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REVISION

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Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome. Please enclose two copies with a stamped self-addressed envelope. Authors should note that each issue of the *Journal* is devoted to one topic. The next issue will be titled TRAINING TEACHERS OF BASIC WRITING, PART 2. The issues BASIC WRITING AND SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH and ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC WRITING are described in a call for papers on page 123. Inquiries should be directed to:

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REVISION

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INTRODUCTION

Though one still finds too few texts which treat revision as more than polishing a draft for clarity and correctness, the term revision has undergone a redefinition among many teachers: no longer the province, exclusively or primarily, of style or arrangement, it is viewed as the means and sometimes the substance of invention. All of the essays in this issue work from this broadened definition of revision.

We begin with an interview with a professional writer, Calvin Trillin, reporter, novelist, essayist. Trillin's discussion of his writing process corroborates what we now know to be typical of mature writers: they mull longer, easily tolerate suspensions of closure, make use of a variety of writing and revision strategies adaptable to different kinds of writing and the problems of a particular topic, work with large chunks of prose. Re-seeing permeates every aspect of composing for the mature writer, from changing the "lead"—whether only a way to begin or the focus or central point—to imposing a better order of parts to sharpening the diction of sentences.

Ann Berthoff presents the philosophical grounds of her belief that writing and thinking are radically alike. Both have forming—making meaning, the cognitive processes of recognition and representation—at the center. Revision is not, she emphasizes, so much achieving a mechanically correct or rhetorically artful layout of what one already knows one knows as discovering that one knows what one knows (and does not know and perhaps cannot know) and how one knows it. Then and only then can form follow form. Students are encouraged to see the radical similarity of writing and thinking, she believes, when they keep dialectical notebooks and lecture notes, gloss their own paragraphs, interpretively paraphrase their own prose sentence by sentence, and when they prepare close imitations of structurally distinctive passages.

As Donald Murray puts it, "The writer's meaning rarely arrives by room-service, all neatly laid out on the tray." Instead, it is discovered and clarified in the act of writing, sentence by sentence, as the writer assesses whether he can "accept, document, and communicate" the meaning of the sentence he just wrote. Murray recommends teaching strategies which

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recognize the centrality, in writing, of the student's struggle toward meaning. Thus he urges teachers *not* to supply their own well-articulated interpretations of what the student meant to say: that the instructor frequently model the process of writing by composing and revising extemporaneously for the class; that writing classes be run as workshops with additional individual conferences; that each workshop devise its own checklist of principles and procedures for revision based on the concrete examples shared as a class.

The essays by Nancy Sommers and Thomas Newkirk explore the kinds of writing students produce when, instead of probing their beliefs and ideas or experiences about a subject, they become preoccupied with following rules which have been abstracted from the contexts which gave them meaning. Whether these rules govern structure or style, whether they are derived from textbooks, teachers, or even the student's experience with one kind of writing as opposed to others, attempting to follow the rules may displace a search for substance as the center of the writing process. Ironically, of course, the student then has no criterion for deciding which of two contradictory rules to follow. He cannot know, for example, whether to "add relevant details" or whether to "cut unnecessary words" without reference to the controlling idea to which they are relevant or necessary. Both authors urge teachers to seek out the ways students may misconstrue and misapply rules.

Several of our authors remind us that one skill that distinguishes mature writers is their ability to imagine and to address an audience. Linda Flower summarizes her work on the differences between writer-based and reader-based prose, and suggests three teaching strategies which will help students write for readers: setting assignments which have specific and realistic audiences; having students formulate a goal for writing which addresses the interests and needs of that audience; and having students role-play a questioning, challenging reader. David Rankin suggests that writing successive drafts for specific, increasingly difficult audiences puts writing for the audience at the center of instruction in a way that enables students to move toward competence in stages compatible with the composing process. And, based upon her survey of the research in reading and auding skills, Irene Clark suggests that role-playing the audience is likely to be more effective, at least initially, when basic writers "listen for comprehension" (that is, for thesis and points of support) than when they read silently, for they are more skillful as listeners than readers and more easily perceive the effects of disorganization and incoherence.

David Hoddeson maintains that oral/aural states remain essential and integral to the writing process, however unpracticed or professional—that writing invariably reflects the evidence of the writer talking to himself and hearing his own voice. The striking similarities between transcribed speech as it occurs in conversation and the writing of basic writers suggests that teaching strategies should mediate quite consciously between the oral/aural and writing selves and the structural differences between voice and text. These methods include oral reading, oral dictation, editing written transcriptions of raw tapes of conversations into written texts, and comparing actual conversations with artistic representations of them.

Our last essay by Susan Wall and Anthony Petrosky presents self-reports of revision practices from writers at five instructional levels, from students who need remediation in both reading and writing to students skilled enough to have been placed in advanced general writing. Because the survey covers five instructional levels during a single semester rather than a cohort of students moving through five instructional levels, it is impossible to tell exactly how the college curriculum may shape student attitudes and which teaching methods may be most effective in developing skills without inadvertently or unnecessarily developing negative attitudes and practices: students arrive with many of their attitudes, practices, and skills in place as a result of prior instruction (or the lack of it). Even so, the profile of student development is quite encouraging. Synchronically measured, students appear to go through periods of insecurity, narrowness of focus, active dislike of writing, and tightness as they tackle the kinds of writing that are typical in the academic and business worlds, but they move toward confidence, experimentation, and positive feelings about writing as they gain competence with these rhetorical modes and the more mature writing strategies they often entail. Diachronic studies may suggest ways that a college curriculum can build more steadily upon the positive feelings toward writing that emerge when very inexperienced writers first feel the pleasure and power of personal writing.

The last decade has been a process-conscious time. Yet, the likelihood is that many writing teachers are only vaguely aware of the research on the composing process and continue to teach rigid essay models too mechanically, without allowing for the stages by which "ideal" form is reached, the fact that rhetorical modes are usually mixed, or the fact that ideal forms must be allowed to permute in interplay with the topic. At the same time, process-oriented teachers are occasionally so hostile to teaching "products" that they stand in danger of underexploiting what

was useful in teaching models and failing to equip students with the highly functional, rhetorically effective models most often used to convey information quickly. There is nothing intrinsically superior about the "organic" essay which documents the writer's exploration of a subject and, perhaps, his change of mind over the more sophisticated essay which simulates the same discovery process, over the essay which begins by seeming to espouse one position (the one held by his audience), only to show the advantages of a different position, over the essay which matter-of-factly states a position and lays out the rationale that supports it. They are simply different shapes a treatment of the subject may take, each suitable for different audiences on different occasions. Thus, while a narrow preoccupation with meeting the formal requirements of paragraph development or of the five-paragraph essay or of the classical argument may produce writing that is wooden, repetitive, and vacuous, rhetorical models, broadly viewed, are among the most powerful heuristics. Teaching methods which integrate what we know about the various processes and products of writing, methods which do not create a false dichotomy, will best equip students with the procedural strategies and ideal forms they will need as academic, professional and personal writers.

Alice Trillin

A WRITER'S PROCESS: A CONVERSATION WITH CALVIN TRILLIN

One night at dinner about ten years ago Mina Shaughnessy asked my husband to tell her how he wrote. I am sure that in the fifteen or so years that he had been a professional writer a number of people had asked him the same thing, but there was something about being asked a question by Mina that made you think particularly hard about the answer. One reason for this was that you knew that she was really interested in what you would say. Also, you knew that she wanted the *real* answer to the question. If she asked a writer how he wrote, she did not want to know how many cigarettes he smoked before he started or whether he used a manual or an electric or how much money he made. She really wanted to know how the writer wrote. So, for the first time in those fifteen years, my husband began to think seriously about how he began to approach a story, what the difference between a first and second draft was, how he knew when he had finished something, and what the difference between writing fiction and non-fiction was. He did not give Mina the whole answer to her question that evening, nor did he give it to me in the interview that follows, but what he says here is, I think, informed by more conversations over the past ten years than most writers would be willing to subject themselves to, with Mina and with me, about the process of writing.

In the questions I asked Calvin Trillin I did not confine myself to the part of the writing process that is most commonly thought of as revision- the multiple drafts that follow the first attempt to get words on

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Calvin Trillin is a staff writer at The New Yorker *and writes a column for* The Nation *called "Uncivil Liberties." His most recent book is* Uncivil Liberties, *published by Ticknor and Fields.*

Alice Trillin, who was Writing Program Specialist at CUNY's Instructional Resource Center, now co-directs Learning Designs, a company that produces films and print materials for public television. She has recently co-produced "Before the First Word," a film on the writing process.

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paper. Instead, I asked about each "stage" of his writing process, because I think we know now that the various sub-processes are not discrete. Revision goes on during each moment of the writing process, in the sense that to revise means to "see again." The writer constantly looks and then looks again, as Ann Berthoff has told us, constantly making different choices and making and re-making connections, constantly forming and re-forming.

There are no rules that govern the way we write. It will be clear from the interview that follows that even after twenty-five years of professional writing, Trillin's "process" varies every time he sits down at the typewriter. But the one thing that never varies, it seems to me as someone who has observed him, is his willingness always to look again, whether it is at the people and situations he is writing about, the structure of a story or a paragraph or a sentence, or the appropriateness of a word. It is by learning to look and look again—by constantly revising the way we see and understand as well as the way we arrange words on paper—that we begin to become writers.

Alice: Let's begin by talking about how you approach a "U.S. Journal" story for *The New Yorker* once you arrive in the city you are going to write about.

Calvin: First I have to have some idea, even if it's a vague one, of what interests me about the situation before I get there. I'm probably better off if the idea *is* vague because I don't want to have too many preconceptions about what the story is: after all, the story I have in mind before I arrive may not actually work out to be a story.

Alice: How often do your ideas for stories change?

Calvin: They change fairly often. Sometimes the entire subject changes, but more often the approach to it changes. For example, I went to Tampa to do a story that I thought was going to be about how three different mens' luncheon clubs dealt with the question of whether or not women should be admitted to membership or at least be allowed to have lunch there or to have some sort of in-between privileges.[1] Each club handled the situation differently. As I started researching, I discovered that one of

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[1] "Four People Who Do Not Lunch at the University Club," *The New Yorker,* April 11, 1977.

the luncheon clubs was much more influential than the other two so that I really couldn't write about the three of them in the same way. The other thing was that this approach was fairly boring. But I discovered four interesting women who were involved with the situation in one way or another. One of them had been a state senator who had been kicked out of one of the luncheon clubs during lunch; one was a television newswoman; one was a member of one of the clubs that had changed its policy; and one was a local feminist leader who liked to make fun of the most important club. So instead of the story being "Three Luncheon Clubs in Tampa," it was "Four People Who Do Not Lunch at the University Club." In a way, it was the same subject but a different approach.

Alice: What do you do if you get someplace and find out the story isn't there at all?

Calvin: Well, I recently did a story in Utah that was unusual because I changed the subject after I got home.[2] I went out originally to do a story on a kind of maverick, self-taught scientist who was having trouble with a town in Utah where he was conducting experiments that he said would end the energy crisis. Many people in the town said that he was just a crank. I found the argument between him and the town kind of predictable and not very interesting. Because stories usually depend a lot on their context, I usually gather a lot of material about the towns I'm in. As it turned out in this case, the town and the way it allotted and used space were terribly interesting. There seemed to be hundreds of miles of empty space all around the town, but actually space was at a premium in the town. A lot of this had to do with gambling just over the state line. As a result, I didn't use very much of what I had researched about the scientist, but instead I used a lot about the context. So it ended up to be a story about space in Wendover, Utah.

Alice: That's interesting to me because I think it was your least successful story this year. Is that because you hadn't done the right research?

Calvin: Right. Even though I had gathered a lot of material about the town because it was what interested me most, I really hadn't done it in as

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[2]"Space in Wendover," *The New Yorker,* April 13, 1981.

systematic a way as I would have if I had actually started out reporting on the town or had changed my mind while I was out there. As a result, I had to do a lot of reporting by phone from New York, and still I was never, in the end, satisfied with the piece because I really didn't have enough information to write confidently about the town. The more you know about a situation, the more small details and knowledge you have beyond what you seem to need, the better you can write about it.

Alice: To what extent is the research—the details—important in the finished story? It seems to me that sometimes a great deal of the reporting shows up in the story, and sometimes the story ends up being much more something that bounces off the reporting.

Calvin: That difference depends on the tone of the story and the type of story it is. If the story is a murder story,[3] for example, that has within it its own narrative line—its own beginning, middle, and end, and its own details—then what I try to do when I write is get out of the way and just let the story tell itself. I try to get as many of the details as cleanly as possible into the story and try to get all the marks of writing off of the story. Sometimes I think of it as trying to change clothes in a tiny closet.

But if it's a story about the search for barbecued mutton in western Kentucky,[4] for instance, which is really just based on my notions of eating thrown together with some experiences—there's no beginning, middle or end—something different than gathering as many facts as possible is called for.

And then, as I said before, sometimes a story changes along the way, causing the balance between straight reporting and my personal reactions to the reporting to change with it. But usually, except in extreme cases, like western Kentucky's barbecued mutton, it's not easy to tell how a story will turn out when I begin to write. So I still have to do all of the reporting and gather as many facts as I can.

Alice: In other words, sometimes the story ends up being more based on the information and sometimes more based on your reaction to the information.

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[3]See, for example, "Harvey St. Jean Had It Made," *The New Yorker,* March 17, 1975, and "It's Just Too Late," *The New Yorker,* March 12, 1979.

[4]"Stalking the Barbecued Mutton," *The New Yorker,* Feb. 7, 1977.

Calvin: Yes. This has a lot to do with whether I'm going to use a subject to tell jokes and to talk about my impressions of the subject or if I'm going to tell a story. Obviously, this division isn't always clear. The story I did this year on the undercover operation among poachers in the riverbottom in Illinois was, in a way, an ordinary story based on facts gathered in a lot of interviews, newspaper clippings, and that sort of reporting.[5] On the other hand, the story was meant to be rather humorous because the situation was humorous.

Alice: It seems to me that you most often use humor to become personal. But sometimes, very rarely, as in your story about Atlanta,[6] you do a much more serious kind of analysis based on your reaction to events, not just on your reporting, that achieves a personal effect in a different way.

Calvin: That's right. There are only three or four cities in the United States that I have enough of a feel for and enough of a long-term knowledge of to write about in a way that's more analytical. One of them is Kansas City, where I grew up; another is New Orleans. The Atlanta piece that you mentioned before is about Atlanta in the early sixties—a time when I lived there or visited there often. I felt that I knew enough about that city to analyze it in a confident way, in what some people call the casual essay; there is a point at which what the writer knows goes beyond mere "information." There is a feeling I have with some subjects that I've gone beyond fact-gathering and interviewing and am really qualified to make analyses—I know them well enough to casually—and I think that's where the casual essay comes in—use an example.

Alice: What do you usually end up with, then, after you finish reporting and are ready to start writing, and what do you do with it?

Calvin: What I have when I get home is a notebook full of handwritten notes, and sometimes if I've been conscientious, some notes which I've typed up either late at night or early in the morning as a way of sharpening my notes a bit. As I type out notes, I remember things that were said or fill out sentences that aren't really carefully done. Also, I find out what I don't know—that there are questions that I will have to ask the next day. In addition to that, I usually have a lot of Xeroxes of newspaper

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[5]"Quackscam," *The New Yorker,* March 9, 1981.

[6]"Rembrance of Moderates Past," *The New Yorker,* March 21, 1977.

clippings, and sometimes I even have copies of court transcripts, brochures, etc. Whatever I have, it is often a fairly sizeable pile. Then, the day after I get home, I do a kind of pre-draft—what I call a "vomit-out." I don't even look at my notes to write it. It says, for example, U.S. Journal, Chicago, followed by the title, and starts out, at least, in the form of a story. But it degenerates fairly quickly, and by page four or five sometimes the sentences aren't complete. I write almost the length of the story in this way. The whole operation takes no more than an hour at the typewriter, but it sometimes takes me all day to do it because I'm tired and I've put it off a bit. Sometimes I don't even look at the vomit-out for the rest of the week and I have an absolute terror of anybody seeing it. It's a very embarrassing document. I tear it up at the end of the week.

I don't write a pre-draft for fiction or for humor, but I can't seem to do without one for non-fiction. I've tried to figure out why I need it, what purpose it serves. I think it gives me an inventory of what I want to say and an opportunity to see which way the tone of the story is going to go, which is very important. Also, this is about the time that I begin to see technical problems that will come up—for example, that one part of the story doesn't lead into the next, or that I should write the story in the first person, or start it in a different way. And obviously, the most important and difficult parts of writing a piece of nonfiction are building the structure and setting the tone and point of view. In any case, almost always, I think, the first paragraph of the pre-draft has something to do with the story that I end up with.

Alice: In other words, the lead in the vomit-out is often the lead you use in the final draft.

Calvin: Probably the lead in the vomit-out has something to do with the lead in the last draft much of the time—even if the original language has been changed to the point of being unrecognizable.

A lead in one of my stories is not necessarily the most important sentence in the story in the sense that a newspaper lead has to contain the most important development in the article. But it is important as a way to get into the story, to establish the tone and direction.

Alice: Let's talk about that for a minute. You were saying the other day that John McPhee never starts a story at the beginning—the chronological beginning—as far as we know.[7] I think that's a very interesting notion.

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[7] *See introduction to The John McPhee Reader,* ed. by William Howath, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976.

How do you decide where to start and what does that have to do with where you go?

Calvin: Well, I meant that as a compliment, as a description of why his stories engage you right away. All of a sudden you're swimming in this story and you find it interesting—you're not quite sure why—and then some details appear to bolster you and provide a kind of craft for going down this river that he's created for you. You gradually find out why you're there. It's not as if he says, "Here is a river and here is a boat"—which is usually a far less interesting way to start.

Recently, for instance, I wrote a story on the discovery of the Tunica treasure[8] which I couldn't start by saying, "Here is a man who works as a prison guard in Angola State Prison, and on his weekends he sometimes looks for buried treasure that is rumored to be around the Indian village." Because the real point of the story centered around the problems caused when an amateur wanders on to professional territory, I thought it would be much better to open with how momentous this discovery was, that it was the most important archeological discovery about Indian contact with the European settlers to date, and *then* to say that it was discovered by a prison guard. So I made a conscious choice *not* to start with Leonard Charrier working as a prison guard, not to go back to his boyhood in Bunkie, Louisiana, not to talk about how he'd always been interested in treasure hunting, hoping that the reader would assume that I was about to say that the treasure was found by an archeologist from the Peabody Museum at Harvard.

Alice: And the lead determined what the story was about because it didn't center on the prison guard finding the treasure, but on the relationship of all the other people in the story to the treasure.

Calvin: That's right. It was a treasure to different people for different reasons—scholars, Indians, fortune hunters, and so on.

Alice: Let's get on to the second draft. McPhee talks about structure in a story in an almost physical way—sorting out his notes, sorting out his folders. What happens when you write your second draft?

Calvin: Well, as I said before, I write the pre-draft without looking at my

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[8]"The Tunica Treasure," *The New Yorker,* July 27, 1981.

notes as a way of finding out what I think, what is really important to me about what I've been looking at for four or five days, often rather intensively. Sometimes—when I am very lucky—the story just opens up before me and I realize which direction to go in. If things are going well, there are times when I think, "Well, now I understand this," but then the next day I think, "How could I have ever thought that? Now I really understand what's going on here." And I don't mean necessarily that I just found more facts; it's a matter of understanding them differently. Then I go back and look at all my notes and documents. I have to say that sometimes I'm impatient about reading through all the documents very carefully at that point, particularly if I have a pretty good notion of which way the story is going, and I might put some of that reading off a bit for the next day. I try to go through everything, though, making a list on a legal pad of points or quotes that I'm sure I want to include.

Alice: Not in any particular order?

Calvin: No. As I come to them. So I have the list, and I have the lead that has usually survived from the pre-draft, or if not, I try to figure out another lead. And then the second day, I begin the rough draft. I do that in a very pedestrian way. I pretend that the piece will be twelve pages long: actually it is more likely to be fourteen or fifteen. Because the beginning is a little harder to write than the second part, I write six pages—half of the rough draft—on this day. When I say that I *write* six pages I might in fact have eighty pages in the wastebasket, since I don't do much pencil editing. I work mainly on the typewriter. If the first half of the page satisfies me and I don't seem to be doing very well on the second half, I might just rip off that second half and staple on the first half to the top of a clean paper and start again. Sometimes I literally rip pages apart and staple them together in sections when I see that something belongs in a different place. At the end of the second day, I have six pages that read like a manuscript. There aren't many errors. Also, I don't think of the pages of the rough draft as "finished" unless they are typed properly.

Obviously, a writer's process is very personal. There is no formula that works for all people. I know people who work completely with pencils, drawing arrows to indicate that something belongs somewhere else. And I also know people who write in finished paragraphs. But I simply never would get past the first paragraph of a non-fiction piece if I tried to work that way. Part of the way I write has to do with the fact that I touch-type very quickly, the result of having taken typing when I was a kid.

Alice: So at the end of the second day you have six pages of the first draft. At the end of the third day you have a complete rough draft. What kinds of things happen at that point? For example, do you start fine-tuning sentences or are you still playing with the structure? And why, at a certain point, do you have me read your rough drafts?

Calvin: There have been times when the structure and tone changed a lot after the rough draft—but more often the basic structure and tone are decided and it is beginning to look like a piece.

Alice: Not a terribly well-written piece, but a piece.

Calvin: Some of the language is exactly what I'm going to end up with and some isn't. But then "rough" literally means rough; there are sentences that I could write better. At this point I really need a reader other than myself—someone to see whether I've said what I wanted to say, someone who can see that it might be said better. This is when I ask you to read it. I need someone to say, "I don't understand what you're getting at here," or "This part is very boring," or "I don't think this is really what you mean," or "I don't understand the relationship of this to this." I need to know that what I've written is basically all right before I go on to the next step—which is what I call the "yellow draft." Usually the yellow draft is my favorite part. Incidentally, I use yellow paper at this stage to distinguish this draft from the rough draft, which is done on regular white paper, as opposed to the vomit-out, which is also done on yellow paper, as a way to keep things in order on my desk.

Alice: There have been a few occasions when I've read a rough draft that just hasn't worked. It seems to me that most writers at this point would just divorce their wives, but you don't.

Calvin: Most writers probably wouldn't put the burden of reading it on their wives.

Alice: If it doesn't work by the end of the rough draft, you figure out what's wrong and start again.

Calvin: Yes. This may mean changing the structure or the tone, or starting at a different place, or getting into the story in a different way. It may mean really ripping the piece up and maybe inserting new paragraphs into

what I'm changing. Although I have made these kinds of major changes on the yellow draft, what I really like to do at this stage is write the piece better.

Alice: This is when you're playing with sentences instead of the piece as a whole.

Calvin: Right. I really look forward to writing the yellow draft, partly because it means that I've gotten to the end of the piece one time. That is very important to me. Once I've actually seen the piece started and finished, I can go on to figure out how to improve each sentence, which is fun because I'm just kind of playing with them. I start at the beginning and write the whole thing again. That's one day's work.

Alice: What kind of play goes on? In other words, what are you doing to those sentences? Are you making them more beautiful, or clearer, or a little of both?

Calvin: Often I'm making them clearer. But I'm also looking at how well the paragraphs fit together. For instance, I might find something in the middle of the story that I realize is the way to end it. And then I have to figure out how to put that part at the end and then get the rest of the story around it.

Alice: Then transitions become very important, when you find things don't connect well.

Calvin: Yes. Sometimes I do sharpen up transitions in the yellow draft. Obviously, transitions are difficult parts of writing. In reporting they are not only difficult but are terrible traps and temptations because it's often so difficult to get from one paragraph to the next. There's a temptation to bend things a bit, to make connections that aren't really there, in order to reach for the next paragraph. I think a lot of the inaccuracies in magazine pieces are in the transitions.

Alice: You also make a lot of changes when you type the piece.

Calvin: Usually I just change words here and there, but sometimes I do change whole ideas. In one piece I recently did, the whole ending changed as I typed it up.

Alice: Earlier you spoke about the importance of having a second reader read your work in draft form. Let's talk now about editing. I know you think it's a very valuable process at the *New Yorker.* What's good about it? What should an editor be and what can an editor do?

Calvin: An editor should be someone who is trying to help the writer say what he wants to say.

Alice: Should the editor make suggestions about what you should say?

Calvin: Editing is somewhat akin to previewing a play before it actually gets to opening night. The editor is, among other things, an intelligent reader who can see—who should be able to see—places where you didn't say what you intended to say or where what you've said isn't clear or is contradictory. For instance, anybody writing makes connections in his mind that don't come out on the paper. It often happens that you think you said something simply because you thought about it a lot.

Alice: That's called writer-based prose.

Calvin: Whatever it's called, it happens often. You think that you've said something you haven't actually said because you've said it in your mind rather than on paper. You've thought about it a lot, and in fact, in one draft you may have said it on paper. But ultimately in the final draft the connections aren't there. And then sometimes writers include details that are unnecessary. They often get interested enough in a subject to make distinctions that aren't really of interest to anybody who doesn't know the subject as well as they do. Or, sometimes, a sentence simply is awkward. Good editors can sometimes take words out of a sentence.

Alice: Should an editor ever put words into a story?

Calvin: I don't think an editor should put words into a story without consulting the writer. Of course, this depends on whether the writer is any good. Even in national magazines, editors are often working with writers who aren't terribly good—writers who may know a lot about their subject but who haven't written about it very felicitously, or who have written more than could possibly fit, or who have gone on about some private notions that aren't very interesting. It's not as if writers are perfect beings who are sniped at by rude and insensitive editors. The editor has a job to

do; his constituency, the person he's worried about, is the reader of the magazine. So he has to protect the reader.

Alice: Could you say more about the limits of what an editor can do?

Calvin: Sometimes an editor ends up writing a lot of a story: the magazine is going to press and the story is so badly written that it turns out that the editor has to replace whole paragraphs on his own; he can't find the writer, or if he finds him the writer says it's impossible to change anything. The best an editor can do is to bring the story up to adequate, or smooth, or some word like that. That is because, almost invariably, good writing is specific writing. It uses details and examples to make subtle distinctions that the editor can't make because he doesn't know the subject.

Alice: So that brings us back to where we started. Even editing has to be based, in some way, on knowing the context and knowing as many details as you can.

Calvin: Yes. And sometimes the editor really *can't* have much knowledge of a subject. If, for example, an editor gets a terribly written story which is an eyewitness account of what goes on, say, in whaling in the North Atlantic, which has a lot of interesting facts in it, you can't really expect him to know about whaling in the sense of having experienced it. He might be able to look up a few books or something like that, but he can't write the sort of vivid eyewitness account that a person who was there can write.

