

INSPIRE: CREATIVE THEORIES AND STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING WRITING

by

JESSICA RENAY KONTELIS

Master of Fine Arts, 2011  
Mills College  
Oakland, California

Bachelor of Arts, 2009  
Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania  
Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty  
of AddRan College of Liberal Arts  
Texas Christian University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

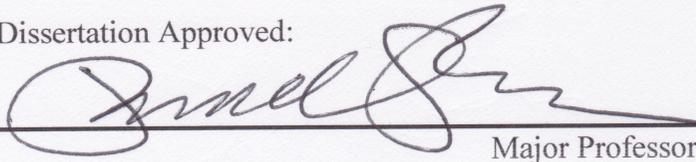
Doctor of Philosophy

May 2018

INSPIRE: CREATIVE THEORIES AND STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING WRITING

By Jessica Renay Kontelis

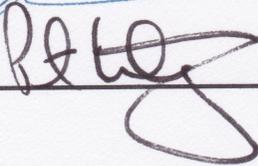
Dissertation Approved:

  
Major Professor









For the College of Liberal Arts

Copyright by  
Jessica Renay Kontelis  
2018

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the care, direction, and support of my dissertation committee, the TCU English Department, Graduate Studies, my family, and my friends. So, I would like to take a moment to individually thank some of them for their roles in this accomplishment.

To my dissertation chair Dr. Richard Leo Enos: Thank you for being my steady voice of reason as I searched through draft after draft looking for the through-line that would turn my observations into argument.

To Dr. Ann George: Thank you for giving me the praise and prescriptive criticism that I needed to translate my fledgling arguments into a dissertation worth reading and sharing.

To Professor Matthew Pitt: Thank you for your page-by-page annotations. They often supplied the word or phrase that snapped my abstract thoughts into sharp relief.

To Dr. Jason Helms: Thank you for meeting with me early on as I struggled with binary language, encouraging me along the way, and helping me judge the consistency of the work as a whole.

To my father and mother: Thank you for telling my fourth-grade teacher that no, she could not tell me that *Anne of Green Gables* was too advanced for my reading level.

To my best friend and academic companion, Dr. Kassia Waggoner: Thank you for journeying with me day after day and year after year as we adapted to new homes, marriage, coursework, final exams, the dissertation process, and the job market.

To my husband, Jeremy: Thank you for leaving your family and friends in California and moving with me to Texas so that I could follow my dream. The sticky note I left for you on the window sill during our first week in Fort Worth still holds true: *All of my successes are in part because of you.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Rationale .....	3
Exigency for Study .....	7
Primary Research and Methodological Framework .....	9
Chapter Overview .....	12
Chapter 1: Demystifying Inspiration .....	16
A Brief History of Inspiration.....	17
Characteristics of Inspiration .....	29
Conclusion .....	49
Chapter 2: Can Inspiration Be Taught? .....	51
Rituals .....	54
Freewriting.....	57
Journaling.....	61
Reading and imitating.....	66
Prompts .....	74
Conclusion .....	77
Chapter 3: Inspiration through Imitation .....	80
Imitation, Embodiment, and Emotion in the Greek and Roman Traditions .....	82
Strategies for Reading that Inspire.....	90
Strategies for Prompting Imitation.....	98
Conclusion .....	106
Chapter 4: From Heuristic to Inspiration .....	108
Inspiration and the Social Context of Creative Writing.....	111
From Heuristic to Inspiration.....	120
Conclusion .....	144
Conclusion .....	147
Appendix A.....	156
Works Cited .....	158

## INTRODUCTION

What is inspiration? If you ask a psychologist, a creative writer, a composition teacher, or a first-year college student, you will likely receive four different answers. This ambiguity combined with inspiration's association with the divine and unconscious cloaks the word in an air of mysticism that draws the popular imagination while creating skepticism among scholars about the subject's potential as a serious matter of study. Rhetoric-composition scholars usually avoid the word altogether; instead, they disperse the subject amongst a web of less mystically fraught terms, such as affect, motivation, and engagement.

By comparison, inspiration is practically a touchstone concept amongst creative writers. Anyone who has ever attended a public reading with a novelist or poet has probably heard an aspiring writer ask some version of the question, "Where does your inspiration come from?" This question speaks to our culture's popular fascination with the word, but it also illustrates the creative writing community's open acceptance of inspiration as a matter of practical concern.

As a Master of Fine Arts graduate in creative writing, I knew that inspiration figures prominently in creative writing textbooks and memoirs of the craft. I figured that I could synthesize how these texts define and teach the subject, then translate their definitions and strategies to demystify inspiration for rhetoric-composition scholarship and pedagogy. So, I gathered a sample of twenty commonly assigned texts in introduction to creative writing classes during the 2015 spring semester from four-year state and private colleges across Texas. I examined how these texts discuss relationships between invention, inspiration, and the strategies they use to trigger inspiration, such as imitation and writing prompts.

As I discovered, creative writers' overall understandings of the creative process are not so different from how rhetoric-composition scholars describe invention (Elbow, LeFevre, Micciche, Rickert). The heuristics and practices they offer are mostly the same. The differences that the texts pose, as the public reading example reveals, is a matter of attitude. When creative writers discuss tacit aspects of invention, such as inspiration, they stress invention's situated, emotional, and embodied nature. They highlight how emotional involvement focuses, motivates, and directs writers' attentions to opportunities for potential insights and how our bodies unconsciously internalize and apply craft knowledge from the authors we admire as we read and imitate. Therefore, reading instructional creative writing texts in conversation with rhetoric-composition scholarship creates a lens that continues to shift teachers' and students' attentions toward invention's situated, emotional, and embodied nature.

To be clear, I am not arguing that uniform approaches to teaching writing exist in creative writing or rhetoric-composition pedagogies. The texts assigned in introductory creative writing classes do not paint a uniform picture of inspiration's nature, much like rhetoric-composition pedagogies vary substantially according to teachers' backgrounds. Instead of making broad claims about disciplinary approaches, I am much more interested in how the expectations and values of fields and genres affect students' and teachers' perceptions of the writing process.

The rewards of this study are many. Analyzing how the texts assigned in introductory creative writing classes define, nurture, and trigger inspiration demystifies the subject, allowing an overview of inspiration's key characteristics and grounding abstract, rhetorical invention theory in practical teaching strategies (Bawarshi, Bazerman, Micciche, Rickert).

Creative writers often use the same teaching strategies as rhetoric-composition pedagogy. When creative writers use shared invention strategies such as freewriting, journaling, imitation, or the Ciceronian *topoi*, their applications reveal each tool's capacity to nurture and trigger inspiration. As a result, this study productively complicates teachers' and students' attitudes toward the tools they use to invent by blurring the line between inspirational process and deliberate, systematic invention practices.

## **Rationale**

From Michelle Cross's *College Composition and Communication* article published in 1957 to Stephen Newkirk's recent *Minds Made for Stories*, rhetoric-composition scholarship routinely proposes productive intersections between rhetoric-composition and creative writing pedagogies. These calls assume the presence of shared values, practices, and heuristics (Bishop, Bizzaro, Andrews, Hesse, T. R. Johnson). T. R. Johnson states in *A Rhetoric of Pleasure* that language's poetic nature should be fundamental to the ways that we teach writing across genres because it is one of the principle reasons that all people are inherently invested in learning and using language. Additionally, Douglas Hesse contends that English departments need the creative influx that interdisciplinary scholarship with creative writing can provide as professors continue to work toward attracting and keeping students ("The Place of Creative Writing").

Interdisciplinary work between rhetoric-composition and creative writing requires a view of writing that assumes all language is jointly rhetorical and poetic. This view may seem odd at first given the differences in how our culture understands the writing that goes

on in creative writing classes and composition classes. Poetic (*poieses*), the re-creation of the world through language and all of the accompanying romantic connotations of creating literature, is a reserved domain for a privileged few who claim the title of creative writers. Meanwhile, some rhetorical instruction is usually a requisite aspect of students' lives. As a result, many tend to view rhetorical and poetic approaches to language as categorically distinct when the poet and the rhetor are often one and the same. Many of the minds who have contributed to work in rhetoric-composition were also creative writers (Sir Francis Bacon, Kenneth Burke, T. R. Johnson, Wendy Bishop, etc.), and many poets are known for their rhetorical work (Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Edgar Allen Poe, bell hooks, etc.). For some of these authors, it is hard to tell whether they are foremost rhetoricians or creative writers.

Rhetoric and poetic share a history and interdependence that tracks from the Homeric tradition to the present disciplinary structuring of today's English programs. Jeffrey Walker argues that "civic eloquence descends from poetic discourse through the Homeric tradition" and that "'poetic' discourse is the 'primary' form of 'rhetoric' on which pragmatic discourse, and especially formalized pragmatic, is dependent for the major sources of its power" (*Rhetoric and Poetics* 16). As many scholars interested in the roots of literacy note, in oral societies, poetic heuristics such as sound patterns and symbolism aid the transfer and memorization of knowledge from one generation to the next (Ong, Havelock). These poetic devices remain the dominant hallmarks of the most powerful speeches and written arguments.

Furthermore, the discipline of creative writing emerged from an experiment to reinvigorate the teaching of writing in junior and high schools, not from broad consensus that poetic and rhetorical genres deserved separate treatment. According to D. G. Myers, creative

writing was “perhaps the most widely adopted of the curricular reforms” promulgated during the progressive education movement from the 1920s to the 1940s (*The Elephants Teach* 101). Hughes Mearns designed the class as a deliberate experiment to replace traditional English curricula in junior high schools. He first referred to the class as “creative writing” in *Creative Youth*, which outlined the class and results of the experiment. The book caught teachers’ and administrators’ attentions, and the class soon spread to other schools.

Myers asserts that Mearns’s class was a response to English curricula that held research and argument as its highest goals (“The Sudden Adoption”). Middle and high school English teachers rapidly embraced “creative writing” as an alternative to teaching writing as rationalistic, fact-gathering scholarship. Mearns’s creative writing model underscored reading literature in conversation with personal experience and using observation and personal experience to cultivate students’ confidence in writing. As Myers writes, “So rapidly were his materials swung into place in schools across the country that, little more than a decade after first news of Mearns’s experiment, creative writing had become one of the most popular subjects in the curriculum, receiving the official sanction of The National Council of Teachers of English” (103-104). Thus, Myers argues that creative writing had nothing to do with creating more poets and everything to do with reforming the teaching of English. Creative writing arose as a separate area of study at four-year universities and colleges only after the creation of the graduate student writers’ workshop, which resulted from an increasing interest in graduate-level instruction in poetic genres (chiefly fiction, drama, and poetry).

Given the shared histories of rhetoric and creative writing, it is unsurprising that instructional texts assigned in composition and creative writing courses share heuristics for

facilitating invention. Even classical heuristics, such as the Ciceronian *topoi* and the sophistic practice of *dissoi logoi* appear throughout the creative writing texts in my study. As a result, comparing how these texts and their practices relate invention and inspiration allows rhetoric-composition scholars an opportunity to begin deconstructing the problematic disciplinary distinctions between creative writing and rhetoric-composition pedagogies and use the strategies and scholarship of the one to enrich the other.

Admittedly, the utility of creative genres in undergraduate composition courses has been a subject of debate over the last forty or so years. Some authors contend that the emotional nature of creative writing genres generally and the personal essay specifically have little or no place in introductory writing classrooms because they create a false sense of truth that distracts young writers from developing a healthy amount of skepticism (Haefner, Bartholomae, and Klaus). Other authors argue the opposite; they assert that emotional engagement with writing is a practice in skepticism because it prompts students to be honest with themselves about the nature of their personal dispositions toward their subjects (Nan Johnson; Elbow, "Responses;" Newkirk, *The Performance of Self*; Micciche).

I tend to side with authors who argue for creative genres such as the personal essay in first- and second-year writing classrooms. While the personal essay may lead some young writers to inaccurate convictions about the nature of their experiences, these inaccurate convictions also arise in other genres. Beginning writers regularly make value judgments based on their emotional involvement with subjects in persuasive, exploratory, and informative essays. When a student finds research to support her gender-biased assumption that women are generally better caregivers than men, that research serves the same problematic purpose of validating her bias. Similarly, recounting the experience of watching

black men burn a confederate flag can reinforce racial prejudices. The responsibility of directing students to recognize personal and cultural biases belongs to all teachers of writing.<sup>1</sup>

### **Exigency for Study**

Invention is a much-discussed topic in rhetorical scholarship. Richard Young, Sharon Crowley, Janice Lauer, Kelly Pender, Thomas Rickert, Anis Bawarshi, and a multitude of others have examined everything from the complexities of Aristotle's teachings to using Weird Al Yankovic's lyrics as a creative catalyst. The many interpretations and definitions of invention throughout the subject's history raise important questions about the nature of thought and creativity. Yet, overt discussions of tacit invention elements such as inspiration are curiously few and far between.

While some rhetorical scholarship discusses unconscious and nonverbal invention factors such as affect, emotion, and embodiment, virtually no contemporary rhetoric-composition scholarship aims to make inspiration a matter of serious study. Occasionally, authors assert a need for this study—usually when seeking to understand the relationship between imitation and inspiration. Paul Northam and Santi V. Buscemi propose that reading triggers writing through combinations of verbal and nonverbal inspirational processes and recommend further study.

---

<sup>1</sup> Many teachers of creative nonfiction generally agree with these assumptions. Mary Karr encourages students who approach the personal essay to aim for reflection and contemplation. She seeks to dissuade them from arriving at solutions and truculent, "inaccurate convictions" (*The Art of Memoir*).

Excepting examinations of classical scholarship on inspiration and poetic (Holdstein), dissertations that attempt to make tacit understandings of inspiration overt are more prevalent in Education and Psychology. These dissertations aim to develop models of inspirational processes through empirical studies and occasionally propose strategies for triggering inspiration (Garberich, Poindexter, Klatzkin). For example, David J. Jennings's dissertation exemplifies the common approach to scholarship on inspiration within psychology ("Inspiration"). His study is an empirical review of psychological literature that discusses inspiration as a psychological construct. Using a combination of literature review and experimentation with human subjects, Jennings concludes that inspiration is concordant with reported levels of admiration, awe, and "emotional elevation" and that individuals experience greater inspiration if the inspirational stimulus accords with their values. The existence of these studies demonstrates that inspiration can and should be a matter of serious study in rhetoric-composition scholarship.

Throughout this dissertation, I occasionally use research from the sciences and social sciences to elucidate inspiration's characteristics and its relationship to imitation. By doing this work, I am filling a gap in rhetoric-composition scholarship on invention. Historically, rhetoric-composition scholarship tends toward skepticism of pedagogical practices that deal directly with unconscious and nonverbal elements of invention, such as emotion (Moffett 1-3). David Bartholomae's well-known argument with Peter Elbow about freewriting and Amy Robillard's case that encouraging emotional involvement puts writing teachers in the role of therapist illustrate this tension ("Writing with Teachers").

Like rhetoric and poetic, emotion and cognition are complimentary, joint processes, rather than ontologically distinct. As Nan Johnson's "Reader Response and the Pathos

Principle” argues, avoiding conversations about emotion or advocating that students should adopt a stoic approach to reading and writing perpetuates an assumption that students should instinctually distrust their emotions. Johnson argues through reader response theory that emotional responses are a legitimate critical point of departure for criticism. John Ackerman also maintains that any understanding of writing as a critical, intentional practice through which students learn to question their assumptions should take into account emotional utility (“Reading”). He describes “reading-to-write” through a “constructivist perspective” as “a literacy event where a composer’s literacy skills (i.e., linguistic, rhetorical awareness, and contextual strategies) interact with an array of information located in source texts, in the context for constructing meaning, and in (the writer’s and reader’s) prior experience” (134). Privileging intentional action is not in itself oppositional to recognition of emotional utility.

### **Primary Research and Methodological Framework**

My dissertation follows from an analysis of twenty commonly used instructional creative writing texts in conversation with rhetorical scholarship. I selected my sample of instructional creative writing texts through *FacultyEnlight*—an online content search, discovery, and adoption website owned by Barnes & Noble College Booksellers that allows faculty to comb through textbooks by institution and department. *FacultyEnlight* lets instructors view textbooks used at other institutions in the United States during the current semester. I compiled my primary texts from introductory creative writing classes at four-year state and private colleges across Texas during the 2015 spring semester. Each of the twenty

texts chosen for this study were assigned in undergraduate, introductory-level creative writing courses at two or more institutions.<sup>2</sup>

I was surprised by the theoretical rigor of many of these texts. They include *Conceptual Blockbusting* by James L. Adams, *Creativity* by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and Peter Turchi's *Maps of the Imagination*. These texts are not only theoretically rigorous; they also purport to target a broader audience than creative writers, such as biologists, mathematicians, and entrepreneurs. The inclusion of these texts in undergraduate, introductory-level creative writing classes signals that many creative writing teachers consider demystifying creativity an important tenet of their writing pedagogy. The inclusion of these texts implies that some introductory creative writing classes challenge students to think about creative writing as a discipline with merit outside of drama, prose, and poetry.

The texts in my sample represent four approaches to the teaching of creative writing: 1.) primers: texts intending to teach the basic elements of creative writing and which also include selected readings and writing prompts; 2.) prompt books: texts that aim to teach craft and nurture inspiration through practice; 3.) memoirs and essays on the art of writing: texts that share the author's creative process (primarily through anecdote and examination of creative works); and 4.) theory: texts that theorize the creative process through scholarship, metaphor, anecdote, and the extension of theory from a variety of disciplines. The majority of texts assigned in introductory creative writing courses at the surveyed institutions are primers. It is also worth noting that instructors typically paired primers with promptbooks, memoirs and essays, and theoretical texts. Alternatively, in absence of primers, some instructors paired memoirs and essays or theoretical texts with promptbooks that contain

---

<sup>2</sup> Appendix A includes a list of the texts' titles divided by genre.

short introductions to the different elements of craft, such as character, point of view, imagery, and plot.

My reading incorporates a critical framework insofar as it reveals how the values and expectations of the creative writing community shape writers' perceptions of invention. Each of the texts in my research sample are authority-laden by virtue of their assigned use. As such, these texts represent value-laden frameworks through which students learn to approach technique and craft.

Reading how creative writers frame the inspirational value of an invention practice such as journaling allows rhetoric-composition teachers and scholars a perspective by incongruity. Kenneth Burke defines "perspective by incongruity" in *Permanence and Change and Attitudes Toward History* as "a method of gauging situations by verbal atom cracking" (*Attitudes* 308). Burke argues that we express our emotional and habitual dispositions toward symbols (words, images, sign posts, etc.) through linguistic associations. As I elaborate in chapter 1, these linguistic associations contain emotional residue that binds language and communities together (Ahmed, Micciche). Burke theorizes that changing the context of the symbolic expression changes our emotional and habitual relationship to the subject by developing different associations. Thus, reading how creative writers relate inspiration to invention and associated teaching practices and strategies pivots rhetoric-composition understandings of invention toward a different set of values and habits.

Genres, as Charles Bazerman and Anis Bawarshi assert, manifest their communities' values, posing explicit or tacit expectations about how people approach the writing that happens there. In chapter 4, I argue that using a creative writing exercise in a first- or second-year composition class encourages students to apply the values and habits (emotional

involvement and risk-taking) they associate with creative writing genres to research and argument genres. Plus, my study has the added benefit of modernizing and enriching creative writing and rhetoric-composition understandings and applications of classical invention strategies, such as imitation, the Ciceronian *topoi*, and the *dissoi logoi*. In chapters 3 and 4, I examine how these teaching strategies are manifest in creative writing texts to highlight each strategies' inspirational value as well as offer exercises to apply some of these techniques to first- and second-year composition classrooms.

## **Chapter Overview**

The four chapters of this dissertation collectively move from a broad analysis of inspiration's literary heritage and key attributes to a closer investigation of how these attributes are manifest in my study's sample instructional creative writing texts. Chapters 2 through 4 demonstrate that although inspiration cannot be taught in the traditional sense of the word, it can be nurtured and triggered.

Chapter 1 introduces and demystifies the concept of inspiration through a review of rhetorical, scientific, and creative writing literature on invention. Exploring inspiration's literary heritage and its correlations across different cultures shows how and why many approach the subject with a healthy amount of skepticism. Yet, the various traditions of inspiration's usage throughout history also point to a paradigm of inspiration. Each instance of the word's heritage from ancient times up through the Enlightenment depicts inspiration as a phenomenon that is *evoked* by external stimuli in conversation with internal sources. Inspiration is *transcendent* in that it transcends individual and social expectations, and it is

always described as a form of *motivation*. This paradigm and inspiration's derivation from the Latin *inspirare*, which literally means "to breathe into," direct me toward a working definition that serves as a framework for later chapters. Inspiration underscores invention's situated, emotional, and embodied nature. Toward the end of the chapter, I develop this definition through the instructional creative writing texts in my study, rhetoric-composition theory and research, and research from the sciences and social sciences. I pose four characteristics of inspiration: 1.) inspiration is situational; 2.) it thrives on openness to uncertainty and discontinuities; 3.) it assumes emotional involvement; and 4.) it requires saturation or internalization.

Then, chapter 2 narrows the focus of this dissertation to the question of whether inspiration can be taught. Although inspiration cannot be taught in the traditional sense of the word, it can be nurtured and triggered. Creative writing and rhetoric-composition pedagogy share many of the same invention practices, such as ritual, freewriting, journaling, imitation, and writing prompts. However, the instructional creative writing texts in my study sometimes frame each practice's value differently. For example, Natalie Goldberg's *Writing Down the Bones* introduces freewriting as a practice in mindfulness, and Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way* describes freewriting as "brain drain" (Cameron 9-10). These passages highlight freewriting's emotional value with only occasional nods to the practice producing anything for publication. Instead, the authors propose that the practice nurtures inspiration by training students to stay focused on their writing and note how their writing situation, habits, and emotions motivate or hamper creative associations and insights. Exploring how creative writing texts implicitly or explicitly introduce the inspirational value of invention practices benefits rhetoric-composition pedagogy by highlighting the situated, emotional, and

embodied value of the invention practices that we already use. Consequently, chapter 2 offers strategies to make tacit attributes of inspiration an explicit part of rhetoric-composition pedagogy.

Chapters 3 and 4 take closer looks at imitation and writing prompts. In chapter 3, I examine the relationship between imitation and inspiration. I begin with a brief overview of imitation's use in ancient Greek and Roman curricula, then consider how the creative writing texts from my study productively complicate and expand imitation's use in the classical tradition. In the classical sense, imitation referred to a carefully sequenced process through which students learned to creatively and critically emulate models through dramatic reading or recitation, rhetorical analysis, memorization, paraphrase, transliteration, delivery, and peer review. Classical teachers of rhetoric used imitation to make rhetorical skill an emotional and embodied habit (*habitas*) or facility (*facilitas*) that students could intuitively and spontaneously draw upon as needed. The creative writing texts in my study similarly aim to develop students' facilities with craft through close reading or "reading like a writer" and imitation practices that parallel classical practices, such as retyping and scaffolding (Bernays and Painter; Sellers). Additionally, the instructional creative writing texts underscore the inspirational nature of reading and imitating. Sybil Estess and Janet McCann describe the inspirational nature of imagistic prose, and Heather Sellers frames line-by-line imitation as an inspirational aid for triggering novel and surprising insights and associations. Thus, chapter 3 provides strategies for nurturing and triggering inspiration through imitation while stressing that how and what we imitate matters.

Chapter 4 begins with the argument that creative writing prompts can benefit first- and second-year composition classes by productively complicating students' expectations of

academic writing and nurturing habits of mind that are conducive to creativity. Then, in the second half of the chapter, I recommend two types of creative writing prompts. Some of the creative writing prompts use invention heuristics that are similar to classical heuristics, such as the Ciceronian *topoi* and the *Dissoi Logoi*. Comparing these shared invention heuristics complicates students' and teachers' understandings of invention heuristics and demonstrates that invention heuristics become inspirational triggers when they engage students' emotions productively.

Finally, my dissertation concludes by emphasizing the need to shift rhetoric-composition and creative writing's tacit perceptions of inspiration to overt discussion of inspiration's use and value. Studying inspiration through creative writing texts and rhetoric-composition theory and scholarship provides a valid and unique opportunity for demystifying inspiration; shifting scholars', teachers', and students' attentions toward the situated, embodied, and emotional nature of invention; and discovering the inspirational capacity of shared invention practices and heuristics.

CHAPTER 1  
DEMYSTIFYING INSPIRATION

Two approaches dominate conversations about inspiration in the Western historical tradition. One proposes inspiration as a spiritual revelation originating from divine external sources. The other, which developed during the Enlightenment and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the birth of modern psychology, proposes that inspiration is a process of irrational psychological sources (i.e., the unconscious, pre-conscious, or both). Both perspectives persist in contemporary conversations about creativity, and both perspectives seem to have shrouded inspiration in a sense of mysticism. These approaches have also historically pitted religion and the sciences against each other, disrupting opportunities for consensus concerning inspiration's definition and value.

