publicly through writing, then, is of great importance to student writers, for it is in those academic voices that our students will first learn to speak publicly.

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