If a non-fiction magazine piece is any good, the person who wrote it knows more than is on the page. I don't mean that he's holding anything back but that in order to write what he wrote he has to know more than just that one example he used. Sometimes I read stories written about something I know about and I think, "That guy has only one example for each thing he's trying to show. He's used it all." And, as it turns out, he may have had the wrong example so he made the wrong judgments. If the reporting is only one anecdote deep, then it usually isn't a very good story. And the editor simply has no way of knowing those other things. That's why I can write differently about New York, or New Orleans, or Kansas City, or Atlanta; I'm more than one anecdote deep in any subject there. I know that if I say somebody said something in the French Quarter, I've talked to three hundred people in the French Quarter over the years and I know that his remark is typical. I know the context.

Alice: So far, we've been talking only about *New Yorker* pieces. Your *Nation* columns are basically humorous. You write those differently. Could you describe that difference?

Calvin: I'm not sure why, but when I write the *Nation* columns and when I've written novels, I skip the first step—the vomit-out—and anyone could find what I've written as a first draft and read it without humiliating me. Maybe the reason I can skip that step is that I don't have to figure out how I'm going to get all the facts into the piece. In the *Nation* columns, for instance, what I begin to write might lead me somewhere else, somewhere I hadn't expected to go, and that's O.K.

In a non-fiction piece, though, you really have to carry around a lot of baggage. You have what happened, your understanding of what happened, what you want to get across about what happened, all kinds of burdens of being fair to whatever sides there are. The facts are terribly restricting. If you don't pay attention to them, there's no reason to write the story at all. The whole point of reporting is that the facts are messy—they never fit in perfectly for the transition. When the "new journalism" made it fashionable to say the fit of the facts didn't make any difference, it was like saying the net didn't make any difference in tennis. There's really no other reason to do non-fiction except to tell what happened as you understand it.

Alice: So your *Nation* columns are your "new journalism" because you get to make everything up.

Calvin: That's right. But getting back to your earlier question about the differences in how I compose pieces that aren't mainly factual, when I write a paragraph of a *Nation* column, I like to pretty much finish it before starting the next one. I still have to do two or three drafts of *Nation* columns, but it's hard for me to explain the difference between the drafts; it's a much less rigid system than that of writing non-fiction. Sometimes it only takes two drafts; sometimes it takes five.

Alice: Russell Baker often gets into his columns by writing the lead over and over again. Once that's right, the whole column grows.

Calvin: That sometimes happens. But then I also find, writing *Nation* columns for instance, that how I end the first paragraph will lead me to the next paragraph or to a whole different thought, and there's no reason

not to go there. I'm not restricted by reality, by fairness, by all sorts of constraints that are present in non-fiction. So if the column goes in a completely different direction than what I expected, it doesn't make any difference. Perhaps the next week I'll write another column in the first direction. So it's a completely different process. As it happens, in the novels I've written, I haven't started with any idea of what the end would be. I don't mean to suggest that this sort of open-ended composing is a perfect system: I have trouble tying up the loose ends. But I let the characters go where they're going to go, a privilege you don't really have with non-fiction because the purpose for writing is different. If you make things up or let your story go where it wants to or change the facts, then you just aren't writing non-fiction anymore.

Ann E. Berthoff

RECOGNITION, REPRESENTATION, AND REVISION

We should not be surprised that our students so often consider revision as a chance to get "it" right the second time around.[1] Despite recent attempts to differentiate editing and rewriting, most English teachers probably continue to instill the idea that revision is like taking another swing at the ball or shooting again for the basket. The idea of revision as correction is, like readability formulas and sentence combining, consonant with a view of language as, merely, a medium for the communication of our views of a reality *out there:* we have ideas and we put them into language. (Sometimes we might get the wrong slot: try again.) Language is often seen as a window which keeps us from enjoying an immediate vision. The pedagogical corollary is that the best we can do is to teach window washing, trying to keep the view of what is "really there" unobstructed by keeping the prose clean and clear. Revision, in this view, is polishing. I argue in the following that we can learn to teach revision as itself a way of composing if we consider it analogous to acts of mind whereby we make sense of the world.

One rainy afternoon last fall I stopped by to browse among some miscellaneous journals in the gaudy reading room of a graduate school library where, as it turned out, I witnessed a basic writer at work. He sat in a low-slung, purple velour settee, a pad of lined paper on his knee, a nice new yellow pencil and a pack of cigarettes at the ready, and a Dixie Cup of coffee to hand. He seemed prepared for the labors of composition. He would write a sentence or two, light a cigarette, read what he had written, sip his coffee, extinguish the cigarette—and the two sentences. He had pretty much worn out the eraser by the time I left. (That would be an

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[1] This finding is reported by Susan V. Wall and Anthony R. Petrosky in "Freshman Writers and Revision: Results from a Survey," *Journal of Basic Writing,* 3 (Fall/Winter 1981).

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interesting research index: how long does the eraser last, if it is not bitten off in momentary despair?) My eyes glazed more quickly than usual as I leafed through *Research in the Teaching of English* because my mind was otherwise engaged in formulating what I would have said to this earnest graduate student, if I had had the nerve. Something like this:

> You need to get some writing down on paper and to keep it there long enough so that you can give yourself the treat of rewriting. What you need is a ball point pen so you can't erase and some cheap paper so you can deliberately use a lot of it—and one very expensive sheet of creamy foolscap for your inventory of glosses: it's a sensuous pleasure to write on a beautiful surface after you've been scratching away on canary pads. But wait a minute! Where are your notes to yourself? Where are your lists? Where are your points of departure? Where are your leads? Where is your lexicon? Where are your quoted passages? Where is your chaos? Nothing comes of nothing! Here you are in this spaceship pod of a chair, this womb, with essentials like coffee and cigarettes, but without the essential essential—language! How can you know what you think until you hear what you say? see what you've written?

I think it is instructive to consider how the "writing behaviors" of this graduate student resemble those of our basic writers. There is, of course, a difference: whereas the graduate cannot get beyond the compulsive readjustment of the (doubtless) insubstantial and formless generalization he has begun with, our students hate even to start—for a dozen reasons which have been carefully formulated and studied in recent years—and once they do have something down, they are loath to touch it: those few words are hard-won and therefore precious, not to be tampered with. The graduate destroys by re-statement because he does not know how to get the dialectic going; the undergraduate cannot conceive of adjustment or development because his fragile construct might collapse. But insofar as neither knows how to make language serve the active mind, they both are basic writers: they do not understand rewriting because they do not understand how writing gets written in the first place.

My tendentious claim is that the same is often true also of their teachers: revision is poorly taught, or is not taught at all, because composition teachers and composition textbook authors often do not know how writing gets written. Without a substantial understanding of composing as a dialectical process in which the *what* and the *how* continually inform one another—a non-linear process motivated by both feedback and what I. A. Richards calls "feedforward"—there will be no way for teachers to differentiate between revision and editing, no way to

teach revision not as a definite phase, a penultimate stage, but as a dimension of composing. Revision is, indeed, re-seeing and it goes on continually in the composing process.

There is, of course, a great deal of talk currently about "the composing process," but there are very few pedagogies which are consonant with the kind of process composing actually is. I have elsewhere discussed the reasons for this state of affairs: current rhetorical theory has provided little guidance for our classroom practice because it has no philosophically sound way of accounting for how words work.[2] There is no understanding in current rhetorical theory that in composing everything has to happen at once or it does not happen at all. If there is not something to think about, if there are not ideas to think *with,* if language is not in action, if the mind is not actively engaged, no meanings can be made. The pedagogical challenge is to help students take advantage of *atonceness,* to see it as a resource, not the mother of dilemmas.

The linear sequence by which "the composing process" is commonly represented—prewriting, writing, rewriting—is antithetical to the "audit of meaning," I.A. Richards' term for dialectic. Instead of atonceness, it suggests that there is a non-reversible order, a sequence of activities which unfold in a predetermined manner. The inter-relationships of the triad are obscure; the notion, for instance, that pre and re have anything to do with one another, logically or psychologically, seems unheard of. If prewriting is, in many instances, presented as a matter of amassing the slottables, rewriting is considered a matter of checking out what has been slotted. "Think of what you want to say" in prewriting is matched by such instructions as these for rewriting: "Go back over what you have written. Are there any unnecessary words? Does everything you say refer to your thesis? Is your main point at the end of the paragraph? Are there any mechanical errors?" These questions are only transformations of the old imperatives: "Do not use unnecessary words. Assure that all statements support your thesis. Avoid mechanical errors." Get law and order. Plant a tree. Love your mother. People who have done a lot of writing themselves frequently consider it a self-evidently sensible thing to teach the use of this kind of checklist to inexperienced writers. What they leave out of account is that the experienced writer has criteria which are brought into play by asking such questions: that's what it means to have "experience."

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[2]See *The Making of Meaning: Metaphors, Models and Maxims for Writing Teachers* (Montclair, N.J.: Boynton/Cook, 1981).

I think it is fair to say that the linear model of composing as prewriting, writing, rewriting fosters a pedagogy of exhortation. Now, if we are to undertake to teach composing as a dialectical process of which revision is not a stage but a dimension, how can we prevent what was earlier described, the write—erase—write again—erase it all syndrome? The short answer is, as I have noted, to teach students to take advantage of the atonceness of composing, to assure that they continually rediscover how forming, thinking, and writing can be simultaneous and correlative activities. Beginning writers need the experience of seeing how it is that consciousness of the *what* leads to understanding the *how*. This is what Paulo Freire means by "conscientization," the chief principle of his "pedagogy of knowing."[3] If a pedagogy of knowing is to be the successor to the pedagogy of exhortation, we will need as models of knowing those acts of mind which are logically and psychologically analogous to writing, namely, perception and concept formation.

Taking perception as a model for writing lets us exploit the ancient wisdom that seeing and knowing are radically alike. Our word *idea* derives from the Greek *oida* which meant both *I have seen* and *I know*. The eye is not a passive recorder; Ruskin's notion of "the innocent eye" has been superseded by that of "the intelligent eye."[4] When we see, we compose. Rudolf Arnheim lists as the operations involved in visual perception the following: "Active exploration, selection, grasping of essentials, simplification, abstraction, analysis and synthesis, completion, correction, comparison, problem-solving, as well as combining, separating, putting in context."[5] Is there any aspect of the composing process not represented in that list?

From Arnheim, E. H. Gombrich, R. L. Gregory and other philoso-

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[3]Paulo Freire, "The Adult Literacy Process as Cultural Action for Freedom," *Harvard Educational Review,* 40 (1970), 217. Both Freire and Richards argue the importance of the learner's consciousness of his learning. It is the very opposite of the commonly held principle of letting well enough alone: if students can do something easily, naturally, why bother telling them how they do it? Conscientization does not depend on a teacher "telling" students what they are doing; Freire rejects this digestive theory of education. Richards comments, in *Design for Escape* (N. Y.: Harcourt, 1968), p. 111, that what learners need are *"assisted invitations*...to find out just what they are trying to do and thereby how to do it." I have used "assisted invitations" as a name for the exercises in my textbook, *Forming/ Thinking/ Writing* (Rochelle Park, N. J: Hayden, 1978).

[4]Richard Coe brought to my attention the fascinating book with this title by R. L. Gregory (N. Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1970). Coe's textbook, *Form and Substance* (N. Y.: Wiley, 1981), is one of the few which present perception as profoundly conceptual, as an act of mind.

[5]Rudolf Arnheim, *Visual Thinking* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1969), p. 13.

phers and scientists, we can learn that perception involves matching and re-ordering, from the molecular level on up: *Vision* is through and through a matter of *revision.* Indeed, seeing is actually contingent on re-seeing. To clarify this fascinating fact, I have students read Owen Barfield's explanation of how it is that cognition depends on recognition. He asks the reader to suppose that

> he is standing in the midst of a normal and familiar environment... when suddenly he is deprived by some supernatural stroke of every vestige of memory—and not only of memory, but also of all those assimilated, forgotten experiences which comprise his power of recognition. He is asked to assume that, in spite of this, he still retains the full measure of his cognitive faculty as an adult. It will appear, I think, that for the first few moments his consciousness—if it can bear that name—will be deprived not merely of all thought, but even of all perception. It is not merely that he will be unable to realize that that square, red and white object is a "house"...; he will not even be able to see it *as* a square, red and white object.[6]

Seeing the point, my students speak of "Barfield's meaningless man." We can make meaning because we see in terms of what we have seen. Without remembered forms to see *with,* we would not see at all. Seeing is thus the primal analogizing in which thinking has its origin.

Now these philosophical principles of perception—seeing is knowing, seeing is contingent on re-seeing, the intelligent eye forms by analogizing —provide the foundation for a pedagogy of knowing. How can we use what we can learn about perception in order to make observation not a preliminary exercise but a model of the composing process?

The atonceness of composing is well-represented by looking and writing in tandem. Since learning to record observations has a self-evident usefulness for everybody from nuclear physicists to nurses, from parents to doctors, and since observing our observations *requires* language, assignments which involve looking and looking again can rationally involve writing and writing again. Exercises which make recording and commenting correlative and virtually simultaneous have an authenticity which is unusual in composition assignments. One procedure which helps writers enact revision as a mode of composing is what I call a dialectical notebook: notes, lists, statements, critical responses, queries of all sorts

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[6]Owen Barfield, *Poetic Diction* (1928; rpt. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), p. 56. This passage appears, along with others from works by Gombrich, Ogden, Burke, *inter alia,* in Part I of *Forming/ Thinking/ Writing.*

are written on one side; notes on these notes, responses to these responses are written on the facing page. The inner dialogue which is thinking is thus represented as a dialectic, the beginning of thinking about thinking. This double-entry journal encourages a habit which is of immediate usefulness, since this format is the best there is for taking notes on lectures and reading. And it is easily adapted to what my colleague Dixie Goswami calls a "speculative draft," a procedure for writing papers which allows students to take advantage of atonceness by keeping notes and queries, formulations and re-formulations in continual dialogue on facing pages.

The dialectical notebook teaches the value of keeping things tentative. Without that sense, the atonceness of composing is dangerous knowledge that can cause a severe case of writer's block. Unless students prove to themselves the usefulness of tentativeness, no amount of exhortation will persuade them to forego "closure," in the current jargon. The willingness to generate chaos; patience in testing a formulation against the record; careful comparing of proto-statements and half-statements, completed statements and re-statements: these are all expressions of what Keats famously called "negative capability," the capacity to remain in doubt. The story is told of a professor of internal medicine who brought home to his students the value of this attitude in diagnosis with the slogan: "Don't just DO something: Stand there!"

Along with the value of tentativeness, practice in observation teaches the importance of perspective and context, which become ideas to think *with* as students practice observing natural objects, for instance, and observing their observations. A shell or pebble on the beach has one kind of appearance; if you bring it home, it has another. Such facts call for recognition, formulation, and articulation. In the practice of looking and looking again, of writing and writing again, as students learn to compare kinds of appearances, they are also learning that perception depends on presuppositions, remembrances, anticipations, purposes, and so on. In my own teaching, I hand out weeds and grasses, seeds and bones because natural forms are themselves compositions, pedagogically useful emblems of historical process. Friends and colleagues have occasionally argued that nature is an alien point of departure and that such an exercise as Ira Shor's examination of the contents of a wastebasket is more likely to engage the attention of basic writers.[7] Detective work or archaeology is

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[7]Ira Shor's *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life* (Boston: South End Press, 1980) is a thoughtful adaptation of Freire to the Open Admission composition classroom. See especially "Re-Experiencing the Ordinary" and "Learning How to Learn." George Hillocks, in his NCTE pamphlet, *Observing and Writing,* offers some excellent suggestions which keep interpretation at the center.

certainly as useful a metaphor for interpretation as nature study: the point is to make the transformation of the familiar to the strange and the strange to the familiar an exemplification of what goes on in all interpretation; to foreground the process of "reading," of construing, of making sense of whatever is under observation, from different perspectives, in different contexts.

Freire shows us how. The peasants in his culture circles, who are learning *how* they make meaning and *that* they make meaning simultaneously with learning to recognize words and sounds, study pictures depicting familiar scenes, reading them as texts, translating and interpreting them and interpreting their interpretations in dialogue.[8] What Freire calls "problematizing the existential situation" is a critical act of mind by which historical contexts for objects and pictures are developed: careful observation of what is depicted works together with the interpretation of its significance. Perception thus provides the point of departure for a pedagogy of knowing because it is through and through conceptual.

Problematic symbols and problem-posing pictures at one end; organic structures in the middle; at the other end, abstract designs and diagrams which we can ask students to observe, translating in the process from pictorial to verbal language. I. A. Richards, in a valuable essay called "Learning and Looking," suggests just how challenging that translation can be.[9] He is ostensibly discussing the problems of literacy training in societies in which depiction is not thought of as representational, but in the course of demonstrating how "reading" certain diagrams exercises the translation-transformation capacity necessary for handling the graphic code, he does much more. For one thing, he shows how comparing depends on the principle of opposition, which is essential to all critical inquiry into "what varies with what while the rest is treated as remaining constant." Even more important, he provides a superb demonstration of how perspective and context function heuristically. Careful looking and experimental translation teach the observer to use oppositions to limit the range of choices. Just as learning to keep things tentative is an all-important support structure for the concept of the atonceness of composing, so learning the use of limits is essential if beginning writers are to understand that composing necessarily involves choosing. Limits are their means of defining and controlling choices; unless we teach the

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[8] An explanation of this procedure, together with a sequence of pictures, can be found in Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (N. Y.: Seabury Press, 1973). These passages are reprinted in *The Making of Meaning*, pp. 159-73.

[9] *Design for Escape*, pp. 93-124.

function of limits, no amount of exhortation will persuade our students to tolerate the risks which revision entails.

By keeping looking and writing together, we can teach revision as analogous to recognition in perception. If we can keep thinking and writing together, our students can learn how revision is analogous to the representation which language makes possible. Language has, of course, an indicative function, but it is its power to represent our interpretations of experience which is vital for a pedagogy of knowing. No thinking—no composing—could happen if we had no means of stabilizing images of what we have seen, of recalling them as forms to think about and to think *with*. Language is our means of *re*presenting images as forms: *forming* is our means of seeing relationships from one or another perspective and in different contexts.

Writing teachers have not, generally speaking, taken advantage of this power of language and mind—it was once called *imagination*—because linguistics, as institutionalized by current rhetorical theory, has no way of accounting for it. The conventional notion of thinking finds no room for the dialectic which language makes possible. It is based, rather, on the dichotomy of induction/deduction: either, it is thought, we go from "the data"[10] to one or another principle, or we go from "high level abstractions"[11] to the substantiating particulars. *Forming* is, I think, the working concept we need in order to benefit from the fact that everything that happens when we think, when we form concepts, has an analogue in the composing process. Consider the following passages, the first, Lev Vygotsky's formulation of the dialectical character of concept formation; the second, I. A. Richards' characterization of what goes on when we compose.

> When the process of concept formation is seen in all its complexity, it appears as a movement of thought constantly alternating between two directions, from the particular to the general, and from the general to the particular.[12]

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[10]The superscripts would be question marks in I. A. Richards' "Meta-semantic Markers," a signal indicating a highly problematic term. Nothing is given to us but a formless *Firstness,* in Peirce's terms.

[11]The positivist "Ladder of Abstraction," promulgated by the general semanticists, is a muddle indeed, since it is not *abstraction* which is hierarchical but *generalization.*

[12]Lev Vygotsky, *Thought and Language,* tr. Eugenia Hanfmann and Gertrude Vakar (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1962), p. 80.

> Composition is the supplying at the right time and place of whatever the developing meaning then and there requires. It is the cooperation with the rest in preparing for what is to come and completing what has preceded. It is more than this, though; it is the exploration of what is to come and of how it should be prepared for, and it is the further examination of what has preceded and of how it may be amended and completed.[13]

The logical ground for the analogy of thinking and writing is *forming*—seeing relationships, recognizing and representing them. Understanding that principle can show us how to start with thinking and writing together, and if we start with them together we will be more likely to keep them together. The way to bridge from so-called personal writing to so-called expository writing, from creative to critical writing, and, I will argue, from writing to re-writing is not to allow a separation in the first place. I want to concentrate now on one particular implication for classroom practice and course design of the premise that thinking and writing involve us in *seeing relationships:* how that can help us to teach revision not as a definite phase but as a dimension of the composing process.

From the idea that composing is a matter of seeing relationships, we might profitably conclude that at the pedagogical center of any composition course there should be not the grammatical unit of the sentence but the rhetorical unit of the paragraph.[14] Cognition depends on recognition; the presence of experience is mediated by the representation of language; sentences depend on how they relate to other sentences. It is therefore easier to construe several sentences than it is one. The writer as reviser is a writer reading. Reading a paragraph, he has many points of entry; if he does not see a relationship as he starts to read, he might catch hold of another as he goes on. He can then re-read and apprehend the earlier sentence. Because it articulates a structure of relationships, the paragraph provides a more appropriate focus for learning revision than the single sentence does. Apprehending the logical and rhetorical relationships of sentences in a paragraph is analogous to perception and

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[13] I. A. Richards, *So Much Nearer* (N. Y.: Harcourt, 1960), pp. 119-20.

[14] I agree with those who argue that the paragraph is a rhetorical convention and that a single sentence may constitute a paragraph. See "The Logic and Rhetoric of Paragraphs," *Forming/ Thinking/ Writing,* pp. 155-73. For the time being, I use the term to mean a sentence sequence which displays logical coherence.

concept formation in a way that apprehending those articulated according to grammatical conventions within the sentence is not. That is why Gertrude Stein is right: "So paragraphing is a thing that anyone is enjoying and sentences are less fascinating."

Seeing relationships, as an idea to think with, can help offset the effects of certain theories of learning which, taking motor activity as the model, lead to the idea that because we must walk before we can run, we must therefore study sentences before paragraphs. Surely first things come first, but wherever language is concerned that will always mean that complexity comes before the allegedly simple. That is because meanings are not elements but relationships. It is by virtue of its complexity that the paragraph is simpler to take hold of than the sentence. This kind of paradox is central to the pedagogy of knowing.[15] I do not mean that we ignore sentence structure when we teach revision. My point is that although errors are best identified in isolation, sentences are best revised in context, in the relational terms which the paragraph provides or which the would-be paragraph can be brought to the point of supplying. We are taking advantage of the atonceness of making meaning when we teach our students to compose paragraphs in the course of revising sentences.

Along with the dialectical notebook, "glossing" paragraphs can raise consciousness of the interdependence of saying and intending. I ask students to summarize their paragraphs in oppositional form, to represent in a double phrase in the margin what is being set over against what. Thus identified, the logical structure of the paragraph can be used as an Archimedean point from which to survey the individual sentences. If it is impossible to formulate a gloss, that will tell a student more than exhortatory comments on incoherence ever could. Or it may be that in the process of glossing the student will express a hitherto unspoken intention which the paragraph can use. In that case, the gloss can be revised in sentence form and incorporated. Invention of needed sentences is contingent on recognizing the need; in my opinion, that recognition is inspired not by asking empty questions about what the audience needs to know but by seeing what the paragraph needs to say. To discover logical and rhetorical needs is to discover purpose, a process which is at once more complex and more manageable than trying to ascertain audience needs directly. They, of course, must be hypothesized and considered in

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[15] I have discussed this principle in "Tolstoy, Vygotsky, and the Making of Meaning," *College Composition and Communication,* XXIX (Oct., 1978), 249-55.

conjunction, dialectically, with purposes. But to instruct the student to determine "the audience's needs" is frequently only an updated version of asking him to ask himself "What am I trying to say?" That is not, I think, a heuristically useful inquiry.

A way to encourage students to ask what a paragraph needs—what their argument or explanation or description or narrative needs—is to have them read their own paragraphs (a day or so after they have been written) a sentence at a time with the remaining sentences covered, anticipating at each period what the next sentence will be, will *do,* by writing one in its place. The writer can do this on his own, of course, but it is best done in conference or in company with other readers, dialogue being the best model of dialectic there is. The newly-framed sentence can then be compared with the original sentence, of which it may, of course, be a replica: having two ways of saying to work with, or one way twice, is important in the practice of revision. The choice can be made, then, of which serves better in answering the perhaps newly felt need, but nothing should be thrown away, since the paragraph might well require the old original sentence in a new setting.

Developing a sense of rhetorical and logical form is in large part a matter of anticipating what comes next, of knowing what is needed, recognizing its emergence. That is not a "skill" but a power of mind, and it is exactly comparable to recognition in perception and representation with language. We do not need to teach this power, but we should assure that it is exercised. These simple techniques of paragraph review can serve that purpose because they keep the dialectic of intending and forming lively. Glossing and anticipating can help students see to it that the "what I mean" does not remain an amorphous, ghostly non-presence but is embodied over and over again. To find out if you have said what you meant, you have to know what you mean and the way to determine that is to say "it" again.

Only when a paragraph has been reviewed in the light of its gloss, the various sentences abandoned or re-written, restored and re-ordered according to emerging criteria, is it time to work on sentence correction. Error identification is often tantamount to error correction and, as I have noted, that is best carried out if the sentence can be "heard" in isolation from its support system, the context which makes meaning rather than grammatical structure predominate. The procedure I recommend is to read the paragraph backwards aloud, sentence by sentence—an old proofreader's trick. If the student stumbles or hestitates, that is a sign of recognition and actual re-writing can begin. Nothing will come of this or

any other such procedure, of course, if the student cannot recognize a faulty sentence when he hears one. By assuring that there are occasions for reading good prose closely, carefully, and frequently aloud, we can help our students to develop an "ear" for syntax, like an "ear" for music, to expect the way a sentence will go or can go so that when it goes awry, they can hear the error. The remedy for a deficient "ear" is hearing good prose, and that means that student writing will not be the exclusive "text" in a well-designed composition course.

When it is a simple matter of agreement, pronoun reference, tense consistency, or punctuation (in some cases), there is a cause for grammatical instruction. But sentences which fail because of pleonasm, faulty parallelism, misused idiom or mixed constructions are, generally speaking, a different matter. They will yield to our grammatical analysis or the student's, but that analysis will serve no heuristic function.

Take, for instance, the following sentences:

> The elemental beach and the music of the sea was more preferable than that other summer beach.
> North Carolina is a state where the long straight roads that lead to small quiet places has an unusualally loud bunch of inhabitants.
> I have always seen that as a silver lining behind the cloud.
> Teachers judge the quality of the student's performance much like that of the farmer's grading his beef.

In my opinion, the best way to work with sentences like these is for everybody in a small group, or for both student and tutor in conference, to revise the sentence by means of composing several interpretive paraphrases, using the parent paragraph as a sounding board. Restating, representing is a way to recognize intention: interpreting by means of paraphrase, rather than tinkering with the incorrect sentence as it stands, allows a student to call upon the resources he has for making meaning which are independent of any explicit knowledge of grammatical laws. I do not mean that rhetorical and logical forms are simply "generated": written discourse is not natural in the way that speech, in a social setting, is. (The notion of a Language Acquisition Device is hazardous even as a model of the processes by which we learn language, let alone as a model of a model of how one learns to compose.) I have no faith that well-formed intentions will surface from the deep if only grammarians will step aside. Returning to intention is a hard journey, but it is profitable because of what can be learned on the way about the making of meaning.