This mystic disposition is probably also to blame for the relative lack of rhetoric-composition scholarship that explicitly deals with inspiration. James Moffett's introduction to *Presence of Mind* hypothesizes that tacit elements of invention such as inspiration and intuition most likely receive little attention in rhetoric-composition scholarship because language can only stretch so far to encompass preverbal elements of thought and action (1-3). However, recent rhetoric-composition scholarship considers preverbal invention elements such as affect, emotion, and embodiment (Micciche, Rickert). Still, inspiration as a critical matter of study has yet to make an appearance. Early cognitive writing scholarship by Linda Flower and Richard Hayes occasionally nods to inspiration, but these accounts distinguish inspiration as a different attitude toward invention instead of discussing the issue at length ("Problem-Solving Strategies").

The purpose of this chapter is to explore inspiration's heritage to show why many avoid the term. Reviewing inspiration's history also reveals key characteristics. These key characteristics let me propose an operational definition for inspiration that serves as a framework for later chapters. The instructional creative writing texts from my study, in conversation with rhetoric-composition scholarship and research from the sciences and social sciences, show that inspiration is a situated, emotional, and embodied process that requires openness to uncertainty and discontinuities, and saturation or internalization of a field's knowledge and values. In later chapters, this working definition guides my use of the term as I analyze how invention practices and heuristics (many of which are shared by rhetoric-composition and creative writing pedagogies) nurture and trigger inspiration. Cultivating an overt understanding of tacit issues in invention such as inspiration is essential for scholars, teachers, and students.

### **A Brief History of Inspiration**

Our historical understanding of inspiration's meaning comes from its use and correlates in written and visual texts across different cultures. As Robert S. Albert and Mark A. Runco argue in "A History of Research on Creativity," each history of creativity is dependent upon cultural contexts, but certain similarities often appear. For example, most literary references to creativity highlight its social and economic value. Albert and Runco explain the pre-Christian concept of genius was originally associated with mystical powers of protection and good fortune, qualities that were divine in origin most likely because genius held immense social value. By the time of Aristotle, creativity began to be associated with

madness and frenzied inspiration, a characteristic that may have been a result of the culture's attempt to recognize (and deal with) mental health conditions such as schizophrenia. In that cultural context, people believed that the creative individual was possessed by the divine when inspired and that the divine attendant (or daemon) determined the type of creative work. Plato argues that a poet is able to create only that which the muse dictates. One person might be inspired to create choral songs, another epic poems (*Ion*). The Romans referred to this same idea as a genius and believed that the genius literally lived in the home of the artist. In the Western tradition, literary uses of inspiration through Judeo-Christian accounts and almost exclusively throughout literature up until the Enlightenment, describe inspiration as a divine external source that the speaker channels. These early accounts attribute the success of the artist to the divine, thereby implying that any resulting social or economic success is also divinely given.

### *Inspiration's Divine Tradition*

Throughout the early Western tradition, literary references describe inspiration as a form of divine favor. Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and a multitude of literary works following an oral tradition, or modeled after works with oral histories, begin by asking one or more divine sources to guide the speaker's telling of the story. This divine aspect of inspiration continues in the early Western conception of creativity through the biblical story of the Creation given in Genesis, and in the *New Testament*, when in the second book of Timothy, it is written, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (KJV 2 Timothy 3:16).

Yet while the divine tradition implies that individuals have limited control of when and how they are inspired, the Homeric tradition of invoking the muse and the linguistic roots of the word suggest otherwise. The Homeric tradition insinuates that individuals are capable of predisposing themselves to the divine since the orator calls out to the divine to guide the story and continues soon after. The character of Athena even acts as a mentor to Odysseus in *The Odyssey*. These references demonstrate an early assumption that individuals have some agency in the creative process.

Additionally, the etymology of inspiration depicts inspiration as an embodied process. In its literal sense, inspiration (from the Latin, *inspirare*, meaning “to breathe into”) refers to breathing in or inhaling an idea or purpose into the mind, accompanied by a feeling of impulse, especially of an exalted kind (*Oxford English Dictionary*).<sup>3</sup> Inhalation of the divine places the emphasis on the body said to become inspired. The metaphor of breath assumes that, in exhaling, the individual’s capacities mingle with the divine to create the inspired work.

Literary usage of inspiration by the sixteenth century openly acknowledged a link between inspiration and one’s emotional state. Shakespeare often uses the word in passages where characters call out to the gods asking for the emotional fortitude to make wise decisions while dealing with traumatic experiences. For example, in Act IV of *Titus Andronicus*, Marcus Andronicus, after learning that his daughter was raped, calls out to Apollo, Pallas, Jove, and Mercury. He cries, “Inspire me that I may this treason find” (lines

---

<sup>3</sup> According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the modern spelling of inspired first appears in Chaucer’s prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* (1387) when Chaucer describes Zephyr, the Greek god of the west wind, inspiring — breathing into or giving spirit to — the new shoots and flowers of the field. In this context, the divine is the first character to be introduced and acts as catalyst, breathing life into the story’s first scene. This first example of the word’s modern spelling also links inspiration to the Homeric tradition of invoking the muse.

1606-1607). Furthermore, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Ferdinand exclaims, “What zeale, what furie, hath inspirde thee now?” (Act 4, Scene 3) in critique of Domaine and Loganville’s hypocritical actions regarding their love interests and each other. These examples portray inspiration as a form of emotional motivation.

Discussions of divine inspiration persist in theological treatments of creativity and in creative writing craft texts, wherein writers still reference muses, daemons, and geniuses. Stephen King describes his muse as a guy who lives in the basement—a metaphor for his subconscious, which he says he has furnished through careful practice (144-145). Anne Lamott writes, “The good news is that some days it feels like you just have to keep getting out of your own way so that whatever it is that wants to be written can use you to write it” (8). Julia Cameron describes creativity as “the process of engaging the Great Creator in discovering and recovering our creative powers” (xxi). This “Great Creator,” whom Cameron refers to as a “spiritual electricity,” motivates and inspires writing, and does not need to be understood to be useful (xxii).

Yet, many creative writers resist and criticize inspiration’s divine tradition. Michael Smith, a creative writer and composition teacher, asserts that inspiration is only a dream “marketed and sold” through cinematic depictions of the creative process and creative writing self-help books:

Many creative writers hold on to the dream of instantaneous, fully formed inspiration, of a piece of writing springing, fully formed, from the head like Athena from the head of Zeus. This conception of creative writing is that it is an almost mystical experience, the writer a kind of shaman or vessel for some sort of force that either descends upon them or springs from some invisible, inner source. . . . This is a dream,

though, a popular illusion about creative writing that is marketed and sold. But knowing better, creative writers still can't help investing in it. ("Worshipping at the Altar" 67)

Smith assumes that the divine tradition is so attractive and pervasive that creative writers routinely market their work by tapping the public's desire for easy, fully-formed writing. To support his argument, he lists creative writing self-help books titles such as *Freeing Your Creativity* and *Writing Magic*. His assertion is not new. Edgar Allen Poe's 1846 essay "The Philosophy of Composition" depicts inspiration as a myth, perpetuated by poets who would "positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes at [their] elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought" (par. 5).

Additionally, by framing creativity as a divine gift, the myth of instantaneous, fully formed inspiration safeguards creativity from the masses. Albert and Runco explain that the Western tradition (especially within the Roman tradition, which linked creativity with patriarchal heredity) describes inspiration as a divine gift to specific individuals, particularly males. Eastern traditions assume no such distinction. Hindu and Buddhist traditions define inspiration as a natural, holistic force that unites every individual with the natural world (Albert and Runco 15).

Smith nods to the Western divine tradition's exclusionary function, but he primarily considers the problem that the divine tradition poses for students. His overall argument is a statement of resistance against the popular conception of inspiration as epiphany—the promise of a fully formed five-page persuasive essay that distracts students from the hard work and dedication that good writing requires. I agree with his observation that inspiration's continued association with muses, geniuses, and spiritual possession clouds students'

perceptions of the creative process. However, his dismissal is reminiscent of a broader trend of writing scholars and teachers who misrepresent and dismiss inspiration as popularly marketed mysticism.

Anne Lamott and Stephen King both posit skepticism about epiphany and insist that hard work (regular writing and reading) create the conditions for inspiration. In each of the passages referenced above, the authors of creative writing texts frame divine, external forces as psychological constructs, not literal beings. Moreover, Lamott and Cameron include belief in an external source of inspiration as a heuristic for creating psychological distance between the artist and the social and cultural pressures of production. Cameron explains that treating creativity as a spiritual endeavor helps writers stop taking their “emotional temperature[s] to see if inspiration is pending” and just show up and write (xxv). In other words, belief in a muse or “Great Creator,” helps writers cast off the typical self-doubt that all writers invariably feel at one point or another.<sup>4</sup>

### *Inspiration and the Birth of Psychology*

R. J. Sternberg explains that it was in direct response to inspiration’s divine mysticism that rational humanist philosophers during the fourteenth through seventeenth centuries, such as Thomas Hobbes (*Leviathan*) and William Duff (*An Essay on Original Genius*), attempted to demystify creativity by redefining it as a province of human ability, such as the imagination (*The Cambridge Handbook*). This shift in perception paved the way

---

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Gilbert’s *TED TALK*, “Your Elusive Creative Genius” explores this theory in detail. For writing teachers, her talk is an easy entry point to classroom conversations about the divine tradition’s social and creative function.

for conversations about creativity during the birth of modern psychology at the turn of the twentieth century when philosophers and psychologists attributed inspiration to unconscious or preconscious faculties. Although some theorists such as G. L. Raymond sought to reconcile the Judeo-Christian history of inspiration with scientific approaches, most emphasized psychology's ability to replace a religious focus on inspiration with deterministic explanations (*The Psychology of Inspiration*).

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries philosophers and psychologists theorized the nature of inspiration and creativity, attributing creative insights to preconscious, irrational associations between sensory information and unconscious memories. They explored questions of whether intuited truths could be considered more certain or true (Bergson) and whether creativity is a trait of specific personality types (Jung). Wallas, von Helmholtz, and Poincaré created models of the creative process that a majority of psychologists still embrace today. These models influenced writing research from the 1970s to present (Young et al., *Rhetoric*; Emig, *The Composing Process*; Flower and Hayes, "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing").

Psychological models of the creative process show that individuals who experience inspiration are predisposed to insight through conscious and unconscious processes and that inspiration requires verification and elaboration.<sup>5</sup> Though the authors' exact terminology varies, writing researcher Elizabeth Holman uses summary provided in P. E. Vernon's *Creativity* to define the stages of the creative process as follows ("Behind the Screen of Consciousness"):

---

<sup>5</sup> See Ribot, *Essay on the Creative Imagination*; Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious*; Wallas, *The Art of Thought* and Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity*.

*Preparation or Saturation* with the subject. In the first stage individuals collect and organize data relevant to a particular problem.

*Incubation or Inactivity.* During this phase, individuals are relaxed and not knowingly involved with the problem. Consciousness is directed elsewhere — but progress is being made at the unconscious (or preconscious) level. Possible solutions to the problem are generated free of reasoning, language, and social constraints.

*Insight or Illumination.* The most intimate coupling of intuition or insight occurs at this stage of the creative act and is called insight, or more traditionally, illumination. It is during this stage that the correct solution, association, or new idea is revealed in a brief and unexpected Eureka! or Aha! or Click! experience. . . .

*Verification.* The new idea, insight, or solution is articulated, tested, and evaluated.

(Holman 67-68)

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi adds a fifth stage to this process model:

*Elaboration.* [The stage that] probably takes up the most time and involves the most work. This is what Edison was referring to when he said that creativity consists of 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration. In [the case of writing] elaboration [consists] of selecting the characters of the story, deciding on a plot, and then translating the emotions [one has] intuited into strings of words. (*Creativity* 80)

Today, many psychologists tentatively continue to hold to this creative process model although they acknowledge that the model has not been conclusively verified through scientific experiment. Also, as creative writing texts often highlight, the creative process is

not strictly chronological and almost always becomes circular when periods of incubation, small illuminations, and large setbacks interrupt the long last stage of elaboration.<sup>6</sup>

In psychology, studies of inspiration most commonly associate it with the third stage of the creative process model: *insight* or *illumination*. The above authors use *insight* to refer to the phenomenon of the “pop” or the “aha!” moment, during which unexpected pieces of the puzzle fall into alignment. They sometimes use *illumination* synonymously, but *illumination* refers more often to a period of time when several insights occur in rapid succession. According to Holman, during the *illumination* stage, sensory information associated with a known or unknown stimulus is said to suddenly become linked through neural networks to the language centers of the brain, creating unexpected associations that produce insight (69). Psychologists Todd M. Thrash and Andrew J. Elliot speculate that sensory information (images, smells, sounds, gestures, etc.) stored in our unconscious memory takes part in fashioning these associations (“Inspiration”).

As mentioned earlier, like divine approaches to inspiration, the psychological approach cloaks inspiration with a mystic quality. Psychology portrays inspiration as a largely unobservable, unconscious, and elusive process. Some psychologists refer to inspiration in as fantastic terms as divine approaches. For example, Carl Jung assumed that intuition is a form of positive knowledge that does not suffer from the intervention or impurities of the conscious mind. Jung’s psychological theory furthered the claims of Aristotle and Kant, who assumed that intuition is more reliable than rational knowledge

---

<sup>6</sup> I find Robert Boswell’s chapter “Process and Paradigm” in *The Half-Known World* especially useful for exploring the digressive and uncomfortable nature of invention with students. Boswell explains that writers often experience inspiration when they stumble upon a character or detail that runs counter to their social and cultural paradigms—thus authors often use the term “paradigm shift” to relate a sudden insight or idea.

because it is irrational and therefore exempted from the mediation of culturally biased language systems (Holman 66). However, recent scholarship from psychology and neuroscience asserts that intuitive knowledge suffers similar cultural and social influences as those judgments that follow from verbal reasoning (Sachiko Kiyokawa et al.). People naturally gravitate toward the stories and patterns of interpretation that are endemic to their cultures. This explains why beginning fiction writers incline toward stock characters, such as the absent-minded professor or the donut-eating cop, while commenting on how easily and intuitively the writing seemed to flow.

I initially began seriously considering inspiration as a matter for study when I noticed how often the students in my first- and second-year composition classes rationalize their biases or resistance to revision through inspiration. When I first turned to rhetoric-composition research, I struggled to find anything that could help me make the subject more transparent for these students. I attribute my difficulty in part to rhetoric-composition's tendency to eschew quasi-mystical subjects such as inspiration for related, less fraught topics. James Moffett's introduction to *Presence of Mind* underscores this point when he notes the broad range of approaches and terms in rhetoric-composition scholarship that discuss subjects related to nonverbal or preverbal writing factors: the unconscious, the body, silence, imagery, emotion, affect, felt sense, motivation, tacit knowledge, creativity, etc. (1-3). No standardized terminology exists to discuss writing factors that deal with beginning writers' intrinsic motivations and intuitive judgments. As a result, even beginning to build upon prior scholarship to discuss inspiration proves difficult.

Moreover, in some instances where the word appears, cognitive writing researchers depict inspiration as a category of intuitive, non-systematic invention approaches. Linda

Flower and John Hayes's early efforts to study the cognitive problem-solving approaches of beginning and experienced writers drew a bright line between inspiration and invention heuristics, calling them "two complementary but semi-autonomous processes" (Flower and Hayes, "Problem-Solving Strategies" 452). In their early models of the writing process, invention heuristics refer to conscious, deliberate efforts that can be parsed into a system of rule-governed steps, taught, and adapted to a variety of writing situations. Inspiration, on the other hand, is an intuitive, playful process that proficient writers experience as a natural, fluid state.

By dividing inspiration from systematic and deliberate "problem-solving strategies," early work on invention sidelined tacit issues of attitude and motivation from invention. Later, in 1996, Hayes admitted that their early cognitive scholarship on invention omitted emotion and motivation because of their reliance on protocol studies ("A New Framework"). Yet, their distinction between inspiration and systematic invention heuristics likely carried into the process-centered approaches that still pervade rhetoric-composition pedagogy due to the early scholarship's heavy reliance on cognitive psychology, linguistics, and literacy studies. A quick review of the contemporary textbooks I use when teaching first- and second-year composition classrooms reveals that similar distinctions continue in today's teaching materials. Many of the textbooks I use to teach research- and argument-centric writing pose invention heuristics and practices as reliable alternatives to inspiration or else omit the word entirely (Graff and Birkenstein, Crowley and Hawhee, Lunsford and Ruskiewicz). Those textbooks that come closest to discussing inspiration approach the subject under different titles, such as "the process of inquiry" or "discovery" (Palmer, Ballenger). The unfortunate result of omitting the word "inspiration" is that some students assume that inspiration and

systematic approaches are two different attitudes toward invention when the two are inseparable.

Without understanding the rich history of inspiration's divine association and the evolving psychological conversations surrounding inspiration's association with invisible psychological forces, inspiration may seem too mystical or too methodologically problematic for many teachers and researchers. However, inspiration's history reveals key characteristics that begin to form a construct for demystifying inspiration. As cognitive psychologists Todd M. Thrash and Andrew J. Elliot maintain, the historical tradition of inspiration—divine and psychological—is immensely valuable because it creates a working construct through which to view inspiration's value and function in culture.

The divine tradition offers a paradigm of inspiration's process and core characteristics as a phenomenological state. In each instance of the word's literary heritage from ancient times up through the Enlightenment, the authors depict inspiration as a force that is *evoked* by external stimuli. Inspired individuals emotionally and intellectually *transcend* their individual beliefs and the social expectations of their communities. Lastly, the divine tradition illustrates inspiration as a form of *motivation*. In the next section, I explore these characteristics further through the instructional creative writing texts in my study and with the assistance of rhetoric-composition theory and research. I also periodically back my discussion with research from the sciences and social sciences. As Thrash and Elliot note, psychology and neuroscience provide the methods through which all fields can develop a stronger understanding of inspiration's internal work. Each approach is valuable to rhetoric-composition scholarship and pedagogy as we endeavor to understand more about how individuals become inspired and inspiration's relationship with invention.

## Characteristics of Inspiration

In popular culture, inspiration implies an epiphany—an instantaneous insight gifted by the gods or called forth from mysterious, unconscious origins. Theology uses the word to refer to transcendent, divine knowledge. Psychology tends to discuss it as a form of intuitive thought that draws on conscious and unconscious cerebral functions. These varying definitions illustrate the fact that how people understand inspiration depends on their backgrounds. There is no one unifying definition of inspiration. In this section, I provide my own working definition of inspiration in order to facilitate classroom discussions surrounding these different yet related aspects of invention.

When I refer to inspiration, I refer to the process implied in the etymological root of the word. Inspiration (from the Latin *inspirare*, meaning “to breathe into”) denotes inhaling an idea or purpose into the mind, accompanied by a feeling of impulse, which compels action (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Inspiration illustrates the individual’s role in a larger locus of inventive activity. Creative individuals breathe in the world around them, internalize that social and material stimuli that are explicit or implicit in their environments, and exhale something back through their unique, experientially, and emotionally formed perspectives. So, a creative work is not wholly new, but it is unique to its creator’s writing situation. The metaphor of breath frames inspiration as an embodied process. Inspiration is embodied because it refers to the ways that our bodies, like breathing, reflexively create and respond to various writing situations. Emotion channels how we construct the stories that we use to make sense of the world; it focuses our attentions; and it binds time into what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls “flow” (*Flow*). Thus, inspiration provides a metaphor that writing

teachers and rhetoric-composition scholars can use to illuminate these tacit elements of invention that sometimes escape conscious awareness.

Throughout inspiration's history, authors of all backgrounds tend to use inspiration interchangeably with emotional engagement, intuition, motivation, evocative stimuli, interests or obsessions, and sudden transcendent insights or paradigm shifts. Thus, the word inspiration always invokes these other ideas even though many of these subjects command their own shares of scholarly attention.

Given the task of consistently crafting narratives and poetry that delight and move audiences, creative writers have to find ways to stay invested and discover those moments of insight that productively challenge both writer and audience. As a result, the instructional creative writing texts in my study provide metaphors and anecdotes that demystify inspiration for students. They also offer tools and strategies that beginning writers can use to become more aware of how their writing situations influence creativity and use this knowledge to stimulate inspiration. In this section, I use the creative writing texts from my study in conversation with creativity studies scholarship and some rhetoric-composition research to outline the many interrelated characteristics to which inspiration refers. In particular, I discuss four observations about inspiration from the texts assigned in introductory creative writing classes to highlight inspiration's relationship to invention and create a theoretical framework for the rest of this dissertation:

- 1.) Inspiration is situational.
- 2.) It thrives on openness to uncertainty and discontinuities.
- 3.) It assumes emotional involvement.
- 4.) It requires saturation or internalization.

### *Inspiration is Situational*

Inspiration is not the product of an isolated writer; rather, it follows from a complex ecosystem of social, cultural, material, and individual factors. Some creative writing teachers explicitly make this point by assigning texts that theorize creativity and conceptual thinking as social and cultural processes (Adams; Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity*; Turchi). Additionally, the authors of primers, prompt books, and memoirs and essays on the art of writing observe that inspiration develops through specific writing situations (Boswell, Dillard, Goldberg, Lamott, Turchi). Their introductory language and anecdotes echo rhetoric-composition scholarship on invention as a social and material act (LeFevre, Rickert), but they emphasize the practical strategies that writers can use awareness of their writing situations to nurture and trigger inspiration.

Like rhetoric-composition scholarship on invention, many authors of creative writing texts embrace a social perspective on invention. As Karen Burke LeFevre asserted in *Invention as a Social Act*, “ideas arise and are nurtured or hindered by interaction with social context and culture” (LeFevre). No individual is ever fully in control over her creative process. Communities give words meaning; creative individuals contribute to their communities by internalizing the accumulated knowledge of their fields and previous generations. Writers imagine audiences as a heuristic for forming and expressing thought and invent texts with co-authors, editors, and fellow writers (Ede and Lunsford). Creative writers highlight the power of writing in communion with other authors, using their words to imagine new possibilities for stories, poetry, and drama, or learning through close analysis and imitation how language creates intended and unintended effects (Prose, Burroway, Bernays and Painter, Dillard, etc.).

The theoretical texts assigned in creative writing classes show that creative writing teachers are keenly aware of creativity's social, material, and individual nature. Several of the introductory creative writing classes that I surveyed assign theoretical texts that examine invention's social and cultural nature. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's *Creativity* relates all creativity to "the interaction[s] between a person's thoughts and the sociocultural context" (24). According to Csikszentmihalyi, creativity arises from the synergy of many sources—not only the mind of a single person. He asserts, "It is easier to enhance creativity by changing conditions in the environment, than trying to make people think more creatively" (1).

How we intellectually and emotionally process information and express thoughts depends on how our cultures and immediate communities understand the world around us. I use *culture* here to demarcate the ways that cultural norms and expectations affect writing. Peter Turchi uses the metaphor of the writer as cartographer in *Maps of the Imagination* to show how writers map their subjects according to the cultural conventions of the communities in which they live (Turchi "Chapter 2"). Thus, Turchi declares that the writers should actively seek out the blanks on the map—what our cultures and communities intentionally or unintentionally omit.

Robert Boswell builds off of this point in *The Half-Known World*. He stresses that excellent fiction flouts our social paradigms, creating paradigm shifts. He uses "paradigm shift" in the tradition of Thomas Kuhn: "a revolutionary change in a specific way of thinking" (Boswell 35). Terrific scenes, dynamic characters, and effective language flounder when "some traditional redemption mechanism or epiphany tool is put to familiar use" (36). Boswell infers that beginning writers suffer this trouble so often because they assume that their job as fiction writers is to "create a world" when what fiction really asks us to do is

“create a social paradigm in which the character participates” (37). Flat and unexciting fiction conforms too readily to the general perceptions, practices, and beliefs of our culture. Thus, students can seek out inspiration by inventing stories around characters who break from their cultural and social preconceptions to adopt new perspectives. However, this ability does not come naturally to most beginning writers.

Many of the instructional creative writing texts in my study advocate reading and emulating literary authors because emulation socially conditions writers to notice the uncertainties and misfit associations that lead to paradigm shifts. Natalie Goldberg, in *Writing Down the Bones*, states that reading the works of others changes the ways that we perceive the world, consequently enriching our work by broadening our perspectives (102-104). Similarly, Francine Prose comments over and over that reading texts can inspire us because trying out the techniques of other writers motivates us to try new things (*Reading Like a Writer*). When young writers read literature that showcases the author’s ability to empathize with radically different perspectives, be open to misfit associations, and move from generality to pointed and nuanced insight, they begin to embrace and apply these attitudes in their own writing.

Additionally, creative writing texts, like recent rhetoric-composition scholarship on invention, embrace the fact that the material, nonhuman world influences creativity. Thomas Rickert, rhetorical theorist and author of *Ambient Rhetoric*, stresses that invention is not only “discursively grounded” in social and cultural expectations; invention always “attunes” to the materiality, social networks, technologies, and informational systems of the places in which we dwell (223). “Attunement” complicates the tendency of some rhetoric-composition scholarship and pedagogy to think of invention as a series of abstract steps that are

reproducible across different situations. Instead, all minds “attune” to their environment, creating a state that Rickert refers to as “invention *inventing* itself” (61). Each new situation locates invention, grounding what one creates in the concrete, material world.