Syntactical structures are linguistic forms which find conceptual forms:

making them accessible to our students is one of our chief duties. Kenneth Koch's experiments are important to us all because they remind us of the value of teaching syntactical structures as generative forms rather than as slots to be filled or inert elements to be combined. We can learn from Koch and others how to make syntax itself a heuristic. The procedure I have found most useful is called "persona paraphrase," in which the teacher selects a specific passage, illustrating a particular kind of structure, and requires the student to copy its structure, phrase by phrase, sentence by sentence, substituting completely different subject matter.[16] Kenneth Burke's conception of recalcitrance explains the principle on which persona paraphrase is based: "A statement is an attitude rephrased in accordance with the strategy of revision made necessary by the recalcitrance of the materials employed for embodying this attitude."[17] Insofar as it recognizes the dialectics of recalcitrance, the paradox that complexity is simple, the fact that concept formation is dynamic, the fact that saying and intending inform one another—insofar as persona paraphrase is a technique which can teach revision as a mode of composing, it is the antithesis of sentence combining. This is not surprising. It presupposes a philosophy of language entirely foreign to the conceptions which underlie the manipulations of sentence combining.

Revising at this level in these ways means slowing things down: atonceness always does. Composing a persona paraphrase can take a full hour; composing interpretive paraphrases for a single conceptually faulty sentence can take up the entire class or conference time. It is time well-spent, but there is a very difficult pedagogical challenge in seeing to it that this necessarily slow, deliberate pace is not the only one at which the composition course moves. Others have probably long since discovered the paradox I have been slow to come to, namely, that atonceness requires a double track, if not a triple focus. Students should work independently on a long-term project for which the dialectical notebook is the enabling means of making meaning; they should continually be revising paragraphs with their fellow students; every day, in class or not, they should focus on the analysis and correction of a single sentence. The difference between the 101 section for basic writers, the non-credit course

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[16]Phyllis Brooks, "Mimesis: Grammar and the Echoing Voice," *College English,* 35 (Nov., 1973), 161-68. As Brooks notes, persona paraphrase is highly adaptable. I have described certain uses which my students have made of it in *Forming/ Thinking/ Writing,* pp. 222-26.

[17]Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change* (1935; rpt. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1954), p. 255.

required of graduate students, and the Continuing Education workshops in writing should be a matter not of which elements are included but only of the ratios among them and the pace at which the entire course proceeds.

If we reject the linear model of composing and the pedagogy it legitimates—teaching the allegedly first things first; subskills before skills; the *know how* before the *know what;* walking (sentences) before running (paragraphs)—we will be free to invent courses which are consonant with the idea of the composing process as a continuum of forming. I have been claiming that recognition and representation, as the central operations of perception and concept formation, provide the models of forming which can help us teach revision as a way of composing.

Donald M. Murray

MAKING MEANING CLEAR: THE LOGIC OF REVISION

The writer's meaning rarely arrives by room-service, all neatly laid out on the tray. Meaning is usually discovered and clarified as the writer makes hundreds of small decisions, each one igniting a sequence of consideration and reconsideration.

Revision is not just clarifying meaning, it is discovering meaning and clarifying it while it is being discovered. That makes revision a far more complicated process than is usually thought—and a far simpler process at the same time.

It is complicated because the writer cannot just go to the rule book. Revision is not a matter of correctness, following the directions in a manual. The writer has to go back again and again and again to consider what the writing means and if the writer can accept, document, and communicate that meaning. In other words, writing is not what the writer does after the thinking is done; writing is thinking.

This also makes revision simpler. There is a logic to the process. The writer needs only a draft, a pen, and a brain. Each editorial act must relate to meaning. That is the primary consideration that rules each editorial decision. Considerations of audience, structure, tone, pace, usage, mechanics, typography are primarily decided on one issue: do they make the meaning clear?

The process of revision—what the reviser does—is fairly simple. The writer cuts, adds, reorders, or starts over. Each of these acts fits into a sequence most of the time. The writer solves the problems of meaning, and those solutions make it possible to solve the problems of order, and those solutions make it possible to solve the problems of voice.

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Unfortunately, many teachers—and, I have discovered recently, many newspaper editors—do not understand the logic of revision and, therefore, do not encourage or even allow revision. They pounce on first draft writing and make corrections.

Since most writers have not discovered their meaning in their first draft, the corrections editors make must come from the editors' own preconception of what the writing should mean. It comes from the editors' own experience, their own research, their own prejudices. They work in ignorance of the writer's intentions and take the writing away from the writer.

When editors or teachers kidnap the first draft, they also remove the responsibility for making meaning from the writer. Writing becomes trivialized, unchallenging, unauthoritative, impersonal, unimportant.

Hemingway told us, "Prose is architecture, not interior decoration. . . ." Premature correction by a teacher or an editor must focus mainly on the decoration, the cosmetics of writing. Of course, writers must spell correctly, must follow the conventions of language that make meaning clear. But the writer must do it in relation to the writer's meaning through the medium of the writer's own voice. Writing is too important to be corrected by the book; it must be corrected in relation to meaning.

When revision is encouraged, not as a punishment but as a natural process in the exploration of the text to discover meaning, then many basic writers become motivated to revise. It is a slow but miraculous process. The basic writers spot a hint of meaning that surprises them. Usually the meaning is in a primitive form at the time it is first shared with a teacher or fellow student. Basic writers are urged on. Soon they do not revise to become correct, they revise to discover their individual meaning, to hear their own voices making those meanings clear, and to hear their readers' delight as an unexpected meaning is recognized as true.

The making of meaning through revision is a logical craft. Once a student has made meaning, the process can be repeated. It is not an act of magic anymore than magic acts are; it is a matter of tuning an engine, kneading dough, sewing a dress, building a shelf. The act of revision allows the writer to take something that was not and make it something that is; it allows the writer to achieve the satisfaction of completion, closure.

Revision can be the most satisfying part of teaching composition if the teacher is willing to let go. The composition teacher must wean the student. The teacher must give the responsibility for the text to the writer, making clear again and again that it is the student, not the teacher, who decides what the writing means.

The best way for teachers to reveal exploration in revision is by writing in public on the blackboard, or by using an overhead projector, allowing the students to see how writing struggles to find what it has to say. The teacher should not consciously write badly; the teacher should write as well as possible. That will produce copy that is quite bad enough to deserve revision.

The teacher who writes in public will expose the fact that writing often does not come clear; in fact, syntax often breaks down just at the point where a new or significant meaning is beginning to break out of its shell. That meaning has an awkward and clumsy time of it, but if the writer listens carefully and nurtures the meaning, it may grow into significance. Or it may not. It may have to be put aside. But first it has to be understood before it can be rejected. Teachers who are willing to share evolving writing will find their class willing to share in a workshop where everyone is trying to help the writer discover and clarify the evolving meaning.

I have internalized a checklist that follows the logic of revision. It may be helpful to consider this checklist, but each teacher should work to develop a new checklist with each class. Neither my checklist nor anyone else's checklist should be taken as gospel. The checklist should be formulated while the class experiences the process of making meaning clear.

The principles that underlie my checklist are:

- *Build on strength.* The writer searches the text for the meaning that is being developed by the writing and looks for what is working to make it work better. Revising is not so much a matter of correction as it is a matter of discovering the strength of the text and extending that strength.
- *Cut what can be cut.* An effective piece of writing has a single dominant meaning, and everything in the text must advance that meaning.
- *Simplicity is best.* This does not mean writing in pidgin English, merely sending a telegram to the reader. It does mean making the writing as simple as it can be for what is being said. The message may be complex, and that may require linguistic or rhetorical complexity, but that complexity should always be the simplest way to communicate the complexity.
- *The writing will tell you how to write.* In revising I do not look to rule books, to models from other writers, to what I have written before, or how I have written it. The answers to the problems of this piece of writing lie in the evolving text. I have faith that if I read carefully—if I listen to my own developing voice—I will discover what I have to say.

My checklist requires at least three different kinds of reading—for focus, form and voice. This does not mean that I read the text three times; it is possible that the readings overlap and I read it only a couple of times. Most times I read it many more times. There is no ideal number of readings. I read it enough times to discover what I have to say.

During each of the readings I keep my eye and my ear on the single dominant meaning that is evolving from the text. A good piece of writing, I believe, says only one thing. Or to put it in a different way, the many things that are said in a piece of writing all add up to a single meaning.

Here is my internal checklist articulated:

Focus. First I read the text as fast as possible, trying to keep my pen capped, trying to see it from a distance the way the reader will so I can ask myself the larger questions of content and meaning. I do not do this "first" reading, of course, until I have the meaning of the writing in mind. In other words, I have to have *a* focus before I can work on *the* focus. If, in each stage of the reading, the meaning does not become clearer and clearer, I go back and discover a potential meaning that can be brought into focus. The questions I ask are:

- *What does the piece of writing mean?* If it is not clear, I will take the time to write a sentence that makes the meaning clear, that achieves what Virginia Woolf calls, "the power of combination," that contains the tensions within the piece of writing in a single statement.
- *Are all the reader's questions answered?* Many times I will brainstorm the questions that the reader will inevitably ask of the text.
- *Is new information needed?*
- *Is the piece built on undocumented assumptions?* Sometimes I will actually write down my assumptions to see if they make sense or stand up as a firm foundation for the piece.
- *Is the genre appropriate to the meaning?* One of my novels started out as a series of articles. By genre I mean fiction, poetry, or the larger categories of non-fiction - personal narrative, familiar essay, argument, exposition.
- *Are there any tangents that can be cut loose?* I used to have much more trouble geting rid of those wonderful pieces of evidence or examples of writing that really did not relate to the meaning. Hannah Lees taught me how to solve this problem. For years I wrote one paragraph to a page, then played solitaire with these paragraphs, arranging and re-arranging them until they made a single meaning.
- *Is there a section that should be a separate piece of writing?*
- *Is each point supported by convincing evidence?* Sometimes I actually role-play a reader. It is always a specific person I know who does not

agree with me and who I believe does not like me. I want to confront my enemies and defeat them before the writing is published.

- *Is the piece long enough to satisfy the reader?* Most writers underwrite, and I am no exception. The tendency is to say it and not to give the reader enough room for the reader to discover the meaning.
- *Is the piece short enough to keep the reader involved?* The piece of writing must develop its own energy, its own momentum. If my mind wanders during this first quick reading, the reader's certainly will.

Form. Next, I read the text again, a bit more slowly, only uncapping my pen when a marginal note is necessary, trying to look at the text as a sequence of chunks of writing, perhaps chunks of meaning. I am no longer looking at the text as a whole, although I am aware of the territory now, and I am trying to keep myself free of the concern with detail, for a premature involvement with the details of language may keep me from evaluating the questions of form. The questions I ask are:

- *Is the title on target?* Years ago when I could put my own heads on editorials, I found that the effort to write a title is worth the trouble. I may draft as many as a hundred titles, for each one is a way of discovering meaning, and I can draft a number of titles in almost slivers of time. At this stage of the revision process I check to make sure that the title relates to the meaning as that meaning has now evolved.
- *Does the lead catch the reader in three seconds—or less?* I hear rumors of good pieces of writing that have poor leads or beginnings, but I have not been able to find any from professional writers. The first few lines of a piece of writing establish the tone, the voice, the direction, the pace, the meaning. I check once more to make sure that the lead will entice the reader.
- *Does the lead deliver on its contract with the reader?* The lead must be honest. It must relate to the meaning that will evolve through the text.
- *Does the piece answer the reader's questions at the point the reader will ask them?* This is the key to effective organization. Again and again I will ask the questions the reader will ask, even if they are the questions I do not want the reader to ask, and then number them in the order the reader will ask them. A good piece of writing does not need transitional phrases. The information arrives when the reader can use it. The reader's questions and their order can be anticipated.
- *How can I get out of the way of the reader and show rather than tell?* Orwell instructed writers that they should be like a pane of glass through which the reader sees the subject. I do not want the reader to be impressed with my writing; my arrogance is greater than that. I want the reader to receive the evidence in such a direct fashion that it will cause the

reader to think the way I want the reader to think. I want to show so effectively that the reader will see my meaning as inevitable.

- *Is there an effective variety of documentation?* Most of us fall into a pattern using quotations, citations, anecdotes, statistics, personal experience—whatever we feel comfortable using or whatever we think we do well. The documentation, of course, should be what works best for the point being documented.
- *Does the pace reinforce the meaning?* The reader should be allowed to absorb each point before moving on to the next one. I tend to write and to teach too intensively; I have to remember to give the reader room.
- *Does the pace provide the energy to carry the reader forward?*
- *Are the dimensions appropriate to the meaning?* The size of each section should be in proportion to other sections.
- *Does the end echo the lead and fulfill its promise?*

Voice. At last, I read the text slowly, line by line, my pen uncapped. I usually read the text many times within this category, generally working from the larger issue of voice down to paragraphs to sentences to phrases to single words. This is the most satisfying part of revision. There is a single meaning. It will change and develop and become clearer, but there is a focus, there is an order, and there is the chance to work with language, to combine my voice with the voice that is evolving from the draft. The questions I then ask are:

- *Can the piece be read aloud?* Does it sound as if one person is talking to one person? Reading is a private experience, a human contact from one single person to another single person. I think that effective writing should be conversational. Sometimes the conversation is more formal than others, but it should never be stuffy, pretentious, or incapable of being read aloud by the writer.
- *Are important pieces of specific information at the ends and beginnings of key sentences, paragraphs, sections, and the entire piece itself?* The 2-3-1 principle of emphasis can do as much as anything else to sharpen up prose and make meaning clear: the second most important point of emphasis is at the beginning; the least important piece of emphasis is at the middle, and the greatest point of emphasis is at the end.
- *Does each paragraph make one point?*
- *Does each paragraph carry a full load of meaning to the reader?*
- *Do the paragraphs vary in length in relation to meaning—the shorter the more important the information?*
- *Are the paragraphs in order?* If the reader's questions are answered when they will be asked, formal transitions will not be needed.
- *Does the reader leave each sentence with more information than the reader entered it?*

- *Are there sentences that announce what will be said or sum up what has been said and, therefore, can be cut?*
- *Are most sentences subject-verb-object sentences?* At least most sentences that carry the essence of meaning should be direct sentences. The interesting work done in sentence-combining has too often confused this issue. Of course sentences should be combined, but the strength and vigor of the language still lies in simple, direct subject-verb-object sentences. These are the sentences, short and to the point, that will communicate.
- *Are there clauses that get in the way of meaning?* Many sentences have to be reordered so that the meaning comes clear. This usually means that sentences have to be read aloud again and again until the information in the sentence appears at the moment that the reader can use it.
- *Are the verbs active and strong enough to drive the meaning forward?* The verbs are the engines of meaning, and during revision the writer must give priority to finding verbs that are accurate and provide energy.
- *Has the right word been found?* Many times we try to use two almost right words in the hope that we will trap the meaning between them. That does not work. Mark Twain said, "The difference between the right word and the almost-right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning-bug." He was right. Revision is the search for the exactly right word.
- *Does the meaning depend on verbs and nouns, not adverbs and adjectives?* The right word is rarely an adjective or an adverb. Again, the meaning is not caught best in the crush between adjective and noun, or adverb and verb. I always feel a tiny sense of failure when I use an adjective or an adverb. I have failed to find the right noun or the right verb.
- *Is there sexist or racist language that should be changed?*
- *Can the writing be more specific?*
- *Are there unnecessary* -lys, -ings, thats, *and* woulds *that should be cut?* Each writer must develop a list of linguistic interferences with meaning. I find when I do professional ghost-editing that merely cutting the *-lys,* the *-ings,* the *thats,* the *woulds*—and yes, the unnecessary verb *be*—will make an obscure text start to come clear.
- *Is every fact checked?*
- *Is every word spelled correctly?*
- *Is there anything I can do to make the writing simple? clear? graceful? accurate? fair?*

Do I formally ask all of these questions of myself in every piece of writing I do? Of course not. These concerns are internalized, and they overlap. The process is recursive. I discover meaning by language. I work back and forth from meaning to focus to form to voice and from voice to form to focus to meaning.

The process is, however, logical. Everything on the page must reveal meaning. Every word, every space between words, is put on the page or left on the page because it develops the meaning of the piece of writing.

This checklist cannot be dumped on the beginning or the remedial writer, but it can be used by the teacher to establish priorities. The student has to learn that writing is a search for meaning, and once a potential meaning is found, it may be clarified through the process of revision.

There is a simple guiding logic to revision, and every question of spelling, usage, structure, mechanics, style, content, documentation, voice, pace, development, must be answered in terms of meaning.

Think of a workman who moves in close, measuring, marking, sawing, fitting, standing back to examine the job, moving back in close to plane, chisel, mark and fit, standing back again to study the task, moving in close to nail the piece in place, stepping back for another look, moving in close to set the nails, another step back, another look, then in close to hide the nail holes, to sand, stepping back to make sure the sanding is complete, then in close at last to apply the finish.

Actually the workman probably moved in close many more times before finishing the task and certainly stepped back many times to see the job entire. And so does the writer, working between word and meaning.

What the student can discover is that this process is logical; it can be understood. An effective piece of writing is produced by a craft. It is simply a matter of working back and forth between focus, form, and voice until the meaning is discovered and made clear.

Nancy Sommers

INTENTIONS AND REVISIONS

Outside the writing classroom, the word *revision* suggests a process of change, one of re-seeing and re-conceptualizing. In the writing classroom, however, revision is treated as a non-creative act, a polishing act concerned with taking the linguistic litter out of sentences. Revision in the writing class is as interesting as an autopsy. This is so, I suspect, because in the pre-dominant model of writing—the pre-writing, writing, rewriting model—we have identified prewriting as the creative stage of the composing process. We have reasoned that our students' compositions lack thought; therefore, we need to direct our exercises to the thinking stage of the process: pre-writing. The re-writing stage is taught as the repetition of writing, simply the fine-tuning of what is already there, bringing to perfection the "pre-conceived" product.

But as Kenneth Burke has remarked, "A way of seeing is also a way of not seeing." What we have not seen about the composing process is that although the linear pre-writing, writing, rewriting model might provide a pedagogical convenience by breaking a complex process into a series of discrete temporal stages, it is not an accurate model of how any writer composes. In our haste to discuss the composing process, we have not developed the necessary vocabulary. Rather, we have attempted to fit our interpretation of the composing process to an inadequate vocabulary.

Current research on the composing process suggests that a writer is simultaneously forced into a multiplicity of roles—reader, discoverer, critic—as ideas are selected, evaluated, and organized. Since we cannot tell where one "stage" of the composing process begins or ends, a more

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accurate understanding of the composing process is a recursive one.[1] This simply means that the composing process is characterized by significant recurring patterns and the repetition of the same subprocesses throughout the writing process. Processes, such as revision, occur throughout the writing of a work. Thus, revision is more usefully viewed not as a stage at the end of the process, but rather as a process of making changes—changing the work to make it congruent with a writer's changing intentions.

An important value of a recursive model is that it focuses attention on the connection between a writer's intentions and the writer's revisions. A recursive understanding of the composing process opens up new territory and allows us to ask, as Linda Flower has, what is the relation between the revising process and the planning process that has preceeded it? If revision is making a text congruent with a writer's changing intentions, then to understand the revision process, we need to understand how writers evaluate the extent to which the written text accomplishes their intentions. We need to understand what criteria writers use in planning their texts that they can later use to evaluate whether the text has accomplished what they planned to do.

These issues are important to composition teachers who demand revisions from their students, but who know revision to be one of the most frustrating aspects of teaching composition. Our students' papers come back with some changes—minor word and phrase substitutions, some grammatical constructions either less or more awkward—but often the quality and structure of the students' work either has not improved, or even worse, the revised drafts are inferior to the previous drafts.

For the past three years I have been studying the revision processes of unskilled college freshmen who have had at least one semester of freshmen composition and of skilled adult writers. One conclusion of my work has been that the major difference between unskilled and skilled writers is the way they evaluate and revise their own writing.[2] In this article, I would like to focus attention on two representative writers whom I have studied: Rita, a second semester freshman with a 500 SAT verbal

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[1]See Janet Emig, *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders,* NCTE Research Report No. 13 (Urbana, Illinois : National Council of Teachers of English, 1971); Linda Flower and J.R. Hayes, "The Cognition of Discovery," *CCC,* 30 (February, 1979), 46-49; Ellen Nold, "Revising," unpublished paper; Sondra Perl, "Understanding Composing," *CCC,* 31 (December, 1980), 363-369.

[2]For an extended discussion of this research see Nancy Sommers, "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers," *CCC,* 31 (December, 1980), 378-388.

score, and one semester of freshman composition behind her; and Walter, a published writer, and instructor of expository and creative writing. The writing topic given to Rita and Walter was: "Write an article for *Parent* magazine in which you explain what you believe to be the biggest mistake (or mistakes) parents make in raising their children." In this article, I examine how Rita and Walter revised their introductions because these revisions illustrate not only how Rita and Walter evaluate the extent to which their texts accomplish their intentions, but also the fundamental differences between the revision strategies of unskilled and skilled writers.

Rita

Rita began this writing with little hesitation. She re-read the writing topic a few times and then stated: "Let's see, the biggest mistakes parents make is being domineering parents." She then brainstormed, asking herself, "What do I know about domineering parents?" After five minutes she formalized her thesis statement: "Domineering parents cause their children to become overly dependent on others and lack the ability to develop an individual character or personality."

With her thesis statement formulated, Rita started writing her introductory paragraph. Rita wrote six versions of her introductory paragraph, crossing out the first four versions after she wrote them, and saying, "No, this isn't what I want to say at all." The following are Rita's six versions of her introductory paragraph:

1. "Most parents instinctively want the best for their children. This instinct is the primary basis for the way they raise their children."
2. "Most parents have a general instinct towards their children; they want what's best for them. This instinct is the primary basis for the way parents raise their children. But, of course, not all parents' methods of raising children are the same. Each method coincides with the individual characteristics of the parents."
3. "Most parents have a general instinct towards their children; they want what's best for them. This instinct is the primary basis for the way parents raise their children. But, of course, not all parents use the same methods when raising their children."
4. "Most parents have a general instinct towards their children; they want what's best for them. This instinct is the primary basis for the way parents raise their children. But, of course, all parents have different interpretations of what's best for their children. And these interpretations usually coincide with the characteristics of the individual parents. This leads to numerous categories that parents can fall under. For example, strict parents."
5. "Most parents have a general instinct towards their children; they want

what's best for them. This instinct is the primary basis for the way parents raise their children. But, of course, all parents have different interpretations as to what's best for their children. Some parents can be categorized as extremists. These are the parents who make the mistake of being too lenient, too strict, or too forceful. But the most damaging parental extremists are the domineering parents. They cause their children to become overly dependent upon others and lack the ability to develop an individual character or personality.

6. "Most parents have a general instinct towards their children; they want what is best for them. This instinct is the primary basis for the way parents raise their children. But, of course all parents have different interpretations of what's best for their children. [For example, some parents are the carefree type who feel it's best to stay on an even level with their children throughout their development.] [Then there are the athletic types who believe a happy child is a physically active child.] [More on the negative side] are the parents categorized as extremists. These are the parents who are too strict or too lenient, [too pushy and too passive, and those parents tend to have damaging psychological effects on a child.] The most detrimental extremists are the domineering parents. Children raised by domineering parents are usually overly dependent on others and lack the ability to develop an individual character or personality."

On her fifth attempt, Rita wrote an introductory paragraph that satisfied her enough so that she continued to write the article. As she had been taught, she took the topic sentence for her second and third paragraphs directly from her thesis statement. The topic sentence for her second paragraph was: "A child with domineering parents tends to be overly dependent on others." And the topic sentence for her third paragraph was: "A child raised by domineering parents is also unable to create a unique personality and be an independent being." Even so, with the formula given her, Rita became stuck in the middle of the second and third paragraphs since she needed examples to support her topic sentences. Finally, she became stuck writing the concluding paragraph because she had been taught that "conclusions merely restate introductions, but in different words." She had already had trouble writing her introduction, straining her vocabulary to find adequate synonyms for the phrase "domineering parents." Rita waited ten minutes after finishing her first draft and then rewrote the entire article. Version six is her introductory paragraph for her second draft. The major additions in this final version, compared to version five, are enclosed in brackets.

What were Rita's intentions? She intended to write an article addressing the topic according to the rules she had been taught for essay

writing: formulate a thesis statement, then use words from the thesis statement as keywords in the topic sentences. If she had two elements in her thesis statement, then she would write a four paragraph essay, but better yet, if she could think of three elements in her thesis statement, then she would write a five paragraph essay. From the beginning, Rita was mainly concerned with applying the *rules* she had learned. This is the major reason she became stuck in writing her introductory paragraph. She had to apply the rules carefully to each sentence as it was written. This job, together with the need to direct the evolution of the whole article in the first few sentences, temporarily overwhelmed her. In fact, the first five versions of the introductory paragraph consumed forty minutes—a disproportionate one third of her composing time.

If we compare versions five and six of Rita's introductory paragraph, we see that she made a number of changes. Rita stated that she added the first two bracketed sentences in version six because she had been criticized by her composition teacher on two accounts: first, for writing introductions that were too brief, and second, for not supplying enough examples in her writing. Rita collapsed these two criticisms into the simple rule "more is better" and revised her introduction by giving more examples of parental extremes. When ten independent evaluators judged Rita's two drafts, they judged the revised draft with version six as an introduction to be inferior to the original draft with version five. The evaluators agreed that in the context of the whole essay the revised introduction was inferior because the added examples of carefree parents and athletic parents took Rita farther away from the point she was trying to make. She weakened the force of her introduction by adding a poor transitional phrase, "more on the negative side," and the unnecessary repetitious phrase, "these parents tend to have damaging psychological effects on a child." By pushing too hard to make her writing specific, Rita did just the opposite, and made her introduction less specific. According to the evaluators who judged Rita's essay, in this case, more was *not* better.

This example illustrates one of the major revision strategies of unskilled writers: obeying rules. Unskilled writers understand writing as a set of techniques and follow the rules even when some of them are not appropriate for the specific text they are creating. The problem is that writing is never abstract, but rules always are. Rita's choice and application of a rigid four paragraph essay format can be viewed as an attempt to find comfort in rules applicable to an overall text. *In general, unskilled writers will subordinate the demands of the specific problems of their text to the demands of the rules.* Changes are made in compliance

with abstract rules about the product, in Rita's case, rules that do not apply to the specific problems in her text.