The instructional creative writing texts from my study share anecdotes that show attunement in action. For example, Natalie Goldberg’s chapter “Beginner’s Mind, Pen and Paper” opens with the assertion that each writer begins anew and without assurance, regardless of prior success. “Actually,” she recalls, “every time we begin, we wonder how we ever did it before. Each time is a new journey with no maps” (6). Every writing situation is different. The writer must assemble her tools, knowing that each tool will affect what and how she writes. Like Rickert, she locates invention in the materiality and concreteness of different writing situations. She expounds upon how a new, far-too-fast roller pen creates a sense of chaos or how an expensive hardcover journal conveys the feeling that anything she writes there has to be good (7). Goldberg’s tools direct her writing by enabling and constraining what she notices, how she feels, and what she does. She concludes, “It is true that the inside world creates the outside world, but the outside world and our tools also affect the way we form our thoughts. Try skywriting” (9). In the end, she advises writers to “experiment” and “choose [their] tools carefully, but not so carefully that [they] get uptight or spend more time at the stationery store than at [the] writing table” (9). Her purpose is not to convince writers that the wrong pen or writing surface can block creativity but to encourage beginning writers to notice how changing their tools and location influences creativity.

Goldberg’s emphasis on the relationship between writing situation and creativity parallels Annie Dillard’s *The Writing Life*, which returns again and again to how material,

social, and temporal factors influence cognition and communication. Dillard describes the writing life as a practice in learning the ways that our material realities affect our minds. She writes, “The materiality of the writer’s life cannot be exaggerated” (46). In “Chapter One” she describes her various experiences at the same, small, study carrel in her local library, and how the time of day and happenings outside the window influenced her writing. In the next chapter, she expands this topic to her work schedule: how the time of day and people around her affect her mood, how she thinks about herself and her writing, and how these thoughts distract or focus her (“Chapter Two”). Additionally, Sybil Estess and Janet McCann aim to help beginning writers become more aware of how different audiences, physical locations, and technologies affect writing. They devote their journaling and “creative reading” practices to showing students that inspiration always depends upon writing situation.<sup>7</sup> In chapter 2, I explore how Estess and McCann’s journaling practice nurtures students’ awareness of creativity’s dependence on one’s writing situation.

### *Openness to Uncertainty and Discontinuity*

Writers need attitudes of openness toward uncertainty so that they do not shy away from opportunities for transcendent insights. In this section, I explore the language and exercises that creative writers use to introduce beginning writers to openness as a creative virtue. Openness is an intellectual and emotional habit of mind that predisposes writers to emotional and intellectual transcendence.

---

<sup>7</sup> See chapter 2 for more on how creative writers frame inspiration’s dependency on material, location, and linguistic factors.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, throughout inspiration's literary history, artists, historians, and scientists depict inspiration as one or many moments of *transcendence* occurring in close succession. These depictions show that transcendence is both an emotional response and an intellectual move. As an emotional response, it refers to one or several moments when the individual realizes something of greater import than their usual concerns. As an intellectual move, it refers to the individual's ability to move from prior beliefs and expectations about a subject to new insights. The intellectual move can be identified in writing; it is the applied outcome of the emotional move, but the emotional move is just as important because it tells the writer that she is close to a new insight and motivates her to devote the necessary time and focus to bringing the idea to fruition (Thrash and Elliot; McCrae).

Openness precedes transcendence. Psychologists studying inspiration and creativity use openness to refer to a psychological state of curiosity, aesthetic sensitivity, and receptive engagement that views experience as intrinsically valuable (Thrash and Elliot; McCrae). Openness refers to a state of mind that values listening, observing, and ruminating upon experience without an imposed motivation or goal. Thrash and Elliot conclude that "receptive engagement," a characteristic of openness, reliably predicts transcendence. In their study of 172 undergraduate students, participants regularly recounted recent moments of inspiration through written narratives. The researchers found that the participants who reported the highest levels of inspiration referred to themselves as recipients of inspiration, emphasizing that inspiration was the result of being acted upon by role models, scientific insights, or novel locations ("Inspiration" 962-963). Another study of working and retired scientific and managerial professionals found that those individuals who displayed the

highest levels of openness presented the highest levels of divergent thinking. Additionally, during interviews, close friends and family regularly identified these individuals as creative, which led the researchers to assume a strong correlation between openness and creativity (McCrae).

The instructional creative writing texts in my study regularly underscore the value of openness. In *Method and Madness*, Alice LaPlante devotes a full chapter to openness (“The Gift of Not Knowing”). She pronounces the position of having nothing to write about a creative advantage because it lets writers share the emotional journey of attending experience and “encountering the new” with readers (29). Alice LaPlante explains that the writer’s first job is to turn on the camera, “to notice as you walk. You can worry about ‘developing’ it later—all that matters is the camera is on” (9). Similarly, Julia Cameron uses the metaphor of filling a well with observations (23). Creative writers must assume that all experience is potentially valuable—that a stray comment or the ripped stitches in the hem of a dress can lead to a novel character or image that predicts the outcome of a story. LaPlante advises that carrying a journal can cultivate this habit of openness. She also provides exercises that I explore later in this section.

Beginning writers find it difficult to tolerate uncertainty because our culture often tells them to take definitive positions before they are ready—to act certain even when they are not. Janet Burroway adds that beginning writers struggle with openness because they are so used to focusing on what others care about:

Identifying what we care about is not always easy. We are surrounded by a constant barrage of information, drama, ideas, and judgements offered to us live, printed, and electronically. It is so much easier to know what we ought to think and feel than what

we actually do. Worthy authorities constantly exhort us to care about worthy causes, only a few of which really touch us, whereas what we care about at any given moment may seem trivial, self-conscious, or self-serving. . . . [Yet] often what seems unworthy is precisely that thing that contains the universal, and by catching it honestly, then stepping back from it, you may achieve the authorial distance that is an essential part of significance. (*Writing Fiction* 10-11)

Like LaPlante, Burroway recommends journaling or freewriting to condition writers into “noticing what they notice” and to develop that sense of openness which assumes all observations are potentially valuable (11).<sup>8</sup> Openness is so essential for writers because it is often the seemingly mundane details that evoke the feeling of transcendence—that sense that tells writers they are on the verge of discovering something important and which leads them to devote long stretches of time to exploring their subjects through writing.

In particular, instructional creative writing texts stress an openness to uncertainties, messiness—what Robert Boswell calls “the human slippage that makes people large and contradictory and fascinating” (*The Half-Known World* 23). As I mentioned in the section above on writing situations, Boswell’s understanding of what makes good fiction requires characters who break from their cultural and social preconceptions and adopt new perspectives (36-37). To create these characters, writers have to not only become critically aware of the cultural and social paradigms that guide individual thought and action; they have to learn to expect that each discontinuity they notice is significant. Boswell lists a number of questions to guide the creation of characters:

1. What did your character do this morning?

---

<sup>8</sup> See chapter 2 for additional discussion about using journaling and freewriting to condition openness.

2. Why does your character think he ought to be fired?
3. What recent mistake vaguely reminds your character of a previous mistake she can't name?
4. What stupid thing kept her awake last night?
5. If you met your character in a bar, what would she think of you? In what ways would she be right? What would she get wrong? What would she see about you that you don't yet understand about yourself?

These questions turn writers' attentions to the social and cultural expectations that guide thought and action. Narrating a morning routine leads writers to discover how the character fits or does not fit into prevailing social and cultural expectations. Does she let her hair air dry or does she diligently blow dry and curl it? Night time insecurities can lead to the recognition of a discontinuity between thought and action. Does she lay awake all-night fretting about a missed work deadline then spend an extra twenty minutes organizing the coffee mugs in the break room? The ability to notice how a character fits and breaks from the prevailing social paradigms requires an attitude that expects every action and thought is potentially consequential. Additionally, Boswell, like LaPlante, characterizes this openness as an emotional ability, noting that "The discoveries you make about your characters work best if they involve searching that makes you uncomfortable, that forces you to face something that you don't want to face, something that makes you want to flee—or at least shut off your laptop and go for a walk" (23).

Boswell and LaPlante's emphasis on uncertainty and discontinuity is especially important given beginning writers' tendencies to want to wrap research essays and arguments up into nice, tidy, often cliché conclusions. The typical five-paragraph essay that students

learn in middle and high school demonstrates our cultural inclination toward seeking reasons and examples that support our generalizations instead of beginning with a complex, messy experience and reaching for a conclusion that reflects that messiness and complexity. By asking students to be open to uncertainty and discontinuity, I ask them to do something that is contrary to how they have been conditioned.

Openness to uncertainty and discontinuity is just as important for rhetoric-composition pedagogy as creative writing pedagogy. Contemporary works by Thomas Newkirk and Candace Spigelman assume that engaging with personal experience through genres such as the personal narrative direct students toward insights by engaging them with the discontinuities between belief and experience (*The Performance of Self, Personally Speaking*). Yet most students in first- and second-year composition classrooms struggle with the personal essay because they are not conditioned to the openness that the genre requires.

Critical pedagogy also requires this openness to uncertainty and discontinuity. Henry Giroux describes critical pedagogy in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* as “an educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action” (“Lessons from Paulo Freire”). Critical pedagogy aims to help students recognize the hierarchical paradigms that shape belief and action by noticing how experiences and practices are often discontinuous with hierarchical paradigms. Again, this ability to notice and pursue these often-uncomfortable observations through language requires openness.

One of my hopes for this dissertation is that it helps writing teachers develop strategies for conditioning openness to uncertainty and discontinuity. The instructional

creative writing texts in my study imply that openness can be conditioned. As I mentioned earlier, LaPlante's chapter shows beginning writers that openness to uncertainty is a virtue and proposes that it can be learned through journaling and targeted exercises.

I regularly assign Alice LaPlante's second chapter, "The Gift of Not Knowing," as a precursor to the discovery essay in my first-year composition classes. The discovery essay, as introduced in Bruce Ballenger's *The Curious Writer*, asks writers to delay taking a position and instead focus on conveying the process of discovery as one question leads to another. In doing so, the genre expects an attitude of openness that LaPlante's chapter lets me explore and clarify with students. The exercises at the end of LaPlante's chapter help students invent research topics that diverge from the typical essays about global warming and gun control to pressing questions that they might otherwise overlook, such as "Are grades a reliable predictor of intelligence?" The first exercise at the end of the chapter asks writers to list things that important people in their lives never taught them. The second exercise asks writer to compose a series of statements about "gaps in [their] understanding or knowledge in order to generate new material" (38-39).

### *Emotional Involvement*

Earlier in this chapter I noted that the Homeric tradition of calling out to the muse features characters who are searching for the emotional fortitude to act within stressful situations. These passages convey that emotional involvement is a significant part of the creative process. Emotion is an active word; it signifies how affect translates into action. To emote is to automatically act upon a situation in such a way that brings our prior, unique

histories and unconscious impressions of self and subject to bare upon a new situation. We are convinced that an idea or an apt metaphor has merit because we feel it in our bodies, and then, if the conditions are right, that emotional arousal sends us off to the races or into the zone. Emotion cues writers' attentions to important topics; it aids in memory formation and retrieval; and it focuses and motivates writers.

People emotionally respond to potential insights. Many of the creative writing texts from my study describe inspiration as a full-body process. They refer to insight as a "gut feeling" or a "hunch" that informs action (Lamott, Dillard, Goldberg, Sellers, Estess and McCann). Anne Lamott describes the emotion as "a kind of sweet panic growing lighter and quicker and quieter (9). These references underscore the fact that inspiration is a felt sense. *Transcendence*, as I mentioned in the last section, refers both to an intellectual move and an emotional move that signals writers to recognize issues of greater importance and then focuses them on the task of bringing the idea to fruition. The emotion does not literally translate into the idea, but it tells the writer of the potential of an idea, and it tends to happen while writers are writing, reading, or engaging in an activity somehow related to the writing.

Emotion mediates and facilitates inspiration at the level of memory retrieval and idea formation. Neuroscientists Paula Hertel and Daniel Reisberg illustrate how the body constructs and retrieves memories using powerful neurochemicals (*Memory and Emotion* 25). Neurochemicals conduct information between the stomach and areas of the brain associated with memories and sight, smell, sound, and taste. These same neurochemicals play a key role in the construction and retrieval of memories, so sudden insights and ideas are intimately related to prior and present physiological experiences. Individuals internalize and interpret sensory information into conscious and unconscious memories, storing that

information in multiple parts of the brain and nervous system. Some memories are inaccessible to our conscious awareness until they are evoked by emotional responses to new events or analogical representations, at which point that information becomes recognizable as a gut feeling or a hunch (Holman, Miller). This explains why writers often experience the emotion of inspiration while reading or writing. After all, words are analogical representations of experience.

Hildy Miller, a writing researcher and professor of rhetoric and composition at Portland State University, defines writing as a dynamic process through which words as analogic representations convey images that bundle emotion and experience (“Sites of Inspiration”). Her study of 148 upper- and lower-division students at Midwestern University relates the phenomenon to motivation. Researchers asked students to write about how they write best and interrupted them three times to fill out questionnaires about their thought processes. The study revealed that over a quarter of the participants used images in their thought processes to recall information, work through abstract ideas, and motivate their writing. In post-interviews, these students implied that the images and ideas they returned to during their writing were emotionally laden and that the emotional quality of the idea ended up motivating the direction of the writing. For instance, in one case a student described a recurring image of herself waiting tables at fifty-years-old. As the image continued to return, she realized that she was angry. She says, “And the next thing I knew my pen wouldn’t stop” (121). Miller’s study illustrates that emotions color writers’ memories, words, and ideas, and that they play an integral role in motivating the kinds of insight writers are inclined to have as well as the resulting writing.

Optimally, emotional arousal contributes to the phenomenon that Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi terms “flow.” It is a state of pleasure during which the miscellaneous distractions of one’s environment fade away, hours contract into minutes, and self-doubt is replaced with energized absorption (*Flow*). Many beginning writers assume that their subjects should evoke this motivational state before or soon after they begin to write. However, experienced writers know that this type of motivation typically only occurs after they have spent hours, days, weeks, or even months immersed in a subject and that it is regularly interrupted by the pressures and realities of everyday life. As Natalie Goldberg insists in *Writing Down the Bones*, like running, “you practice [writing] whether you want to or not. You don’t wait around for inspiration and a deep desire to run. It’ll never happen, especially if you’re out of shape and avoiding it” (13). So, writers must write whether they want to or not and be ready to know what to do with their emotional responses when they happen.

Laura Micciche takes a rhetorical approach to explaining how emotion motivates and focuses writing (*Doing Emotion*). In early drafts of this dissertation, I leaned heavily on Kenneth Burke’s concept of piety to elucidate how emotion motivates and stifles creativity.<sup>9</sup> However, I find that “stickiness,” coined by Sara Ahmed in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, is a clearer metaphor for emotion’s role in writing, especially when discussing inspiration with undergraduate students. Ahmed uses “stickiness” to explain how emotion shapes the

---

<sup>9</sup> *Permanence and Change* and *Attitudes Toward History* use the concept of piety to explain how individuals’ perspectives of the world are formed and why they become resistant to change. Burke defines piety as “a system-builder, a desire to round things out, to fit things together into a unified whole” (*Permanence and Change* 74). Each person’s piety is her uniquely constructed desire to make each new experience agree with the range of her past experiences. It is “*the sense of what properly goes with what*” (*Permanence and Change* 74 emphasis original).

discourse that circulates through political parties and how the emotional residue throughout that discourse unifies members. In *Doing Emotion*, Laura Micciche applies the word to help readers understand emotion's pedagogical implications. As Micciche explains, when people read or write, the words they use do not just act as conveyors of meaning; words also "stick" to other words and ideas as writers use past experiences to make sense of new experiences. Thus, as Kenneth Burke proposed in *Permanence and Change*, "The poet, writing of night, puts together all those elements that are his night-thoughts, the things that go with night as he knows it" (75). Emotion binds thought so that one idea calls out to the next. It also alerts us to the ruptures between personal experience and social expectation.

Micciche argues that emotions are a rhetorical analytic that point us toward relational observations about ourselves and the people around us. She argues that emotions happen between people and form the residue that lets one person identify with another or compels them to separate (14). Consequently, as people become more aware of their emotional reactions, they become more aware of their relationships with others. For creative writers, such recognition is a practical skill that lets them locate the discontinuities which turn them to a new insight about how people conform with or diverge from their social paradigms (Boswell).

Many rhetoric-composition scholars have stepped forward to critically consider invention's emotional nature (Elbow, Murray, Berthoff, Rickert, Spigelman, Micciche). All of these authors raise concerns over what they understand as a tendency in rhetoric-composition pedagogy to "neglect or underestimate emotion's role in the process of meaning-making" (Micciche). Emotions whether acted upon or not permeate all of our responses, and yet some popular rhetoric-composition textbooks still treat them as an

additive part of persuasion. For example, Andrea Lunsford and John Ruszkiewicz's *Everything's an Argument* primarily describes emotion (*pathos*) as a persuasive appeal that rhetors add to their arguments in order to sustain interest or diffuse tense topics with humor. Yet, to really understand and teach emotion's role in argument, we need to recognize it as an intrinsic motivator that perpetually influences all language production.

To use emotional responses productively, students need to be open to being emotionally involved with their subjects, and they also need to recognize the significance of the emotional response when it happens. There is a darker side to our emotional involvement with subjects. In my own experience, I have found that students who proudly proclaim they were inspired to write about a subject are also those who resist revising, who construct narratives with flat, stereotyped characters, or who end a compelling and thought-provoking essay with a cliché about how power comes with great responsibility. Emotional arousal can turn students toward a topic or an insight to which they want to dedicate substantial time, but it does not guarantee that the audience will find anything inspiring in the work. Inspiration depends on the writer's ability to notice and pursue uncertainty and discontinuity. It also depends on the writer's command of language—how they have internalized or saturated themselves in the craft of writing.

### *Saturation or Internalization*

Creativity theorists understand that inspiration occurs when writers immerse themselves in the methods, knowledge, and values of the fields where they seek to make contributions and their subjects of study. In the creative process model, this stage is called

“saturation,” but as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi proposes, it seems more fitting to refer to this stage as “internalization” (*Creativity*). Bodies internalize the rules and values of their social, material, and cultural situations. Thus, “internalization” directs us back to the understanding of inspiration implied in the etymological root of the word. The Latin *inspirare* literally means “to breathe into” and implies a body that inhales information from the external world and exhales something back (*The Oxford English Dictionary*). Inspiration is an embodied process; it relies upon the individual’s unique automatic responses that are specific to her writing situation, but systematic practice and study condition her responses.

Historically, we know that creative pursuits at the macro-level such as literature, art, the sciences, and advanced mathematics flourish in cultures where surplus wealth and time are available, such as Greece in the fifth century BCE, Florence in the fifteenth century, and Paris in the nineteenth century. The individuals in a society who make creative contributions are usually those who spend significant amounts of time immersed in their subjects through systematic practice and observation (Csikszentmihalyi 8-9).

Alice LaPlante asserts, the ability to write effective literature that surprises and convinces readers in the manner that E. M. Forster describes in *Aspects of the Novel* requires a *poux de deux* of method and madness (1-4). She states, “Method can be learned in an academically rigorous, systematic manner” (1). Inspiration, which LaPlante calls “madness,” requires an intuitive and occasionally reckless approach that applies the method in such a way that creates something meaningful for both the writer and reader. That process depends upon the writer’s unique situation, history, physiology, and also the rules of craft that convey meaning to others.

Later in the text, LaPlante uses Philip Larkin's "The Pleasure Principle" to explain how the writer's interested exploration of experience works in tandem with the writer's embodied knowledge of craft to convey interest:

1. A person becomes obsessed with something to the degree that he or she is "compelled to do something about it" — that is write.
2. The person writes down words (A "verbal device") that attempt to reproduce the original emotion in "anyone who cares to read it."
3. Other people, from all places and all walks of life, read the words and "set off" a device that re-creates what the writer originally felt and/or thought.

(LaPlante 37)

Combined with the writer's internalization of the rules of craft and cultural beliefs surrounding the of choice of words, rhythm, etc., interest guides the writer's choices, which in turn evokes emotion and action in readers. The three stages above are interdependent. If the writer has felt no emotion, there will be nothing to convey nor guide the writer's choices. If the writer has not internalized the rules of craft and culture that lead to the appropriate selection of language, the emotion cannot be translated. If there is no audience to interpret and be evoked by the emotion, there can be no evocation. These three stages convey a central tenant of many creative writing texts: emotional and intellectual investment are channeled between readers and writers, and embodied knowledge of craft allows that channeling.

The word "interest" in the passage above is also significant. Interest connotes an individual's sense of value rooted in one's emotional involvement with the subject. It is a conditioned response. We learn what is interesting from prior experiences and from what those whom we admire find interesting. Multiple metaphors throughout the texts propose that

what one reads directs what one creates. For example, Ray Bradbury describes cultivating inspiration as the writer putting his muse on a diet of literature (33-39). Reading literature teaches writers the kinds of observations and stories that are valuable and tacitly directs their interested explorations of experience. Through internalization, systematic study translates into intuitive process. As LaPlante concludes, “the whole thing comes full circle: craft and creativity, method and madness” (2).

The texts assigned in introductory creative writing classes emphasize the importance of saturating oneself in the study of one’s craft and the information that is most relevant to the subject of one’s work through regular reading and writing. Inspiration—both the emotional journey and the ability to convey that journey to others—develops from a deep, embodied understanding of the rules and values of the individual’s field.

## **Conclusion**

For many years, rhetoric-composition scholarship has passed over inspiration for related but less mystically fraught subjects. Reviewing inspiration’s literary history shows how the divine and psychological traditions contribute to inspiration’s mystic disposition. Yet, the divine and psychological traditions also reveal key characteristic of inspiration. Throughout its literary history, we see that inspiration refers to a process of emotional and intellectual *transcendence* that individuals experience as an intrinsic *motivation* that is *evoked* by unique writing situations. Inspiration’s literary usage and etymology emphasizes the creative individual’s participation in a broader locus of inventive activity.

The instructional creative writing texts in my study share a pragmatic approach to inspiration. They refer to inspiration as a situated, emotional, and embodied process that writers can recognize and channel. In the next chapter, I examine how the instructional creative writing texts in my study aim to teach inspiration by nurturing conducive habits of mind and triggering inspiration. Creative writers believe that certain practices and heuristics can trigger the openness and emotional involvement that predispose students to new insights. Therefore, in conversation with rhetoric-composition scholarship, they afford a platform for understanding, nurturing, and triggering inspiration.

## CHAPTER 2

### CAN INSPIRATION BE TAUGHT?

#### HOW CREATIVE WRITING TEXTS TEACH THE UNTEACHABLE

Most creative writing and rhetoric-composition scholars agree that inspiration cannot be taught. As Richard Young writes in “Inventing: A Topographical Survey,” inspiration—“the imaginative act or the unanticipated outcome”—cannot be taught in the conventional sense of the word because “the processes involved . . . are too unpredictable to be rule governed procedures” (1-2). Inspiration is a tacit process, unique to each person’s physiological, social, cultural, and material writing situation. The habits and situations that spark insight and creativity vary widely between individuals and projects, so what works for one person or project may not extend to the next.

Instructional creative writing texts agree that creativity cannot and should not be reduced to a matter of rule-governed procedures. Instead, authors such as Alice LaPlante, Janet Burroway, Sybil Estess, and Janet McCann offer students a range of invention practices and exercises that help students cultivate habits that are conducive to inspiration. Janet Burroway and Elizabeth and Ned Stuckey-French write, “The question is not ‘How do you get it done?’ but ‘How do *you* get it done?’” (*Writing Fiction* 3). They do not cast the activities—rituals, freewriting, journaling, imitation, and prompts—as one-size-fits-all solutions. Instead, they assume that inspiration follows from a successful *practice*—a word that connotes regular writing time, internalizing craft techniques, and integrating the practice of writing into everyday life. Thus, the authors of instructional creative writing texts aim to encourage a persistent, focused, and open orientation toward inspiration through invention activities.

In my last chapter I argued that rhetoric-composition scholars, teachers, and students should not consider inspiration a mystical process. Rather, the word stresses invention's situated, emotional, and embodied nature. Our bodily and emotional reactions to situations direct how we attend to the world; these reactions shape our thoughts, and by extension, creativity. The texts in my sample aim to help students become more aware of their participation in this process and, however incrementally, take control of it.

In this chapter, I survey the state of creative writing as a pedagogical art and the strategies that creative writers use to nurture and trigger inspiration. Few have studied the actual state of creative writing as a pedagogical art. Those who do note the similarities between creative writing and rhetoric-composition pedagogies. For example, "Rhetorical Pedagogy" by Tom C. Hunley and Sandra Giles introduces the disciplines of creative writing and rhetoric-composition as partners in a shared pedagogical history. They assert that rhetoric-composition pedagogies can benefit creative writing pedagogies and offer classical and modern rhetorical tools such as imitation and exercises from the *progymnasmata*.<sup>10</sup> This chapter assumes that the opposite is also true: examining how creative writers introduce and structure shared invention practices highlights the practices' inspirational value.