Furthermore, since there is no one rule which governs the writing and revising of an entire text, unskilled writers are stuck with revising word by word, sentence by sentence, rule by rule. The "tyranny of the shoulds" dictates to unskilled writers what they should or should not do when revising. Significantly, Rita occasionally worried when writing her article whether she had written something irrelevant or something that did not connect. These concerns develop for unskilled writers when attention is narrowly focused on rules rather than on referring them to larger goals for the whole piece of writing.

Walter

Walter did not immediately begin writing his introduction with a fully developed thesis statement like Rita did, but rather began by thinking about examples of parents he had known—one set of parents in particular who had four children with wrecked lives, although the parents were among the most respected people in the community. Walter decided to start his article with an anecdote about this family. The following are the introductory paragraphs Walter wrote for drafts one and two of his article:

1. "They lived on Maple Street, in an Upstate New York village, this beautiful family of four. He was a professor of history in the local college, and she was very active in the community, including work with liberal political groups. They had four beautiful children—Anne, Robert, Callie, Meg. [Meg played the cello, Callie the viola, Anne the piano, and Robert played basketball on the high school varsity.] They were a family that looked like it had come directly out of the pages of *The Saturday Evening Post:* Dad puffing on his pipe, Mother thin and attractive, and the four children blonde and beautiful. More than one parent in our village pointed to the Smiths as an example of a happy couple, and a happy family. When things started being less than ideal for the children, we credited it to "bad luck"—the Smiths, that was their name, their being so ideal, had such a hold on our minds we couldn't conceive of problems in their family being anything but the working of cruel fate."

2. "They were a family right out of *The Saturday Evening Post,* this family of six, and in that upstate New York village, they were looked up to, even admired. He was a pipe smoking history professor who talked of liberal politics, of humanism, and of the importance of social commitment —all of course spiced with light irony which we thought he might have picked up at Harvard where he had taken his degree. She was a vigorous,

attractive woman with a very good mind. She was committed and active in the anti-war and anti-proliferation movements and, with another woman, worked four years to fund and establish a half-way house for delinquent boys. Both of them were key members of the Unitarian Fellowship, both vigorously discussed human development—using words from Erickson, from Rollo May, from Carl Rogers—and together they were known in the Village as concerned, loving parents of their four beautiful blonde children. When things started being less than ideal for their children, we credited it to "bad luck." The Smiths, that was their name, had such a hold on our minds that we could hardly conceive of problems with their children being anything but the working of cruel fate."

In the middle of writing his first draft, Walter realized that the central idea that he wanted to express in his article was that many parents allow ideas about child rearing to become substitutes for living mutual relationships. He subsequently realized what he had not originally realized when he wrote the anecdote—that the problem with the Smiths (the family in the opening anecdote) was that their ideas, while all good ideas, created a terrible absence at the heart of the family. Walter realized that the point he wanted to make with the opening anecdote was that the Smith children were raised by clusters of ideas, not by their parents. Although Walter discovered this central idea in the middle of writing his first draft, he decided to push all the way through to the end of the piece before revising the opening anecdote so that he could have some kind of frame or structure to think in terms of for revising.

Walter explained the essential difference between draft one and draft two this way: "I didn't know the idea before I started to write. I knew that these were parents who epitomized what I thought were the major dangers of raising children, but I wasn't sure how they did, or why they did, or even why I really thought so." In writing the introduction of draft one, Walter bracketed the information about the children playing musical instruments, but waited to revise his introduction until he understood the structure of his article. The detail about the children playing musical instruments, which he originally thought would be a "nice bourgeois detail" to add, was rejected when he revised because he realized that he was not trying to make the point that the Smith family was *Saturday Evening Post* quaint (the tone of the anecdote in the first draft), but rather that this was a family who lived in a world of ideas. He added various examples of the Smiths' commitment to liberal ideas and social causes to make the opening anecdote consistent with the specific meaning and structure that emerged in writing the draft. Meaning was not what Walter started out

with, but something he discovered. Revision allowed the meaning of Walter's text, how and why the Smith family epitomized the dangers of raising children, to become clear. This is the recursive aspect of revision, a process which needs constant reference to its ends. As a more detailed understanding of his intention and his meaning emerged, Walter attempted to make his text congruent with his intentions by integrating the parts and the whole.

Walter began with a plan—write from personal experience and put that experience into the form of an anecdote that would provide a context with which both the reader and writer could identify. As Walter attempted to connect his anecdote to the world of his reader, he began to see that the anecdote, which began as a simple example, could be revised to be more effectively integrated with the meaning that emerged, and that, in fact, the anecdote could structure subsequent parts of his article. For Walter, finding a structure was a strategy for finding meaning—structure was both a heuristic and communicative device. Walter found his structure by linking the inner elements of his text and, in so doing, selected and shaped his meaning. For Rita, however, the rules made it impossible for her to discover meaning; her thesis statement was her meaning. What Rita assumed was that the meaning to be communicated was already there, already produced once she formulated her thesis statement, and all that she needed to do was follow a formulaic four or five paragraph essay form and stuff her "meaning" into her paragraphs. For Rita, structure did not develop—it was a given.

Walter used different aspects of his opening anecdote as a cohesive device to make his text hang together, thereby reinforcing his meaning at different points in his article. But, to unskilled writers like Rita, who do not look at the whole text, the cohesive devices which Walter used merely suggest repetition, and repetition is always a negative quality. Rather than exploiting repetition as a strategy for cohesion, unskilled writers follow the rule "never repeat." When unskilled writers see that they have repeated the same word or phrase too often, they eliminate the repetition either by substituting other words or deleting the words. Most important, repetition inspires this sort of revision without any reference to the larger purposes of composition. The unskilled writers reword their sentences to avoid repetition, thus solving the immediate problem, but blinding themselves to the larger conceptual problem, the fact that although they are using different words, they are merely restating the same idea, not developing it.

What we learn from Walter, and from other skilled writers, is that it is impossible to revise a text without understanding of the *purpose* of the

different parts and how they fit with the whole; a writer's sense of the whole writing both precedes and grows out of an examination of the parts. The changes unskilled writers make are made at the great risk of producing revisions inferior to their original drafts. This happens because unskilled writers follow rigid rules—rules which in the abstract no one would disagree with—but without understanding the reasoning behind the rules. Without a sense of what the rules are for, unskilled writers apply them in a consistent way, lacking any sense of the relation of those rules to the larger goals and processes that achieve and, to some extent, define the specific piece of writing.

What we also learn from Walter, and from other skilled writers, is how very important the relation is between discovering a structure and discovering meaning. We tell our students: Be correct! Be concise! Be concrete! But above all: Discover! Yet we rob our students of this important part of the discovery process—this discovery of structure—by forcing them to write formulaic five paragraph essays. We impose rigid structures upon students at the risk of turning out terribly mechanical writing like Rita produced, for a fixed structure often inhibits the discovery of ideas and, therefore, the process of significant revision. If we can teach our students the logic of a paragraph, then we can have the confidence to allow them to discover their own structure to match the meaning of what they have to say. Every student has something to say, but not every student knows how to say whatever she or he has to say in a rigid five paragraph essay complete with topic sentences. What we have not realized in our composition pedagogy is that the structure of an essay is a very sophisticated form of discourse and that there are numerous forms of writing to teach our students besides the formulaic essay.

The problem in teaching writing is that writing is never abstract and rules always are. What is needed is a series of procedures formulated in relation to students' goals that would give students a more specific sense of the purpose of their writing and the means to achieve (and modify) that purpose. The rules we are offered now—and the necessary attention to detail they force us as teachers to take—are so abstract that they are often mistaken for ends in themselves. The rules that we teach in composition classes foster the assumptions that writing and successfully communicated thought are indistinguishable and that this writing or communication of thought is completely separate from the procedures of revision, which simply correct local mistakes, add "style," and seek to find other words. What they encourage is the constant though necessary danger of rules as such: the confusion of ends and means.

Thomas Newkirk

BARRIERS TO REVISION

> *People's problems come not so much from their ignorance as from knowing so many things that aren't so.*
> Josh Billings

If students use invalid criteria to evaluate their evolving texts, the revision process is disrupted. Either they do not see any need to revise, or they revise in ways that do not improve—and may weaken—their texts. In order to uncover some of the inappropriate criteria that college freshmen use, I conducted case studies of two students in a freshman writing course taught by an experienced teaching assistant. I monitored the changes in the composing processes over the eight-week duration of the writing course. Unlike the traditional writing course where students usually receive only written responses to their work, in this course students met once a week with the instructor to discuss problems and possible revisions. Students wrote a three to five page paper each week and were allowed to choose their own topics. A major revision of a piece was counted as a new paper, and students were graded on their best two papers at the end of the course. Thus, the course structure encouraged revision in a way that traditional courses, which often make revision into extra work, do not.

I met individually with the students once a week for thirty minutes to discuss their evaluation of their work, the changes they had made, future plans for revision, and, in general, any problems they had in writing the piece. I will report on two types of problems these students faced—and, to a degree, overcame--in revising their papers.

INVALID CRITERIA

Patti is a forty-year-old housewife, married to an oral surgeon. Aside

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from helping her husband set up his office, she has had extensive experience in marketing research, and interviewing. With this background, I expected a freshman English course to pose little challenge for her. But it turned out to be a difficult eight weeks for Patti as she wrestled with a question that bothers many freshmen—what is the relation of personal knowledge to that given by secondary sources?

This question came to the fore in the third week of class. Patti's first paper had been a humorous account of the many interruptions in her day. Although her instructor had commented favorably on it, she dropped the topic and the personal approach to her topics. Her second paper was on quitting smoking, and the only line which suggested her personal involvement was this:

> Women often smoke to avoid making that final scream of the day.

But in her next paragraph she was back to an impersonal account of the reasons for smoking among young people.

> A favorite speculation often proved true is that adolescents smoke to project an image of assuredness to their peers.

When I asked her how she came to write on this topic, she said she had extensive experience with people and groups involved in ending bad habits. (As it turned out, she had gone through a program that helped her quit smoking.) I asked if she had made a decision to exclude personal experience.

> Yes. I wanted to take the piece out of the realm of personal experience and write about something objectively, that had a broader base, that was a little more sober. I thought the first paper was rather frivolous.

Patti made it clear that she was concerned, even obsessed, with how her audience would react. Yet her sense of the importance of objectivity worked against her. She was caught between conflicting goals of being objective and being interesting, and at this first point in the course was acutely dissatisfied. She admitted in her next conference that her papers were "by and large, dull."

The conference in the third week of the course was pivotal. The instructor convinced Patti to write the paper on smoking from a personal point of view. The result was Patti's best writing of the course. For example, she wrote of her dependency on smoking as follows:

> My whole life clearly was geared to smoking. I would rearrange my errands according to my smoking supply; going there instead of here because the cigarette store was nearby. Smoking only in restaurants where I was comfortable as a smoker. I'd even get huffy when friends who didn't puff preferred me not to smoke in their presence. I'd go outside to smoke. I couldn't even get through a meal without finishing a cigarette for almost every course. I'd wake up with a cigarette. I'd go to bed with a cigarette. It was frightening to realize how addicted I really was. I started to hate myself for being addicted.

Patti grudgingly admitted that she liked the writing in this piece better. She was, she claimed, breaking out of the "Victorian," "high-blown" way that she had been taught. Still there was resistance to the new approach She was worried about supplying too much information, too much detail, going too far. She was also uncomfortable with using "I":

> I really labored not to use "I." And I didn't succeed too much because it was my experience. But I really am trying my level best to write more interestingly.

The major test was yet to come, however. During the fifth week she began her research paper on the stress experienced by dentists. Why did she pick the topic?

> I know a lot of dentists' wives and we talk about stress in dental marriages. If you mingle with [the wives of dentists] at all, you're constantly hearing about this.

Yet when I asked her if she would use any of this personal information in her paper, she claimed that what she knew was "shared experience":

> The shared stories are not that unique. One touches on another and another and another. They all share certain similarities, certain causes, symptoms, and effects.

She would, she said, rely on information from the books she had located, at the same time admitting that the approach might be "dry." Was she worried about being dry?

> I guess I shouldn't be if it's a research thing. But, yes, I guess I am.

As promised, the first draft was almost devoid of the personal observations that in truth formed the basis of the paper. In the conference

on the paper, the instructor pointed out the places where more documentation or support was needed, and assured Patti that she would not need to worry about footnoting this material. One of the spots he pointed out was an unconfirmed generalization stating that the dentist is the victim of a cultural stereotype. Her revision compared the ways doctors are portrayed on shows such as "Marcus Welby" and the way the dentist is portrayed on "The Bob Newhart Show." She concluded with the "ultimate insult" to dentists:

> The ultimate insult occured in the now-classic movie, "Born Yesterday," when Judy Holiday, in a fit of temper shouted, "You...you...you... DENTIST."

In commenting on what she had learned through writing the final piece, Patti made her declaration of independence:

> I have learned, yes, through personal experience and observation about how dentists are regarded and about how the community puts pressure on the dentists or the doctors. That was a bone of contention when writing this. *There are certain things that I have learned.* And I don't have to look them up in research books or textbooks because I've lived it.... At the beginning I kept trying to take things out of the personal. I'm better off writing about something I know personally. Because I can write with more authority and I can write more convincingly. But I was afraid to. I would think, "Well, I know this, who cares, big deal."

At first, Patty's criteria of "objectivity" prevented her from drawing on pertinent personal experience. She construed objectivity to reside in researched information which she felt was solid and valid, and she excluded first-hand experience which she felt was inconsequential, unauthoritative, even common. She also felt personal information and researched information should not be mixed. These misconceptions about the nature of objectivity and the hierarchy and incompatibility of different kinds of information kept her from attempting an analysis of personal experience that she could do authoritatively.

It would be easy to say that prior instruction is to blame for Patti's reluctance to write from personal experience; Patti herself gave that explanation. But there is, I feel, something more fundamental at the root of this hierarchy, some authoritative quality of print. Plato, in his attack on writing in the *Phaedrus,* noted the special quality of written language.

> ...writing involves a similar disadvantage to painting. The productions of

> painting look like living beings, but if you ask them a question they maintain a solemn silence. The same holds true of written words; you might suppose that they understand what they are saying, but if you ask them what they mean by anything, they simply return the same answer over and over again.[1]

Writing, according to Plato, lacks the dynamic quality of the dialogue and for that reason is inferior.

But for students the opposite seems to be true. The very assurance of print intimidates. The fixed quality of print belies the uncertainties that went into its production. Then too, there is the look of print—neat columns, carefully spaced words, binding, copyright date. If the truth is to be discovered, the student reasons, it will look like something printed in a book. Compared to printed texts, all other forms of language, particularly the "shared stories" Patti mentioned, seem hopelessly tentative and unreliable.

There was another area where Patty applied invalid criteria to her text. She chose to leave out pertinent information and detail for fear of boring the reader. While it is possible to bore readers with too much detail, students rarely have this problem. In fact, their prose usually is anemic and underdeveloped. This deficiency is often explained by the inability or unwillingness of the writer to view the text from the point of view of the reader; the writer acts egocentrically and fails to provide information useful and necessary for the reader.

I used to explain holes in the text by egocentricity,but I am now convinced there is often a different reason. A graduate student of mine once asked an eleventh grader what provisions she made for her audience. She answered:

> I usually give less detail and more vague descriptions so I won't bore them.

A college freshman made the same comment on a paper she wrote about an inspiring high school teacher. She notes that the paper does not say all she wanted it to:

> I'd like to mention his patience, how he'd work after school, how he'd go and find you just to talk to you. He was different from other teachers and if I said all that it would just be boring to the reader.

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[1] Plato, *Phaedrus,* Walter Hamilton, translator (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 97.

One of Patti's fears about writing from personal experience is the fear of digression:

> ...in trying to tell all, I found myself digressing too much... I didn't know how to divide the information and how far to go before it became too boring, and too detailed and ridiculous.

Lack of detail then does not arise solely from obliviousness to the audience. It is often the result of a conscious, but misguided attempt, to satisfy the audience.

These writers are applying a rule for conducting conversations to written situations. They are writing for an audience—but an audience of listeners, not readers. Speakers take turns; those who do not recognize when their turn is up are bores. If, for example, you ask me what my grandfather was like, I will try to sum him up in a few sentences:

> He was a German Protestant farmer. I never saw him angry, not in the twenty-five years I knew him. Died at the age of 91.

And that may be all. I have finished within my contracted time. If you want more, you will ask. But if I embark on a long detailed description, you are likely to drift off. I would be providing too much detail, cutting off your opportunities to participate in the conversation, and well on the way to being a bore.

When we ask students for detail and elaboration, we are asking them to violate a rule of conversation, asking them, in fact, to act like conversational bores. The job of the teacher is to convince the student that while it may be a bad thing to "talk like a book," it is not necessarily a bad thing to write like one. The principle of economy which governs selection in conversation runs counter to the economy that governs the setting forth of details in writing.

RESISTANCE TO REVISION

Patti accepted revision as part of the writing process. Although her early revisions often made for little or no improvement, she did not resist the act itself. Anne did.

Anne was a 17 year-old freshman with an SAT verbal score of 550. She considered herself a writer. She would wait for the moment when she was in the right mood, struggle with the opening sentence, and then "it would just come bubbling out" of her.

Interviewer: When it's bubbled out, is it what you want?
Anne: Yes, it's what I want.

She would not subject her writing to any test for accuracy or effectiveness. When I asked her to compare her first paper, a disjointed piece on, ironically, the writing process, with what she had written in high school, she said that she would give her paper on writing an A:

> It's not that it's better. I always write A's. This is almost as if I'm talking aloud, thinking on paper. In all my English courses that's how I carried it through. It always depends on what mood I'm in, but it always comes out good.

It followed, of course, that she did not want to change anything. At times she even asserted that comparisons of quality were impossible. During the third week of the course, she wrote a maudlin piece of fiction about a girl going blind. When I asked her if the paper was better than her earlier ones, she replied:

> I cannot say better. I do not choose that word. Because all of the papers I put myself into, I really put myself into. I can't play one against the other. They are all so real to me, but I've written on other topics and they come out just as good.

She even refused to acknowledge a conscious component in composing. In the blindness paper, she began without a lead preparing the reader. When I asked her if this innovation was a new experiment, she replied:

> No. It depends on my mood. There is no new way or old way of writing for me. It depends on my emotions.

To acknowledge conscious experimentation would have been to admit the possibility of critical judgment. To acknowledge trying a new way of writing would imply dissatisfaction with the old way. Anne simply rejected the premise of my question.

During the third week she expressed, for the first time, uncertainty about her work:

Anne: When I read this paper, I can feel myself into it. I don't know if anyone else can feel themselves into it. I try to write so they will, but I can't tell.

Interviewer: Is this a new concern?

Anne: It's not a real concern because it gets the feeling to me. I mean, I don't want any of my stuff published. *The only problem is, I've got you and Cindi to read these papers and I want to transmit some of the feeling to you.* But if you don't get it, I'm not going to cry over it. I'm just concerned with how I feel.

Anne's real breakthrough came during the fifth week of the course when she wrote about a traumatic experience—the shooting of her mother by her father. The piece began, like Delmore Schwartz's short story, "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities," with Anne in a movie theatre watching a film of the shooting, of her father blocking her mother's car with his, of Anne and her brother running for help, and of hearing the shots while huddled in the bathroom of a nearby house. The accounts of the shooting and the aftermath had none of the maudlin affectations of her piece on blindness.

Her reaction to the piece, clearly her best of the course, was one of dissatisfaction:

> ...there's so much I'm leaving out and there's so much more. I mean we still get letters from him [her father] and there's the trial, one thing after another... And there's so many little things you notice, *but when you sit to type them out they don't have the significance that they had at the moment.*

She sensed the disparity between the experience and the depiction of the experience, and that disparity became the motivating force for revision. I asked if she was still satisfied with her earlier papers:

> I was satisfied with them. There was no great point to them. There was no emotional breakthrough. They were papers. But this, I would like to work at this.

Her plan for revision was to begin with an account of the trial and to flashback to events that led up the trial. It was an ambitious plan, one that she was not able to follow.

The revision, almost an entirely new paper, included the shooting scene but began with the early trouble in the family and ended with current problems her mother is having. The piece opens with the early conflicts between Anne and her father:

> As a little girl, I spent hours crying in the bathroom because of my daddy. He would call me names varying from "princess" to "stupid" or "liar." He would hit me, bruise me in his father/child wrestling games. He would swear and curse my mother one minute, act contrite the next minute, and on the third, he'd be believing the lies with which he excused his behavior. He'd ignore me one minute, cuddle me the next, and then shove me away. It hurt. It always hurt.

The piece ends with the postscript of "till death do us part" which her father adds to all letters he still sends her mother. The only evaluation of the paper that Anne made was a short note on the title page:

> I am still dissatisfied with this because it lacks total honesty. There are some perspectives that I can't or am unable to express concisely on paper.

At the beginning of the course, Anne seemed to be operating under a misconception that I will call "fusion," most clearly illustrated in the story of the Russian peasant who was informed that scientists had determined the exact distance to the stars. That did not surpise the peasant. What he could not figure out was how scientists had learned their names. There was a fusion of word and referent. Young children often show this trait when asked, for example, if a horse could be called a "cow." The child will say, "No, because a horse is a horse." Unless this unity is broken, revision is impossible. If the word carries the essence of the referent, anyone who asks for a revision is challenging the essence of the experience depicted.* Many of us retain vestiges of this primal view of language—our association of our selves with our own names, for instance. But for Anne the fusion extended far beyond names. Her paper on blindness was not simply one possible fictional account, not one alternative among many: for Anne it was blindness itself. Language fused with referent in the same way names fuse with personal identities. In order to revise, Anne had to accept a more flexible view of language and choose among alternative accounts of the same experience.

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*This identification of message with referent was brought home to me during a tutorial with one of my students who had written a glowing profile of his brother. His brother apparently had no faults whatsoever. I suggested, perhaps undiplomatically, that to make the portrait more believable the writer might include something of the foibles or problems his brother had. Much later, on the final evaluation of the course, the student wrote, "Mr. Newkirk is a good teacher, but for some reason he doesn't like my brother."

The wedge was driven when she wrote about the shooting. For the first time, she knew more about her subject than she could comfortably get down in a rush. Her memory was too vivid, and in testing her writing against her memory, the writing was found wanting. Paradoxically, the more details she gave, the more she was aware of excluding detail. The better she wrote, the more dissatisfied she became. Where language before had the capability to evoke "wholes," now it seemed only partial. Perspectives were missing.

The final note is intriguing. On the one hand, it suggests a critical perspective, a willingness to subject her work to judgment that was so lacking in the initial weeks. But there is a loss as well. Now that Anne recognizes that the fit between depiction and experience is not exact, the primitive unity between language and experience has been destroyed. Unless she goes on to develop an appreciation for the art and craft of composing she may never be as satisfied with her writing as she was during the first weeks of the course.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

- The criteria that students use to evaluate their writing are often inappropriate. The teacher must explore in depth the criteria that students use to judge their work. Since misconceptions about objectivity, hierarchy, incompatibility, and economy as criteria may cause the student to exclude pertinent personal information, a major job of the teacher is to help the student retrieve that which has been unwisely excluded, for students will often misunderstand and misapply such injunctions as "Be consistent," "Be objective," "Be concise." The fact that students can name relevant criteria does not mean they understand the contexts in which the criteria operate.
- Revision requires a type of critical reading ability that even students such as Anne and Patti, who are evaluated as good readers, do not possess. If reading (and literature) programs always present students with finished writing, canonized in a textbook, the student will be no more able to understand writing quality than a person who spends all his life on the desert will understand dryness. However, when students are exposed to a *range* of writing in the form of published and student-generated texts, and are asked to make judgments about quality, they learn to make crucial distinctions. I am arguing, in effect, that students need to read more bad (or unfinished) writing.
- The students in these two cases may have learned most when they revised. They confronted problems they might have avoided if a new

paper was due every week. If skill in revising is to be a major goal in a writing course, a revised paper should count as a new paper. Students should be permitted to revise a paper a number of times. Courses which merely allow revision while still requiring assigned weekly papers will probably not provide enough incentive for students to do major revising. Revision will not be seen as an integral part of the process, but as extra credit work. Similarly, courses that limit revision to the reworking of inadequate papers to bring them up to a level of acceptability limit revision to a janitorial function.

- A student's ability to sense and diagnose a problem precedes his or her ability to remedy the problem. Patti, for example, sensed that her writing was dull, but she could not initially pin down the cause and revise her work. Many students who seem to have made little progress in their writing may have made considerable progress in their ability to read critically, but that ability has not yet been made operational when it comes to revision. It follows that the written product itself is only a partial indication of what has been learned in a writing course. As one student put it when asked how she had improved her writing in a writing course, "I don't know if I've improved or not. I have a better idea of what I'm after but I'm still working on how to get it."
- Revision, for beginning writers, seems to proceed most easily in personal writing. Donald Graves has noted this tendency in young children who find it easier to recall their own experiences than the experiences of others.[2] When writers like Anne write from an abundance of information, that very abundance makes options possible. An emphasis on personal writing may seem antithetical to the traditional objectives of required writing courses and to claims that skills in narration and description do not correlate with performance on expository tasks.[3] It may be, however, that the argument about narration-description vs. exposition is being made on the wrong footing. Revision of any writing changes the tempo of learning. In John Dewey's words, revision requires an ability to sustain "an attitude of suspended closure," to test a number of solutions for the same problem, to accept failure and inadequacy as a necessary part of the learning process.

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[2]Donald Graves, "Research Update: What Children Show Us about Revision," *Language Arts*, 56:3 (March, 1979), p. 318.

[3]Andrea Lunsford, "Cognitive Development and the Basic Writer," *College English*, 41:1 (September, 1979), p. 45.

For Anne the change was dramatic. After she attempted the piece on the shooting, not only did her writing change, but her behavior in class changed as well. The change was described by her teacher as follows:

> ...(before this paper) the only time she would say anything was if she *knew* it. She would especially say it so it would be ill-timed like the voice of her early papers... But after she had been in the course a few weeks and especially after she'd written this paper, *she actually began to ask questions.*

Both writing and writer were revised.

Linda S. Flower

REVISING WRITER-BASED PROSE

Experienced writers rework their papers again and again. Novice writers correct the spelling. This paper is about the kind of radical transformations—the "re-visions," restructuring, and seeing anew—that experienced writers are able to make, and how teachers can help students learn the same skills. Mina Shaughnessy showed that when basic writers are encouraged to simply reread their prose, they can learn to spot and correct significant problems (Shaughnessy, 1977). I want to talk about the next level of revision above correction, that is, the kind of revision that reorganizes or restates one's ideas in recognition of the needs of a reader.