Creative writing teachers know that certain practices can nurture and trigger the attitudes that predispose students to thoughtful and insightful writing. Julia Cameron, Annie Dillard, Sybil Estess, and Janet McCann aim to help students develop awareness regarding how their tools and environments at any given moment influence their creative capacities.

---

<sup>10</sup> Variations of these exercises already exist in instructional creative writing texts. Imitation, commonly introduced to students alongside practice in reading like a writer, already figures prominently in creative writing pedagogies. Consequently, this chapter corrects assumptions about the practices that instructional creative writing texts use by providing a cursory understanding of creative writing invention practices.

They offer ritual, freewriting, and journaling as strategies that nurture inspiration by helping student to recognize their bodily and emotional responses to different situations and cultivating habits of mind and body that characterize effective practice. Imitation and prompts also nurture inspiration, and they trigger it by creating situations that emotionally evoke creativity. While these approaches are qualitatively different, all embrace an embodied, emotional, and situational understanding of inspiration, affirming that the ability to write in ways that are insightful and engaging requires more than knowledge of style and the writing process. Together they demonstrate that the practice of creative writing extends beyond the knowledge of how a piece of writing is composed to how we learn to productively manage our writing situations, emotions, and bodies.

Throughout this chapter, I note the variety of invention practices in introductory creative writing texts and share how these practices translate into my first- and second-year composition classrooms. However, I keep these considerations brief. Chapters 3 and 4 explore imitation and writing prompts at greater length. This chapter focuses primarily on how creative writing texts relay the relationship between shared invention practices and inspiration. Specifically, the practices I examine demonstrate strategies for developing awareness of how inspiration is evoked; how our emotions, bodies, and situational constraints contribute to or stifle inspiration; and how shared invention strategies nurture and trigger inspiration by productively manipulating our writing situations.

## Rituals

While many of the authors in this study nod to the creative power of ritual, few devote substantial space to the subject. Most of the authors note the subject in passing, proposing that regularity in the actions surrounding our writing guides us into the headspace we need to face the page. The two exceptions are *The Practice of Creative Writing* by Heather Sellers and *The Writing Life* by Annie Dillard. So why start the body of this chapter with ritual? Too often, beginning writers imagine writing as a purely cognitive problem. They force themselves into chairs in secluded corners, expecting that knowledge of their subjects, audiences, and the mechanics of arrangement and style will automatically produce cogent, engaging writing. Experienced writers know that the actual practice of writing is complicated, circuitous, paradigmatically exciting and frustrating, and physically exhausting.

Discussions of ritual in creative writing texts remind us that habits of mind correspond with habits of body and being. Heather Sellers explains in *The Practice of Creative Writing* that ritual is the tool by which we train our minds to enter into states of focus and creativity by training our bodies (20). Sellers and Dillard propose that we can harness the creative power of ritual by attending to how our actions and material realities affect creativity and by conditioning our minds over time through repetition.

Rituals are a means of conditioning writers' bodies and minds. According to Heather Sellers, creative writing rituals are no different than rituals in sports such as soccer, basketball, or ballroom dancing. Writing is a skill that requires our minds and bodies to act in harmony. When we attempt a basket, we ask our bodies to follow a set of procedures that require sustained focus and courage. When we compose a sentence, we must focus on the

sentence's purpose and trust that our spontaneous facility with vocabulary, syntax, and subject will guide our words. Sellers writes:

Rituals guide our brains into successful practice. The more you repeat a ritual, the smoother your practice is. . . . It doesn't matter what your rituals are; what is important is that you pay attention to what you do right before your writing sessions — and repeat what works for you. Rituals teach your creative brain how and when to focus. (Sellers 20)

As Sellers clarifies, the choice of ritual is personal. What matters is that writers learn how their bodies move and behave in different situations, then harness that power to their advantage. When repeated regularly at the start of writing sessions, rituals help bodies enter into productive mindsets.

Ritual refers to a system of interactions with material, temporal, and social conditions. Dillard explains that each individual has a unique system of associations between her craft and the material, temporal, and social world. For example, she writes that composing in a quiet corner of a library spurs her imagination, perhaps because of the comfort of a regular writing space and the fact that, for her, seclusion clears away other distractions (46). However, this same ritual might be counterproductive for a writer conditioned to react to seclusion as a form of punishment. Our ways of acting and thinking in specific situations correspond to former experiences and the outcomes of those experiences. Thus, Sellers and Dillard insist that developing an awareness of how our actions and environments impact our ability to focus and act in specific ways is an essential part of learning to write well.

When writers identify situations that help them move into conducive states of mind, they take some control over their creative processes. Once writers are aware of how the various factors in their environments impact their thoughts, they can learn to interact with the world in productive ways. Our minds allow us some ability to shape our material reality and, in the process, focus our creative energies (Dillard 46).

In all of my writing classes, I find that the creative writing passages above help me communicate why writers need to critically consider how their writing situations affect their bodies and minds and deliberately repeat those rituals that work best for them. Focusing on the situational, embodied, and emotional nature of creativity allows a productive space for voicing frustration with writing and inventing ways to deal with these frustrations. After reading passages from Sellers and Dillard, I ask students to list the rituals that they use to get started or unstuck and share these with the class. Then I list common creative blocks on the white board, such as the anxiety of getting started, uncertain audience expectations, procrastination, impatience, and perfectionism. We pair our list of rituals with the creative blocks on the board and try to invent new rituals for those creative blocks without easy solutions. After we have completed our brainstorming session, I ask students to commit to a new ritual from the board and reflect on the effectiveness of that ritual in their authors' notes during each major essay. This activity only takes thirty to forty minutes of class time, and it has a noticeable impact on students' abilities to control tacit aspects of their writing processes, especially those mentioned above.

Rituals underscore the unconscious power of our bodily interactions with the world. Repetition of actions within particular material, social, and temporal contexts create bodily triggers for associated beliefs and actions. Hence the tapping of a pen on the desk may trigger

focus for one person and affirm distraction for another. Sellers, Burroway, Dillard, Bradbury, Lamott, and many other creative writers indicate that ritual speaks to the writing process as a system of actions internalized within the writer's sense of what properly goes with what. Much of a writer's practice is unconscious, but writers can develop rituals that trigger positive reactions or mitigate negative ones.

### **Freewriting**

Freewriting has enjoyed a prominent place in many writing classes for almost half a century. *The Saint Martin's Guide* credits Dorthea Brande as one of the earliest advocates of freewriting, which she refers to as "first pages." Brande's *Becoming a Writer*, published in 1934, instructs writers to rise early and commit their first thoughts to paper without raising their pens or pencils for thirty minutes. Her approach operates on the assumption that individuals are most creative in the mornings when their unconscious minds are still active from dreaming.<sup>11</sup> She believed that as individuals continue with their days, they are prone to censor their thoughts and observations—a habit that proves destructive for writers while they are generating new work. However, Brande's technique was largely ignored by teachers of expository writing until Ken Macrorie updated and popularized the technique in *Uptaught* and *Telling Writing* (1970), and Peter Elbow later advanced it in general writing classes in *Writing Without Teachers* (1975).

---

<sup>11</sup> Brande argues that stories begin in the unconscious, following the writer's unique patterns of attention and are defined in consciousness, where thoughts are "scrutinized, pruned, altered, strengthened," etc. ("The Process of Story Formation" in Dorthea Brande's *Becoming a Writer*). This belief persists in Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way* and Janet Burroway's introduction to *Writing Fiction*, which suggest writing early in the morning may turn our attentions to what's naturally concerning us, help us become aware of how we react to different stimuli, and identify where our interests lie.

Similarly, Julia Cameron adapted and popularized Brande's "first pages" practice for creative writing circles with her 1992 text, *The Artist's Way*. Cameron's adaptation is much closer to Brande's practice since she primarily advises writers to write early in the morning. The authors also sometimes refer to freewriting as "automatic writing" (Dillard). However, most of the instructional creative writing texts in my study published after the year 2000 use the term "freewriting" and describe it in much the same way as Peter Elbow (Burroway, Sellers, Estess and McCann). This observation proves the cross-pollination of teaching practices between rhetoric-composition and creative writing pedagogies.

The parameters of freewriting vary between instructional creative writing texts, and this variance reflects the elusive nature of finding one right way to urge inspiration. In Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way* and Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird*, freewriting is referred to as a kind of "brain drain" —a way of cognitively, emotionally, and physically preparing oneself for invention. Lamott calls freewriting throw-away pages but notes that freewriting can function as a kind of brainstorming (9). Janet Burroway's brief mention of the practice under the subheading "Getting Started" primarily introduces freewriting as a type of longhand, stream-of-consciousness brainstorming. Cameron advises writers not to leaf back through the writing they produce during their freewriting sessions (10).

This variance in approach is also present throughout rhetoric-composition literature on freewriting. Peter Elbow, freewriting's most prolific promoter among rhetoric-composition scholars, prizes the practice for its ritual value, emphasizing its ability to help writers cultivate confidence and marry the merits of spoken word with written discourse (*Writing with Power, Vernacular Eloquence*). While freewriting sometimes leads writers to ideas that they later develop and refine, it is primarily valuable because it nurtures the habits

of mind that writers need to make creative contributions. On the other hand, *The Saint Martin's Guide* frames freewriting as “a kind of structured brainstorming, a method of exploring a topic by writing about it” (169). Other instructors primarily use freewriting as a warm-up activity. For example, Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations* argues that one of freewriting's primary benefits is its ability to demystify the writing process. Many teachers of first-year writing do not realize how little academic work their students have written, and freewriting prompts students to simply pour out their thoughts, teaching them to regard writing as a common ability rather than a divine gift.

Of the seven creative writing texts in this study that recommend structured stream-of-consciousness writing, most stress freewriting's ritual value (Cameron, Burroway, Estess & McCann, Goldberg, LaPlante, Lamott, Sellers). Cameron instructs writers to compose morning pages every morning, as soon as possible after waking. She expounds, “The morning pages are three pages of longhand writing, strictly stream-of-consciousness. . . . They might also, more ingloriously, be called brain drain, since that is one of their main functions” (9-10). They are not supposed to sound smart or artistic: “Just write three pages in a spiral notebook and do not leaf back through” (10). Cameron's introduction clarifies that the morning pages are not meant to lead to full creative works. Rather, they act as a ritual that helps writers enter into a productive headspace. The morning pages are “brain drain” —a warm up exercise rather than an inventive activity (9). While the practice may help writers discover avenues of interest, their primary function is conditioning and triggering the confidence and focus that writers need to commit to generating writing before critiquing it. The morning pages help writers become more mindful of the paths of thinking that lead them toward gridlock and, conversely, those patterns that lead them toward insights (15). Cameron

infers that the morning pages teach writers to notice how their thoughts stray toward self-censorship and recognize that resisting self-censoring lets observation grow forthright, complex, and unexpected (xxiv-xxv).

Similarly, Natalie Goldberg describes freewriting as a meditative act in *Writing Down the Bones* and illustrates the practice's emotional value. Freewriting can be profoundly uncomfortable for many beginning writers. Committing one's first thoughts to paper without censoring them requires that the writer surrender their sense of control—that sense that “tries to prove the world is permanent, and solid, enduring and logical” (12). The world is not permanent. It changes. Our beliefs are, and ought to be, unstable and mutable. Recording thoughts in stream-of-consciousness teaches us to resist the desire for control and to embrace chaos. Goldberg explains,

In Zen meditation you sit on a cushion called a zafu with your legs crossed, back straight, hands at your knees or in front of you in a gesture called a mudra. You face a white wall and watch your breath. No matter what you feel—great tornadoes of anger and resistance, thunderstorms of joy and grief—you continue to sit, back straight, legs crossed, facing the wall. You learn to not be tossed away no matter how great the thought or emotion. That is the discipline: to continue to sit. The same is true in writing. You must be a great warrior when you contact first thoughts and write from them. Especially at the beginning you may feel great emotions and energy that will sweep you away, but you don't stop writing. You continue to use your pen and record the details of your life and penetrate into the heart of them. . . . Don't stop at the tears; go through to truth. This is the discipline. (12-13)

In meditation, the practitioner's goal is to attend and acknowledge how her attention is pulled and prodded without judging. The same is true of freewriting. The author records "first thoughts" without judging them, so the practice conditions writers to be open to any observation regardless of merit. Beginning and some advanced writers often find that this practice is uncomfortable because they are so accustomed to judging and evaluating written thoughts. Freewriting teaches writers to resist that drive toward order and rationality, so that they can entertain new associations and perhaps find a way forward.

The creative writers I have discussed so far share the understanding that freewriting is a process by which writers emotionally and behaviorally condition their bodies in service to writing. By resisting the desire to censor and doubt their words, they allow a wider range of associations, and some of these lead to creative insights. Notably, several of the texts in this study turn conversations about freewriting away from its ability to help writers invent or brainstorm topics, preferring instead the practice's ritual value. In the tradition suggested by Cameron, Lamott, and Goldberg, freewriting opens writers to new associations that may inspire a way forward, but its primary purpose is nurturing confidence and forthright, uncensored observations.

## **Journaling**

The instructional creative writing texts in my study introduce journaling as an essential component of beginning writers' educations. Whereas Cameron describes freewriting as messy, chaotic, stream-of-consciousness composition, journaling assumes a balance between play and discipline. Sellers, Burroway, and Estess and McCann stress that

journaling must be private and ungraded, a place for play and risk-taking, but they also assert that journaling should be accompanied by a sense of structured discipline. Together, their approaches pose strategies for fostering creativity in all writing classrooms. Journaling conditions writers' bodies and attitudes toward creativity by making writing a regular practice, encouraging students to believe that what they notice matters, and guiding them to notice how their writing situations influence creativity.

Most of the instructional creative writing texts in my study introduce journaling as a practice that encourages students to write regularly and remain open to the possibility of insights and ideas for future and current work. Janet Burroway's introduction to *Imaginative Writing* describes the writer's journal as a sketchbook: "a handbag, a backpack, a trunk, a cupboard, an attic, a warehouse of the mind" where the writer stores anything that might be useful later on (*Imaginative Writing* 5). As artists keep sketchbooks for the joint purposes of exercise and generating ideas, so do writers. She tasks beginning writers with keeping a journal, and the rest of the text regularly offers prompts, trigger lines, and exercises for use in the journal. Beyond these prompts, she encourages writers to freewrite, brainstorm, and use the journal to record interesting observations and experiences (an overheard remark, an unexpected insight, a person that catches one's attention, etc.). She provides examples from the journals of established writers such as Ayelet Waldman, Billy Collins, and Chris Manza that include lists of character names, quotes, and short dialogue exchanges. The examples illustrate that creative insights often occur while bodies are in motion (eating, eavesdropping, etc.) and that journaling records these moments of intrigue and insight.

Burroway's writing exercises and prompts stress recording observations and associations while resisting the urge to evaluate the worth of these observations. She states

that the writer's journal is not a diary (6). Evaluating the meaning, purpose, or reasoning behind one's observations turns one's attention away from narrating experience and toward reflection and contemplation, which can lead to self-censorship if left unchecked. The journal may include the writer's feelings and concerns, but the practice's overall purpose is to train oneself "to observe the outside world" and develop "a habit of listening and seeing with writing in mind" (6). According to Burroway, a writer is a kind of benevolent cannibal who "eats the world" (6-7). Similarly, Alice LaPlante explains that all people notice things by virtue of being alive, but we filter what we notice through extraneous expectations about what matters. She writes, "Your first job is to turn your 'camera' on, to notice as you walk. You can worry about 'developing' it later—all that matters is the camera is on" (9). Thus, the authors assert that journaling conditions the habit of openness: the habit of noticing what one notices and believing that these observations are intrinsically valuable.

According to Burroway and LaPlante, journaling nurtures inspiration by emboldening young writers to believe that their observations, thoughts, and interests matter. As I noted in Chapter 1, our educational system often teaches students to write with a constant eye toward what other people find interesting. Burroway expounds in *Writing Fiction* on the value of freewriting and journaling. She claims that they are necessary practices because beginning writers are so used to writing what they think they *should* care about. Especially within the power dynamics of a classroom, students are more inclined to deduce topics from the interests of others or Googled lists of popular essay topics than inquire after issues that relate to their interests, which may seem "trivial, self-conscious, or self-serving" (10-11). I am convinced that this tendency leads students to belabored topics and clichéd ruminations as they stretch to make sense of what they only abstractly understand. Treating journals as

sketchbooks emphasizes to students that all observations are meaningful and worthy of attention.

Many rhetoric-composition textbooks contain prompts that ask students to list observations in notebooks or conduct short case studies of how people behave in different situations. When I ask students to keep a journal for a first- or second-year composition class, I regularly assign these exercises to condition that attitude that assumes all observations and experiences are potentially valuable. William Palmer includes many of these exercises in *Discovering Arguments*. Each chapter contains several short activities that focus students on generating ideas and recording observations in concrete language. Other texts, such as *Everything's an Arguments* regularly ask students to list observations over different periods of time, such as the number of times and different contexts in which students made arguments and their reasons over a two-day period (Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz 6).

The regular practice of recording observations and ideas in a journal nurtures inspiration by training beginning writers' bodies to focus, sustain interest, and relax into writing. Regular writing creates habits of thinking and focusing in the same ways that regular exercise trains the body's habits of movement. Janet Burroway explains, "As with a physical workout, you have to coax or cajole yourself into writing regularly before you get to the point when you look forward to that part of your life" (7). Heather Sellers relates writing to running to stress that writing is an act of physical endurance and mental focus that becomes easier and "even relaxing" with sustained practice (viii). The more that beginning writers exercise their craft, the more they internalize these moves, and the more intuit new connections, associations, and insights. As writers practice the rules of craft and internalize the values these rules represent, they begin to use the knowledge intuitively and inductively.

Regular writing in a journal—or really any place, so long as it is regular—helps writers internalize rules of grammar and story construction in a space free from outside commentators and critique. By exercising habits of mind such as curiosity and focus, beginning writers learn to sustain writing for longer and longer periods of time.

Sybil Estess and Janet McCann introduce journaling as a way of developing a regular writing practice and storing up ideas for later use, but they also emphasize a third quality of journaling: journaling helps writers notice how their writing situations influence creativity. They list nine styles of journaling in the first chapter and ask students to keep at least two journals with defined frameworks for “mining ideas” (2-3). Like Burroway’s journaling practice, some of the styles focus on recording things that capture the writer’s attention (events that strike the writer as meaningful, cartoons, photographs, quotations, etc.). Some focus on recording observations, reflections, and meditations. Others address imaginary or real audiences or require publication in a public space (such as a blog). In some cases, the style imposes a theme, such as environmental issues or family (3-5). A few of the styles parallel structured journaling activities in expository writing classes, such as writing logs, reading journals, research journals, and double-entry notebooks. According to the authors, keeping multiple journals tunes beginning writers’ attentions to how situational factors such as the technologies they use, who they address, and what they write about impact creativity. Estess and McCann’s approach to journaling suggests that insights follow from specific embodied moments, and the more writers become aware of how their environments and the rituals surrounding their writing influence their observations, the more they can take control of their situations and their creativity.

When I teach creative writing, first- or second-year composition, I find that journaling opens opportunities for students to reflect on how their writing situations predispose them to different kinds of creative insights. Some students accept journaling as an invitation to try productively changing their writing situations. For example, one student used his required journaling time to conduct field research at the gym for his persuasive essay on sports nutrition and realized that most of the students purchasing nutrition drinks left without exercising. Later, he commented in his author's note that this observation served as the inspiration for his thesis: that sports nutrition has become more of a consumer fad than a productive part of fitness regiments. Journaling provides a space for collecting observations, cultivating openness, developing regular writing practice, and recognizing how writing situations shape thought and creativity.

### **Reading and Imitating**

Reading and imitating are two of aspiring creative writers' most important tools for nurturing and triggering inspiration because they help writers internalize the knowledge, strategies, and habits of mind necessary to their craft while motivating them to rival the creative achievements of the authors they admire. Several of the craft memoirs in my study aim to impart the inspirational power of reading and imitating through anecdotes (King, Bradbury, Lamott, Goldberg, et al.). In this section, I explore how these metaphors and anecdotes describe the embodied and emotional nature of reading and imitating. I also briefly introduce strategies for teaching imitation but save the bulk of these strategies for chapter 3.

Imitation assumes a specific attitude toward reading, which is why I have chosen to combine my discussion of “reading like a writer” and imitation. The instructional creative writing texts in my study regularly use “reading like a writer” or “reading as a writer” to refer to reading for the purposes of writing something similar. Reading like a writer is fundamentally different from reading like a reader: “It involves asking not only *What does this mean?* but also *How does it work?*” and “Can I *use* this effect, try these rhythms, create this sort of atmosphere? It is only one step further to imitation of such strategies, and to using imitation as a way of developing your own skills” (*Imaginative Writing* 3).

### *Metaphors and Anecdotes*

Many metaphors and anecdotes throughout the texts in this study describe reading and imitating as primary strategies that prepare writers for inspiration. Creativity requires that individuals learn the methods and expectations of their fields and the ability to notice how their bodies direct them toward associations, the ways of thinking that compel these associations, and the courage to discover the significance behind their observations.

Imitation is a bodily practice. By asking beginning writers to imitate model texts, teachers effectively encourage writers to learn habits of mind, vocabulary, and the knowledge of their fields through performance. In so doing, imitation nurtures inspiration by helping young writers internalize the knowledge they need to make creative contributions. As Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi explains in *Creativity*: All creative persons “must internalize the rules and the content of the domain, as well as the criteria of selection [and] the preferences of the field” so that they become part of how individuals reflexively process and respond to the

world (47). Writers who want to make creative contributions to a domain must internalize the expectations and systems of the domain to the extent that these habits become an intuitive part of how they create.

Ray Bradbury (*Zen in the Art of Writing*) and Stephen King (*On Writing*) use metaphors to help beginning writers understand how reading nurtures inspiration. Both view reading as a practice that makes their bodies hospitable to inspiration. King describes furnishing an apartment for his muse through proper exercise, diet, and tremendous amounts of reading (144-145). Bradbury portrays cultivating inspiration as feeding his muse a healthy diet: “Into our subconscious go not only factual data but reactive data, our movement toward or away from the sensed events. These are the stuffs, the foods, on which The Muse grows. This is the storehouse, the file. . . . What is The Subconscious to every other man, in its creative aspect becomes, The Muse” (32-33). Bradbury notes that our emotional reactions are an important part of our education. As Stanley Fish argued in the 1970s, readers are active mediators of each text’s meaning. We experience texts; it is something that *happens* to us. Subjective reactions, or what Bradbury calls “reactive data,” inform us of the value of the writing; they cue our attentions toward valuable techniques and habits of mind (21). We access new insights as we imitate the techniques that create our subjective reactions. Thus, Bradbury and King advise reading voraciously, slowly, and deliberately. They tell beginning writers to imitate literary techniques that they find compelling and return to those that they do not later because taste changes over time.

A second common metaphor that the authors use to describe the inspirational power of imitation is that of the reader as lover and the text as beloved. Several authors in this study describe reading as an act of love (Bradbury, Goldberg, Lamott, Prose). Bradbury writes,

“The Feeding of the Muse then . . . seems to me to be the continual running after loves, the checking of these loves against one’s present and future needs, the moving on from simple textures to more complex ones” (41). Francine Prose titles her book *Reading Like a Writer: A Guide for Those Who Love Books and for Those Who Want to Write Them*. Natalie Goldberg frames reading like a writer with the analogy of devouring the words of one’s beloved and memorizing the cadences of her sentences and paragraphs as one memorizes the features of the beloved’s face (Goldberg 103). This metaphor of the author as beloved communicates a love of reading that verges on obsession and that inspires writers to emulate those authors that they love.

The prevalence of “love” in creative writing texts stresses the importance of writers’ emotional involvement with reading and imitation. Natalie Goldberg describes reading what one loves and writing soon after as a way of capitalizing on this innate desire to identify with, and thus understand, those that we admire: “Writing is not just writing. It is also having a relationship with other writers” (Goldberg 103). When we admire others, we naturally want to know them— “to step into [their] skin[s]” —so as to understand how they act, pause, and observe (103). Love of people and things drives us to know them better, to analyze their words, movements, and gestures through the context of our experiences.

Love conveys imitation’s complex social and embodied nature. In chapter 3, I explain how language syntactically primes us to repeat the syntactical patterns of the people and texts in our environments. Rhetoric-composition scholar Mary Minock uses Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism to examine imitation’s complicated web of social context. She defines imitation as unconscious appropriation of hierarchical language. Writers imitate to appropriate the various voices and perspectives of their communities, specifically those that they perceive as

authorities and role models, in order to participate more effectively in their discourse communities (494-495). She characterizes a postmodern pedagogy of imitation as creative empowerment through which “properly *irrational* responses—honored in a temporary suspension of [plagiaristic concerns]—inspire in students a great attention to texts, a willingness to read and respond to them over and over again, and an unpredictably high incidence of imitation” (499). Like the instructional creative writing texts in my study, Minock reveals imitation’s emotional and embodied nature, but in abstract terms.