Most real world writing situations call for reader-based prose; that is, the writer is asked to adapt what he knows to the rhetorical problem at hand. For example, when a teacher writes a student recommendation, his task is to review the large body of information he has about the person and to select those key features which are both true of the student and important to a prospective employer. In such a letter, the writer is in an unstated contract with the reader, adapting his knowledge to both the reader's needs and his own goals. Because of this contract or because the teacher knows the conventions of recommendation writing based on it, he mentally reviews the student's class participation, late papers, improvement over the term, and so on, and tries to transform that information into a few ideas such as "a responsible person" or "thoughtful critic of her own work."

It would be easier, of course, for the teacher simply to record his mental review of the student and list thoughts as they come: (He started out the term doing flashy theme talk. He did a terrific revision on his last paper,

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but it was downright terrible to start with.) Or he could tell the story of getting to know the student or deciding on his grade for the course. The teacher could do this, but he probably would not. Instead, he would sit at the typewriter, mentally listing ideas, and following out the narrative of his experience, but trying to write an analysis organized around concepts and facts the reader would want to know.

WRITER-BASED PROSE

The distinction I wish to make here is between reader-based prose, which takes the reader into account, and what I call writer-based prose, prose in which the writer is essentially talking to himself. Since the notion of writer-based prose has been discussed at some length elsewhere, let me summarize it here (Flower, 1979). In its narrative and/or survey structure and its elliptical style, writer-based prose reflects the interior monologue of a writer thinking and talking to himself. Its roots lie, no doubt, in the inevitable egocentrism of children and adults. However, let me stress that writer-based prose, which is regularly written by adults of all ages, is not evidence of arrested cognitive development. Children may have no choice, but for adults, writing to oneself is better understood as merely an easier, highly available mode of thought. Reader-based prose is, by contrast, often quite difficult to do. Furthermore, being able to write reader-based prose often means being willing and able to revise—a skill many students lack (Sommers, 1980). For example, if the task is a difficult one such as writing a first or complex letter of recommendation, it is often easier and more efficient to express ideas in the less constrained mode of writer-based prose and then to revise with a reader in mind—if, of course, one knows how to revise for a reader. Writer-based prose, then, is inadequate for the reader, but easier for the writer, and on difficult tasks it can represent an efficient first step in the writing process.

The kind of writer-based prose that appears in both student and business writing has two distinctive features. The first is its egocentric focus, centered on the writer—on what he did, thought, or discovered. Second is its structure. Often this structure is narrative; the organization of ideas reflects the writer's own thought process: we are given, for example, a narrative of the writer at work reviewing his or her first impression of the student, followed by second thoughts, a sudden realization, and so on. An alternative to narrative is a survey structure: the writer simply surveys the information at hand, borrowing whatever structure it may have. For example, our writer could have just gone down his record of paper comments and listed features of the student as they were organized by the record, his information source.

Egocentric narratives and surveys make a lot of sense from a writer's point of view. Psychological studies show they are very economical strategies for remembering and presenting information. We use narratives and surveys to think about the topic, to discover what we know, to explore our own knowledge. However, as writers we must then go one step further and transform or restructure that knowledge of a topic around a goal we share with the reader.

Ideally, we would all write reader-based prose from the beginning, and sometimes we can. Yet for all of us, first drafts often turn out to be more writer-based than we would wish. This, I think, is a normal state of affairs. As a result, a critical skill in writing is learning how to transform writer-based prose into reader-based prose as a part of composing. This means that as teachers we can recognize an inadequate first draft as a major accomplishment—and tell the student so. But at the same time we can show writers how they must then go one step further in order to talk to the reader instead of themselves.

Let me stress that a writer-based draft is not a "stage" we should particularly encourage; it is, rather, a fact of life that we should accept, and help our writers learn to recognize and to move beyond. Obviously, writers should do their initial or global planning with the reader in mind, but integrating the reader into moment by moment decisions during the act of composing is a different matter, especially when this means transforming ideas held in a narrative structure in memory into an issue-centered paragraph on paper. Furthermore, if the writing problem is difficult, such as writing a long complex article or the writer unskilled, it often makes sense to reduce some of the constraints the writer must juggle while composing. Teaching students to revise for readers, as a separate and therefore more serious operation, can then aid the initial composing process and at the same time suggest how important it is to consider the reader overall.

REVISING WRITER-BASED PROSE

One advantage of teaching students to spot their own writer-based prose is that once they see it, they can often revise it. Asking them to transfer some of the well-developed sense of audience they probably have in speech to the task of writing often taps skills students have but do not use when they write in school. It is also our job as teachers to make these good intuitions about writing explicit and teachable. So the rest of this paper will discuss two of the thinking processes or skills which underlie reader-based revising and suggest some practical ways to teach these skills. The first process or principle in reader-based revising is simply

taking the needs of the reader into account. The second is creating an issue-centered organization of ideas based, in part, on those needs.

Taking the Reader into Account

How do writers, in the act of composing, actually deal with their audience? In a recent study, John R. Hayes and I found some striking differences in the way expert and novice writers represented the audience to themselves as they wrote (Flower and Hayes, 1980 a). Having writers compose out loud before a tape recorder—that is, asking them to articulate everything that flows through their minds as they compose—gives us a unique window into the composing process. The transcript of this session, called a composing protocol, contains a rich and detailed record of the ideas and language that entered into the writers' composing process. Although all our writers had the same assignment ("write about your job for the readers of *Seventeen* magazine, thirteen to fourteen-year-old girls"), the expert writers spent much more time than did the novice writers thinking about their audience: what would interest them, what they knew or did not know, how they might respond to the writer's own statements. In the process of writing, the experts developed a rich, detailed image of their reader and her needs. By contrast, the novices created little more than a stick figure: they spent less time thinking about the reader and rarely went beyond conventional features such as "Fourteen-year-old, better keep it simple." This difference in representation is important because writers solve only the problem they represent to themselves. The expert writers constructed for themselves a flesh and blood reader with needs and interests. This rich representation not only allowed them to respond to the real rhetorical situation, but it also helped them generate ideas about their jobs that were appropriate to the assignments. To sum up, the important part of writing for readers is not something as vague as merely feeling empathetic, but it is the concrete, time-consuming task of thinking about those readers and what they need.

It appears that teachers can have a significant impact on the amount of reader-based planning writers do. In working with four groups of subjects from fourth grade through college, for example, Bracewell, Scardamalia, and Bereiter found that by specifying the audience more exactly and creating the possibility of feedback from readers, they could significantly improve the writer's tendency to decenter and to consider the needs of the audience (1978). This suggests that in order to tap higher rhetorical skills, we need to replace vague assignments such as "write for a group of peers" with real rhetorical situations such as "write a feature article for the college paper. The class will play the role of Feature Editor who decides

whether to accept your article, and they will play themselves, a group of students who only read features which offer something they want to know."

Creating realistic assignments with real audiences will sometimes have a powerful effect on the writing of our students, but sometimes it will not. In a recent study comparing expert writers to basic writers in a community college, Marshall Atlas (1979) wanted to see where this problem lay: did the writers simply not understand what the reader needed to know, or did they understand the situation and simply ignore the reader when it came to writing? In this case, the writers all had the same background information about a proposed bus system for handicapped people, and all had to respond to a worried letter from the Handicapped Citizens Group.

The question seemed straightforward: Would the writers simply describe the proposed bus system as it had been described to them? Or would they write to the reader, where writing to the reader meant including certain key ideas found in the briefing information but not in the standard description of the new bus system? In the initial version of the experiment, seventy percent of the expert writers showed they were aware of the readers' worries by including these key ideas, whereas only fifteen percent of the basic writers did. Therefore, Atlas reran the experiment, adding a questionnaire to find out if the basic writers really understood the situation. In this version of the experiment, Atlas found, first of all, that half of the writers did not really understand what their readers wanted—they had not adequately interpreted the letter from the Handicapped Citizens Group. Second, even when the writers had understood the readers' needs, had answered questions about them, and had been encouraged to consider the audience, they still failed to use this knowledge when they actually wrote the letters.

Why do writers who know the reader's needs and have been encouraged to respond to them still fail to do so? This is an important question since it suggests the limits of what teachers can do with good assignments and encouragement. In his study, Atlas suggested that the writers were behaving like students attuned to repeating whatever had been given them and, as a result, were so heavily dependent on the standard description that they failed to include the "extraneous" information found in the briefing. In other words, the writers were using the survey strategy of writer-based prose and were unwilling to deviate from the information being surveyed. However, "unwilling" is, perhaps, the wrong word here. As Scardamalia and others have noted, writing forces people to juggle a number of constraints or demands at the same time (Scardamalia,

1981, Flower and Hayes 1980 b, Nold 1981). When the task is familiar, or the skill well-learned, we can handle multiple demands simultaneously —handwriting, spelling, grammar, syntax, connections between ideas, our rhetorical plan, and even the audience. But for novice writers, producing correct grammar, much less considering the audience, may be an excessive demand. It may, in fact, create what psychologists call a cognitive overload. Therefore, when the writing task is unfamiliar or complex, it makes sense to help beginning writers break up the problem, allowing them to deal with the reader as a special task or independent process, much as Shaughnessy and other teachers have done with editing.

To sum up, the first principle in transforming writer-based prose into reader-based prose is taking the reader into account. However, knowing about the reader is not the same as actively responding to that reader. Creating vivid, realistic assignments centered around a clearly defined "real" reader is a first step in leading students towards reader-based prose, but the second step is actually affecting the writers' composing process; that is, getting writers to respond to that reader actively in the act of writing itself. At the end of this paper, I will suggest some teaching techniques that can help writers do this.

Creating an Issue-Centered Structure of Ideas

The second principle in transforming writer-based prose is transforming a narrative or survey into an issue-centered organization with a hierarchical structure. In practice, this means the writer must first isolate the key points or controlling ideas which will stand at the top level of his or her hierarchy of ideas, just as a topic sentence stands as the most inclusive, top-level idea of a paragraph.

For most writers, being able to isolate, much less articulate, one's own key ideas is no simple task, and that is why working from a writer-based draft with its simple organization can be a good starting point; it lets the writer get ideas down on paper and then ask, "What are the main points I want a reader to remember from my discussion or from this paragraph? If I had to say it all in one sentence, what would I say?" By introducing a reader or listener who wants to hear the main idea, we help students to draw on familiar strategies they use in speaking and to apply them to the task of writing an organized, issue-centered paragraph or paper.

Creating a hierarchically organized piece of writing with its main ideas articulated and developed can be difficult for all of us. So it is important to let students know that even experienced writers go through multiple drafts, not simply correcting errors, but reorganizing ideas and sharpening their focus.

TEACHING REVISION STRATEGIES

There are at least three teaching techniques teachers can use to help students to revise their drafts and to write prose that has a reader in mind. Two principles lie behind these techniques. The first is to help the writer become vividly aware of a real reader with real needs. And the second, to increase the student's repertoire of specific revision techniques, such as writing a draft and then revising it or transforming a narrative to a hierarchical structure.

Strategy 1. Give assignments which specify or have students specify a real-world purpose and a realistic audience. For example, students are often asked to respond to a vague "college theme" assignment, such as, "Write about a sport you like." A real-world assignment might pose a problem such as the following: "The college athletic department is often asked for information and advice on popular sports such as tennis and running, so they have decided to put together a resource book that covers equipment, training, how to find courts, or jogging routes and so forth. Below is a list of the topics they wish to cover. Pick one you know or can find out about and write a brief discussion which is designed to answer the question a person who is new to this sport might ask. Keep in mind that the reader will be using your writing to make a decision on a question, such as, 'What kind of shoe should I buy?' Make your writing useful to your reader." Creating an assignment such as this helps writers evaluate their own writing against some standard more concrete than simply "good" or "well-organized" writing. It helps both writer and reader talk about what a "good organization" would be by setting up a realistic purpose for the finished product.

Strategy 2. Help students set up a mutual goal which both the reader and the writer can share. Earlier in this paper, I reviewed studies which suggested that assignments which specify the audience in some detail sometimes have a dramatic effect on writing, but not always. Knowing about the readers' needs is not always enough; the writer must integrate that knowledge into the process of composing. Getting students to set up a mutual goal, to sketch out such a plan, does this in two ways. First, it encourages writers to actively consider what they want to accomplish by writing the paper, and what readers want to get out of reading it. Then, once the writer has managed to find a mutual goal, such as "Choosing the Best Running Shoe for Your Needs," this idea forms the top-level idea of the writer's hierarchy. It provides the controlling idea around which the writer can organize subordinate ideas and write the paragraph or paper.

Setting up a mutual goal and sticking to it helps the writer integrate an active consideration of the reader into the process of writing and organizing sentences. The exercise below clarifies for students what establishing a mutual goal involves.

EXERCISE

In this assignment, you are to find a mutual goal for your reader and yourself as a writer by working through a writing problem (Flower, 1980). From the writer's point of view, there are two reasons for trying to create this goal. First, it fulfills part of an unwritten contract in which you promise to adapt your knowledge to the reader's needs in return for being read. Second, organizing ideas around a mutual goal is a powerful strategy for motivating readers and making sure they comprehend and remember what you have to say. Imagine the following situation:

> You have just been commissioned to write a short booklet on preserving older homes and buildings, which the City Historical Society wants to distribute throughout an historical section of the city. Most of your readers will simply be residents and local business people. How are you going to get them, first, to read this booklet and, second, to use some of its suggestions?

Consider how you would present your knowledge to these readers. Try to draft a short introductory statement which sets up the framework for your booklet. Consider your goals and your readers' needs as you prepare this statement. Then compare your introductory statement and its mutual goal with the ones below and test them with the criteria which follow.

Examples of Three Introductory Statements

A. This booklet will help you create civic pride and preserve our city's heritage. In addition you will be helping the Historical Society to grow and extend its influence over the city.

B. This is a booklet concerned with civic restoration and maintenance projects in designated historical areas. It discusses the methods and materials approved by the City Historical Society and City Board of Engineers.

C. If you own an older home or historical building, there are a number of ways you can preserve the beauty and historical value of your building. At the same time you can increase its market value and decrease its maintenance costs. This booklet will show you five major ways to improve your building and give you step-by-step procedures for how to

do it. Please read the booklet over and see which of the suggestions might be useful to you.

Criteria for Evaluating a Mutual Goal

A. Will this approach and organization of ideas motivate your audience to read and remember what you have to say? Is your article going to solve some problem your reader faces or achieve some end he or she really cares about? Do not appeal to vague wishy-washy generalizations such as "our heritage," unless they matter. Use your knowledge to fill some need your reader really has. Or think of this as a professional situation: Your reader has ten letters and five reports on her desk this morning. Your mutual goal should tell her why she wants to read your report first and read it carefully.

B. Will your mutual goal increase comprehension? People understand and retain information best when they fix it into a framework they already know. For example, the context of "home repair" and "do-it-yourself" would be familiar and maybe even attractive to your readers. They would find it easy to fit your new ideas into that established framework. By contrast, if you defined the goal as "architectural renovation" or "techniques of historical landmark preservation," you would probably be understood by members of the Historical Society, but you would have missed your primary audience, the local readers. They would probably find that context not only unfamiliar but somewhat intimidating. Offer your readers a context or framework that helps them see your ideas in their terms.

C. Will your mutual goal make something happen? If you want to produce writing that makes something happen, that makes people understand the value of old buildings or even do something to preserve them, you must be clear about what you want the reader to do. Instead of simply setting up a "topic" such as building renovation, a mutual goal organizes your knowledge around something both you and your reader want to do. It helps you to be more purposeful as you write. Is your goal something you and the reader actually want to do?

Strategy 3. Ask students to simulate a reader's response to their own writing. In our studies of the composing process, one thing which has distinguished the expert writers from the basic writers is their ability or tendency to imagine how their reader would respond to what they have just written (Flower and Hayes, 1980 a). In the act of composing and revising, they step out of their own role and test individual sentences by imagining what a reader might say or think.

Below is an example of a writer-based paragraph that needs revision. It combines not only an egocentric focus and a narrative structure, but concludes with a list-like survey of the facts which the writer happened to know about running shoes. Although this survey happens to be structured like a list, such a survey can take any form because it is simply borrowing the structure inherent in the writer's source of information.

Writer-Based Draft

Like many people, I started running two years ago. Running offers recreation and body conditioning at limited expense. The first thing a runner has to do is decide which shoes to buy, but the problem is knowing what to look for. Shoes are the most important part of your equipment so choose them well. First, there are various kinds. Track shoes are lightweight with spikes. Road running flats, however, are sturdy, with ½" to 1" of cushioning. In many shoes the soles are built up with different layers of material. The uppers are made in various ways, some out of leather, some out of nylon reinforced with leather, and the cheapest are made of vinyl. The best combination is nylon with a leather heel cup.The most distinctive thing about running shoes is the raised heel and of course, the stripes. Although some tennis shoes now have stripes, it is important not to confuse them with a real running shoe. All in all, a good running shoe should combine firm foot support with sufficient flexibility.

For example, one could imagine the following sets of responses to the running shoe paragraph:

Writer's Statement	*Reader's Response*
Like many people, I started running two years ago.	So what? And what is important about two years ago?
Running offers recreation and body conditioning at limited expense.	Yawn. That sounds more like a college catalogue course description than something I would do for fun.
The first thing a runner has to do is decide which shoes to buy, but the problem is knowing what to look for. (and so on .....)	Wait a minute, you just told me this was cheap. Why do I have to buy shoes?

From the point of view of a reader who needs to know something, this paragraph raises a lot of questions, such as "How do I finally decide between leather, nylon and vinyl?" and "How do I know 'sufficiently

flexible' when I see it?" Good writers frequently test their writing as they compose, imagining a reader's response to a given word or statement and revising it accordingly. Clearly, the ability to form a sensitive simulation of a reader's response depends in part on the student's ability to read and interpret prose. But for basic writers, classroom practice in simulating responses and in comparing imagined and real responses often serves a basic function of simply creating an awareness that responding readers do exist.

The following revision of the running shoe paragraph has changed in both its organization and its content, but the basis of the revision is not mysterious. The writer has transformed this paragraph by recognizing its writer-based structure and setting up a mutual goal which helps him organize his ideas around an issue in which both he and the reader are interested. Second, he has imagined how a reader might respond to the first draft, the questions he might ask, and has used his knowledge to answer the reader.

Reader-Based Revision

Choosing a Running Shoe

Many people take up running because it is fun to get hot and sweaty and to feel in good shape. But running is only fun if you take care of your feet. Your running shoe will be your most important piece of running equipment, so look for a shoe which both cushions and supports your foot. Track shoes, which are lightweight and flimsy, with spikes for traction in dirt, won't do. Neither will tennis shoes, which are made for balance and quick stops, not steady pounding down the road. A good pair of shoes starts with a thick layered sole, at least ½" to 1" thick. The outer layer absorbs road shock; the inner layer cushions your foot. Another form of cushioning is the slightly elevated heel which prevents strain on the vulnerable Achilles tendon.

The uppers, which will support your foot, come in vinyl, which is cheaper but can cause blisters and hot feet; in leather, which can crack with age; and in a lightweight but more expensive nylon and leather combination. The best nylon and leather shoes will have a thick, fitted leather heel cup which keeps your foot from rolling and prevents twisted ankles. Make sure, however, that your sturdy shoes are still flexible enough that you can bend 90° at the ball of your foot. Although most running shoes have stripes, not all shoes with stripes can give you the cushioning and flexible support you need when you run.

It is clear that what I have been describing exemplifies a high-level form of revision or "re-seeing." When it goes on in our heads before we commit

words to paper, we call it thinking and organizing. When we do it slightly later and on paper, we call it revision. The critical skill here is being able to organize what one knows with a reader in mind. It is this basic thinking process which counts, not the point at which the writer performs it. Even expert writers find that they must often organize information for the reader in stages, partly before they write, partly after they have written a draft. For the basic writer, the process of developing information may be a formidable task of itself, so that separating that task from the process of shaping information for the reader can be a helpful and sometimes necessary simplification. Taken together, the skills of conceptualizing a reader and his needs, establishing a mutual goal, and simulating reader reactions suggests that writing for readers is a complex, high-level skill, but one that teachers can break down into manageable, teachable parts that students can tackle successfully.

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David Rankin

AUDIENCE AND THE COMPOSING PROCESS

I propose to apply the notion of *audience* to the successive stages of the composing process. We know from experience both as writers and teachers that a writer without a sense of audience is hard put to produce his best prose. We also know that although we may speak abstractly of "a composing process," that process moves at different paces for different people and for the same people at different times, and it may not include for everyone the same stages in the same order. We trace this process through stages from invention to copyreading to illustrate its interior logic and to show how we believe it to work in general. We should look at the successive stages of the composition process and ask whether each stage calls for a somewhat different sense of the audience in the mind of the writer.

What has been called "egocentric speech" by Piaget and "expressive speech" by James Britton appears to be the activity that writers perform in the earliest stages of composition. In other words, the audience for our first attempts to generate something to say is, probably, ourselves. This principle is, I believe, fundamental to composition teaching. The inexperienced writer in school is too often and too quickly preoccupied with what is assumed to be the ultimate audience: usually the teacher, imagined as a critic set to correct what is about to be written. Many students have told me that even during prewriting, when they are supposed to let go and record by association everything that comes to a mind exempt from concern about form, they still feel the pedagogic eye peeking over their shoulder. The pathetic beginnings, over and over again, of the same incomplete sentence written by one of Mina Shaughnessy's students are deeply revealing not of a mind with nothing to say but rather of a mind struggling to find immediately the right words, properly ordered, in which to cast the buzzing mental activity that all

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writers experience the moment they try to express themselves. The inexperienced writer is in double jeopardy: his felt inadequacy with the written language is deepened by his self-inflicted pressure to produce at once prose that will satisfy a discerning and critical audience. No easy solution lies to hand. A minimum necessity, however, is that the writer be aware that the beginning of the writing act is tentative and quirky for everyone, veteran and neophyte alike. Otherwise the inventive faculty is stymied, and ideas are frozen in place, usually in closed recesses of the mind.

I want now to apply to each stage of the composing process the idea of *multiple audiences* as a means of reducing writing anxiety. My ideas apply mainly to teaching exposition and argument but are not irrelevant to other kinds of discourse.

Invention. Invention continues, of course, throughout the process, as the mind continually loops back into its earlier yield. Ideas are discovered, rejected, modified, even until the last comma is properly placed and the last misspelled word is corrected. We are accustomed, however, to think of invention as the initial act that generates the essential content of the composition. In activities like note-taking, conversation, daydreaming (even night dreaming), journal writing, heuristic exercises, and free-writing, the mind is acquiring or retrieving information for content. At this point, the writer usually has little more than a subject, a general purpose, and, perhaps, a tentative slant on the material. If the writer also has in mind a foreboding image of an audience that is going to disapprove of what is about to be said, potential content may simply fail to materialize. It is better, therefore, for a writer to ignore the external audience and to urge the mind to uncover everything that might be said on the subject, no matter how outrageous, apparently irrelevant, contradictory, opinionated, ignoble, inaccurate, indefensible, or downright silly. Of course it is true that some people are prevented from recognizing what they would truly think and feel by monitors like belief systems or emotional states that muffle threatening ideas. For those among our students thus blocked, we can do little in our professional capacity. For most of our students, however, we can make practical suggestions to free up the mind. Here is a set of directions appropriate to the stage at which students are brainstorming for ideas about a topic:

First, forget me and all the English teachers in your past. What you are putting on paper is for your eyes only. Your only audience is yourself. Put down everything that comes to mind. Try to discover what you really think and feel about your subject. Don't worry about making good sentences or paragraphs. Don't worry about form at all. If it helps to

imagine a listener for your ideas, imagine someone who understands your subject, shares your interests, and who probably agrees with your ideas or is at least sympathetic to your viewpoint. You might even try to imagine some of that person's reactions. They might suggest additional ideas.

Composing. When writers begin drafting a composition, they are still producing what has been called writer-based prose. Although they are still inventing, they probably begin at this point to move away from egocentric speech toward the ultimate transaction between writer and reader. Depending upon the mode and purpose of the composition, the shift in audience sense will be stronger or weaker. Argument and exposition, one would assume, oblige the writer to consider, or at least begin to consider, reader response, whereas personal and narrative writing may continue to be essentially writer-centered or subject-centered. The experienced and intellectually confident writer may welcome, even need, the imagined presence of an opposing mind to stimulate the production of ideas worthy of consideration. For many students, however, concern with the ultimate audience may still be premature, expecially if the audience is imagined as indifferent or unsympathetic to the writer's message and inclined to criticize its manner of presentation. In a first draft, therefore, students should concentrate on the development, clarity, and sequence of ideas, and not worry about reaction to content or to form and style. They might ask themselves, "Will a reader be able to follow this?" not, "Will a reader approve of my ideas and my English?"

The audience for a first draft, then, is a double audience. The writer is aware of the need to communicate clearly (to himself and to others), but not necessarily to communicate persuasively (to others) or correctly (to others). We can explain that a first draft is an opportunity for the writer to explore ideas in sequence, to continue to probe and test, to find out what might be said, to open mental doors, and to do all of this with knowledge that the communication remains essentially private, although its social consequences are beginning to enter the equation. Once again, we can make practical suggestions:

In a first draft, you are still writing basically to yourself and for yourself. You are trying to develop and connect the ideas you produced in the prewriting stage. The difference is that now you begin to consider whether a reader will understand *what you write. This does not mean that you should try to tune every statement finely, but rather that you should impose order on your prose, think about the meaning of your sentences, and use examples to illustrate or support general points. (However, if a sentence does not come right the first time, don't dawdle over it too long. You can rework it later.) Pay little attention to mechanics and usage, or to*

anything that will impede the flow of thought. A first draft is still exploratory. Write as quickly as you can. Continue to imagine that your audience is likely to approve of what you say, or to be charmed or entertained by it, exactly as it comes out of your head.

Revision. I take revision to be different from editing and copyreading in that in revision the emphasis falls upon the clarity, completeness, organization and impact of content, not upon style and usage. (Considerations of style and usage cannot, of course, be divorced from considerations of clarity, completeness, and impact. But as long as we are breaking the composing process down into manageable tasks, we can delay final concern with style until after the main thinking job has been completed.) During revision, the writer must become aware for the first time of an audience that needs to be persuaded in the case of argument, or more fully informed in the case of exposition, or more richly engaged in the case of narration/description. Writing at this stage becomes a genuinely social act. It becomes reader-based. The writer must consider whether his material is likely to persuade effectively, or at least to demonstrate the main points to an audience that is either uninformed or indifferent or hostile. Revision offers an opportunity to rethink the message, perhaps to concede points (and thus to learn something), and to use tactics for rhetorical impact. By the time a writer finishes revising, he should be fairly satisfied that the audience will understand not only what is being said but also why it is being said. For practical advice to the student, one might say:

Now you must forget yourself and that sympathetic listener you might have been imagining. Try to imagine a reader who is unfamiliar with your subject or who is familiar with it but probably does not share your views. The audience is no longer you but the people you want to bring around to your way of thinking. Try to imagine their arguments or their lack of information. (You may need to do some research.) What additional evidence or information is needed to make your case or to explain your subject? Are your assertions reasonable? Is your presentation logical? What is the best way to start? How should the material be organized for maximum impact? With this audience, you can take nothing for granted. Leave no gaps in the development of your subject. Give honest consideration to viewpoints that differ from yours. Perhaps you will want to modify your position.

Editing. The writer as editor of his own work concentrates on style: word choice, word placement, economy, emphasis in the sentence; in short, polished and forceful presentation of ideas. The writer as copyreader looks after mechanics and usage, and, if relevant, manuscript

form. Both audience and occasion affect the writer's stylistic choices. The writer achieves felicity of expression and appropriateness of tone by consulting on the one hand an internalized aesthetic and on the other a clear view of what the consequences of the communication are expected to be. He imagines a demanding audience, not inclined to forgive imprecision in language or mistakes in register. He realizes that style is not ornamental but central to the complete realization of content. At this point in the composing process, the advice that we give students, especially basic writers, depends upon our estimation of what they can realistically be expected to do. Students with very limited vocabularies and limited experience of the written word cannot be expected to write with stylistic distinction, but they can be made aware of the importance that discerning readers attach to well-written prose. They certainly can be made to understand that style is not mere decoration or "flowery writing," as some students put it. With adjustments to the student's level, the following advice might be given:

Now imagine that your composition will be read by someone who is sensitive to language use. Do your words mean what you intend them to mean? Do they have the right "feel"? Is there a better word to express the idea? Are you using the kind of language that suits your subject, the occasion, your purpose, your audience, and that will help the reader see things your way? Can any of your sentences be stated more concisely? Are there gaps that need to be filled to make the writing more coherent? Have you overwritten in an attempt to impress the reader?

Copyreading. Some very good writers are bad copyreaders of their own work because they literally can no longer see what they have written. No matter how many times they peruse the manuscript, they will not notice that *accomodate* is spelled with one *m*, nor will they spot the missing apostrophe. Professionals have people to do this for them. Students normally do not, so they must be trained to look specifically for errors that will distract the reader's attention from content and, what is worse, erode the reader's confidence in the writer. Most of us, even people who scoff at prescriptivists, are nonetheless careful in our own writing not to offend them. What Miss Snip or Mr. Snap taught us in the sixth grade remains internalized in our writing personalities so profoundly that even some people who do not object particularly to a split infinitive in someone else's work are reflexively incapable of producing or letting one stand in their own.

Students do not always know what is expected. They make errors that are not errors to them. Basic writers are still learning the conventions of the written language. A teacher's insistence on a certain minimum level of

correctness is tied to many considerations: the level and goals of instruction; the needs and temperament of the student; the stage of the course; the purpose of the assignment. Teachers who practice selective marking may overlook some errors while citing others in a particular composition. Our advice to students at this last stage in the process will vary, but the teacher looking for a clean paper might say:

Imagine now that your reader cannot stand errors like [complete your own checklist]. Unfair as it may sound, this reader will not give credit to your ideas unless they are written in correct English. You seek to make your writing socially acceptable *to people who believe that misspelled words and grammatical mistakes reflect careless attitudes and a lack of consideration for the reader.*

The virtue of teaching this concept of different audiences in sequence is that, above all, it puts early emphasis upon the discovery of raw material, moves then to the shaping and expression of content, and only at the end directs the composing (and perhaps composed) mind to problems of surface structure. These categories are not as neat in nature as I have presented them, but then neither is the composing process itself. The scheme is designed not to relieve the student of pressure while composing but rather to spread it out in time through a sequence of tasks, to ration it, so that all of the pressure writers feel is not felt at the outset, when the mind needs to be as freewheeling and active as possible if anything at all worth saying is to have a chance of making itself known.

Irene Lurkis Clark

LISTENING AND WRITING

Successful writers do not simply express thought but transform it in various ways for the needs of the reader. Whereas oral discourse "normally takes place in an actual situation that provides abundant non-linguistic clues to the speaker's intended meaning,"[1] written discourse, by contrast, depends upon supplying a sufficient context for interpretation in the absence of the contextual clues found in ordinary speech, a context which is determined by the conventions of code and audience. This eccentricity of written discourse creates problems which cannot be solved even by the ablest of native speakers without practice and instruction and which often prove insurmountably difficult for students lacking sufficient experience in reading and writing. One method, however, whereby students can learn to focus upon the concept of the audience, a method which has not yet received a great deal of attention, is to provide them with the opportunity of not only reading their own discourse, but of listening to it as well. Listening to their own writing as well as to that of their classmates enables student writers to cultivate a necessary detachment from their own writing and an imaginative attention to audience. Such a technique can benefit college student writers at all levels and is particularly useful to disadvantaged writers, who often experience severe difficulty in establishing an adequately developed context for their written discourse in the absence of actual audience feedback.

Many beginning college writers produce what Linda Flower calls "writer-based prose," which she defines as an "unretouched and

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[1] E.D. Hirsch, *The Philosophy of Composition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 21.

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underprocessed version"[2] of the writer's own thought, and which may be differentiated from "reader-based prose," which presents a deliberate attempt to communicate something to the reader, using a shared language and context between writer and reader. Writer-based prose, familiar to all teachers of composition, is characterized by "the absence of expressed causal relations and the tendency to express ideas without proof or development,"[3] characteristics which Mina Shaughnessy identifies as descriptive of the composition of basic writers. Shaughnessy cites evidence "in Basic Writing papers of the egocentricity of the apprentice writer, an orientation that is reflected in the assumption that the reader understands what is going on in the writer's mind and needs, therefore, no introduction or transitions or explanations."[4] College classrooms at all levels are filled with writers who have not learned to move away from writer-based prose into a public reader-based expression.

Writer-based prose shares many of the features of the egocentric speech used by the developing child. In studying the emerging thought of children, both Vygotsky and Piaget observed a mode of speech which seemed to have little social or communicative function. In Vygotsky's synopsis of Piaget's theory, "In egocentric speech, the child talks only about himself, takes no interest in his interlocutor, does not try to communicate, expects no answers, and often does not care if anyone listens to him."[5] According to Piaget, the child's non-communicative or egocentric speech is a reflection not of selfishness, but of the child's limited ability to assume the point of view of listener.[6] Similarly, one may say that writer-based prose has nothing to do with discourtesy or selfishness but is a reflection of the student's inability to assume the point of view of reader.

Of course, we encourage students to become their own readers and to reformulate discourse by the process of revision. Few writers are capable of finding and formulating their full meaning in a first draft of a discourse, no matter how much time they devote to the prewriting stage.

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[2] Linda Flower, "Writer-based Prose: A Cognitive Basis for Problems in Writing," *College English*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (September, 1979).

[3] Flower, p. 27.

[4] Mina Shaughnessy, *Errors and Expectations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 240.

[5] Lev Semenovitch Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*, trans. Eugenia Hanfmann and Gertrude Vakar (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1962), p. 15.

[6] Herbert Ginsberg and Sylvia Opper, *Piaget's Theory of Intellectual Development* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1969), p. 89.

It is usually during the second stage of the composing process, the revising stage, that meaning clarifies and deepens. However, as all composition teachers know, merely urging students to revise often proves to be of little use, even if we reward revisions with higher grades. Beginning writers, in particular, are often unable to maintain sufficient psychological distance from their own discourse in order to detect when the stated meaning does not match the intended meaning and therefore cannot know when to add, substitute, reorder or restate. This perceptual blindness is particularly acute when students begin rereading their work immediately after they have written a first draft; they fully recall and read into their texts all their unexpressed semantic intentions.

Furthermore, the process of revision imposes an additional difficulty on disadvantaged students in that it requires that they read perceptively, an ability which many college students simply do not have. Skillful revising implies skillful, that is, critical, reading, but unskilled writers are often unskilled readers as well. John Butler points out,

> One thing we know about remedial writers is that most of them are also remedial readers. What is often forgotten... is that such a person is a poor reader not just of essays, stories, poems, and so on, but of his teacher's comments.[7]

To ask them to re-read their own prose for the purpose of revising it is to impose a task that is doubly difficult. Revision for such writers is often merely a "hit and miss" procedure—the correction of a few misspelled words, a half-hearted sprinkling of commas. No real reformation occurs.

Substantive revising can occur, however, through the process of listening, which can take place either in the classroom, during office conferences, or in a listening center located in the writing lab. In a setting which stresses the importance of listening, students can read their drafts aloud to one another and gain the benefit of immediate audience feedback. Comments such as "Wait, I didn't understand that section," or "What do you mean by that?" help students realize that what they intended to say may not actually be written in their early drafts. Moreover, when students gain experience in commenting on one another's work, they acquire greater insight into their own efforts.

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[7]John F. Butler, "Remedial Writers: The Teacher's Job as Corrector of Papers," *College Composition and Communication,* Vol. XXXI, No. 3 (October, 1980), p. 271.

Without being instructed, they learn to regard "readability" or "listenability" as an important criterion in written discourse.

Listening to writing can also take place in the writing lab between tutor and student, with the tutor reading the student's paper aloud to him or the student reading it aloud to the tutor. It can also occur with the use of tape recorders, a method which has been suggested by Jerome Bruner.[8] With this method students read their drafts aloud into the tape recorder and then listen to them, either with or without the written texts before them, or else they trade cassettes with other students. Whichever method one may prefer, the act of reading aloud[9] forces students to move more slowly through their writing, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, enabling them to perceive more readily those errors in punctuation and diction which are due simply to carelessness, and to hear, as well as see, the effects of incoherence and disorganization.

While listening to writing in class, office or lab provides a useful alternative to silent reading for transforming writer-based prose into reader-based prose, one may question whether listening is as reliable a method for evaluating prose as is reading it; whether "listenability," defined as the comparative ease or difficulty of the style of a message in an aural signal for the person listening, equals "readability," defined as that quality of writing that permits a reader to read and understand it readily. This question is difficult to answer in the absence of more research in the area. E.D. Hirsch asserts unequivocally that "listenability and readability are the same,"[10] a position which he bases on two publications on the subject, one by I.E. Fang and the other by T.G. Sticht. Fang has demonstrated that a .96 correlation exists between his listenability test and the Flesch Reading Ease Formula.[11] Sticht's experiments have shown "no differences between reading and listening scores,"[12] within carefully graded groups; that is, Sticht's readability formula (based upon Farr,

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[8]Jerome Bruner, *Toward a Theory of Instruction* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University: Cambridge, Mass., 1966), p. 111 and Patrick Hartwell, "A Writing Laboratory Model," in *Basic Writing: Essays For Teachers, Researchers, Administrators*, ed. Lawrence N. Kasden and Daniel R. Hoeber (NCTE, 1980), p. 69.

[9]For a discussion of the advantages of reading aloud as a means of evaluating writing, see David Bartholmae, "The Study of Error," *College Composition and Communication*, Vol. XXXI, No. 3 (October, 1980), 253-270 and E.D. Hirsch, *The Philosophy of Composition*, p. 162.

[10]Hirsch, p. 94.

[11]I.E. Fang, "The Easy Listening Formula," *Journal of Broadcasting*, II (1966-1977), 63-68.

[12]T.G. Sticht, "Learning by Listening," *Language Comprehension and the Acquisition of Knowledge*, ed. John B. Carroll and Roy O. Freedle (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1972), p. 288.

Jenkins, and Patterson's modification of Flesch's readability levels) appears to have been "appropriate for scaling listenability also."[13]

According to these studies, listening is sufficiently similar to reading; what can be understood with relative ease or difficulty by one method is correspondingly easy or difficult by the other method. It makes sense that this approximate equivalence should hold true. Listening resembles reading in many ways, sharing

> many of the same characteristics... beginning with the prerequisites of attention and memory. Beyond that, both require the acquisition of language—of understanding the system for selecting and sequencing conventionalized signs. Furthermore, it is necessary that these signs be decoded and processed into conceptualizations. That is, auding and reading both imply the recognition and conversion of symbolization into meaningful cognitive content. In addition, both skills rely upon the ability to form discriminations between stimuli (either visual or auditory) and depend on the development of higher order strategies (e.g. chunking) for subsequent improvement. To state it concisely, auding and reading differ primarily in the manner in which the individual receives the stimulus words; they are similar in the sense that they are both receptive communication acts that require a central language and conceptualizing base.[14]

As Walter Kintsch expresses the idea, "the comprehensive process is the same whether a person reads or listens to the text, after the initial perceptual analysis."[15] Given the limits of voice and print, what one understands by reading one can understand by listening.

Reading and listening are not strictly equivalent, however, nor equally effective for all texts or purposes. T.J. Glasser points out that although "readable and listenable are generic, if not somewhat less abstract labels for comprehensible,"[16] in some instances it is conceivable that "readability/listenability formulae may promote clarity at the expense of precision."[17] Similarly, Merton E. Carver, discussing the variables affecting the relative value of reading and hearing the same material,

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[13]Sticht, "Learning By Listening," p. 288.

[14]*Auding and Reading,* p. 70.

[15]Walter Kintsch, "On Comprehending Stories," *Cognitive Processes in Composition,* ed. Marcel Adam Just and Patricia A. Carpenter (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1977). p. 33.

[16]T.L. Glasser, "On Readability and Listenability," *ETC.: A Review of General Semantics,* Vol. 32, No. 2 (1975), 138.

[17]Glasser, p. 140.

maintains that "the effectiveness of auditory presentation tends to vary inversely with the difficulty of the material presented,"[18] a statement with which anyone who has ever attempted to listen to an MLA paper being read aloud can easily agree. An early study by Day and Beach supports this statement, concluding that "the relative effectiveness of the visual presentation increases with the increasing difficulty of the material."[19] It would seem from these studies, taken collectively, that using listening as a revision strategy might work to keep the content of the message relatively simple but not to improve the clarity and effectiveness of its presentation.

Further research is needed to determine the various ways listenability relates to readability. However, when we assert that students can profit from listening to their own prose, we are assuming that all facets of discourse are fundamentally inseparable, that, as James Moffett maintains, "anyone reading or writing necessarily merges all three levels of coding (experience into thought, thought into speech, speech into writing)." Moffett asserts that "reading and writing can progress little further than the limits of their oral base. If a learner cannot understand something said to him, he will probably not comprehend it in a book. If he cannot say something to himself, at least, he will not be able to write it." According to Moffett, "the best way for the receiver to learn to comprehend is to compose. Like any game, you have to play all roles if you wish to compose. A learner needs to practice all roles and relations of the communications structure." Because the skills are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, "people can learn to write by talking, to read by listening, to spell by reading, and so on...It is precisely this fact of transference that justifies integrating all language activities with one another."[20]

The Writing Laboratory Model discussed by Patrick Hartwell in a recent collection of essays concerned with basic writing presents a similarly integrated view of discourse. The assumption in this model is that "the connection between speech and writing occur[s] at the highest level, the level of communication, rather than at the low level of surface features of dialect and written code."[21] Moffett's and Hartwell's models of

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[18] M.E. Carver, "Listening and Reading," *The Psychology of Radio*,ed. H. Cantril and G.W. Allport (New York: Harper, 1935), p. 159.

[19] Willard F. Day and Barbara R. Beach, *"Auditory Versus Visual Presentations,"* Listening: Readings Vol. 1, ed. Sam Duker (New York and London: The Scarecrow Press, 1966), p. 403.

[20] James Moffett and Betty Jane Wagner, *Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading, K-13, second edition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), pp. 10, 31, 15, 44.

[21] Patrick Hartwell, "A Writing Laboratory Model, " p. 66.

discourse, both of which assume the inseparability of reading, speaking writing, and listening, suggest that listening can provide basic or beginning writers with an important aid to revision.

These models provide theoretical justification for the use of listening as a means of revision. One important advantage of the listening option is that many basic writing or beginning students will be significantly more comfortable and/or successful when they listen to writing as opposed to when they read it. This increased success is due to the fact that college students who come to the composition classroom with inadequately developed reading and writing skills, are almost all equipped with habits of speaking and listening which are, by contrast, fairly well established. According to E.B. Huey[22] and others, skill in learning by listening precedes developmentally the acquisition of skill by reading. T.G. Sticht, in a recent work, *Auding and Reading,* notes that "performance on measures of ability to comprehend language by auding will surpass performance on measures of ability to comprehend language by reading during the early years of school,"[23] a time presumably when reading skill is first being learned. Disadvantaged college students, like younger children who have not yet acquired facility in reading, are often ill at ease when they read. Reading for them has not yet become a workable tool which they can use easily when they revise. It is reasonable to suggest, then, that for students, to utilize listening, a skill which they have been using all of their lives, would serve to divest the writing process of some of its inhibiting mystery and threat by returning one part of it, comfortably, to the realm of the familiar.

And, because listening is a skill they can perform easily, many students will prefer to listen rather than to read for the purpose of revision. Research in reading and listening indicates that proficient readers usually prefer to learn by reading rather than by listening and that the converse is true for poorer readers. Moreover, when students are not proficient readers, their ability to listen actually exceeds their ability to read. In an early study by Sticht, the poorer the reader, the greater the preference for listening rather than for reading.[24] A more recent study by Charles A.

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[22]E.B. Huey, *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading* (New York: Macmillan, 1908, republished Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968).

[23]T.G. Sticht, L. Beck, R.H. Hauke, G.M. Kleiman, J.H. James, *Auding and Reading: A Developmental Model* (Arlington, Va: Human Resource Organization, 1974), p. 70.

[24]T.G. Sticht, "Learning by Listening," *Language Comprehension and the Acquisition of Knowledge,* ed. John B. Carroll and Roy O. Freedle (New York: John Wiley and Son, 1972).

Perfetti and Alan M. Lesgold indicates that competent readers were able to recall more of both normal and scrambled texts when they read, as opposed to when they listened, but poorer readers were more successful on both kinds of texts when they listened.[25] Similarly, in Sticht's more recent study, *Auding and Reading,* at the college and adult level, the proportion of comparisons in which reading clearly exceeded auding (A<R) was only .5, suggesting that some college students and adults never achieve superior efficiency in gathering information by looking at print as opposed to listening.[26] Many college students, then, will be more comfortable and successful when they listen to rather than read their own prose for the purpose of revision.

Listening to writing provides other advantages to beginning or basic writers. In addition to helping students to become their own audience and to evaluate their own discourse, it supplements and reinforces the silent reading procedures used in the past. According to Sticht, "the combined visual and auditory presentation of material leads to more efficient comprehension than the presentation of either auditory or visual material alone,"[27] suggesting that listening to writing can only enhance the process of revision for students at all levels. Furthermore, listening to writing can actually improve student reading skills. As Sticht asserts, "training in comprehending by auding of a particular genre (e.g. listening for the main idea) will transfer to reading when the skill is acquired,"[28] which suggests that students who are trained to listen to their own writing will then become more perceptive readers. This transference of comprehension skills is supported by considerable pedagogical research, particularly the studies of Devine (1967, 1968, 1978), Duker (1969), Durrell and Murphy (1953), and Schneeberg (1977).[29] One's ability to listen, then, can enhance one's ability to read, which, in turn, can enhance one's ability to revise,

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[25]Charles A. Perfetti and Alan M. Lesgold, "Individual Differences in Comprehension," *Cognitive Processes in Composition,* ed. Marcel Adam Just and Patricia A. Carpenter (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1977).

[26]*Auding and Reading,* p. 72.

[27]*Auding and Reading,* p. 72.

[28]*Ibid.*

[29]T.G. Devine, "Listening," *Review of Educational Research,* 37 (April, 1967), 153-158; Sam Duker, "Listening and Reading," *Listening: Readings,* ed. Sam Duker (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1971), pp. 68-82; D.D. Durrell and H.A. Murphy, "The Auditory Discrimination Factor in Reading Readiness and Reading Disability," *Education* 73 (1953), 556-560; H. Schneeberg, "Listening While Reading: A Four Year Study," *The Reading Teacher,* 30 (March, 1977), 629-635.

which, finally, has significant implications for the production of coherent discourse.

In evaluating prose by listening, students should focus upon the following five points:

- To determine whether or not the paper contains a main idea, oriented toward a central purpose;
- To evaluate the organization and development;
- To judge the extent to which the supporting details accomplish their purpose; to distinguish among relevant and irrelevant details; to judge whether or not more information is needed to prove the writer's point;
- To judge whether or not the writer has attempted to attract the reader's attention and to hold the reader's interest;
- To determine whether or not the paper is structurally complete.

These five points can be incorporated into a worksheet used for evaluation and self-evaluation. Such a worksheet would contain the following sets of questions for the student to answer, based upon what he has perceived by listening:

1. The purpose of the paper is to prove that...
2. Three main points which support this idea, together with at least two supporting details for each main point.
   A.
      1.
      2.
   B.
      1.
      2.
   C.
      1.
      2.
3. Do all of these details make sense?
   Is more information needed? What? Where does it belong?
4. Name two ways that the writer of the paper has attempted to hold the reader's interest.
   List any words the writer has used which have the effect of creating pictures in the mind.
5. Does the paper contain all of its parts?
   An introduction?
   At least two middle paragraphs?
   A conclusion?
   Does the conclusion support the introduction?

The above worksheet will help to direct the students' attention toward both the overall and supporting structures of the discourse and to enable them to form judgments about whether or not the writer has achieved his semantic intention. As Moffett maintains, "What students need is not information, but awareness of their own egocentricity,...the biggest single cause of problems in comprehension and composition."[30] For beginning writers at all levels, and for basic writing students in particular, listening can become a significant link between the very real abilities students have acquired throughout their lives and the academic skills they have always lacked.

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[30] James Moffett, *Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading*, p. 34.

David Hoddeson

THE REVISER'S VOICES

THEORY

By now it is one of the truisms of our process-conscious times that writing is rewriting. But what if we should ask from where, and out of what, come our originals? Ultimately the answer must be voices, inner and outer voices, in the ways those voices name our perceptions, retrieve our memories, and organize what we often are pleased to call our logical thinking. The only alternative is paraphrase, citation, or interpretation of already-written texts. These uses of prior readings, of course, often play important roles in writing and revision processes, but as we shall see, inner voices intervene even here. To begin with, the revoicing of texts is integral to reading them, let alone to approving others' writings sufficiently to echo or assimilate them into one's own work.[1]

Despite the powerful and irreducible bonds between voice and page, we also know that the relation between the two modes is anything but straightforward. In consequence, the problematic joinings of utterances and texts are, first of all, central to linguistic description and literary criticism, and second, crucial pedagogically. And as to pedagogy, if anything is clear from the evidence in their writings, it is that for many of today's undergraduates, and for basic writers especially, confusion

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[1] For the importance of prior *writings* as new writings' sources, see Roland Barthes' prototypical statement, in *Image-Music-Text* (New York: Farrar Straus, 1977), p. 146, which characteristically defines any text as a "multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash." For a recent overview of the metacritical dispute between "epi-readers" (revoicers of texts) and "graphi-readers" (those who view all texts as text-derivative), see Denis Donaghue, *Ferocious Alphabets* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1981), which surveys structuralist and post-structuralist hermeneutics in order to group the major figures into these two categories.

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concerning speech and print both deface the surface features and distort, stigmatize, and cripple their writings' contents.[2]

To begin with, basic writers display an imperfect ability to turn speech sounds into conventional written signs, and that literally spells trouble—not only in spelling, but in all the rest of the surface feature errors with which they struggle often and long: with faulty mechanics, homonyms, and word confusions; with failures to note the conventional grammatical inflections; with inaccurate word divisions, and all the rest.

More fundamental the inability to invent written *substance*—and that too, stems even from the basic writing students' over-exclusive oral allegiances. It is from oral discourse that many characteristics of their writing derive: their paratactic, disjunct progressions; their overgeneralized and overpersonalized declarations; their roughly-hinged, isolated declamations, and their nonconciliatory, absolute moral announcements. All are as characteristic of speech as they are out of place in academic written discourse.

It is not my thesis here, however, that our students are lost in an oral world or that they are absent from the written one that we, their teachers, inhabit. Rather, we and they all share, to a greater or lesser degree, in the same writer's situation. Oral states are essential and integral to everybody's writing and revision processes, however rudimentary or professional. Speech and text mutually enrich each other, intermingle and revise one another in all writing, and in copy-editing too. For in writing ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, and by this I do not mean the biography of any given writer's progress to maturity, but something far more frequent and replicative, the movement from primary orality to written text as a virtually universal revision process for nearly every piece of writing that we do.[3]

As researchers from Vygotsky to Flower have at least in part suggested, inner and outer speech are our real first drafts.[4] It is through these language modes, not writing, that we nearly always first cast percept, image, sensation and sense-memory into language; it is through inner and

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[2]An extensive if rather unselective bibliography addressing the pedagogical issues accompanies *Exploring Speaking-Writing Relationships: Connections and Contrasts* (Urbana, Il.: NCTE, 1981), pp. 215-33.

[3]For primary and secondary orality, see Walter Ong, "Literacy and Orality in Our Times," *ADE Bulletin,* 58 (1978).

[4]Lev S. Vygotsky, *Thought and Language* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1962), p. 144, and Linda Flower, "Writer-Based Prose: A Cognitive Basis for Problems in Writing," *College English,* 41 (1979) 19-37.

outer speech that we not only name house as house, horse as horse, but also, by the abstraction and transfer of qualities, find our way to describing feeling sad as being blue.[5]

Essentially then, the ability to revise language from the flow of inner and outer voices to the written page, while seemingly a narrow focus, actually embraces not just the art of revision but the entire process of writing—not to mention many of the cognitive acts that lie behind writing. Moreover, a clear awareness of the differences, equivalences and overlaps between spoken and written language clears the way to the written communication of ideas and feelings that are passionately metaphorical, authentic and expressive, lucid and persuasive, or literal and exact, as the writer wishes, and in a very wide range of situations, occasions and forms. Each kind of writing draws its powers from a different plane of consciousness in the progress from inner voice to final "text," metaphor and simile from the deeper substrates where meanings first form themselves, literal and exact texts from the more fixed, habitual and reasoning levels of consciousness, and so on.

Still, the theoretical basis for all that follows is simple enough. It is founded on a perception of the manifold differences between the semiotics of our spoken and written codes. I see those distinctions as so fundamental as virtually to determine, by the existence of their variant cue systems, the divergent conventions and contents that characterize speaking, on the one hand, and writing, on the other. Cultural differences have less to do with these matters, and adjustments to match this semiotic shift have more, than we consciously realize today. In consequence, the overriding considerations for writing and for those who teach writing are not so much Walter Ong's primary and secondary oralities, Hayes' and Flower's writer-vs.-reader-based prose, or Basil Bernstein's restricted and elaborated codes. It is revoicings, to repeat, that always provide writing's materials—and, equally important, those voices must always be recast—revised—to create coherent texts.