As readers seek to understand those authors that they love and admire, they are moved to respond. In this way, writers’ natural drive toward imitation segues to inspiration by moving us toward emulation. People who are fascinated with popular television series, novels, poetry, or even political speeches start to imagine aloud how they might create something similar or better if given the time and opportunity. Even strangers will stop to dissect character actions and the significance of particular scenes when they recognize an opportunity to share the same affinity.

Discussions in creative writing texts about imitation, emulation, and voraciously reading remind us that emotional involvement with texts is an important part of how we come to internalize and apply the conventions and expectations that guide creative contributions. Goldberg argues one’s “ability to love another’s writing means those capabilities are awakened in you” (103). Francine Prose advises writers to “read first for pleasure, then to understand how each effect is accomplished” (3). Reading for pleasure should not supplant rhetorical analysis. However, beginning writers must experience the pleasure of reading effective compositions as they attempt to understand how compositions accomplish their rhetorical and poetic effects.

Should teachers expect this level of admiration from beginning writers in first- and second-year composition classes? Creative writing classes have an edge in this department because creative genres are more entertaining than academic research and rhetorical case studies. Moreover, many students in required writing classes dislike reading and writing because of prior negative or too few positive experiences. Yet, these challenges should not lead us to accept a lukewarm disposition toward reading and writing. All writing teachers can encourage students to meaningfully engage with reading as writers by choosing texts that are challenging but provocative in terms of subject or style. Plus, asking students imitate to these genres sometimes allows a gateway to enjoyment.<sup>12</sup>

Creative writers emphasize that imitation—or reading as a writer—is an empathetic process, informed by the writer’s emotional reactions, and a means of internalizing the knowledge and values characteristic of good writing. The practice of imitation embraces the natural pleasure that humans experience when they mimic the attitudes and habits of those they admire, orienting students in moments that engage them emotionally and intellectually.

### *Approaches to Teaching Imitation*

As with most invention practices, the creative writing texts in this study employ multiple strategies to teach imitation. Most creative writing craft books, like rhetoric-composition textbooks, model imitation by demonstrating how close-reading and rhetorical analysis let writers deconstruct and adapt different strategies and techniques. Janet Burroway

---

<sup>12</sup> See chapter 3 for an example of how I use the classical tradition of paraphrase to help students understand and emotionally engage with David Bartholomae’s *Inventing the University*.

prompts students to imitate isolated techniques such as juxtaposition (*Imaginative Writing*), and Heather Sellers instructs students to explicitly imitate provided models through “scaffolding” or “writing between the lines” (43).

The most common strategy that creative writing texts use to teach imitation and emulation is incorporating close reading and explanation of how one might imitate specific aspects of the writer’s craft (Burroway, Estess and McCann, LaPlante, Sellers, Prose). Francine Prose’s *Reading Like a Writer* devotes the entirety of her book to modeling reading like a writer. Each chapter works from word to sentence to paragraph as she explores components of fiction, such as narration, character, dialogue, detail, and gesture. Throughout, she demonstrates the process and utility of using close reading by describing the ways that her reactions to the text lead her to make conclusions about each text’s effectiveness, such as the importance of using words economically (39), and how turns and contradictions in dialogue illustrate the personalities, class, and educational backgrounds of characters (148-154). Additionally, Heather Sellers’s *The Practice of Creative Writing* and Sybil Estess and Janet McCann’s *In a Field of Words* model close reading by analyzing how the texts accomplish particular effects. While these texts do not always end with the call for beginning writers to try imitating the provided texts, they usually include the expectation that students should write soon after reading.

Unfortunately, I worry that many students do not act on this expectation, so I tend to prefer texts that explicitly prompt imitation (Burroway, Estess and McCann, Sellers). Janet Burroway’s *Imaginative Writing* follows short selections of nonfiction, fiction, poetry, and drama with exercises that ask writers to try writing their own creative works by imitating key aspects of the author’s writing, whether subject or style. For examples, see chapter 3. I find it

especially interesting that Burroway chooses to follow selected readings with imitation prompts instead of asking writers to analyze the texts. This deliberate choice seems to imply that too much focus on analysis before imitation can derail the writer's desire to emulate the reading or that imitation includes unconscious analysis as one rapidly and intuitively decides what and how to imitate.

Heather Seller's *The Practice of Creative Writing* uses a type of explicit imitation that she refers to as scaffolding. Writers imitate another text line by line to internalize important aspects of craft and generate new ideas. She highlights the utility of form in learning to write more so than any other text in my sample. It is the only text that explicitly leads students through the art of imitation. Using Bob Hicok's poem "A Primer," she advises students to "copy the poem on a sheet of paper, skipping three lines in between each line of the poem" (43). Then the writer copies the writer's syntax, which often involves different associational moves, such as metaphor, simile, and synecdoche. Later, she gives students Betsy Sholl's "Genealogy" and tells them to reimagine the poem by changing its subject from two parents to two friends, two roommates, or two coaches, etc. (48). She stresses that imitating the form of creative works forces us to fit our thoughts to forms that they do not usually inhabit and pushes us toward surprising associations.

I have used Sellers's imitation approach several times to great effect in both creative writing and rhetoric-composition classes. Scaffolding works especially well with short creative pieces like poetry, but it is also valuable for introductions and conclusions. It is not hard to imagine ways that imitative, creative writing exercises can inspire similar approaches to invention in a broad range of writing contexts.

## Prompts

The authors of creative writing texts introduce prompts and exercises with the expectations that they “take students out of themselves” and “trigger inspiration” (LaPlante 2; Kiteley 171). In chapter 4, I compare specific types of prompt that parallel classical invention heuristics and argue that my case studies blur the line between conceptions of heuristics as rule-governed, systematic procedures and inspiration as a natural, intuitive process. This section takes a bird’s-eye-view of creative writing prompts’ methodology and construction. Specifically, I argue that prompts nurture inspiration by conditioning risk-taking through productive constraints. These productive constraints also trigger inspiration by pushing writers to step out of their normative patterns of thought.

Writing prompts tend to share rhetorical similarities. Many of them are worded as personal challenges, addressing audiences in second person. A vast majority of prompts contain imperative language, such as “Begin a story or a scene with” or “Write about.” They limit the scope of the writing to specific word counts (Kiteley), scenes and settings (Kiteley, Johnston, Bernays and Painter), or even a starting sentence (Bernays and Painter). Other constraints include the nature of the topic, story elements (character, setting, etc.) and word choice or syntax.

Prompts teach writing by setting it in motion and by isolating particular elements of craft, such as characterization, dialogue, and perspective. Most instructional creative writing texts include prompts at the beginning of and throughout their chapters. Janet Burroway regularly intersperses “Try This” exercises throughout each chapter in *Imaginative Writing*.

Plus, a whole category of creative writing texts that creative writers refer to as prompt books aim to teach craft and technique through exercises.

Brian Kiteley's introduction to *The 3am Epiphany* introduces creative prompts as a compliment to the high-stakes atmosphere of the workshop. Workshops are high-stakes scenarios because they take place after the creative process manifests in the draft of a finished project. He contends that the workshop cannot teach creativity, beginnings, or invention processes because its focus is on perfecting products (4). Prompts presume the opposite—that creativity can be driven out of students in much the same way that low-stakes writing prompts evoke reflection and synthesis in first and second year-writing classes. He uses exercises in his workshops “to derange student stories, find new possibilities, and foster strangeness, irregularity, and non-linearity as much as to encourage revision and cleaning up” (4).

Beginning writers are less apt to take creative risks in high-stakes situations with an impending grade. Thus, Kiteley stresses, “Learning to step outside of yourself and make unexpected connections depends on your relative ability to try and fail” (8-9). Johnston introduces his collection of writing exercises similarly: “Much of the writer's work must be – can only be – accomplished by doggedly venturing into territories unknown, by risking failure with every word” (*Naming the World* 3%). Creative prompts endeavor to create environments in which writers feel invited and empowered to take risks.

Students' responses to the prompts need not be completely private, but they should not be rigorously assessed for soundness or clarity, and their worth should be determined by the writer, not the instructor. Kiteley describes his prompts as “stretching exercises” and “warm-ups,” but also “experiments in form and style” that let students test the possibilities of

written genres. Like ritual, freewriting, and journaling, prompts nurture creative habits of mind and body, such as resisting self-censorship, balancing analysis with spontaneous action, and openness to uncertainty and discontinuity (2). Kiteley also cautions that the purpose of completing the prompts should not be to write a story but develop an idea. He writes, “In creating a series of these exercises you are creating a range of possibilities” (5).

Endless possibilities are often more paralyzing than liberating. Constraints offer many writers an emotional aid. Anne Lamott shares her inventional strategy of composing through “a one-inch picture frame” with the explanation that it helps her manage her expectations of her writing: “This is all I have to bite off for the time being. All I am going to do right now, for example, is write one paragraph that sets the story in my hometown, in the late fifties, when the trains were still running” (*Bird by Bird* 17-18). Writing is physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausting. Constraints help writers manage their anxiety and maintain focus by giving them the simple reassurance that the writing will reach an agreed-upon endpoint. I am reminded of the value that beginning writers place on page lengths—an obsession that seems to transcend age and class. Experienced writers know that the length of a document does not necessarily correlate with associated effort, but telling oneself “I just need to write two pages today” can help anyone feel a little more at ease in front of that blinking cursor.

The constraints of a prompt nurture risk-taking by challenging writers to step outside of their normative patterns of thought. Brian Kiteley introduces his exercise collection as a response “to how writers sensor themselves, how [they] react to familiar patterns of behavior, and how [they] fall into ruts” (1). He advises writers to take risks with their writing because certainty is limiting. He writes, “I use exercises in my workshops to derange student stories, find new possibilities, and foster strangeness, irregularity, and nonlinearity as much as to

encourage revision and cleaning up after yourself” (4). His exercises help students practice suspension of belief and different ways of thinking about experience. In the introduction, he tells writers to use the exercises in blocks of ten to discover the characters, settings and scenes in a story before committing to one specific vision (5). While writers may use a passage, scene, or idea from the exercises, he advises them to use the exercises for their exploratory value.

Kiteley’s advice indicates an underlying premise that certainty of one’s choices becomes self-reinforcing and limiting. Writers need exercises because they fall into normative patterns of belief and behavior. Every choice precludes other choices, so the act of discovering a story is naturally exclusionary. Prompts force writers to explore those blanks on the map, and, in so doing, teach beginning writers to “step outside of [themselves] and force [themselves] to see things in a way that [they] normally wouldn’t” (8-9).

## **Conclusion**

Creativity is a skill that cannot be taught, but it can be learned. Heather Sellers explains in her introduction to *The Practice of Creative Writing*, “When we make something, whether it is a three-point shot outside or a poem, we have to figure out what to do with our heads, where to put our doubts, our analytical minds, our fears” (Sellers viii). This type of learning occurs through practice. The creative writing texts in this study nurture and trigger inspiration by setting writing in motion and guiding students to recognize how their bodies, emotions, and writing situations influence their work. They also aim to condition the habits and attitudes that characterize effective practice.

Most of the invention practices in creative writing texts are not new, unusual, or even surprising. They are a regular part of many writing emphasis classrooms. However, what is different about these texts is how they introduce the practices—how they explain their values and, in some cases, how they instruct students to use them. As evidenced in the discussion above, most of the texts emphasize that the creative process is situated, emotional, and embodied. Rituals nurture inspiration by conditioning our reactions to specific places and actions. Similarly, freewriting helps writers enter into states of mind that are conducive to creativity by promoting resistance to censorship. As Julia Cameron explains, the purpose of freewriting is not to generate a short story through some kind of organic process; it is to exercise resistance to self-doubt.

Creative writers stress the need to internalize knowledge of craft and develop openness to uncertainty and discontinuities through regular practice. Imitation motivates writers to attain the strategies and habits of those they admire. Journaling prioritizes the observations that individuals find interesting and teaches them that what they notice matters. Inspiration occurs through sustained practice in reading, writing, and attending the ways that our bodies and minds react to different situations, productively or not. As LaPlante explains, the ability to tune into our private material and develop insights that are surprising and unexpected cannot be imparted like knowledge, but it can be nurtured through “certain exercises, prompts, and ‘constraints’” because these practices “take us out of ourselves” and turn our attentions in productive ways (2).

The most insightful and creative productions follow neither from a mystical process called inspiration or simply from persistently and logically applying the rules and values of craft. Rather, internalizing these rules and values through practice prepares our bodies for

inspiration. Conversations about ritual, freewriting, journaling, imitation, and prompts reconcile method and inspiration through mindful practice. In this way, creative writing is not just the teaching of imaginative genres, but the cultivation of perspectives that engage in the continuous enrichment of experience through the art of language.

## CHAPTER 3

### INSPIRATION THROUGH IMITATION

Most writing teachers recognize a tacit connection between imitation and inspiration. Longinus, Greek teacher of rhetoric and literary critic, claimed that imitation could excite even the most incurious students: “for even as their natural temper be but cold, they share the sublime enthusiasm of others” (ch. 13, vs. 29). Similarly, the creative writing craft texts in my study assert that reading generally, and imitation specifically, create the conditions for inspiration. Exploring what classical rhetorical texts tell us about imitation’s practice and creative function alongside the language and strategies that creative writers use to introduce and teach imitation as an inspirational practice underscores imitation’s emotional and embodied nature. As an inspirational practice, imitation emotionally motivates and engages writers; it evokes ideas for future work; and it facilitates writers with the habits that bring these ideas to fruition.

Imitation refers to a wide range of teaching practices, including copying, using models, and line-by-line syntactical imitation. Greek and Roman teachers of rhetoric considered imitation one of the primary ways that students learned the language arts and experienced orators invented new compositions. The classical tradition, especially imitation’s use in the Roman school system, provides a concrete model of imitation as a creative yet “carefully plotted” sequence that includes the students’ emotional experiences of the model, careful analysis, imitation, delivery, and peer review (Murphy 54-60). These stages form a framework for considering imitation as a creative process that teaches students how to read

and imitate for the purposes of inventing new work. Imitation assumes a specific attitude toward reading that it nurtures and applied through a wide range of structured exercises.

Thus, after defining imitation through the Greek and Roman traditions, I consider how creative writing texts introduce students to the process of reading for the purposes of imitation. The authors of the instructional creative writing texts in this study present “reading like a writer” as an emotional and embodied act, through which readers first read for pleasure in order to experience the model’s effectiveness and develop ideas for new work, then carefully and analytically in order to understand how the model accomplishes its effects. Introductions to “reading like a writer” highlight the importance of being emotionally engaged with the model and using one’s writing situation and imaginative response to guide rhetorical analysis and inspire writing. These passages propose that imagery-rich literature may be more likely to inspire insights and new ideas because readers naturally use personal memories and present-day circumstances to comprehend imagery. Plus, the texts offer strategies to help students emotionally engage with reading, such as “imaginative reading” (Sellers) and retyping (Bernays and Painter) that all writing teachers can use to increase student engagement with models as students develop rhetorical and poetic skill alongside ideas for future work.

Lastly, I use imitation exercises from the texts to pose useful strategies for encouraging writers to use imitation as a means of experimenting with and habituating technique while inventing material that is creative and insightful. In the Roman school system, imitation was a primary means by which students developed a habit (*habitas*) of effective expression (Murphy, “Habit” 35-76). During the first and second stages, students read and listened to dramatic deliveries of model texts, emotionally engaging with the texts

as oral performances and then analyzing the model's merits and shortcomings with the assistance of the teacher. These stages made experiential and critical reading a normative part of creating new works. The following stages typically understood as imitation—memorization, paraphrase, and transliteration—committed correct pronunciation, syntax, vocabulary, argument techniques such as narration, paradox, refutation, and the use of commonplaces, to habit. Therefore, imitation developed the student's ability to flexibly and spontaneously use rhetorical techniques.

Some of the creative writing craft texts in this study use imitation for the same purposes. The strategies for using imitation to teach craft and trigger inspiration vary from imitating the syntax and arrangement of sentences, passages, and whole poems or short stories to prompting students to imitate specific, isolated techniques. Examining these strategies provides new ideas for incorporating imitation exercises in today's first- and second-year composition classrooms.

### **Imitation, Embodiment, and Emotion in the Greek and Roman Traditions**

Imitation is one of the earliest known methods for teaching composition. Its formalized role in rhetorical education persisted from the time of the older sophists into the medieval and Renaissance schools (Corbett, "Theory and Practice" 244). The older sophists most likely first introduced imitation into the formal curriculum of rhetorical instruction through modeling and memorization. In *Brutus*, Cicero credits Gorgias and Protagoras for creating lists of commonplaces for students to imitate as they invented their own creations (46-47), and Plato depicts Protagoras saying schoolboys internalize the moral qualities of the

great men described in poems when they memorize poetry (*Protagoras* 325-326). Ancient teachers of rhetoric saw no problem in imitating the works of others because they assumed that skilled orators always aimed to improve upon the works of others. Thus, imitation in the classical tradition more-so resembles what people today would understand as emulation. Teachers hoped that practicing imitation would compel writers to emulate—to rival or exceed the effectiveness of the model—and in so doing commit the excellences of the model to habit (*habitas*).

As one of the earliest known manuals on teaching rhetoric, *Rhetorica ad Herennium* demonstrates the central role that imitation played in classical pedagogy. The author of *Ad Herennium* names imitation as one of three ways by which students learned the oratorical arts and defines it as a method of attaining rhetorical skill:

All these faculties [invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery] we can acquire by three means: Theory, Imitation and Practice. By theory (*ars*) is meant a set of rules that provide a definite method and system of speaking. Imitation (*imitatio*) stimulates us to attain, in accordance with a studied method, the effectiveness of certain models in speaking. Practice (*exercitatio*) is assiduous exercises and experience (*usus* and *consuetudo*) in speaking. (420-421; bk. 2, pt. 2, vs. 3)

The author introduces imitation as an embodied practice that stimulates students to “attain” the effective elements of oration. Classical teachers understood that mere knowledge of theory (*ars*) could not give students the facility (*facilitas*) they needed to use rhetorical knowledge effectively. Thus, imitation aimed to habituate effective techniques of argumentation, committing them to the students’ reflexive understanding of language so that she could intuitively and spontaneously use her rhetorical ability in everyday situations.

Quintilian applies these same expectations to teaching imitation in *Institutes of Oratory*, when he describes imitation as a tool that is only useful insofar as an artist uses the tool (400; bk. 2, ch. 21, vs. 24). Imitation allows the student to use the strategies of the model to bring her own vision to bare. Quintilian writes:

Undoubtedly, then, imitation is not sufficient of itself, if for no other reason than that it is the mark of an indolent nature to rest satisfied with what has been invented by others. . . . When those who had no master in any subject, have transmitted so many discoveries to posterity, shall not the experience which we have in some things assist us to bring to light others, or shall we have nothing but what we derive from other men's bounty, as some painters aim at nothing more than to know how to copy a picture by means of compasses and lines. (bk 2, ch. 2, vs. 4-6)

Here we see Quintilian divide mere copying from emulation. He describes both as attitudes toward imitation. The “indolent rest satisfied” with reproducing the efforts of others while the engaged student uses “the experience which [she] has in some things to bring to light others.” Mere copying denotes an apathy toward imitation—a refusal to fully engage. The latter approach assumes the desire to improve upon the model by using the rhetor’s current experiences “to bring to light” new ideas and insights. Whereas the first approach uses imitation apathetically, the second approach assumes a personal and emotional connection with the model. This emotional connection is implicit throughout the Greek and Roman traditions.

In the Greek and Roman traditions, imitation referred to an artistic process by which poets and rhetors internalized effective techniques and used them in such a way that made those techniques their own. That process of internalization assumed emotional involvement.

Aristotle proposes in the *The Poetics* that people imitate because it is intuitive and pleasurable and that they are drawn to art because it is imitative (*mimetic*). Yet art is not imitative in that it simply copies the natural world. Aristotle believed that artists use imitation creatively because every imitation translates aspects of the world through human virtues about what is good, fair, beautiful, and right. Consequently, each imitation contains emotional judgments related to how the artist, and the artist's culture, sees the world.

In the classical sense, one's emotional engagement with imitation created the conditions for inspiration. The first-century BCE Greek rhetorician, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, assumed that imitation becomes creative through the artist's emotional engagement with the model. Dionysius proclaimed those who wanted to become great poets should become familiar with great literary models, exercise discretion so as to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their models and learn by comparing an artists' virtues against others. George Kennedy translates the fragment in *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World*: "Another fragment (3) defines imitation (*mimesis*) as 'an activity receiving the impression of a model by inspection of it,' while emulation (*zelos*) is called an 'activity of the soul impelled toward admiration of what seems to be fine'" (348). The passage communicates the emotional nature of imitation. Dionysius describes imitation as an act of reverence toward other artists. The poet's "impression" and "analysis" of the model move her to emulate the characteristics she admires. Additionally, Dionysius uses *zelos* to portray the admiration that compels the poet to emulate. *Zelos*, which translates literally to zeal, is also the name of the daemon son of Pallas and Styx, and sibling to Nike, Kratos, and Bia, who respectively personify victory, strength, and force. *Zelos* personified dedication, emulation, eager rivalry,

envy, jealousy, or zeal. Thus, Dionysius's use of *zelos* implies that Dionysius believed the poet's emotional involvement with the model was a significant creative force.

Plato also demonstrates the emotional connection between imitation and inspiration. In *Phaedrus*, we see Socrates provide an impromptu analysis of a speech by Lysias after listening to it. Edward P. J. Corbett points out that Socrates delays only briefly between analyzing the model and composing a new oration on the same topic. Such a brief delay indicates that classical perceptions of imitation crossed mind-body dualist expectations, for in moving so quickly from analysis to genesis, the reader is led to understand imitation as a conscious challenge that develops embodied, unconscious skill ("Theory and Practice" 246). This observation takes on further significance when we consider Socrates's emotional motivation. In the illustration, *Phaedrus*, the person of Socrates's admiration, is besotted by Lysias's speech on the nature of love, and Socrates jealously boasts he can compose an even stronger speech on the subject. His resulting oration displays similar poetic flourishes and rhetorical prowess but changes the model's argument so as to create a new work. In this case, jealousy stimulates and guides Socrates's imitation, illustrating that classical perceptions of imitation embraced one's emotional involvement with subject so as to stimulate one's desire to emulate the model's effectiveness.

Amusingly, Longinus, Plato's contemporary and author of *The Sublime*, used Plato to exemplify imitation's emotional and inspirational nature. He points to Plato's competitive nature as a source of the sublime:

Now what I am speaking of is not plagiarism, but resembles the process of copying from fair forms or statues or works of skilled labor . . . fair flowers of imagery [would not] have bloomed among the philosophical dogmas of Plato, nor would he have risen

so often to the language and topics of poetry, had he not engaged heart and soul in a contest for precedence with Homer, like a young champion entering the lists against a veteran. (ch. 13, vs. 4)

Although *Phaedrus* does not clearly resemble the works of Homer known today, Longinus's remark points to a broader observation about the rhetor's emotional orientation toward other authors. Rhetors, philosophers, and poets are emotionally moved to imitate those they admire, and the object of inspiration need not necessarily cohere to the rhetor's genre or discipline. As Plato imitates Homer, he competes for Homer's aplomb and engages the topics of language and poetry. Thus, we see imitation creating the context through which emotional reactions such as jealousy motivate enthusiasm, generate compelling language, and orient writers toward complimentary topic and style.

However, classical teachers of rhetoric stressed that a critical approach to imitation is a necessary counterpart to emulation. People's tendency to intuitively imitate sometimes means that people imitate without giving much thought to whom or what they imitate. Consequently, Quintilian cautioned teachers to be mindful of the texts they assigned and help students critically determine the positive and negative effects of the author's choices (bk 2, ch. 5, vs. 6-10), then commit effective choices to habit through imitation.

According to James Murphy, in the Roman curricula, imitation referred to a planned and deliberately sequenced set of stages that aimed to condition students' habits (*habitas*) so that they could intuitively and spontaneously create original compositions. The Roman approach involved "interpretive and re-creational activities," some geared more toward critical analysis and others geared toward learning through performance (*A Short History of*

*Writing Instruction* 54). Murphy lays out a seven-stage process. Each stage in the sequence had its own purpose. The stages included:

**Reading aloud (*lectio*):** During this stage either the teacher or a student would read a text aloud. The stage was especially important because most compositions were intended for oral delivery, and students needed to master habits of effective delivery, such as correct pronunciation and proper variation of tone and gesture.

**Analysis of the text (*praelectio*):** The instructor demonstrated a close-reading of the text and pointed out the positive and negative effects of the author's choices. As Murphy notes, the dissection of the text during this stage was "microscopic," committing the class's attention "to one word, or even one syllable at a time" (56).

**Memorization of Models:** In this stage, the student memorized the model in order to strengthen his or her memory and develop the "abundance of the best words, phrases, and figures" from which he or she would later compose original compositions (*Institutes of Oratory*, bk. 2, ch. 7, vs. 4).

**Paraphrase of Models:** The student retold a passage or complete composition in his own words so as to borrow the organization of the model and to develop his personal style.

**Transliteration of Models:** The student practiced "re-casting models" back and forth between Latin and Greek, shortening and lengthening the text, switching between verse and prose, or altering the text's style from plain to grand or vice versa. Murphy comments that transliteration often demanded "precise knowledge of verse forms and prose rhythms as well as an extensive vocabulary" (Murphy 60).

**Recitation of Paraphrase or Transliteration.** Each student read or recited his or her paraphrase or transliteration aloud to the class.

**Correction of Paraphrase or Transliteration.** The instructor and sometimes classmates would comment on the student's work, admonishing his failures and commending his successes.

Writing teachers may recognize parallels between these stages and modern-day approaches to teaching writing. Most rhetoric-composition textbooks include models, rhetorical analysis, assignments to produce arguments that follow the same genre or respond to the model's subject, and directions for peer review as part of their curriculum. However, the classical model places considerably more emphasis on performance, stressing imitation as a means of habitualizing rhetorical knowledge. During the first and second stages, students read and listened to dramatic deliveries of model texts, emotionally responding to the teacher's or student's performance before analyzing the performance's merits and shortcomings with the assistance of the teacher. This emphasis on performance made emotional response and critical reading complementary parts of imitation. Murphy also notes that students often competed with others as they tried to deliver the most creative and persuasive imitations, and that the teacher typically praised and admonished students' imitations in order to further instill a competitive attitude.

Ancient teachers of rhetoric and poetry believed imitation was an important part of how all creative individuals learned their art and invented new, creative contributions. They considered imitation an emotional and embodied process that conditioned writers to commit rhetorical knowledge to habit so that they could spontaneously draw upon that knowledge in new situations. In the rest of this chapter, I use the instructional creative writing texts in my

study to expound upon imitation's emotional and embodied nature and consider opportunities to use imitation in first- and second-year composition classrooms.

### **Strategies for Reading that Inspire**

Creative writers regularly emphasize the importance of analyzing how texts engage their emotions and using their emotional responses to guide analysis and imitation. In chapter 2, I argued that discussions of “reading like a writer” in creative writing craft texts introduce reading for the purposes of imitation as a process that privileges the writer’s emotional experience of literature for its role in engaging and motivating analysis and emulation. For Francine Prose, reading like a writer refers to reading for pleasure first, then more analytically, “conscious of style, of diction, of how sentences [are] formed and information [is] being conveyed” (3). Similarly, Sybil Estess and Janet McCann write in the opening to their section on critical reading in chapter 1, “Like anyone else who reads for pleasure, the writer reacts first to what she or he reads. Then, however, comes analysis, a careful deconstruction to see the means by which the story or poem ‘works’” (13). These passages assert that emotional responses inform analysis. Beginning writers cannot analyze how literature conveys emotion if they have not experienced it. So, the texts pose strategies to emotionally engage students with reading.

Sybil Estess and Janet McCann describe different ways of interacting with texts for the purposes of writing. In chapter 1, they explain that writers read creatively and critically:

Can you read creatively and critically at once? Possibly not. Therefore, read creatively first, and enjoy the experience of reading and the connection the story

makes with your own life experience. Then go back and read critically. In reading as well as in writing, the pleasure tends to come first, with discovery or invention. The work comes next, with analysis or design. (20)

The authors divide the process of reading like a writer into “creative reading” and “critical reading.” “Creative reading” is an active process. Readers read themselves into a story, and, as they do, they invent ideas for new work: “You may deliberately pull everything that impinges on the text right into it. . . . In a restaurant waiting for a friend, accompanied by a book of poetry, you might let the day and time into the book. Images of the poetry may combine with the scenes from the restaurant, making a new poem that comments on the old one, on the scene, or both” (9). The student’s experience of the model as understood through her writing situation creates a juxtaposition that inspires new ideas. The next step for the writer is figuring out how she can create a similar effect through analysis and design. Reading creatively and then critically lets her invent something new that is based on elements of the model, then consider how to design her piece so that it creates the intended effect. However, the authors express some skepticism about critical analysis’s creative use.

Francine Prose mirrors this concern when she suggests that some forms of critical analysis can stifle creativity. *Reading Like a Writer* opens with a qualification about pleasure’s role in emulation. Although most of the text focuses on reading analytically, she first amplifies the importance of reading creatively through metaphors that compare reading to disappearing down a rabbit hole (5) or following a yellow brick road (6). These passages convey the expectation that emotionally engaging with reading in such a way that motivates new ideas requires the writer resist thinking of texts as puzzles that need to be analyzed in order to be understood. Prose laments the years she spent training to read literature through

deconstructionist, Marxist, and feminist frameworks. These frameworks taught her to read literature as a series of puzzles that need to be deconstructed in order to be fully understood and conveyed the expectation that “ideas and politics trumped what the writer had actually written” (8). To be clear, Prose does not argue writers should discard these frameworks. Instead, she contends writers need to remain aware of how the desire to fit their readings to a given framework disrupts their ability to appreciate how individual words, sentences, and paragraphs create their effects.

### *Imaginative Reading*

One might wonder if it is possible to teach what Estess and McCann call “creative reading.” Heather Sellers contends this ability to imaginatively engage with a text can be learned. Her introduction argues all persons can benefit from instruction in creative writing because it exercises creative capacities that everyone has. Imaginative reading is one such capacity. She writes, “Practice reading to try to notice the differences between *knowing* and *seeing*. They are two different ways for the mind to apprehend information” (119). When we read to “know,” we receive the information and hopefully store it for later use. When we read to “see,” we participate physiologically through our imaginations.

Sellers proposes that imagery-filled writing creates imaginative spaces where writers can invent new insights and ideas because images are active: “Images bundle memory, smell, vision, action for the reader: Everything happens at once, providing a rich, seamless experience. The reader is *there*. Not being told something, but experiencing, firsthand, for him- or herself” (118). Readers who read imagistic writing flash on different sights, sounds,

and smells to make sense of what they read, and, as they do, they are transported to a situation unique to their own memories and experiences. That experience becomes inventive when writers write soon after reading. The images and themes in the model combine with the writer's writing situation to create new images that stimulate writing.

When I ask students in my writing classes to read arguments with imagistic language, I find that they readily compare their experiences with the author's. For example, I regularly assign Susan Douglas's "Narcissism as Liberation," a chapter from *Where the Girls Are*, as a prelude to rhetorical analysis essays. Douglas regularly describes advertisements designed to sell beauty products in concrete, imagistic language: "Endless images of women lounging on tiled verandas, or snuggling with their white angora cats while wearing white silk pajamas" and slogans that persist in present day advertising, such as L'Oréal Paris's "Because I'm worth it" (245). These images convey her experience of the advertisements as she simultaneously deconstructs their persuasive appeals. Her imagery invokes students' first-hand experiences, exciting discussion. Even without prompting, a handful of students usually emulate Douglas's structure of moving back and forth between image and analysis as they write their essays.

Does literature have to be imagistic to inspire writers? Possibly not. However, imagery is one of the creative writer's greatest tools for invoking readers' emotions, so it makes sense to assume that imagistic writing may be better at triggering the emotional engagement and motivation that makes beginning writers want to write.

## *Copying*

Copying also offers a strategy for emotional and embodied engagement with models as writers develop responses to complex, abstract, and seemingly foreign ideas. Retyping or rewriting slows down reading, letting readers focus on each letter, word, sentence, and paragraph. Yet copying also evokes a more intuitive or reflexive approach to imitation. The rhythm of copying a skilled author's words can reflexively enable writing at a level that sometimes escapes conscious awareness.

Ann Bernays and Pamela Painter introduce copying or “re-typing” as a strategy for experiencing and analyzing a text's effectiveness in “Learning from the Greats” (*What If?* 221). The exercise asks students to type out several stories or chapters from an author whom the writer admires and whom has “stood the test of time”: “Try to analyze how the sentences work, how their vocabulary differs from your own, how the structure of the story emerges from the language, how the writer intersperses scene with narrative summary. Feel in your fingers what is different about the prose” (221). By reconstructing each letter, word, and sentence, copying slows writers' experiences of the texts, letting them focus on how their bodies respond to the significance of each word and idea.

The authors present copying as an embodied form of analysis when they tell writers to “feel what is different” about the writing (221). “Learning from the Greats” underscores how imitation engages our bodies and minds in ways that sometimes escape conscious awareness. Psycholinguists refer to our unconscious tendency to mimic the syntactical patterns of those around us as “structural priming” or “syntactic persistence.” Michael Erard, creative nonfiction writer and journalist, describes the process and its effects in his 2012 *New York Times* article titled “Escaping One's Own Shadow”: “Your brain's activity in one part

of the day shapes it in another, especially when it comes to creating sentences. This is a real phenomenon, described by psycholinguists, who call it ‘structural priming’ or ‘syntactic persistence.’ Basically, earlier patterns in what you say or read or write ‘prime’ you to repeat them when you’re acting automatically.” Structural priming explains why we tend to repeat the syntactical choices of those around us. When we read a scientific journal, we tend to use passive voice soon after. When we read Hemingway or Gertrude Stein, we tend to mimic their short sentences and patterns of repetition. Francine Prose refers to the phenomenon in *Reading Like a Writer* when she says that the process of learning grammar from literary authors often more-so resembles the “process of osmosis” than “the logic of thought” (43). It is a kind of imitation that happens naturally as we hold friendly conversations or read literature.

### *Paraphrasing*

Paraphrase helps students slow down their experiences of a text to fully understand what the author is saying and imagine how the author’s language connects to their personal experiences. On a whim a few years ago, I asked a section of my first-year writing students to imitate the first paragraph of *Inventing the University*. Of course, they first reacted with confusion. What did I mean by imitation? Since I had not written this chapter yet, I was uncertain of the answer. We were already familiar with Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein’s version of scaffolding in *They Say/I Say*—an approach to imitation that teaches students to turn a model’s syntax into a series of templates that they then use to construe and construct their own thoughts. So, we decided to imitate the paragraph sentence by sentence, fitting our

experiences to Bartholomae's syntax. For most of the students, the exercise turned into paraphrasing Bartholomae's argument. Their resulting paragraphs demonstrated paraphrase's ability to help students understand and engage with difficult passages. The example below captures and translates the frustration Bartholomae addresses into easily accessible language.

I have included Bartholomae's original writing for comparison:

From David Bartholomae's *Inventing the University*:

Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion—invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like History or Anthropology or Economics or English. He has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community. Or perhaps I should say the *various* discourses of our community, since it is in the nature of a liberal arts education that a student, after the first year or two, must learn to try on a variety of voices and interpretive schemes.

Student's paraphrase:

Every time I sit down to write an essay, I have to figure out what I'm meant to say on the spot—invent the class's topic, or a piece of it, like Columbus's passage through the Americas, or osmosis. I have to write in complete sentences, with proper punctuation and in text citations, to speak like a textbook, to try on these peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of the community. Or perhaps I should say the ridiculous discourses of the community. No one in the real world writes like this. (Emphasis original)

I saved this example because it demonstrates how paraphrase can encourage students to emotionally engage with academic arguments. In this case, the student interprets Bartholomae's argument through his concrete experiences. Knowing that he is the student that Bartholomae is describing, he switches the paragraph's perspective from third person to first person. Through each line, he translates the idea of inventing the argument into a specific example—an essay—and further dissects what he has to do to write the essay—“invent the class's topic, or a piece of it, like Columbus's passage through the Americas, or osmosis.” As I read the paragraph, these examples communicate to me his frustration with the fact that his academic writing often simply repeats what has already been said on Columbus's passage in words that “no one in the real world” uses. The exercise motivates his conclusion that in trying to learn how to write discourse, he is not learning how to write from “*various*” academic perspectives but through “peculiar” and even “ridiculous” stylistic conventions.

Through this example, we see how paraphrase can facilitate a deeper, emotional engagement than simple reading provides. I find copying and paraphrasing especially useful during days when students are slow to join into class discussion. Rewriting or retyping an introductory or significant body paragraph helps students consider the meaning of each word and sentence. It teaches them that every word, sentence, and idea matters, and it also primes their brains to continue thinking and writing through similar syntactical patterns. Paraphrase helps students understand and engage with difficult texts by encouraging them to translate the author's language into language that is more familiar and, in some cases, more concrete. In these ways, copying and paraphrasing create contexts for inspiration, for associations

between the author's thoughts and the imitator's experiences, and for emotional reactions that, if pursued, contribute important insights within students' various fields of experience.

### **Strategies for Prompting Imitation**

This section examines two imitation approaches from the creative writing craft books in my study: Heather Seller's scaffolding exercises in *The Practice of Creative Writing* and Janet Burroway's "Try This" exercises that follow selected readings in *Imaginative Writing*. These approaches differ with regards to purpose and level of explicit analysis. Consequently, they provide a useful framework for creating situations where students can analyze and experiment with technique while inventing material that is creative and insightful.

While all of the instructional creative writing texts encourage students to read proactively, considering how the texts accomplish their effects, many of the craft texts do not explicitly prompt students to imitate models. Instead, imitation is an implicit expectation, much as it is in rhetoric-composition textbooks that model rhetorical analysis of texts and provide students with general guidelines for creating something similar. As I demonstrated in the previous section and in chapter 2, creative writing craft texts that do not explicitly prompt imitation still have lessons to offer those interested in teaching imitation as an inspirational practice. However, the absence of explicit imitation prompts demonstrates that creative writing pedagogy can benefit from a review of strategies for prompting imitation.

Rhetoric-composition instructional materials often limit imitation's use to the teaching of style. *The St. Martin's Guide* introduces imitation in chapter 8, "Teaching Style," but makes no mention of the practice in chapter 6, "Teaching Invention." Additionally,

*Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students* devotes an entire chapter to imitation, but again, Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee primarily introduce it as a method for learning effective style.

I find this distinction troubling for two reasons. First, even when the authors apply imitation to the study of style, the process nurtures and triggers invention by giving students the vocabulary and syntax to enable new associations and insights. Heather Sellers's scaffolding exercise and Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's *They Say/ I Say* demonstrate this fact. Imitating another author's syntax sentence by sentence is a highly generative practice. Secondly, I worry that relegating explicit practice of imitation to units on style reduces the amount of time that teachers and students give to the practice. After experimenting with different imitation exercises over the last few years, I have noticed that students find imitation most helpful when they are exploring new genres and discovering topics for their essays. Thus, I hope that this section will provide writing teachers with opportunities to use imitation throughout their classes as they teach not only style, but invention and arrangement.

### *Scaffolding*

Heather Sellers's *The Practice of Creative Writing* demonstrates explicit imitation's inspirational value. The practice is similar to the paraphrasing activity I mentioned above, but Sellers applies the exercise to help writers develop new ideas as they internalize sentence-level craft techniques such as metaphor, simile, and repetition. She introduces a version of

close imitation named “scaffolding” or “writing between the lines” (43) to engage beginning writers with poetry:

Call to mind a building under construction. You know the system of platforms constructed *around* the building site, as the new floors are built? That’s scaffolding, and that’s the function of the text we use to launch our imitations. Then, when the new piece is completed, the scaffolding is removed. The building stands. We forget all about the scaffolds. The original text provides inspiration and supports the new work. (43)

Scaffolds create space for beginning writers to make novel insights by encouraging unique associations. By removing the necessity of creating the form, scaffolding allows the free, creative part of writers’ minds room to come forward and play.

Using Bob Hicok’s poem “A Primer,” students copy the poem word for word, skipping three lines in between each line of the poem. The writer annotates each line, noting the line’s syntax and function. Then the writer fills in the blank lines to make the form fit a new subject. Sellers suggests this process is inspirational because the writer must interpret a new subject through the juxtaposition of disparate topics (46). In reimagining a poem or piece of prose through close analysis and subject change, writers fit their thoughts to forms of association that they do not usually inhabit. This pushes writers to internalize new strategies of technique and form and invent associations that may lead to new creative works.

Sellers’s scaffolding exercise demonstrates the inspirational nature of classical imitation strategies such as paraphrase and their applicability to today’s classrooms. James Murphy explains that paraphrase turned students’ attentions to “the structure of the model rather than its words” (59). We commonly think of paraphrase as the practice of translating

someone else's words into our own words, but in the Greek and Roman traditions, paraphrase intended to help students internalize the structures of different genres and specific parts of argument, such as the *narratio*. Like paraphrase in the classical sense, Sellers's scaffolding exercise prompts writers to borrow the structure of various creative pieces. Her introduction emphasizes that paraphrase unlocks new material by helping students internalize new techniques. She writes, "In this class, you are not going to try to publish your imitations, or pass them off as your own totally inspired personal invention. You are practicing. Imitation is training, development. You are trying to block out your normal thinking habits and force yourself into some new patterns and new moves" (41). According to Sellers, the purpose of scaffolding is play—to make "gaps, leaps, nonsense, surprise, discomfort, weirdness" (42). Scaffolding removes the burden of developing or choosing a form for one's thoughts, so the writer can focus on increasing the range of what she can do. She asserts that this practice works especially well with poetry that is slightly opaque and surreal (49). The texts that Sellers recommends are syntactically unique, such as Jamaica Kincaid's "Girl," which implies students stand to gain more from imitating texts that are different from their normal writing patterns.

Scaffolding works especially well with academic as students grapple with the forms and expressions that characterize academic discourse. Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein use a similar approach in *They Say / I Say*. They argue scaffolding demystifies academic discourse by equipping students with a heuristic for identifying the common rhetorical moves within particular genres. When applied to multiple models, it helps writers understand hooks and thesis statements as dynamic and changing—breaking the perception of a one-size-fits-all approach to genre. Like Sellers, Graff and Birkenstein contend that scaffolding facilitates

creativity by encouraging patterns of thought that are endemic to academic discourse, such as summary, qualification, planting a naysayer or “tying it all together” (Graff and Birkenstein 105).

I find scaffolding especially useful when discussing academic moves, such as integrating sources and drafting introductions and conclusions. While conducting research for this dissertation, I adapted Sellers’s scaffolding exercise for students in two sections of first-year composition with the following prompt:

Read “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” by Nicholas Carr or “Does Texting Affect Writing?” by Michaela Cullington. Then use the scaffolding technique we used in class to imitate the first two paragraphs of the article you read. Imitate the structure and function of each sentence while changing the subject. Go sentence by sentence, highlighting each sentence at a time. Your resulting fictional introduction may be as serious or silly as you desire. Feel free to fabricate quotes and sources as part of this exercise.

I grade this low-stakes assignment for completion and use it as a springboard for class discussion. In order to give students some room to exercise their aesthetic preferences, I offer a choice of texts and allow fabrication for practical reasons. I am asking students to invent new introductions under strict limitations. Beginning writers have difficulty finding sources that are credible and related to their topics, much less narrowly related to the specific patterns of thought provided by the models. Fabricating sources helps students focus on how each author’s use of sources generates interest and build her case through sets of concrete rhetorical moves. When students fabricate sources in this low-stakes, purely educational context, it frees them to consider the multiple ways that sources boost credibility and interest.

Then, when it is time to share the discoveries they make through research, they have a storehouse of rhetorical moves from which they can intuitively pull. Plus, the exercise is fun. Many students find the opportunity to create a fictional research essay or argument mildly subversive, and in some cases the exercise leads to potential essay topics.<sup>13</sup>

### *“Try This” Exercises*

Janet Burroway’s *Imaginative Writing* models a looser version of imitation that positions models as aids to completing challenges. After each selected reading, Burroway uses “Try This” exercises to help students generate writing and practice the craft techniques discussed in the chapter. She isolates techniques from the selected reading, then challenges students to emulate the technique. For example, after reading chapter 2 on Imagery, students read “What I Learned” by David Sedaris. Sedaris’s subject is mundane—walking around Princeton’s campus and remembering things that happened in the past. Sedaris infuses his imagery with unexpected and inappropriate nouns: “Princeton breastplate” and “velvet cape” to describe the outfit his father adopted after his son was admitted to the Ivy league school or “warts the size of new potatoes” to describe one of his professors. After reading “What I Learned,” Burroway challenges writers to “write, quickly, a couple of pages about something banal that you’ve done in the past few days. Then replace at least fifteen nouns with other nouns that are in some way extreme, or inappropriate to the subject at hand” (30). Although the exercise does not explicitly tell students to use Sedaris’s piece as a model, the challenges

---

<sup>13</sup> Mary Minock argues that asking students to imitate academic language is a postmodern practice because it invites students to subvert hierarchical classroom models that assume teachers and texts primarily serve a corrective function. See “Toward a Postmodern Pedagogy of Imitation.”

to use juxtaposition similarly and write about mundane events lead students to rely on Sedaris's writing as they complete the prompt.

Burroway's approach is an easy alternative to Sellers's scaffolding. Her activity is a much looser version of imitation than Sellers's scaffolding technique. She values brevity and requires some anticipatory analysis of the model's strengths. She does not break down why she wants students to write a few pages on a mundane topic or change nouns; she just says, "Try this." Her emphasis puts the action before the explanation and assumes that students will figure out the connection. Her approach requires teachers to isolate the features of the text that they want their students to imitate and challenge them to do something similar. I find her approach easier than Sellers's because the exercises are almost always brief—no longer than four sentences—minimizing the attention that teachers and students must give to reading and comprehending the challenge and maximizing the attention they give to the reading.

The exercise above works well as a warm-up activity for the personal essay. I use David Sedaris's essay to help students generate ideas for their personal essays. Most students in my first- and second-year composition classes can relate to the oddball characters and misfit feelings that Sedaris conveys. I also use Burroway's exercise as a model to construct similar exercises for research- and argument-centric genres. Creating an imitation prompt in the "Try this" tradition requires that I isolate the technique that I want students to imitate and write a two- to three-sentence challenge that they complete following the reading. For example,

Immediately after reading Jenna Wortham's "I Had a Nice Time with You Tonight.

On the App," write a couple of paragraphs about your typical Sunday afternoon. Then

choose one of the activities you described and complicate it by asking a question or posing a problem.

This exercise helps students consider their normal everyday lives as subjects worth writing about and practice building interest through a wrinkle or complication. Wortham's paper models the back and forth of a present and retrospective narrator, which can help students practice the dialectical movement between narrating concrete experiences, posing problems, and making meaning through reflection. Many students write about their fraught relationships with technology as they develop compelling introductions to leading questions, "Such as why do viral tweets attract more negative attention than other social media posts?"

By isolating rhetorical features, then using that feature as a springboard, students learn to engage productively with models. Writing soon after reading, especially when the reading is pleasurable, can be a playful, imaginative exercise, which invites readers to use their imaginative responses to texts as part of new work. This kind of imaginative reading experience translated into action benefits students by cultivating an orientation toward reading and writing that makes it seem less painful and more pleasurable.

Sellers and Burroway prompt students to use imitation as a means of discovering and committing various writing techniques to habit and developing ideas for new works along the way. Instead of staring at the blank screen and waiting for the mythic muse, students begin to understand imitation as a pleasurable and at times inspirational tool. Plus, imitating specific features of a model creates a classroom environment where we can compare multiple applications of the technique, emphasizing that imitation is paradoxically authentic to the person imitating.

## Conclusion

Greek and Roman teachers of rhetoric considered imitation one of the primary ways that students learned the language arts and experienced orators invented new compositions. Early descriptions of imitation frame it as an emotional and embodied creative process. Throughout the classical tradition, we see rhetors and poets in the throes of inspiration, moved by their adulation for great artists, or instigated to create as a form of competition with the greats. The classical framework, especially imitation's use in the Roman school system, shows that imitation aimed to develop rhetorical theory (*ars*) into a habit (*habitas*) of effective expression (Murphy, "Habit" 35-76). Ancient Greek and Roman teachers of rhetoric implied that emotional involvement with imitation facilitates inspiration.

The overall format of imitation's practice in the classical sense is still present in many first- and second-year compositions classrooms. Rhetoric-composition textbooks regularly offer models that illustrate genres, argument strategies, or stylistic techniques. They demonstrate analysis or close reading of individual passages to isolate rhetorical or poetic effects, explain how the effect is accomplished, and they usually prompt students to practice identifying the technique or attempt writing something that accomplishes a similar effect. These exercises aim to instill rhetorical analysis and close reading as habits that help students critically identify, analyze, and apply rhetorical choices.

Creative writing texts also use imitation similarly. Many of the texts in my study are what I call primers—those books that we think of as traditional textbooks—they offer selected readings, demonstrate craft techniques through close reading, and challenge writers to read for the purposes of analyzing how texts accomplish their effects. They also add the importance of emotionally and imaginatively engaging with texts—suggesting that models

become inspirational insofar as they move writers to want to emulate those authors that they love. These authors propose that how we experience model texts is of direct significance to how we learn and create.