To specify a little about spoken-written divergencies: the signifiers of the speaking voice are greater in number, have a wider and more expressive set of registers, and are more frequently redundant in function

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[5]For an explanation of the metaphoric and metonymic poles that this passage illustrates, see Roman Jakobson & Morris Halle, *Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), pp. 67-96. To summarize, Jakobson believes that a) *metaphor,* in which a transfer of qualities is made from one word or phrase to another (feeling sad/being blue), and b) *metonymy,* in which a part stands for the whole (as in word for thing, or, in rhetoric, sail for ship), together create the "two-fold character" that underlies all language's cognitive operations.

than their written equivalents. On the page, the grammar of utterances can only be very partially and schematically rendered, and in consequence, and much like musical scores, written texts present schema merely, notational systems that must not only be revoiced but, in the act of revoicing, interpreted; writing must be *performed* inwardly or publicly in order to be "read."

This is so in part because the cue system in writing is so spare. Concerning language in print, meanings are derived from just three elements: words, syntax and the mechanics of capitalization and punctuation. These three interlocking patterns must somehow provide equivalents for all the semiosis of the human voice, yet voice affords a 700-1 range of volume intensities in normal conversation, and these levels sound all our variants and combinations of breath, pitch, pause, intonation, stress, rate, tone color, timbre, regional accent, and so on. It is by means of voice's rich and overlapping cue clusters that we often instantly recognize mere acquaintances, singling that one voice from thousands, frequently by a simple "hello" on the telephone. The voice contours of strangers, too, almost simultaneously convey many kinds of information: the age, sex, and identity of the speaker; the social class, educational level, and region to which the speaker belongs; the degree of emphasis with which information is being communicated; the speaker's underlying mood. To communicate virtually *any* of this information, writing must do one of the following: deviate more or less obviously from standard usage, make explicit statements, or rely on contexts. Unlike speech, all those methods normally require conscious effort—"revision."

In consequence, relations between speakers and their audiences, and writers and their readers, must differ profoundly. For the shift from voice to text moves us from a scene where there is a comparatively effortless and amiably-shared responsibility for coherence and communicability—the operative norm for speakers, wherein any listener becomes a remarkably efficient, albeit unconscious editor/revisor—to the harsher world where writers are. There, any variation in writing's stricter and sparser code threatens to plunge the reader through the ice-thin surface features of the text, to leave him floundering after meanings in the contexts beneath. Unless the contexts supply with their elaborations whatever is absent, readers ordinarily do not respond kindly.

In sum then, the writer's labors—and the basic writer's troubles—begin when we try to transform speech contours into the abstract notation we call writing, try to trap in writing's abstracted, attenuated web of signifiers what voice so often is so effortlessly and organically able to express. That is why in discursive writing especially (poetry and fiction ordinarily are more explicitly "orchestrated"), we need to focus on exact word choice,

more regular syntaxes, and more organized rhetorical progressions. And written communication's contents also must differ, if only in compensation for what has been lost, by extending spoken discourse's abilities to establish writing's coolly-etched positions, those elaborate panoplies of comparison and illustration and documentation that are our culture's taxonomies and hierarchies and systems, more or less dispassionate-seeming, of kind, order and quality.

What I hope to draw out here is an Ariadne's thread—voice—as it retrieves, often from the frontiers of thought, the materials that become our written work. I have also suggested a few of the ways voice can lead us to shape and reshape all writing. As to the advantages of teaching voices in texts, this is a method that

- allows students to move from language practices they know well to those they fear but need to learn;
- offers a window on internal cognitive processes as they are cast into language;
- externalizes and renders visible revision and editing procedures otherwise inaccessible;
- provides an inclusive rationale for what otherwise might appear arbitrary in the writer's work: the radical pruning, the painstaking reshaping, and the equally extensive elaborations of writing.

DEMONSTRATION

If speech is the source of writing, and if at the same time speech written down is unacceptable as writing, we need to see what written speech looks like. For our pedagogical purposes here, that means raw tape transcriptions.

My first example is randomly chosen, but typical enough of the tape transcriptions I have done over the past several years—Studs Terkel being interviewed. I have followed my invariable transcribing rules with Terkel, choosing the first audible spoken passage of reasonable length on my tape, and transcribing as faithfully as conventional orthography permits and my ear can manage.[6]

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[6]That is, these transcriptions attempt to match the word formation, pause length, and intonational shifts in the individual speaker's delivery. I should emphasize that the punctuation of these passages is not arbitrary: when the speaker fails to use the length of pause and intonation contours that usually mark sentences at what might be grammatically analyzed as sentence boundaries, I attempt to match standard mechanics to *spoken* contours. A comma represents the briefest speech pause, a dash or semi-colon stands for a somewhat longer pause depending on intonation, and a period denotes either a long pause or a steeply falling intonation or a combination of the two. Enjambment, too, mirrors the sounds as produced, as do other similar elisions and all non-lingual noise ("uh/duh").

In this excerpt Terkel has just been asked how he "went off the straight and narrow, and started on this life of crime, talking to people" in order to create books. His response:

> It's not a criminal law it could be criminal, I avoid one thing, trespassing on what might be called the private domain. I like t'ask people about their life, b'the people I talk to mostly, through my other ventures, are the non-celebrated people, the so-called ordinary people y'notice I say so-called, because, every person's different, fact there's an extraordinary quality in every person, it comes out in the language. But that other, party, as Runyon would say the other party, has to recognize that you are interested, not someone from Mount Olympus, you're not someone shoving a mike in front of em asking, are you for or against busing? And the answer is meaningless, unless you know that person's conditions thoughts life, is this detergent that detergent whiter than white same meaning, unless you talk to the person and he opens up, he-she opens up.

Immediately apparent in Terkel's speech—aside from some of the word deformations embedded in his characteristically rapid-fire delivery—is the inescapably associative development of his ideas, which pay scant respect either to sentence syntax, sentence boundaries, or any rhetorical progression known to discursive writing. Indeed, Terkel's speechstream irresistibly brings to mind Vygotsky's discrimination between thought complexes—mere chains of association—and genuine concepts, for as Vygotsky explains this distinction, "complex thinking begins the unification of scattered impressions... by organizing discrete elements of experience into groups....[as] a basis for later generalizations," while true concepts require us "to abstract, to single out elements, and to view the abstracted elements apart from the totality of the concrete experience in which they are embedded." In short, the "very essence" of complex thinking is "over-production of connections, and weakness in abstraction."[7] That description, I believe, is not at all unfair to Terkel's speech.

I know from my collected transcriptions, by now grown rather extensive, that Terkel's tape is typical speech. New readers of raw tapes such as this one, however, are often not so easily convinced. So let's try another speaker of standard English, this time a figure publicly and militantly dedicated to the beauty of the American plain style—Edwin Newman. In this tape Newman is at the beginning of a discussion with Dick Cavett, to which Agnes de Mille was also a contributor, on the

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[7]Vygotsky, p. 76.

subject of good and bad American English. Because I will make several uses of the oral-written contrasts embedded in this sample, I quote Newman at greater length:

> If you wanta know where the [clears throat], shall we call it the corruption? of the language begins and the decline of the language sets in I think it it's the uh principle culprits, are in the academic world. [de Mille: Oh no.] you will have your turn, surely, [laughter, simultaneous voices] I think they're in the academic world, uh and their influence spreads into government, into civil service principally, or what may be called a bureaucracy let me give you an example [Cavett: Good]. This was sent to me, by a professor, uh, writing from San Francisco eh he forwarded an extract, from the agenda of the board of trustees the California State, University and Colleges.
>
> [reading]
>
> In the environmental impact report on the renovation of the stadium of San Jose State University (one reads), traffic congestion will result from vehicular trip generation associated with stadium usage. [laughter] Uh expansion of the stadium will exacerbate neighborhood nuisance impacts by pushing onstreet parking further into a residential area.
>
> [end reading]
>
> Which he translates as, when there are games there will be cars. [laughter] Now this language as I say comes from the academic world and comes from, comes from the government, and those are the principal sources I know that Agnes de Mille does not agree.

Newman's discussion—the development of the argument and his run-on syntax—provides a specimen guide to the different standards that apply in spoken and written persuasion. To specify, his original thesis is both bluntly unqualified and highly unlikely, for it assigns one cause—academe—to a complex phenomenon, the decline of the language, even though there must be many causes. Moreover, although this thesis is almost sure to be resisted unless it is very strongly and variously supported, Newman does not offer such support. Instead, again in a characteristically oral mode, when challenged he repeats his thesis in unmodified terms: whatever is *said* twice lays a double truth-claim on listeners. He also brings out a single anecdote as illustration—the stadium usage impact memorandum. Finally, he offers motives for inflated prose—the need to protect position and pretensions to expertise—that, by their very nature work against his own thesis, since in this society those motives can scarcely be confined to academics.

Indeed, when Newman for the third time presents his thesis at the close, there is a significant concession: the sources of circumlocution may after

all be more complex than had before been allowed, for government bureaucrats have apparently assumed their role as co-villains: "Now this language as I say comes from the academic world and comes from, comes from the government, and those are the principle sources." In short, Newman's speech is characteristic of oral argument, where points often are not so much marshalled in order as mirrored in the process of their emergence in the stream of consciousness.

APPLICATIONS TO BASIC WRITING

For basic writers, the issue is narrower and more special. So it may be useful to remind ourselves of basic writing as it often is:

> Yes I agree that television has an effect on young people. Take this example when superman flow out the windows. Alot of kids, tide a rag around there neck and Jumped out the window. But it didn't work. This I readed in the newspaper many years ago. Another thing is that when I was a kid, and I saw T.V. like monster movies or ferry tales. I believed in it. When I grew up I was Let down that none of the things I saw on T.V. were real. I say that television should not be taken away from America. But that it should be more real. Or by Parents being there to answer there kids questions. Television has a lot of ups and downs like new programs that have come out or are going to. Example: Wonder women, The Six Million dollar man. Some of these programs we learn from, But some are just a waste, Example did wonder women come from space! you and I know she did'nt but kids do'nt. I say that television should have more learning programs for kids, grewups, and younger people. I would say that we learn from game shows.

A year or two ago this text was used by test scorers of the CUNY proficiency exam in writing as an example of what a typical failure on that exam might look like. In none of what follows do I mean to imply that it is not exactly that. Of more than passing interest, therefore, is the fact that nearly all the errors that distort the surface and stigmatize the contents of this text would, in all likelihood, remain unstigmatized—indeed, remain undetected—in the speech stream, a fact the reader may demonstrate to himself by reading the text as he imagines a student would speak it in a conversation.

Variations, a characteristic of standard speech, are well known to linguists. As Roman Jakobson and Linda Waugh's recent book, *The Sound Shape of Language* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University, 1979), points out, elliptic phonations as condensed as *ten min sem* (ten minutes to seven) and *jijcet* (did you eat yet) in speech are both commonplace and immediately intelligible, while many homonyms (gone,

going, put him, put them), are hallmarks of rapidly-delivered American English.

In the perspective of allowable *speech* variances, then, we can see how trivial the surface feature errors in the basic *writing* sample might appear to its orally-oriented author. Take the first fourteen of these mistakes as representative: flow/flew, alot/a lot, tide/tied, there/their, neck/necks, Jumped/jumped, did'nt/didn't, readed/read, Like/like, ferry/fairy, belived/believed, Let/let, America./America, Parents/parents. Note that nine of these written faults are indistinguishable in speech (alot/a lot, tide/tied, and so on), while three more (neck/necks, ferry/fairy, and belived/believed) are homonyms far closer in sound and, as much to the point, also closer to their correct written counterparts than are either "ten min sem" or "jijcet." Finally, observe that the source of two of the more stigmatizing variants of the basic writing passage—flow/flown and readed/read—are written hypercorrections for irregular verb conjugations, hypercorrections devised by a writer probably so uneasy about written verb endings generally that he may feel compelled, when really unsure, to do something *very* different with them than what he might normally say.

Put another way, basic writing is often more sensitive to, and sometimes transcribes more accurately, English as it actually is spoken, including some prestige speech variances that surface only in nonstandard texts—for example, "I use to." But the vitality of voice over print obtains for everyone, obtruding even where the printed text is already present and complete, ready for inspection—and even when that inspection is by professionals.

In print it is easy to find such homonym confusions, each of which represents a triumph of sound over sense, for they all too often escape both professional writers and their proofreaders. *The New York Times* internally-distributed stylesheet, *Winners & Sinners,* even prints batches of these mistakes, culled from *The Times'* own published columns, including: "the tone of the piece waivers [wavers] between utter seriousness and outright slapstick;" "In an effort to diffuse [defuse] the truth in testing movement;" "I honestly don't think that Joan Kennedy has to be put through the ringer [wringer];" "The protesters disbursed [dispersed]."[8]

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[8]"disbursed/dispersed" and "ringer/wringer": *Winners & Sinners* # 39, Jan 18, 1980, p. 2; "waivers/wavers" and "diffuse/defuse": *Winners & Sinners* #40, Sept. 5, 1980, p. 2.

It is from such evidence that I once suggested that Mina Shaughnessy's observation, that "the beginning writer...tends to see what he means rather than what he writes," be amended to "hear what he means"—and that this phenomenon is true for professionals as well as beginners.[9] What has happened—and plainly happens not only in *The Times* but everywhere in writing—is that even a trained eye has been momentarily over-ridden by the more compelling flow of the reader's inner voice; for if sound plays no role, why *homonym* confusion?

Comparatively limited in effect, mistakes such as these remain large in implication. For from such lapses we can graphically observe that error's endless train in part stems from a universal semiotic conflict: the writer's inability to switch off the inner voice that originally dictated, and that upon rereading revoices, written texts. Indeed, our system of transcription almost inevitably reinforces such voicings, for as Jakobson and Waugh observe: "an alphabetic system necessarily prompts its user to associate it, to a high degree, with speech and to transpose the script into an oral performance." (*Sound Shape,* p. 71) That, of course, is why experienced writers often put their freshly-composed work aside for awhile, and only reread it after the inner, dictating voice has had a chance to fade a little; it is then that they can see the writing. The reader's equivalent is the well-known page-proofer's tactic: scanning text backwards so as to effectively cancel revoicing and give the eye its chance to scrutinize written marks undistracted.

Practices such as these, which cope with confusions at the level of the spoken-written sign rather than what is signified, point to both how powerful revoicings are and, at the same time, how unperceived. Thus, students of writing, and basic writing students especially, should be taught how universal their own oral-written dilemmas and confusions are. Knowing about the pervasiveness of ear-to-eye conflicts in reading might help speed the transfer to basic writing of grammatical conventions learned in the abstract, through drill, but inconsistently applied to texts.

PEDAGOGY

Given these conclusions about the pervasiveness of voice in writings, what basic writing students first of all need is:

- to understand that their own inner voices will provide many if not most of the raw materials for writing;

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[9]Mina Shaughnessy, *Errors and Expectations* (N.Y.: Oxford, 1977), p. 48.

- to learn the ways these voices must undergo changes, both at the level of the sign and in content, to become acceptable written texts;
- to experience in reading, as all writers do, standard written English passing through their inner oral/aural selves, so that those writerly voices also can chime and echo in consciousness, as alternatives for the more variant social and inner speech. Otherwise spontaneous speech is the sole source for writing, and it is "wrong"—an impossible, paralyzing situation.

Several strategies address these needs directly. Thomas Farrell and Joseph Collignon have each delineated one important path to basic writing sound-to-written-sign competences: having students read aloud. Collignon reports results that appear highly promising; they lend some support to his hypothesis that the "ability to read aloud means that [basic writing students] then have the power to produce their own 'sound' on paper."[10] This seems a little far-reaching as a conclusion, although an ability to read aloud with fluency must surely narrow the gap between voice and page, if only because the audible passage of written English forms through the oral/aural self eventually provides a repertory of such structures for future writing.

To complement, extend and reinforce Collignon's methods, and to move students closer to actual writing, I also wish to recommend practicing with the oral dictation of written texts. In foreign language study it is a venerable technique, and just as Collignon discovered that reading aloud has its precedent in Osgood and McGuffy, my antecedent is Rollo Walter Brown's *How the French Boy Learns to Write,* which NCTE reprinted in 1965 from Brown's 1915 original.

In that work Brown compared the transcribing abilities of American and French students. When he did so he noted that eleven and twelve year old French schoolboys could transcribe English dictation with far fewer errors in spelling and mechanics than American schoolboys or even American college students writing their own language. Specifically, in "200 pages of exercises written in English by French boys ranging in age from nine to twelve years" Brown discovered "seven misspelled words" (61). Yet from a 500-student sample of American schoolboys, he got only

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[10]Joseph Collignon, "Why Leroy Can't Write," *College English,* 39 (1978), 852-859; see also his "Did You Say *Spuriously?* No, I Said *Furiously,*" *College English,* 42 (1980), 18-24. Thomas Farrell's recommendation is in "Developing Literacy: Walter J. Ong & Basic Writing," *The Journal of Basic Writing,* 2 (1978), 37.

eleven perfect papers—2.2 percent. And when Brown dictated an anecdote in English to 500 American college freshmen, he got in return just forty-seven perfect transcriptions—under 10 percent.

Brown attributes this French writing competence almost entirely to dictation, "the chief means of its early development" (62). And certainly reading aloud and taking dictation both address directly, and in context rather than isolation, the basic writer's failure to permute in conventional ways from voice to text. Better still, both methods are far less mechanical and fragmenting than many of the drills they might replace, with their vocabulary and spelling lists, their sets of prefixes and suffixes, their sets of rules that subsume other often bewildering lists of exceptions to those same rules.

Brown himself makes the point, noting that in France, "I saw no spelling whatever of isolated lists of words such as we have in our spelling books. Instead...the pupils write the words from dictation in a normal context, and afterwards discuss any difficulties" (62).

There are other advantages to reading aloud and taking dictation. Both retrace with written forms the oral/aural paths through which the language is originally learned, and therefore are in a line of progression that is natural to us—from the familiar modes of speaking and listening to the more abstracted ones, reading and writing. At least as important, these activities allow mimesis to work its powers so that as teachers we need no longer rely solely on analysis and memory, as we too often do. For it is through mimesis, not analysis, that every good writer I ever heard of established his own prose voice.

But reading aloud and taking dictation are rote work compared to the actual writing. Students must progress from these activities to the ones that show how writing, by permuting voices, most often is invented, as well as merely revised, edited, or transcribed. And while a certain fraction of what follows may seem advanced study for basic writers—it is frequently drawn from classes in freshman English with better-prepared students—it is offered here because it points out paths across terrain all writers must cross.

The teaching format is simple enough. Present the class with the transcription of a raw tape, such as the Edwin Newman transcription, and ask what the class thinks of that tape as writing. When someone says how terrible it is (and they do), I say, "Fix it."

On occasion even my regular freshman writing classes find it difficult to revise raw tapes; they hear too clearly the voices behind them. But it is not hard to find ways to mediate their difficulties. By pairing orally-oriented written materials—say, *Huckleberry Finn*—with raw voice tapes, one

fictional speaker paired with one actual tape, the facts of speech performance in all their accidental, fragmentary incoherences may be contrasted with the fiction-writer's invariably more orderly, artful representations.

In addition, television stations will often furnish the public with transcripts for a dollar or two: MacNeill-Lehrer, Buckley, Cavett and others. The transcripts already are edited into some semblance of coherence by their distributors, so these renderings can be compared with segments of the actual raw tape typed up for the class. Students then can confer over the two versions and try to produce from them a more truly finished and written text.

Usually, however, my freshmen go rather cheerfully about their tasks of deleting, adding, substituting, and correcting, for they take pleasure in editing the famous, in all their sinful variances, at least as much as editing me, or their classmates, or themselves. I confine myself to a single activity: categorizing, in an *ad hoc* way, the kinds of revisions the class makes, and recording these categories on the blackboard ("Oh you mean the sentence is unclear because the syntax is scrambled?") Here is one such list, inductively assembled by my freshmen in their first pass at revising the first few lines of Edwin Newman's tape:

correcting oral to standard written verb form
cutting deadwood
establishing sentence boundaries (correcting run-ons, fragments)
unscrambling sentence syntax
dividing words
adding or deleting commas
inserting or correcting transitions to indicate discourse relation and direction
substituting noun for pronoun (vague reference)
reorganizing discourse into better sequence

Below is Newman's first (and thesis-bearing) sentence as originally spoken:

> If you wanta know where the shall we call it the corruption of the language begins, the decline of the language sets in I think it it's the uh principle culprits are in the academic world.

Here are two successive revisions by the class:

> If you want to know where the corruption of the language begins, it is in the academic world.

And then, after some discussion about the legitimacy of "If you want to know" in a written text:

> The decline and fall of the language begins in the academic world.

Revisions like these may appear simpler than they are, even to freshmen. In fact the operations required are complex. To achieve an acceptable written version of that one sentence, the class created the first six of the nine categories on my revision list, even though in this exercise they merely were trying to regularize the syntax and grammar and clarify the existing sense of Newman's statement. Even about this small exemplum two further points need to be made. The first is minor: "decline and fall" was first inadvertently substituted for "decline and corruption" via a slip of the tongue during class discussion, and then deliberately inserted in our version of Newman for the stronger connotative echo: it thus provided a small but living illustration of one way orally-assimilated *writing* can legitimately resound in later compositions.

The second point is more general, and central. Revising voices nearly always entails heavy cutting. A word count therefore always follows my classroom revision sessions, for there is no better way to demonstrate how to eliminate deadwood. Here, Newman's original thirty-five words were trimmed to twelve, even though Newman, a trained journalist and speaker, in this same passage was expressing his admiration for the succinct.

Students learn a great deal just from "fix it" sessions, much of it inductively, and some, indeed, without any kind of explicit instruction at all. For these sessions develop concrete revision strategies and editing techniques that the students can begin to apply to their own inner voices as they revise their own first drafts. In consequence, the blackboard notes I write out become student revising and editing checklists.

Students do, however, need several further kinds of guidance here. For one thing, early written drafts vary in their fidelity to inner voice. Some writers—even some student writers—revise those voices so smoothly as they set down a first draft that very few of voice's vagaries appear; what emerges is close to final text. And some go too far in the same direction; they present a text altogether devoid of voice, a re-creation not of voice but of the kind of academic-bureaucratic diction Newman offered up for ridicule in the tape just cited, wherein "traffic congestion will result from vehicular trip generation associated with stadium usage." Students need to recognize that such prose represents another extreme of bad writing—not an overly-oral text but a literally overwritten one, a prose entirely

divorced from speech because it is exclusively confined to terms and structures no one would ever utter. So, along with the Newman tape, we also discuss other written specimens of deliberately depersonalized and disfigured bureaucratic circumlocution and bloat. The class rewrites the passages, and as they do so, some students learn for the first time and in a new way that it is apt written analogues for voice, not the obliteration of voice, that they are seeking to establish in their text.

The next step is to play back the tapes of the transcriptions the class has been struggling to clarify as writing, so the students can hear for themselves the same tapes' lucidity as speech. That lucidity now startles them, and they then can compare directly voice's ways of meaning to writing's smaller, more schematic repertory of signs, and inquire why the class was compelled to do what it did in its revisions to restore the coherence of voice to prose text. That is, they learn that if print strips voice of much of its signifying melody, then in compensation writing's syntax had better be regularized, its words made more exact, its ideas more explicit.

In such contexts I also find that for my students much else now lies open in the realm of print. For one thing, they can read and interpret other writers far more easily—especially writers whose voice is manifestly important—by deriving from texts the intonations that now are perceived to echo in them. As one illustration, I often lead off with that long and famous sentence from Martin Luther King's "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," that makes clear why Blacks "find it difficult to wait" for equal treatment. King's sentence begins "when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim," and goes on for a dozen parallel clauses that fill three-quarters of a printed page to establish his claim. In those prose cadences students can hear as well as see the unmistakable passion of a writer matching his people's wounding history to his own private griefs in order to create a set of written structures that work cumulatively. Examining them, students can discern how a writer's syntactic patterns establish his compelling voice in the reader's consciousness.

Writing is then seen for what, to repeat, I believe it chiefly is: an orchestration of voice. Naturally enough, my classes therefore look at poetry along with prose—poems being so much more obviously patterned for revoicing. They read stories shaped by a strong narrator's accent (for example Frank O'Connor's "Judas," Alice Walker's "Everyday Use"); or stories that deliver the speech of their characters clearly (Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants"); or journals and letters that speak directly in the writer's accents; or speeches and sermons designed to be spoken

formally; and, finally, strongly-argued essays, such as King's "Letter."

We move on to writings in which voice is not so readily apparent. It is important to view, from the perspective offered here, documents like technical manuals and business reports too. Strongly-sequenced and clearly-patterned, these now reveal themselves in their implacably directive, declarative tones.

There is a deeper general advantage to all this. Somewhere along the line, some students cease to conceive of writing as a prisonhouse of rules and come instead to view it a little more as Robert Frost viewed metrics—a kind of real-life game that is all the more interesting because, as in all games, there are inherent constraints to elicit the player's ingenuity and skill.

Of the preceding, despite all implications, it still might be said: it is mostly stylistics. But movement direct to revision of speech content is easy too, and should be encouraged. To do so, one might try the following:

- offer transcriptions of tapes of classroom sessions, and work on those. The question before the class is: "What was the speaker trying to say?"
- present any transcription and ask: "What is the main idea behind this? What are its supports? Evaluate each, make an outline or written list, and rewrite the tape. Include new ideas where needed."

When working with class transcriptions, have the original speakers of the tapes attend class so that the class interpretations of the content and the speaker's actual intent may be compared—an opportunity not to be missed, since both congruences and divergences are highly instructive. To have this happen the original speakers must remain silent until the class has arrived at its own view of the meaning, however much they are bursting to explain what the tape "really meant to say." (That opportunity, of course, must always be provided eventually.)

In its discussion, the class must move beyond attributions to motive—the student equivalent of how virtuous and democratic Terkel transparently wants to appear, and so on. These are matters about which students often prove ruthlessly discerning, and their insights are all to the good, of course, but the discussion must proceed to the subject matter itself, and the smoothest path from speaker to subject often is to conceive point-of-view in senses other than emotional bent—that is, to judge how inclusively a subject is described, to list and evaluate the detail, to conceive what should be deleted, what added.

To perform these operations is to begin to abstract, to infer concepts

from an oral performance that often is made up merely of what Vygotsky saw as chains of associations. Thereby students find for themselves how writers work: first, gathering and grouping materials associatively, then organizing and reorganizing them by developing hierarchies that occupy many more rungs on the ladder of abstraction than utterances customarily do.

Before such revision can begin, however, the class needs to confront another phenomenon common and expressive enough in speech, but disallowed in writing—the "saturated word" of inner speech, a single word so soaked with multiple meanings that, as Vygotsky comments, "many words would be required to explain it in external speech." Such saturation of course also occurs in external speech; it is, in fact, another evidence of the powers of speech melody that we learn so much more than conversation's strikingly limited vocabularies alone could convey. "Those *stupid* conferences," a student complains in Shaughnessy's *Errors;* "those *boring* chemistry classes," my freshmen say. When I ask them just what "stupid" means, the possibilties flow for some time: uncomfortable, mechanical, without content, emotionally cold, threatening, repetitive, irrelevant. "Boring" is a blur word of even greater depth and density, called upon as it is to dismiss matters that are no challenge because they are overfamiliar or too easy ("we did it a million boring times"); that are too hard and therefore threatening ("what a boring lecture; I couldn't understand a word"); for occasions that otherwise frustrate or diminish the accuser's self-esteem ("those boring cliques on the senate committee"); finally, for situations that coerce, overtly or covertly ("Those boring sermons about reforming my work habits").

Writing, as we can then see, is a mode of learning in good part because it explicates these saturated words of speech, teasing often unsuspected ideas out of the distinctions imbued in our commonplace spoken blurts. In writing we separate and elaborate, construing those blurry terms to display their manifold meanings, meanings that in both senses often become more telling than the original utterance, however vehement. Similarly, after we cut the unneeded verbiage of individual sentences we then discover that speech often must be greatly *amplified* to meet writing's need for increased explicitness—for thesis statement, for context-setting and topic limitation, for reasoned qualification, for teasing out implications, for proofs, for the acknowledgment of the complexity of issues.[11]

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[11] Vygotsky, p. 144. Flower's "Writer-Based Prose" also notes the prevalence of saturated words in much student writing.

It is important that taped transcriptions be kept of these classroom revision sessions too, and that the class on occasion consult written excerpts from them. For from these records students can confirm yet again the markedly different effects of spoken and written forms of argument—more specifically, how the positive impact of some kinds of *spoken* persuasion (reiteration, confrontational tactics, approximate analogies, epithets, homilies, personal appeals, outright intimidation) may work in face-to-face exchanges to win disputes but, more frequently than not, are disqualified when offered as *written* discourse.

Thus begins the creation, as a joint class enterprise, of the writer's persona—that reasoned, cool-headed, fair-minded, meticulous, considerate, informed figure who stands behind written persuasion. Helping to incarnate him must be the group ego of the class as audience, in part shaped by the teacher's guidance, into the ideal reader the class will first role-play and then really become: a reader who is comparatively unprejudiced, willing to be informed if appealed to with logic or proofs, and always patient enough to read a presentation through—if, that is, there is a clear design to follow, preferably foreshadowed early in the text—and if the subject is elaborated or supported by a reliable and equally fair-minded presenter.

Some of this evolution to writer and reader's persona is spontaneous; students often strive to be even-handed. And as long as they are, the teacher's role may remain passive; he may confine his activity to writing up additional lists for revision strategies. Those lists are not editing codes this time, but methods by which to buttress oral arguments as they turn into written positions: ways to define, limit and qualify; to note logical fallacies as they appear; to discuss both the weaknesses and the powers of written comparisons and analogies; to offer guidelines for allowable inferences, causes, and effects; to single out appeals to prejudice, stereotypical thinking, conventional wisdom and so on. Essayists are made that way, in the living presences, and through the sounds of contributory voices, from revising (and audibly self-revising) peers and mentors.

Susan V. Wall
Anthony R. Petrosky

FRESHMAN WRITERS AND REVISION: RESULTS FROM A SURVEY

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

Our paper reports the results of a survey on revision which we conducted among students in the composition program at the University of Pittsburgh. Our survey sought three kinds of information: what these students had been taught about revision in high school; how these students say they use revision in the writing process; and what values these students attach to revision. We ran a pilot study in the Fall of 1978 with 150 students and then administered the final, formal study in the Fall of 1979, obtaining 248 complete sets of responses from students in twenty-two composition classes.

The survey was administered over three days in five parts. Part "A" surveyed the kinds of discourse which our subjects had been assigned as writing tasks in high school. "B" surveyed how these students had been taught to revise. "C" asked students how often they typically use revising and other related strategies during the writing process. "D" surveyed the values which our subjects associate with various reasons to revise. And "E" was a set of short essay questions. In addition, there was an information sheet to find out the number and kinds of English courses our subjects had taken in high school, dividing these into straight

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composition courses, straight literature courses, and courses in which both literature and composition were taught.

The results of the survey were analyzed according to the sections in which these students had been placed when they entered the University. These placements were made on the basis of the Nelson-Denny test and performance on a holistically scored essay. There were four sections representing relative levels of writing ability: Basic Reading and Writing (about 8 to 10 percent of all entering students place at this most basic level); Basic Writing; General Writing (our course for the "average" first-year student); and Advanced General Writing. The appropriateness of these placements had been confirmed by individual instructors by the third week of classes when the survey was administered. All our subjects were day students, and all were freshmen except for eleven older students in Advanced General Writing. Very few were speakers of English as a second language or of non-standard dialects.

A survey such as this has some important limitations. A survey is a self-report. It will not tell us what writers actually do when they write, only what they think they do, as that is filtered through their feelings about sharing their thoughts with a researcher. Therefore, responses such as "often," "sometimes," "seldom," and "never," cannot make absolute comparisons of behavior among groups, only comparisons of relative levels of familiarity with certain kinds of experiences. And, of course, a survey which reports results as percentages deals only in averages, and there is no such person as the "average" writer, at any level of ability. Nevertheless, this kind of research may be helpful for those times when faculty must generalize, such as when they create assignments, conduct class discussions, or refine their methods of placement.

RESULTS: HIGH SCHOOL BACKGROUND

One general conclusion we have drawn from our results is that there have been serious deficiencies in our subjects' instructional backgrounds. When we asked, for example, the amount of time spent on learning about the writing process, we found that about three-quarters of these students, 76.1 percent, had taken either no straight composition courses at all or less than one year of such instruction. Only slightly more than half, 52.4 percent, had taken more than one year of English courses in which composition was taught in conjunction with literature. When class time had been devoted to composition instruction, it was the experience of three-fifths of these students, 60.5 percent, that revision was either seldom or never discussed.

There were serious deficiencies in the amount and kinds of writing these students have done. Part "A" of the survey asked students how often they had done sixteen kinds of writing assignments in high school. Our categories covered a range of writing tasks, from short essays and letters to more ambitious projects such as skits or term papers, and they represented writing in all four modes of discourse: expressive, explanatory, persuasive, and literary. When we considered a response of either "often" or "sometimes" as indicating at least some familiarity with a type of assignment, we found that nine out of the sixteen kinds of assignments were familiar to 50 percent or more of our subjects, six out of sixteen were familiar to 63 percent or more, and only two, letters and personal essays, were familiar to 85 percent or more. Expressive discourse tasks were the most familiar, followed by explanatory ones. Persuasive discourse had been especially short-changed: with the exception of the nine freshmen in Advanced General Writing (an unusual group in many ways), only about a third of those surveyed, 36.1 percent, were familiar with the writing of argument papers, and only about one-fourth, 25.9 percent, with critical essays. Recent results from the 1979 National Assessment of Writing bear out our findings: "Judgments about specific writing skills of seventeen-year-olds indicated that the ability to write narratives...improved dramatically from 1974 to 1979. Three-quarters of the seventeen-year-olds wrote competent narratives in 1979. Persuasive writing ability declined betwen 1974 and 1979, while performance on an explanatory business letter and a humorous letter remained stable."[1]

Our students' unfamiliarity with persuasive discourse appears to be part of a different problem—their lack of experience with what we call "situational" writing, writing for which there is a real, specific audience being addressed, as with speeches or plays which will actually be given or performed, or newspaper articles or descriptions which writers share with their peers. Revision is often a central part of these writing tasks because a writer writing for a specific context and an immediate audience often has an opportunity to discover first-hand that what he said did not produce the imagined effect on the audience, or that what others observed does not correspond to what he feels he said. In this way, revision does indeed become re-vision, a "re-seeing" of what was said. Exposure to and

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[1]National Assessment of Educational Progress, "Good News, Bad News Mix in Third NAEP Writing Survey" *NAEP Bulletin* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1981). See aiso Arthur N. Applebee, *A Study of Writing in the Secondary Schools.* (Washington, D.C.: Final Report, NIE-G-79-0174, 1980).

practice in these kinds of writings are important if students are to have a chance to learn that language is an interpretation of the world, not merely a reflection of it.

There is another kind of "re-seeing" that involves a change of general ideas in the course of time, when the writer undergoes "a change of mind" or "reformulation" of his position. Sometimes this change happens quickly. But a great many professional writers have testified to the need for time to get away from a piece of writing, to achieve a new perspective or sense of "distance" before any re-vision can take place. And here, again, our results are discouraging. Although three-quarters of our subjects said that the period of time typically spent on a paper in high school was often or sometimes more than a day, the same number had seldom or never spent more than a week on writing tasks other than term papers. Furthermore, it was very unusual for these students to have been given any sequenced assignments, that is, assignments which asked them to explore a subject in depth by reconsidering papers they had already written, and even more unusual for them to have been given a grade only after a set or series of assignments had been completed. So while we cannot say that ideas were not being questioned and re-examined in their English classes, we can say that there was little in their initial writing tasks to encourage these students to do this re-seeing on their own.

Another way a writer can be encouraged to re-examine what he has written is through the help of a good reader. Here our results are mixed. 41.9 percent of these writers had often or sometimes shared their papers with other students in their classes, either before or after the paper was submitted to their teachers. Furthermore, in response to the essay question, "Describe what you learned in high school from a teacher who helped you understand revision in a new and important way," nearly three-quarters of those surveyed, 72.7 percent, gave positive answers. And we found it heartening that in all but about 10 percent of these responses there was reference to some kind of revision other than just editing for errors. It is less certain, however, that these students have been regularly motivated to revise by their teachers. Just about half have often or sometimes been required to correct their errors. But about 70 percent were seldom or never required to do any other kind of revision, nor were they offered the incentive of a better grade if they did. More had been encouraged to revise without any actual requirement to do so, but only 13.2 percent experienced such encouragement often. These discouraging figures are matched by ones which show that about 70 percent of these writers seldom or never met with their teachers in conference or even submitted a working draft for reaction and advice.

What we see here is more than a matter of the lack of application of a few pedagogical techniques. What the vast majority of these students have not been given is role models to serve as examples of how experienced writers revise and how they talk about and value revision. In most cases the teachers of these students have not fulfilled that role, in class or out of class, nor have they offered examples of professional writers' revisions which might partially make up for it. The National Assessment reported that although "revision skills are often considered to be the essence of good writing,"[2] most college students that are poorly prepared have not been taught how to revise so as to meet the expectations of college-level academic discourse.

RESULTS: COMPARISONS OF LEVELS OF WRITING ABILITY

The concerns we have expressed about high school instruction stem in part from the way in which sophistication about the writing process seems to be related to level of writing ability. Our survey results show that, on the whole, the better writers among our subjects, the students in General Writing and Advanced General Writing, both know more about writing and have more strategies for writing and revising at their command than do the writers in the two sections of Basic Writing. Moreover, the better writers have picked the specific topics of their papers for themselves more often than the basic writers, and they have more often spent more than a day and, occasionally, more than a week on a given assignment. They have more strategies for invention: the basic writers often start papers by just beginning to write on the first idea that comes to mind and seeing what happens; the better writers know this strategy, too, but more of them say that they also sometimes think a long time before beginning to write and sometimes even write extensive notes or an outline. The better writers say they pause more often while they write to reread or to plan what to say next, and they stop more often to revise, whether they pause after a sentence, a section, or a whole draft. Understandably, then, the better writers more often make a lot of changes in what they write before their work is handed in. They are more concerned than the basic writers with the reader's reactions to their writing, and, going along with this, they are more attentive to using revision in order to improve sentence style, to eliminate errors, and to cut out redundancy in their writing.

The better writers we surveyed have not necessarily had more writing

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[2]National Assessment of Educational Progress, *Write/Rewrite: An Assessment of Revision Skills.* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1977).

courses than the basic writers, nor do they say that they have spent appreciably more class time discussing revision. But what they have done is develop greater familiarity with more kinds of writing tasks. If we say that a group as a whole is "familiar" with a particular type of assignment when 75 percent or more say that they have done it often or sometimes, then we find that the students in Basic Reading and Writing are familiar at the end of high school with only two kinds of writing assignments, the "general writers" with four, and the older writers in Advanced General Writing with six. Not suprisingly, the better writers also do more writing on their own, what Janet Emig calls "self-sponsored" writing.[3]

We do not mean to suggest, however, that in all cases "more" is "better." We also have to consider relationships between behavior and values on the one hand and the demands of task and situation on the other. Common sense suggests that not all strategies work equally well in all circumstances, that one does not write the same way or for the same reasons when composing, say, a long research paper as one does when composing a poem or an impromptu essay. Nor does the writer come to every writing task the same person; we all have our bad and good days, our times when writing comes easily and times when it seems difficult or blocked. And to the extent that we share the values of the academic world, we value writing as a way of discovering new ideas, not simply as a means to communicate what we already know. For all these reasons we want to suggest that flexibility about using options may be as important for the good writer as sophistication about which options are available to use. It is when we look at our data in this way that the most dramatic differences among the five groups emerge.

Advanced General Writing: 2. The upperclassmen in Advanced General Writing (abbreviated here as AGW2) stand out from the other groups in many ways. For one, they give themselves a lot to work with. More than any other group they say that they usually think a long time before beginning to write, spend time on their papers, write two or more drafts, and add a lot to what they have written. They usually see a lot of changes, too, in what they write before it is finished; but there is a definite pattern as well to how these changes are made. The AGW2 writers most frequently pause to plan, to reread, and to consider revision after they have completed sections of their papers; they pause less often for these

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[3]Janet Emig, *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders.* (Urbana, Il: National Council of Teachers of English, 1971).

reasons at the end of a draft, and even less often after just a sentence or two. More than the writers in the other groups, they say they like to rearrange the order of sentences and whole sections of their papers. These responses suggest that these older writers concentrate their revising efforts on "chunks" of prose, moving them around and adding more where it seems necessary or where new ideas are generated in the process. This would explain how they can say that they usually make extensive changes in what they write while, at the same time, seeming to pause and to revise less often than the writers in the other groups. We would suggest, then, that these writers can be described as flexible in the way that they regularly put themselves in a position to deal with middle-level ideas "beyond the sentence," while they are sophisticated enough about writing to know that revision of whole drafts or even multiple drafts may on occasion be necessary.

We see flexibility, too, in the way these AGW2 students exercise the range of options available to sophisticated writers. They take more risks than the writers in the other groups by using such strategies as starting a paper by "just beginning;" stopping and starting over; cutting substantial amounts; rearranging whole sections; and writing multiple drafts, that is, more than two. But they also seem to adjust these strategies to the writing situation: they say they exercise all of these options sometimes, rather than usually, seldom, or never.

We cannot, of course, say what caused these writers to become so flexible; but we can speculate on some possible influences from their backgrounds. Of all the groups we studied, these students were the ones with the most high school experience in discussing revision in class and in discussing their final drafts in student-teacher conferences—responses which are probably linked to the fact that they had taken more straight composition courses in high school than had any other group. AGW2 was the only group in which even half had seen examples of professional writers' revisions, and the only group whose answers to survey questions indicated that they had had previous experience with persuasive discourse as well as explanatory or expressive discourse. These students were also unusual in that half of them named multiple categories of self-sponsored writing (e.g., poetry, journal, and newspaper articles), responses which suggest familiarity with adult models for writing.

The responses of these students also suggest a relationship among level of writing ability, self-sponsored writing, and the kinds of revision a writer does for school-sponsored writing. For the five groups studied, the higher the level of ability, the more there were differences in revising between students who did self-sponsored writing and those who did not.

The differences were the most striking among the AGW2 students. Those in this group who did some sort of self-sponsored writing were much more familiar than the other writers in their group with making extensive revisions in their school-sponsored papers and with that process of exploration and discovery that Donald Murray calls "internal revision."[4] They say, for example, that they often add new ideas after reading over what they have written, even taking something from a previous draft and exploring it further. They also say that they attach a much higher value to "internal revision" for school-sponsored writing than the other members of their group.

We do not mean to suggest that extensive revision is necessarily a good thing or that discovery is always the good writer's purpose in revising. What we are saying here is that for some writers, as Richard Beach has suggested,[5] extensive revising may be closely tied to a use of revision for the purposes of invention throughout the writing process. Among the superior writers we studied, this kind of revision for school writing is most typical of those students who practice writing on their own outside of school.

General Writing. The students in General Writing, our average freshmen, are familiar with about the same number of strategies as the AGW2 students, but their use of them and the values they associate with them are much more limited.These writers pause, plan, and consider revision more often than any other group. But although about half of them say that they usually make a lot of revisions, the revisions that they do make, like those of the freshman writers Nancy Sommers studies,[6] seem limited to the level of the sentence or below: changing words and phrases; substituting more impressive vocabulary words; occasionally rearranging sentence order. Fewer than half say that they usually write more than one draft, and of all the writers we studied, these are the ones least inclined to stop a draft and start over, to add or cut substantial amounts, or to reformulate what they have written.

We would speculate that the relationship between revision and the

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[4]Donald Murray, "Internal Revision: A Process of Discovery," in *Research on Composing: Points of Departure,* ed. Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell (Urbana, Il.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1978), pp. 85-103.

[5]Richard Beach, "Self-Evaluation Strategies of Extensive Revisers and Non-Revisers," *College Composition and Communication,* 27 (May, 1976), 160-164.

[6]Nancy I. Sommers, "Revision in the Composing Process: A Case Study of College Freshmen and Experienced Adult Writers," Unpublished dissertation, Boston University, 1978, pp. 84-90.

kinds of assignments these students have been given gives rise to this rather limited writing process. Although about have of them said that they were thinking of expressive discourse when they were taking the survey and about half said they were thinking of explanatory discourse, we think that what these writers know and value about revision has probably been more heavily shaped by their experiences with explanatory discourse. For those responding to the essay question, "Describe the writing you feel you have revised the best," 55.5 percent named some sort of explanatory task. Of these tasks, 68 percent were term papers—which is not surprising. But we also found that conventional expectations about explanatory writing dominated the general writers' responses on the section of the survey dealing with the values associated with revision. The writers in this group were not much concerned with "internal" revision, nor did they give the highest responses to the value of developing an authentic *persona* ("revision is valuable in order to make my sentences seem more like my own way of saying things"). But they were far above any other group in the values they attached to revision in order to bring out the central ideas of a paper, to reorganize main points, to add supporting examples, and to change statements the reader might not understand.

Advanced General Writing: 1. The freshmen in Advanced General Writing were students who had scored only "average" on the placement essay but who had elected to take Advanced General Writing anyway. Their records showed that they had been superior English students in high school, and their instructor felt that their ability was sufficient for this advanced section. Yet, when we look at their responses to the survey, we find that these students are not younger versions of the older AGW students we discussed earlier but, rather, somewhat maturer versions of our general writers. That is, like the general writers they write one or two but rarely more than two drafts, pause frequently to reread and plan, and give a lot of attention to sentence style. If they are to be distinguished from the average writers, it is more in the direction of carefulness and planning than toward the older writers' willingness to write a lot and take risks. These writers like to outline or make extensive notes and to pause frequently while writing. But they rarely revise, rearrange sentences or sections, stop and start over, or make extensive changes in what they write. They are concerned with eliminating redundancy and with responding to the questions of someone who has read the paper, but they seem to care little for personal style or for internal revision or reformulation. These characteristics may be due to their relative

familiarity with in-class essays and with persuasive discourse. But we suspect even more that their writing processes may have developed by way of successful imitation of a certain model derived not from the work of experienced writers but from some of the popular rhetorical textbooks which picture writing as a matter of trying to get everything right on the first try.

Basic Writing. In a similar sort of way, the students in Basic Writing, our second group, might be described as less successful versions of our average writers. The basic writers spend time on papers, think before beginning to write, pause, read, plan and revise while writing, edit for error, rearrange sentences, and cut out redundancy. But as a group, they say they do all of these things less often than the general writers. Some of their responses hint at the difficulties they have with the writing process. For example, they report a greater number of second drafts and more reformulation than the general writers. But since they are also the group which cares the least about the value of adding new ideas after rereading what they have written and the group which cares the most about revision as a chance to try a new approach when the first one does not work out, their values suggest that whatever rewriting they do is less a matter of "re-seeing" than it is a second chance after a failed effort.

We were also struck by the negative attitudes these basic writers expressed in the essays which asked about teachers who had helped them learn revision, about self-sponsored writing, and about papers they felt they had revised the best. For all three essays, the basic writers had the largest percentages of negative responses: "none," "don't know," or no answer. Quite a few actually sounded hostile: "No teacher ever helped me with revision!" or, "I don't waste my time with that."

Some of these responses become understandable in light of these students' high school experiences. The basic writers have done less writing than the students in the other groups, and they have done few writing tasks often enough to be really familiar with them. Of all groups studied, including Basic Reading and Writing, the basic writers have had the least amount of experience with class discussion of revision and with examples of revised work, either from professional or from student writing. They have had more responses from teachers about their papers than the students in Basic Reading and Writing, but these responses were mainly to first drafts. This left them on their own to cope with revising their completed papers, something they were required to do often in order to pull up an unsatisfactory grade. In light of the picture of the group that

emerges from our data, we would suggest that part of what is "basic" here is a problem of motivation. The sense of difficulty these writers experience and the association of revision with punishment work are issues which probably need as much attention from a teacher as strategies and skills.

Basic Reading and Writing. By contrast, the students in Basic Reading and Writing, those who were considered to have the lowest level of writing ability, seem to like to write. In this group, 44.7 percent have done some sort of self-sponsored writing other than letters, a figure not far from the general writers' 50 percent. There are also some features of their writing processes that might be called sophisticated, for example, a willingness to add substantial amounts to what they have written and to write more than one draft of a paper. Their values are sometimes comparable to those of the older students in Advanced General Writing, especially their responses to items suggesting that revision is very valuable in order to explore further the feelings, ideas, or opinions expressed in a previous draft of a paper (BRW 42.6%, AGW2 45.5%) and to add new ideas which occur to the writer while rereading what has been written (BRW 68.1%, AGW2 63.6%). In this group, 55.6 percent say that revision is very valuable in order to create an individual, authentic *persona,* the highest "very valuable" response of all the groups we studied. Their responses on the two essay questions about teachers who have helped with revision and about papers they had revised the best were also as positive as those of the upperclassmen. They had taken about as many high school English courses involving writing instruction as the two groups in Advanced General Writing, and of all the groups in the survey this was the one with the most experience with student-teacher conferences and with peer-group paper reading.

If there is any likely reason why their level of writing ability is so inadequate for college, it is probably their lack of familiarity with anything other than expressive writing combined with a striking naivete about the demands of academic discourse. These writers only sometimes think a long time before beginning to write, and they rarely make any written plans or notes, preferring to begin a paper by "just beginning." Fewer than half say they usually pause to plan while writing, and on the whole they pause less often than writers in the other groups to read and to consider revision. They also make fewer changes in words and phrases, and since this is the most popular form of revision other than editing among all the other freshmen we studied, their lack of interest in this kind

of stylistic change probably accounts in part for the relatively lower percentage of those in this group who say that they usually make a lot of changes in what they write.

Based on our findings, then, we think it is important to reiterate what Mina Shaughnessy has said about basic writers' lack of a sense of the expectations of an academic audience.[7] Only 29.8 percent of these Basic Reading and Writing students say that revision is very valuable in order to change statements that the reader might not understand; by contrast, 71.3 percent of the general writers say that this is very valuable. Whereas 85.2 percent of the general writers find revision very valuable in order to cut out redundant statements, only 44.7 percent of the BRW writers agree. And whereas 88.8 percent of the general writers consider it very valuable to edit a paper for error, only 63.8 percent of these Basic Reading and Writing students seem to think that this is very important. The challenge, then, for any teacher who has these students in college is to ensure that they become familiar with the conventions and the audience demands of explanatory and persuasive academic discourse without, in the process, destroying all the positive attitudes and writing behaviors that these students have derived from their past experiences, and without implying that expressive and literary modes of discourse are in any way inferior to the others.

CONCLUSIONS

None of the students we surveyed are non-writers. Although certainly their levels of writing ability vary, they all do write, and most are acquainted with many strategies for writing and revising even if they do not always use them to their best advantage. Approximately half of them say that they have done at least some self-sponsored writing other than letters.

But even the better writers among the entering freshmen have rarely written papers involving more than one or two writing sessions, papers with any real audience other than the teacher, or papers which had specific connections with anything they had written previously or would write after that. For the freshman writers we surveyed, the higher their level of placement, the more their writing processes and values are adapted to one very narrow, specialized kind of writing—the short, impromptu explanatory essay. So it is difficult for us to imagine these

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[7] Mina Shaughnessy, *Errors and Expectations.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

writers functioning well in the "universe of discourse"[8] inhabited by many college-educated adults, where writing tasks often involve long-term commitment, collaboration, reworking, and transformation of forms. Many university graduates work on projects requiring writing that takes months, even years. Written work in many disciplines is collaborative, even co-authored, which generally increases the need for revision. It may be submitted to an editor or supervisor and then reworked, often more than once. Form, style, and content undergo transformations as the purpose of writing shifts, as when, for example, a letter to a colleague becomes a series of lecture notes which then become a journal article which ultimately becomes the basis for a chapter in a book. If these long-term commitments to writing are to be recognized by students let alone adequately addressed by teachers, writing courses need to be concerned with sequenced assignments, a variety of discourse tasks, real audiences, and a lot of talk about writers writing. If revision is not taught within these contexts, then it may be reduced to nothing more than a set of textbook rules.

More to the immediate point, our freshman writers seem ill-prepared for the expectations of any college course in which open-mindedness, originality of thought, and the constant questioning of one's own assumptions are highly valued. Few of these writers seem interested in "internal" revision. Those who say that they make extensive changes in what they write are working by and large at the level of work and phrase or editing for error. And this lack of what Nancy Sommers refers to as "holistic" concerns [9] is also reflected in the fact that fewer than 25 percent see any reformulation in their papers even sometimes.

A teacher addressing these issues might, then, want to treat them in part as a question of attitudes and values: why might a writer want to "re-see" what has been said? In addition there is a way in which the group of older student writers we studied might serve as models for teaching the revising process at the freshman level. These upperclass writers represent a kind of intermediate level between entering freshmen and adult college graduates. In many ways they are like their younger counterparts. But what distinguishes them is their work with chunks of prose, rather than sentences or whole drafts. We strongly suspect that their ability to generate, delete, and move around whole sections of their papers is an

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[8]James Moffett, *Teaching the Universe of Discourse.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968).

[9]Nancy Sommers, "Revision in the Composing Process," pp. 87-88.

important reason why these writers feel free enough and confident enough to take bigger risks with their writing. In other words, they can focus on larger units of meaning and build on what has been said without having to abandon a whole draft and start over from scratch. We do not mean to suggest that these writers never get confused. But their combination of sophistication and flexibility may enable them to be, as a friend once said about his own research, confused on a higher level and about more important things.

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