The instructional creative writing texts in my study, in conversation with the classical tradition, develop our understanding of imitation as an emotional and embodied process. Authors such as Francine Prose, Sybil Estess, and Janet McCann argue that writers must read for pleasure first, then more analytically, conscious of diction and style, because the emotional experience of reading engages and motivates the imagination and provides the information that lets writers notice how specific choices create their intended effects. Additionally, the authors stress imitation's embodied nature, posing that learning through imitation often resembles osmosis more than rational method (Prose 3). Plus, the texts offer strategies to help students emotionally engage with reading, such as "imaginative reading" (Sellers) and retyping (Bernays and Painter), that all writing teachers can use to increase student engagement with models as they develop rhetorical and poetic skill alongside ideas for future work.

However, creative and critical reading do not relay the full range and power of imitation as an inspirational practice. Ignoring imitation practices such as copying, paraphrasing, and targeted imitation of particular techniques means that we also ignore the possibilities for nurturing and triggering inspiration that these practices provide. These exercises help writers recognize and internalize the habits and patterns of thought that lead them toward new discoveries. They also provide strategies to meaningfully engage students with academic genres as they interpret what other authors have to say through their unique writing situations.

CHAPTER 4  
FROM HEURISTIC TO INSPIRATION

“We’re going to try an exercise,” I tell my students during the second week of our first-year composition class. “Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. I want you to imagine your high school. You’re standing outside the door where you normally entered. Maybe you’ve walked or taken the bus. Maybe someone dropped you off. What are you wearing? What does the building look like? What’s the weather like? Who is there? What do you smell? Now walk inside and look around. What do you see in that first room? Who is there? Do they react to you? How do you feel? Are you worried about anything? Are you excited for something? Take a few minutes to just be there, and when I tell you, we’ll open our eyes and write what we’ve just experienced.”<sup>14</sup>

Exercises modeled on creative writing prompts have become a ritualistic way of calling forth the muse in my writing classes. Each time I use one, I watch students lean over their notebooks. Their eyes lock onto the place where the pencil or pen meets the page; nostalgia flickers through faces and postures. I use writing exercises as many writing textbooks do—to introduce and elucidate elements of craft, such as concrete language and perspective. Yet I also use them in the way that Bret Anthony Johnston describes at the beginning of *Naming the World*: “to draw out the writer, to cultivate her confidence, and to provide the tools and raw material to make her work the best version of itself” (Johnston 4%). Johnston, like many of the other creative writers who authored the instructional texts in

---

<sup>14</sup> Anne Bernays and Pamela Painter share a similar exercise by Alison Lurie. The exercise uses Ciceronian-like *topoi* to guide writers through sensory-rich recollections of a place or event (161 “Total Recall,” *What If?*).

my study, values such exercises for their inspirational power, their ability to motivate the kinds of writing that push writers to experiment with language; transcend initial expectations of people, places and actions; and bring readers along with them for the ride.

In chapter 2, I argued inspiration cannot be taught in the traditional sense of the word, but it can be nurtured and triggered. In this chapter, I ask how creative writing exercises facilitate inspiration, and beyond that, how they benefit rhetoric-composition pedagogy and scholarship. In the first part of this chapter, I argue that using creative writing exercises in first- and second-year required writing coursework productively complicates students' expectations of academic writing and nurtures habits of mind that are conducive to inspiration. Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) scholarship in conversation with writing studies from Phyllis Creme, Celia Hunt, and Gregory Light illustrates how genres and the cultural expectations that students attach to genres shape students' expectations about how they should engage with writing. For example, creative writing genres communicate a poetic license for diverging from audience expectations to surprise and excite readers, as well as an increased emphasis on using subjective experience to emotionally motivate writing. I argue these implicit expectations play a valuable role in triggering inspiration within creative writing classrooms, and that when educators use creative writing prompts in research- and argument-centric writing classrooms, the prompts provide an important counterpoint to the expectations that students bring to academic writing.

Then, in the second half of the chapter, I compare classical invention heuristics with similar creative writing prompts. Creative writing and rhetoric-composition pedagogies share related invention heuristics. As a result, teachers of first- and second-year composition can easily adapt creative writing exercises to benefit research- and argument-centric genres.

Additionally, reading shared heuristics through the instructional creative writing texts productively complicates students' and teachers' understandings of how heuristics function by highlighting the relationship between heuristics and inspiration. I support these arguments through two case studies that examine how creative writing exercises use Ciceronian-like *topoi* and the *dissoi logoi* to nurture and trigger inspiration<sup>15</sup>.

The creative writing exercises accomplish similar heuristic functions as the classical heuristics while stressing the associated heuristics' inspirational value. For example, Bret Anthony Johnston's *Naming the World* and Anne Bernays and Pamela Painter's *What If?* include Ciceronian-like *topoi* that help writers develop characters and plots by systematically locating significant details that lead writers to infer new possibilities for their stories. Under the right circumstances, significant details emotionally motivate invention, sometimes creating the conditions for automatic writing or flow (Boswell). However, writers' emotional inferences from the *topoi* will not lead them to say anything new or surprising if they are not aware of how their communities and cultures inform their emotional responses. Therefore, I argue that students who use the Ciceronian *topoi* need a habit of openness to uncertainty and discontinuities.

The *Dissoi Logoi*, an ancient text of unknown authorship, taught students a system of reasoning by opposites based on the assumption that all meaning is situationally dependent. The system aimed to condition openness to other perspectives, stressing that multiple truths can exist simultaneously. Elizabeth Strout offers a perspective-changing exercise that serves the same purpose by encouraging students to recount and narrate an argument from the other

---

<sup>15</sup> Cicero translates *topoi* (Greek) to *locoi* (Latin) in his work on invention. I use *topoi* as opposed to *locoi* for the sake of term consistency as I discuss the relationship between his *topoi* and the Greek *Dissoi Logoi*.

person's perspective. I argue that her exercise applies and modernizes the pedagogy of *Dissoi Logoi* for today's students while highlighting its inspirational value. The exercise proves especially useful for nurturing openness to uncertainty and discontinuities in first- and second-year composition classrooms. Additionally, my study shows that the Ciceronian *topoi* and *Dissoi Logoi* are most effective when used together.

### **Inspiration and the Social Context of Creative Writing: An Argument for Using Creative Writing Exercises in First- and Second-Year Composition Classrooms**

In an *Inside Higher Ed* opinion piece, Cydney Alexis argues English and related departments should “banish the use of ‘creative writing’ in titling, disciplines, tracks and departments” because our cultural narratives about creative writing perpetuate false binaries about “academic” and “creative” writing’s value (“Let’s Banish the Phrase”). “The problem,” she asserts, “is that one image of writing dominates the popular imagination and is weighted with value more heavily than all the others: writing as ‘creative writing,’ which is treated as if it’s interchangeable with fiction and poetry.” Movies, television, and novels consistently depict creative persons as those invested in the Fine Arts. As a result, students tend to consider anything other than fiction, poetry, and drama, such as essays, emails, blog posts, instruction manuals and so on, less creative and less important.

Like many writing instructors who come to the first- and second-year writing requirement courses with an optimistic eye toward empowering students and cultivating a deep appreciation of research and argument, I try to resist this dichotomous attitude toward “creative” and “academic” writing. Alexis argues the problem is a cultural branding issue

that English departments can mitigate by using broader titles. Yet writing teachers also have an opportunity to make students' expectations of creative writing genres work for them by incorporating creative writing exercises as low-stakes, pre-writing exercises for research and argument essays. Using creative writing exercises to teach research- and argument-centric genres productively complicates students' attitudes toward writing and cultivates habits that dispose them toward inspiration.

My argument follows the same reasoning as arguments made by writing across the curriculum (WAC) advocate Charles Bazerman, who uses Rhetorical Genre Studies to argue that switching between multiple genred sites of action in composition classrooms fosters critical awareness of what genres help writers do and not do and enables students' critical and emotional participation within these different sites of action (Bazerman 17). Genre is not merely or primarily a set of conventions. It is an epistemic form, a way of knowing or a mode of thought that reflects the values inherent in the social context (Fleisher Feldman, "Genres as Mental Models" 117). Genre directs the writer's emotional orientation toward subjects: the "range of feelings, impulses and stances [one] adopts in orienting to the world" (Bazerman 14).<sup>16</sup> Using creative writing exercises as low-stakes introductions to research- and argument-centric genres is a subversive act. It disrupts students' expectations regarding how they should interact with subjects, the range of insights that are potentially valuable, and hopefully the value of the writing itself.

In "Genre and Identity: Citizenship in the Age of the Internet and the Age of Global Capitalism," Bazerman argues that asking students to write in a range of genres not only prepares students to critically analyze and apply the expectations of genre; writing in a range

---

<sup>16</sup> Also see Carolyn Miller's seminal article, "Genre as Social Action."

of genres also educates students' evolving senses of self, as well as the "range of feelings, impulses and stances [one] adopts in orienting to the world" (14). Genres influence how students perceive their motivation and purpose for writing, which includes assumptions about how they should emotionally relate to the subject and the task. To illustrate how genres direct students' understanding of themselves and their writing, Bazerman compares genres to social spaces, such as a dining room, a dance hall, a seminar or a church service (13):

As participants orient towards this communicative social space, they take on the mood, attitude, and actional possibilities of that place—they go to that place to do the kinds of things you do there, think the kinds of thoughts you think there, feel the kind of way you feel there, satisfy what you can there, be the kind of person you can become there. . . . You adopt a frame of mind, set your hopes, plan accordingly, and begin acting with that orientation" (13).

Social spaces affect what individuals are likely to say and do, and also how they identify themselves in relationship to the social setting. The more a person hangs around a particular social space, the more that person develops the parts of herself that are "related to and oriented toward the activities of the space" (14). In the same way, genre triggers different relations between self and subject, different "actional possibilities," and different expectations regarding the "particular ranges of feelings, impulses, and stances" that are appropriate in such a context (14).

It is undeniable that the social expectations of creative writing genres differ substantially from expectations of academic writing. Phyllis Creme and Celia Hunt studied a group of undergraduate and graduate students' perceptions of academic and creative writing during a voluntary workshop designed to help students think about academic scholarship

through creative writing exercises. The researchers surveyed students about their perceptions of academic and creative writing before, during, and after the workshop sequence. By consensus, the group identified the major concerns of academic writing as “clarity, succinctness, orderliness in fulfilling academic conventions; concern with the reader/assessor; and conveying one’s own ideas or interpretations” (160). Their expectations of creative writing posed a striking contrast. Participants described the process of creative writing as a kind of “contained chaos,” wherein instead of focusing on “getting things right,” they could “experiment with wild, speculative ideas, loosening the academic frame and allowing new thoughts and new connections to be made” (161).

Another study by Gregory Light corroborates Creme and Hunt’s observations, specifically that students associate creative writing with more attention to personal expression and an associated stylistic freedom that enables that expression (265). One student defined the process of creative writing as “mind freeing, freeing your imagination, creating empty spaces which then get filled up with something absolutely new and you don’t know where the hell it’s come from, right. And the other one (essay writing) is sort of shoving a hell of a lot of noise in your head and wanting to scream” (265). The general assumption across these student reports is that creative writing genres, by embracing subjectivist accounting of reality, enable a greater freedom in students’ ability to assent to or dissent from the perceived expectations of one’s readership. The subjectivist attitude frees students to grapple with their emotional responses toward topics and experiment with different ways of presenting information.

This subjectivist attitude is also expressed and reinforced through many creative writing texts, which for some students form a first point of initiation to the study of creative

writing genres. Alice LaPlante defines all good writing as “*surprising yet convincing*” in the tradition set forth by E. M. Forster’s *Aspects of the Novel*, published almost a century ago (*Method and Madness* 3; emphasis original). Forster argued that readers are *convinced* by *surprise*: “[They] get a jolt, and then a sense of the rightness of it all” (Forster paraphrased in LaPlante 3). Communicating this sense of surprise requires that writers communicate their subjective experiences of discovery to readers; they must not only act as reporters, but as guides who lead their readers down the annals of thought and experience through which they traveled on their journeys of discovery. Writers cannot communicate that journey unless they have experienced it through the writing.

Therefore, LaPlante advises writers to use their emotional responses to guide their journeys of discovery. She uses Philip Larkin’s “The Pleasure Principle” to describe the imperative of the writer’s emotional and intellectual investment in his or her creative work. I used Larkin’s stages to explain how internalization of craft knowledge and the values of the field contribute to inspiration in chapter 1, so I will only return to them briefly here. LaPlante uses Larkin’s three stages of creative work to emphasize that effective writers need to be emotionally engaged with their subjects because their interest compels action on the part of writers and readers. Interest forms a bridge between reader and writer, invoking the writer, which in turn invokes readers. If the writer has felt no emotion, there can be nothing to convey nor guide the writer’s choices. If the writer has not internalized the rules of craft and culture that lead to the optimum selection of language, the emotion cannot be translated. If there is no audience to interpret and be evoked by the emotion, there can be no evocation. These three stages convey a central tenant of many creative writing texts — that emotional

and intellectual investment are channeled between readers and writers, and that emotional involvement sustains interest for the writer as well as the reader.

The value of subjective, emotional involvement echoes throughout the rest of the creative writing texts in my study. Thane Rosenbaum differentiates fiction writing from other writing by its “easy reliance on emotional truth” (“Strategies of the Story Teller: Point of View” in Johnston). Bret Anthony Johnston introduces his collection of writing exercises with the metaphor of the writer “doggedly adventuring into territories unknown, risking failure with every word” (“Introduction”). Such a disposition can only be accomplished with an attitude that proclaims every subjective observation and emotional response is potentially valuable and interesting.

Emotional involvement plays an essential role in facilitating creativity. Creativity requires more than the ability to retain information and communicate it through the standards of a given field and genre. It requires students to feel the freedom to diverge from the expectations of a single correct or conventional perspective on a topic and resist initial assumptions. A report co-sponsored by Art Works and The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) summarizes recent interdisciplinary research on creativity in the arts and sciences. Creativity, as the authors define it, is experienced through the brain’s “magic synthesis” of divergent and convergent thought processes (Arieti 20-21). Creative insights are most likely to occur when individuals are able to freely switch between convergent thinking— “think[ing] strategically, to apply logic and discretion to narrow a quantity of ideas to the best ideas”—and divergent thinking— “associate[ing] and combin[ing] ingredients” while recognizing that “an infinite number of possibilities exist” (19-20). These seemingly paradoxical processes come together in what Arieti calls the “brain’s magic synthesis,”

through which individuals meld the expected and the unexpected to form solutions that transform individual or public ideas.

While scientific research has not yet shown that subjective writing triggers the brain's magic synthesis, the study by Creme and Hunt demonstrates that creative writing genres help some students use emotional responses to diverge from their initial assumptions. One student in Creme and Hunt's study reported that using a fiction prompt to represent her emotional response to Shakespeare's tragic hero helped her center herself in the subject and realize that her initial response to the archetype, "dull and flat," was really a result of a deeper emotion—the ridiculous (153-154). Focusing on her emotional response to Shakespeare's tragic hero let her diverge from the perspectives of secondary sources and recognize that she had a different perspective to contribute.

Emotional responses play an important role in motivating and focusing creativity. They help writers sustain attention to subjects while exploring and communicating the urgency and gravity of messages. Csikszentmihalyi's foundational work on flow explains that when individuals are emotionally immersed in subjects, they display higher generativity, productivity, flexible memory combination, and resistance to intrusive habits or fixed ways of thinking (*Flow* 131). Plus, affective reactions can generate a greater ability to identify exigencies, evidence, and grounds for argument. In *Doing Emotion*, Laura Micciche argues emotion is not just a rhetorical appeal in the Aristotelian sense, but a category of analysis through which we come to identify evidence and grounds for argument (3). A strong emotional response tells us that certain subjects are worth pursuing just as pain is the body's way of telling us something is wrong.

Most writing teachers recognize that all writing assignments, regardless of genre, elicit a wide range of emotional reactions. The personal essay in particular invites students to disclose personal, often painful experiences, so instructors need to avoid implicitly or explicitly communicating the expectation that students write about emotionally fraught issues (see Amy Robillard's "Shame and the Personal Essay"). However, emotional involvement with writing can also lead writers to discover a sense of personal investment and a sense of self or voice, especially when writing about personal experience. Peter Elbow and Donald Murray encouraged young writers to explore their subjective experiences in writing, not only to improve their writing style by discovering their authentic voices (a premise that met sharp resistance from James Berlin and David Bartholomae), but also to invite insights from personal experience and mitigate writing anxiety (*Writing Without Teachers*, *Writing with Power*, and *A Writer Teaches Writing*).

These arguments for subjective writing's value persist in some of today's rhetoric-composition textbooks, such as Bruce Ballenger's *The Curious Writer* and *The Curious Researcher*, where thoughtful accounts of emotions' motivating and creative role are scattered throughout. Yet, students' perceptions of composition's social context, as suggested in the two studies above, do not always match the impressions that instructors of research and argument-centric genres want them to have. For instance, students often assume academic writing is more concerned with preciseness and correctness, when composition instructors generally agree an attitude that embraces creativity is central to the habits of mind students need for success in higher education (Council of Writing Program Administrators).

Telling students "We're going to try a creative writing exercise" in a first- or second-year composition classroom effectively tells them that their writing is being held to a

different set of standards—one in which stepping outside of one’s comfort zone to explore subjective and emotional relationships to complex subjects is as important as, and coincides with, addressing the needs of the audience. As Anis Bawarshi explains in *Genre and The Invention of the Writer*, “When writers begin to write in different genres, they participate within different sets of relations, relations that motivate them, consciously or unconsciously, to invent both their texts and themselves” (16). Genres socialize students’ attitudes toward writing. The more students play with poetry and story, the more they feel a sense of freedom to play with the sounds, textures, and rhythms of language. Stories give students permission and space to linger on a topic, imagine different perspectives, and consider how the subject makes them feel, how it will make others feel, and what these emotions tell them about what they are saying and why it matters. It is much easier to encourage students to be open to the writing process, appreciating its ability to compel and meaningfully complicate their perceptions of subjects, when they show up expecting and wanting that kind of experience with writing just as dancers show up to a ball expecting to dance. However, I expect that introducing students to creative writing genres in first- and second-year composition classrooms can have much the same effect as bringing a guest to a ball. Eventually the room, the music, and the enthusiasm of the other dancers entices the guest to dance, and my teaching experience tells me that the same can be equally true for the student who has never thought of herself as a creative person or else allowed that thought to turn dormant.

Of course, using creative writing exercises in a composition classroom involves anticipating which exercises will foster the attitudes and habits required by research- and argument-centric genres. Each creative writing exercise prompts a particular set of cognitive and emotional moves, and so some exercises are more suited to research- and argument-

centric genres than others. To choose an exercise that fits the aims of a unit in one of my first- or second-year composition classrooms, I have to first ask what cognitive and emotional moves I am asking my students to make. Then, I look for a suitable writing exercise in the creative writing books on my shelf.

So, in the next section, I consider creative writing exercises that use similar inventional methodologies to classical invention heuristics, specifically the Ciceronian *topoi* and *Dissoi Logoi*. These two invention heuristics are implicit in prevalent writing practices, such as the five Ws (who, what, when, where, why) and refutation, but their original applications vary substantially from how we use them today. Comparing their use in the classical tradition with how they appear in my sample creative writing texts demonstrates how use of these heuristics has changed over time and how they work together to nurture and trigger inspiration. Additionally, the two case studies in the next section complicate how we understand the relationship between heuristics and inspiration by illustrating that they are not characteristic of separate attitudes but wedded together through the genius of the human body. Thus, examining how the heuristics are manifest in creative writing exercises illuminates the relationship between heuristics and inspiration and offers strategies for modernizing the Ciceronian *topoi* and the *Dissoi Logoi* for contemporary students.

### **From Heuristic to Inspiration: Cicero's *Topoi*, the *Dissoi Logoi*, and Creative Writing Exercises**

To say writing prompts are prevalent amongst creative writers would be a severe understatement. They are pervasive—from instructional texts and prompt books to *The New*

*York Times* and *Reddit*. They vary from one-sentence, fantastic scenarios to multi-step exercises designed to capture meaning in the mundane. Some creative writing prompt books, such as Bret Anthony Johnston's *Naming the World*, Anne Bernays and Pamela Painter's *What if?* and Brian Kiteley's *3AM Epiphany*, primarily seek to teach craft through practice, just as basketball players learn to dribble or make half-court shots. However, the exercises are more than systematic practice; they are inspirational. They aim to help writers use emotion productively while teaching craft and equipping beginning writers with the emotional intelligence needed to recognize and avoid bias.

Heuristics become inspirational triggers when they excite emotional involvement with subjects and instigate epiphanies that lead to creative contributions by closing the synaptic jumps writers must make from what they know to what they have yet to learn. These leaps are intellectual and emotional. Reading how creative writers introduce heuristics that have a long and rich tradition in rhetorical pedagogy underscores this observation. Moreover, reading the creative writing exercises alongside their counterparts in rhetoric-composition history shows that exercises in the tradition of the Ciceronian *topoi* and *Dissoi Logoi* teach students complementary habits of mind and that the exercises are most conducive to inspiration when used together.

In chapter 1, I showed that early cognitive writing scholarship on invention bifurcated inspiration from deliberate “problem-solving approaches” also referred to as heuristics. Even as the authors introduced heuristics as a component of writers’ tacit, creative processes and a means of triggering inspiration, their treatment of the term tended to isolate it from emotional issues such as motivation and bias. For example, Flower and Hayes admit they “have made a fundamental assumption about the creative process: namely that it can be divided into two

complementary but semi-autonomous processes,” which they designate as “generating versus constructing on one level and playing versus pushing on the other” (“Problem-Solving Strategies” 452):

This division in our model reflects one of the essential dichotomies that pervades the literature on creativity and imagination. In their various ways, artists, critics, and psychologists have long recognized a distinction between what we might call inspiration and work. . . . Over time the prestige and precise definition of each mode varies, but together they represent two stable, complementary dimensions of the creative process. Although experienced writers fluidly switch from one mode of thinking to the other as they write, there are important practical and psychological reasons for writers to be conscious about this distinction and to recognize the multiple cognitive styles writing requires.

(452)

The dichotomy in the above passage assumes an attitudinal difference toward heuristics and inspiration. “Constructing” and “pushing” signal to readers that heuristics are systematic, practical, problem-solving approaches to the creative process. On the other hand, “inspiration” or “playful,” “generative” approaches are indicative of a different “cognitive style”—one that is pleasurable and happens easily and intuitively. This dichotomization of heuristics as “work” and “inspiration” as pleasurable, intuitive play is problematic for several reasons. Heuristics sometimes start as “work” and become pleasurable, and “inspiration” can easily morph into “work.” As a result, casting heuristics as systematic, problem-solving processes sidelines emotional issues, such as motivation and bias.

Ann Berthoff elucidates this in “The Problem of Problem Solving” when she argues that in promoting the expectation that writing can be reduced to repeatable and efficient problem-solving processes, invention heuristics convey a distinction between “intellectual” and “creative” uses of language (238). She writes:

Teachers studying heuristics . . . will soon discover that a theory of learning as problem-solving requires a view of language as signal code, a notion that converts meaning to “information,” form to “medium,” interpretation to “decoding,” etc. By thus misconceiving of the human use of language, communication theory or, rather, pedagogy deriving from it falsely defines the forms of knowing. There is a fundamental failure to recognize that “the linguistic adult,” in the current phrase, who comes to school is an *animal symbolicum*. (238)

Berthoff’s chief concern about casting invention heuristics as efficient, intellectual, linguistic strategies for exploring subjects is that they reduce the complex nature of human thinking to the rational and reproducible processes of computer algorithms or bureaucracies. As humans, our invention processes are never so straightforward because we use language in order to understand the world, and as such, every time we answer a question, stage a scenario, or play out an analogy, we use our histories, identities, and emotions to inform these processes.

Thus, heuristic procedures always involve our biases and individual motivations.

Heuristics are subject to the same problems of human bias, so teachers need to be careful not to imply that using a heuristic will lead to a more objective or *true* solution. However, the results of complicating our understandings of the relationship between inspiration and heuristics are not wholly negative. My study shows that deliberate, systematic approaches to invention can and do trigger emotional engagement with subjects that leads

writers to transcend their initial assumptions and discover novel insights and creative contributions.

The same scholarship that characterized inspiration and deliberate “problem-solving approaches” as different attitudes toward invention also assumed a relationship between the two attitudes. Janice M. Laurer explains in *Invention in Rhetoric and Composition* that during the 1960s, psychologists “posit[ed] that heuristic strategies work in tandem with intuition, prompt conscious activity, and guide the creative act but never determine the outcome” (Lauer 8). Linda Flower and John R. Hayes also define heuristics as “a kind of shorthand for cognitive operations, [which] give the writer self-conscious access to some of the thinking techniques that normally constitute ‘inspiration’” (“Problem-Solving Strategies” 452) and propose that more experienced writers tend to use heuristics tacitly, adapting them to their own writing processes. Additionally, Richard Young, Alton Becker, and Kenneth Pike introduced heuristics as tools that can with practice become part of writers’ tacit creative processes (*Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*). They explain that heuristics facilitate inspiration by “prepar[ing] the investigator’s mind for the *intuition* of an ordering principle, or hypothesis” (119 emphasis added). These definitions collapse Cartesian mind-body divisions by stressing that heuristics become automatic as experienced writers internalize them and that writers use emotional responses to notice opportunities for new insights. Creative writing exercises introduce heuristics with language that reveals these assumptions, and they pose opportunities for modernizing classical heuristics so as to make them more engaging for beginning writers.

### *The Ciceronian Topoi in Creative Writing Exercises*

Heuristics such as the Ciceronian *topoi* are systematic approaches to invention that have the capacity to trigger inspiration by emotionally motivating writers' associations and creating a sense of uncertainty and discontinuity that leads to new insights. Reading the classical pedagogy of the Ciceronian *topoi* in conversation with the creative writing texts' use of similar *topoi* demonstrates this fact. Some creative writing exercises use Ciceronian-like *topoi* to help students systematically develop plots and characters through attention to significant details such as occupation, health, and family relationships. These details give the narrator a sense of authority or *ethos* by providing proof that the narrator has been to the places, known the people, and felt the feelings of which she writes. Significant details also let writers tap into related personal experiences and social expectations as they develop their understandings of story or case. Analyzing how the creative writing texts in my study introduce the practice in conversation with how Cicero originally introduced and framed the *topoi* highlights how the heuristic becomes inspirational. The Ciceronian *topoi* become inspirational when they emotionally engage writers with the concrete, significant details of the persons and actions in their stories, cases, or topics.

Cicero's *topoi* are especially applicable to storytelling because they stimulate invention through narrative analysis. Cicero introduces his *topoi* in Book 1 of *De Inventione*, where he directs rhetors to invent arguments by considering the circumstances of the case:

But I think that it will not be inconvenient to set forth in the beginning, without any attempt at order or arrangement, a kind of raw material for general use from which all arguments are drawn, and then later to present the way in which each kind of case should be supported by all the forms of argumentation derived from this general store.

All propositions in argument are supported by attributes of persons or of actions. We hold the following to be the attributes of persons: name, nature, manner of life, fortune, habit, feeling, interests, purposes, achievements, accidents, speeches made. . . . The attributes of actions [place, time, occasion, manner, and facilities] are partly coherent with the action itself, partly considered in connexion with the performance of it, partly adjunct to it and partly consequent upon its performance. (70-75; sec. 24-26)

Cicero describes each of the categories above in detail. For example, under “nature,” Cicero lists “sex whether male or female, race, place of birth, family, and age” and even proposes that students identify the members of the person’s family, “the advantages and disadvantages given to mind and body” by age, physical appearance and stature, and so on. Each category focuses rhetors on significant details that allow them to infer additional knowledge about the case. For example, knowing the defendant in a murder trial is a taxidermist, a lawyer could argue that the defendant had the skill, constitution, and means to commit murder and dispose of the body. In this case, the category of occupation directs the rhetor to important circumstantial information that changes the rhetor and audience’s interpretations of the persons and actions involved.

Thus, the Ciceronian *topoi* differ from the Aristotelian topics in that they foreground the “*quandum silva atque materiam universum*” (universal resource or material) from which rhetors construct arguments (70-71). Donovan J. Ochs distinguishes between Aristotle’s *topica* and Cicero’s *topoi* with the explanation that Aristotle’s *topoi* are given as “premises . . . written to assist the dialectician” (“Cicero’s Topica” 108), whereas the Ciceronian *loci* are “argumentative knowledge which renders a doubtful matter credible” and useful for both the dialectician and the rhetorician (Cicero qtd. in Ochs 109). According to Ochs, The *Topica*,

Cicero's last literary effort in rhetoric, demonstrates that the topical system first described in *De Inventione* was not a "mechanical method" but a dynamic heuristic that relied on patterns of circumstantial inference to help rhetors through the following processes: 1.) assembling what could be known about the persons and actions involve; 2.) structuring the material to help the rhetor make additional inferences; 3.) evaluating his or her inferences; and 4.) "enunciating the proof" (117). Rhetors used the Ciceronian *topoi* to collect circumstantial details and develop inferences about the persons and actions in the case based on those details. The rhetor then used these details to invent the *narratio*, a story that formed the basis for the rest of the argument.

The Ciceronian *topoi* apply broadly to many different kinds of writing, and they are still present in many rhetoric-composition textbooks through the five Ws: who, what, when, where, and why. These questions descend from the Hermagorian elements of circumstance carried through *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Cicero's *De Inventione*.<sup>17</sup> However, Cicero's *topoi* are much more specific than the Hermagorian *topoi*. Cicero breaks down his *topoi* into numerous subcategories. For example, Cicero writes,

Under manner of life should be considered with whom he was reared, in what tradition and under whose direction, what teachers he had in the liberal arts, what instructors in the art of living, with whom he associates on terms of friendship, in what occupation, trade, or profession he is engaged, how he manages his private fortune, and what is the character of his home life. (73; sec. xxv)

---

<sup>17</sup> For a more thorough discussion of the Ciceronian *topoi*'s influence in the development of the five Ws, see Michael J. Leff's "The Topics of Argumentative Invention" and D. W. Robertson Jr.'s "A Note on the Classical Origin of 'Circumstances' in the Medieval Confessional."

These subcategories reflect experiences that rhetor and audience have likely shared, such as how one was parented as a child, education, occupation, and how one manages their money. Consequently, each subcategory provides significant details from which rhetors and audiences make assumptions about how they should interpret the case.

Creative writing texts use Ciceronian-like *topoi* to help writers develop characters and plots. For example, in “What Do You Know about Your Characters?” Anne Bernays and Pamela Painter use Ciceronian-like *topoi* as a tool for “fleshing out” a character (44-46). They list thirty-four attributes of person, which include “family,” “diction,” “hobbies,” “religion,” “beliefs,” “vocation,” and “food preferences.” Although Bernays and Painter do not provide *topoi* for considering characters’ actions, they frame the exercise as a tool for understanding “the character’s motives and actions” (46). Some of the categories mirror the Ciceronian *topoi* from *De Inventione*, but others, such as “food preferences” and “diction” are more specific. These categories serve the Ciceronian function of directing writers toward significant details that lead them to infer new possibilities for their stories. For example, “food preferences” act as a *topos* when the category lets a writer infer broader character traits. A character who only eats pizza, hamburgers, and chicken tenders probably is not very adventurous in other areas of his life. So, food preferences, like the example of occupation above, leads writers to infer who their characters are based on their knowledge of similar persons.

The *topoi* become inspirational when they arouse writers’ emotional engagement with their subjects. Bret Anthony Johnston supports this point in *Naming the World* when he narratively introduces his Ciceronian-like *topoi* as a strategy that generates inspiration through research (“How to Name the World” 17-18%). During graduate school, Johnston

wrote narratives for a domestic travel magazine about “unexciting” destinations, such as the C. M. Russell Museum, Hershey’s chocolate factory, or the giant Sam Houston statue (17%). These assignments paid the bills, put food on the table and gas in the truck, but the destinations were not especially inspiring, and, even worse, he had never visited most of the locations. Instead of sending plane tickets, the magazine could only afford to send “monthly manila envelopes, pregnant with photos and statistical information and state-produced propaganda” (17%). Research became his method for finding inspiration in the concrete, significant details of each location and “convinc[ing] the magazine’s audience that [he] had seen first-hand the rare albino alligators through Louisiana’s glass-bottomed boats and street lamps fashioned in the shape of Hershey’s Kisses” (17%). These details prove Johnston’s *ethos*, convincing readers that he is qualified to imaginatively guide them through second-hand experiences of the destinations. They also imaginatively and emotionally engaged him with the locations, channeling his interest through the peculiarities of each place.

To help students learn research’s inspirational use, Johnston provides Ciceronian-like *topoi* that fasten beginning writers’ attentions on details that expand their appreciations of setting, characters, and actions. His *topoi* are strikingly similar to the Ciceronian *topoi*. At times, they directly parallel the attributes of persons and actions that Cicero names in *De Inventione*:

Landscape and setting

Flora and fauna

Characters’ occupations

Characters’ hobbies

History and historical events

Weather and meteorology

Medical and biological information

Architecture and apparel

Technical and scientific information

Culture and cultural events

“Characters’ occupations,” “hobbies,” “medical and biological information” and “culture” are attributes of a person’s nature, habits, manner of life and interests. “Landscape and setting,” “flora and fauna,” “history and historical events,” “weather and meteorology,” “architecture and cultural events” also correspond with Cicero’s attributes of actions, which he describes as “purpose,” “adjacent actions,” “place,” “opportunity,” “time,” “occasion,” and “manner” (*De Inventione* 70-75; sec. 24-26). Each *topos* points beginning writers toward significant details that ground their abstract understandings of setting, character, and action in the particular. Reading Cicero’s *topoi* through the exercises above shows how the *topoi* become inspirational. They move writers from abstractions and generalities to concrete, significant details that imaginatively and emotionally engage readers and writers, and predict the conclusion of the story or argument.

The *topoi* serve invention by providing a topical system that simultaneously grounds invention in the details of the case while invoking a sense of significance. Creative writers use the term “concrete, significant detail” to refer to language that simultaneously appeals to the senses, focuses, and segues attention toward generalities about settings, characters, and actions. Janet Burroway connects the idea to the frequent advice “show, don’t tell” in

*Imaginative Writing*:

*Concrete* means that there is an image, something that can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, or touched.

*Significant* means that the specific image also suggests an abstraction, generalization, or judgement.

*Detail* means that there is a degree of focus and specificity. (18)

Concrete language shows readers and writers images that actively involve them in the story through their senses. Detail focuses readers and writers on the specifics of who and what the story involves: not just a high school uniform but a crest-embroidered blazer with tailored slacks. Significance poses ideas or qualities about what the detail suggests: socio-economic privilege and exclusivity.

While I find the Ciceronian *topoi* too abstract for students to understand and apply, Ciceronian-like categories paired with a lesson on concrete, significant details can help students focus and develop their arguments through research. I encourage my students to locate their understandings of subject in the concrete, significant details that research provides by asking them to track down each source's age, gender, occupation, socio-economic status, political affiliation, and geographic location. These categories help students think of their sources as characters, which lets them interpret the significance of each source's stance, and how each source relates to the others. This type of attention stimulates students' emotional engagement with their subjects.

In creative writing, significant details often motivate and predict the outcome of stories. Robert Boswell discusses the inspirational power of significant details in *The Half-Known World*. He refers to certain significant details that "recur in a manner that propels the outcome" of a story as "narrative spandrels" (53). Spandrels create a foreshadowing effect,

such as a storm that foretells a coming danger. He argues that the most effective spandrels happen intuitively as part of the writer's unconscious invention process and that spandrels are most effective when they surprise and convince writers in the manner that E. M. Forster described in *Aspects of the Novel*. A surprising, concrete, significant detail can generate a powerful, innate, emotional response that puts the writer in touch with her overwhelming desire to understand and communicate something about what it means to be human:

And this leads me to think of the automatic writing writers sometimes fall into, wherein all we seem to be doing is listening to a story as it spins itself out, and the yellow hat on the girl's head in the first paragraph turns out to be important in the ultimate resolution—the spandrels leading to discoveries perhaps because they permit the writer full access to an inborn map of narrative. (60).

Boswell assumes that narrative is a hardwired, human capacity. He references Carl Jung's notion of the collective unconscious to explain why our cultural narratives and mythologies generate such strong emotional reactions. According to Jung, the collective unconscious exists outside of the individual and contains the emotional instincts and archetypes that unconsciously influence individual actions.

Through rhetorical theory, we see that this phenomenon of language “spin[ing] itself out” is an unconscious byproduct of language's social and emotional nature. Language, according to Karen Burke LeFevre, is ultimately responsible for carrying the beliefs, expectations and archetypes of one generation to the next. Building off the language theories of Immanuel Kant and Ernst Cassirer, LeFevre argues that language actively constitutes how individuals perceive reality by filtering individual experience through social norms and expectations (97). As a result, all writers continuously infer the significance of candlesticks,

storms, doctors, taxidermists, and high school uniforms through social and cultural patterns of inference. The social nature of language motivates invention by providing writers with new inferences about their stories or arguments. That inventive action is also highly emotional.

Our participation in this process is intensely emotional. In *Doing Emotion*, Laura Micciche proposes that the details we include in the stories we use to make sense of the world are emotionally related to our identity narratives (26-46). Using Sara Ahmed's term "stickiness," Micciche seeks to explain "how affect circulates, creating an economy of feeling that gets transmitted and transformed as it moves among objects and bodies" (28). The details of an argument or a story are always interpreted through these economies, such that certain details do not just intellectually trigger associations with other objects, narratives, and beliefs. Emotions bind language together. Specific objects, persons, places, and words trigger strong emotions insofar as they have accumulated emotional relationships with other objects, experiences and ideas. As a result, a systematic invention exercise such as the Ciceronian *topoi* can suddenly and unexpectedly transform from a mechanical heuristic to inspirational practice as significant details stick to other details, unfolding into sentences, paragraphs, and pages.

Cicero most likely understood emotion's central role in motivating invention. *De Oratore* and *De Partitione Oratori* assume that eloquence—the rhetor's ability to not only persuade but move people to action—depends on the rhetor's command of *ethos* and *pathos*. In *De Oratore*, Cicero underscores how carefully and skillfully the rhetor must apply these appeals in any given situation. He writes:

Now nothing in oratory . . . is more important than to win for the orator the favor of his hearer, and to have the latter so affected as to be swayed by something resembling a mental impulse of emotion, rather than by judgement or deliberation. For men decide far more problems by hate, or love, or lust, or rage, or sorrow, or joy, or hope, or fear, or illusion, or some other inward emotion, than by reality, or authority, or any legal standard, or judicial precedent, or statute. (328; sec. 42)

*Ethos* and *pathos*, Cicero proclaims, are far more likely to persuade audiences than logic or even the rule of law. These rhetorical appeals are not added to the argument after invention; they develop through the art of invention. Cicero proclaims that “it is impossible for the listener to feel indignation, hatred, or ill-will, to be terrified of anything, or reduced to tears of compassion, unless all those emotions, which the advocate would inspire in the arbitrator, are visibly stamped or rather branded on the advocate himself” (330; sec. 45). Although it is possible to feign emotion, Cicero recommends against it. Instead, the quality of the orator’s style should be such that no trickery is needed, “for the very quality of the diction, employed to stir the feelings of others, stirs the speaker himself even more deeply than any of his hearers” (330; sec. 45). In this passage, we see that the rhetor’s command of *pathos* depends on her ability to feel those feelings that she seeks to create in the audience. Thus, eloquence depends on the rhetor’s emotional involvement with her subject.

However, inspiration also assumes a paradigm shift as Boswell describes in *The Half-Known World*—a transcendence from initial belief to new insight. The inferential and emotional nature of concrete, significant details discovered through the *topoi* can just as easily lead to stereotype and cliché without an openness to uncertainty and discontinuities.

Thus, I argue that the Ciceronian *topoi* prove most effective at triggering inspiration when used in combination with exercises that fit the tradition of the *Dissoi Logoi*.

### *The Dissoi Logoi in Creative Writing Exercises*

Inspiration depends on one's ability to transcend from one socially-informed perspective to the next—to understand how right and wrong, truth and falsity, justice and injustice vary with the circumstances of each case. Classical students of rhetoric spent a great deal of time exploring subjects through exercises, such as the *dissoi logoi*. The same is true of creative writers. The authors of creative writing texts dedicate substantial space to exercises through which writers can crack open story drafts and explore different perspectives. These exercises demonstrate the imperative of entertaining different, sometimes opposite, perspectives and delaying certainty about where a story may lead.

The exercises often seem to focus more on educating the author than producing a text, and among the habits that writers need to cultivate is an openness toward different ways of perceiving and judging. Just as Cicero argued that the orator must be able to “speak *pro* and *contra* the topics of virtue, duty, equity and good, moral worth and utility, honor and disgrace, reward and punishment, and like matters,” creative writers know that the power of fiction depends in part on its ability to complicate cultural beliefs and to do so by exploring different perspectives (*De Partitione Oratori* translated by Rackham 107-108). According to Cicero, eloquence depends on wisdom. Cicero writes in *De Oratore*, “no man can kindle the feelings of his hearers, or quench them when kindled . . . unless he has gazed into the depths of the nature of everything, including human characters and motives: in which case the orator

must need make philosophy his own” (312; sec. li). In this passage, we see that Cicero situates philosophy as a prerequisite of invention, for when selecting the details of persons and actions most likely to move the audience through the *topoi*, the rhetor must gaze “into the depths of the nature of everything.”<sup>18</sup> Similarly, creative writers must be able to suspend their personal value systems as they construct characters with different perspectives. Thus, the philosophy of *dissoi logoi* appears in creative writing texts as a means for helping writers inhabit perspectives that are different and even opposite their own.

In classical rhetoric, the practice of *dissoi logoi*, or *dialexeis*, prompts writers to set aside their initial assumptions and entertain binary constructs of experience. Its practice is first articulated in *Dissoi Logoi*, a text of unknown date and authorship, but thought to have been written around 425 BCE. The text reads like a series of lecture notes on the logic of reasoning by opposites, which is implicit in the title. *Dissoi* and *logoi* are the Greek roots for “dissent” and “reason” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

The text begins with the premise that good and bad are not different categories but different sides of “the same thing,” then clarifies this position with several examples regarding how humans interpret situations (translated by Sprague 155). In these examples and the sections that follow (“seemly and shameful,” “just and unjust,” and “truth and falsehood”) the author repeats this logic. For example, “lack of restraint [regarding food, drink, and sex] is bad for those who lack constraint, but good for those who sell these

---

<sup>18</sup> Donovan J. Ochs further supports this point when he contends in “Cicero and Philosophic *Inventio*” that Cicero later developed and used a topical system for philosophic discourse, a system that was integrally joined to his topical system for rhetorical invention,” and that “this integrated system appears to be the necessary and sufficient condition for stylistic eloquence” (217-218). Cicero’s philosophic inventional system immediately follows his discussion of the technical parts of the oration, which further implies that he intended the philosophic and rhetorical system to be the logical beginning of *inventio*.

commodities;” a strong crop production is “good for farmers, but bad for the merchants” (155). Each example deals with the nature of human perspective, specifically how social disposition, occupation, and so on affect how people evaluate and respond to situations.

The philosophy of *Dissoi Logoi* assumes that value depends upon situated, human perspectives. Since each person’s knowledge and circumstances vary, contradictory truths (*dissoi logoi*) will appear. Thus, for the sophists, the *dissoi logoi* afforded orators the power of persuading audiences by complicating their initial judgments about the case. For example, Gorgias used the power of *dissoi logoi* to hold audiences’ attentions by resisting ontological distinctions about guilt or beauty. Debra Hawhee points out in “Kairoitic Encounters” that *Encomium of Helen* establishes Gorgias’s facility with *dissoi logoi*. Gorgias defends Helen, not by delineating the reasons why Helen is innocent, but by enumerating the reasons why she might not be to blame and thus “undermines the very notion that one truth (or any truth for that matter) exists” (Hawhee 27).

Gorgias’s demonstration also explains why philosophers such as Plato were so appalled by the sophists. The sophists’ abilities to complicate their audiences’ understandings of right and wrong, truth and falsity, meant that they could undermine the knowledge and policies upon which their society and government was built. However, for Cicero, the *dissoi logoi*, or “the ability to speak *pro* and *contra*” as he describes it in *de Partitione Oratori*, is a moral good. Because oratory usually deals with subjects concerning persons and actions, the orator must have the ability to think critically about the attributes of persons and actions and understand how they influence moral and ethical judgments.

Entertaining other perspectives dissuades writers from fixed assumptions and polarities, opening opportunities for complexity. Byron Hawk explains, “The exercise of

*dissoi logoi*, or reversing the obvious argument to make an argument that is culturally or situationally counter-intuitive, is meant to unfreeze rigid, accepted concepts or positions” (*A Counter-history of Composition* 180). When students memorized and applied *dissoi logoi* to arguments, they complicated their understandings of subjects by entertaining opposing perspectives. This process allowed new opportunities for compromise and grounds for argument.

While researching this section, I was surprised to find no explicit applications of *dissoi logoi* in composition textbooks. Sharon Crawley and Debra Hawhee employ the term when they define the sophists’ attitude toward truth, but they do not prompt students to practice it (*Ancient Rhetorics* 14). Additionally, I found no mention of the *Dissoi Logoi* in *The Saint Martin’s Guide* or writing argument textbooks, such as Andrea A. Lunsford and John J. Ruszkiewicz’s *Everything’s an Argument*. The philosophy of *dissoi logoi* is implicit in refutation or counterargument, which figures prominently in first- and second-year composition textbooks. However, refutation is only one application of *dissoi logoi*. In Book II of *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle employs the philosophy of *dissoi logoi* for refutation and counterargument after he assumes that the *dissoi logoi* are already known. He refers to the *dissoi logoi* when he assumes that the rhetor will already be familiar with “the topics that are sources of enthymemes about good and evil, or honorable or shameful or just or unjust” before commenting that they are useful as they apply to refutative and demonstrative enthymemes (translated by Kennedy 171; ch. 22, vs. 16-17). In addition to refutation, the *dissoi logoi* serve invention by nurturing the habit of mind that lets writers “unfreeze rigid, accepted concepts or positions” (Hawk 180).

Creative writing texts apply *dissoi logoi* to the development of fiction and nonfiction. Its use is part of a larger trend toward teaching craft and triggering inspiration by changing narrative perspective. During my initial attempts to categorize the kinds of exercises in my sample, I noted that perspective-changing exercises account for just over a quarter of the exercises in *Naming the World*, *What if?* and *The 3AM Epiphany*. Many of the exercises ask writers to identify several different narrating perspectives, including characters, animals, and inanimate objects, then write a story that incorporates snippets from each of these points of view. Other exercises challenge writers to adopt a single narrating perspective but make that narrating perspective strange by restricting the narrator's tone, word choice, and syntax (Kiteley, "The Reluctant I," "Imperative," and "The Unstable Self"). These restrictions shape the narrating voice by shifting the tone and corresponding observations and judgments. While both methods use perspective to trigger creativity, in this section I focus primarily on Elizabeth Strout's "Exercise on Point of View" in Bret Anthony Johnston's *Naming the World* because it is the clearest and most accessible application of *dissoi logoi* for students who have little experience explicitly analyzing and applying narrating perspectives.

The *Dissoi Logoi*'s method for complicating initial assumptions clarifies the creative potential of creative writing exercises, such as Elizabeth Strout's "Exercise on Point of View." Strout instructs beginning fiction and nonfiction writers to "think back on the most recent intense altercation or disagreement you had with someone in real life. It should be an occasion where you were absolutely certain of the rightness of your position. After you ruminate on this experience of discord for a few minutes, write the scene from the other person's point of view" (Strout qtd. in Johnston 36%). The exercise seeks to help writers master the tricky task of inhabiting a dissenting position while acknowledging that their

representations are fictional. Earlier in the prompt, she tells writers to remember that fully inhabiting another person's perspective is not possible. Every time writers step into a new character's perspective they always bring their old biases and beliefs with them. Strout's exercise, like the *Dissoi Logoi*, aims to make students more aware of their dispositions and complicate them by trying to step into new perspectives.

Strout's genre is creative nonfiction, not argument, but it helps beginning writers develop empathy to try to step into a different—and in this case dissenting—position. To write about an argument from another person's perspective, the writer must draw upon prior experience to represent that perspective's thoughts, observations, dialogue, and actions. When using this exercise in my first- and second-year composition classes, I ask students to remember an argument they had with a friend or family member and tell the story first from their perspective, then from the other person's points of view. Strout's exercise tells writers to begin with the other point of view, but I find that students with little creative writing experience have an easier time with this challenge if they first report the events as they remember them in first person. I also highlight Strout's caution to set aside conscious and unconscious agendas and ask them to try as much as possible to imagine themselves in the other person's position. My students begin the exercise in class, then complete it for homework. I ask them to reflect on the process when we meet the following class period.

Students regularly write about arguments with parents, roommates, and girlfriends or boyfriends. In one case, a student wrote about an argument she had with a teacher during high school concerning whether she, as a student with an individualized education plan (IEP), should be held to the same expectations as her classmates. In our follow-up reflective

writing exercise, she described what she learned by exploring this highly emotional issue from multiple perspectives:

That day was really hard to write about. At first all I could remember was the teacher pulling out that infamous sheet of paper with the IEP on top and wanting to rip it apart. I didn't want to think about what she [the teacher] was thinking because it made me so mad. She's my teacher and she's supposed to believe in me, but instead she's dumbing everything down. I had to back up and think about what her day must have been like. One time she said that she wakes up at 5am to get started by 7, so I started there with her waking up and listing all the things she had to do in one day. When I started thinking about her schedule, I stopped being so angry at her and got more angry at the system that gave me the IEP and her little support.

This student's reflection demonstrates the heuristic potential of Strout's exercise. When she notes the time that her teacher wakes up, we see her recalling information that was not relevant to her initial point of view. The exercise also forces her to put some distance between herself and her initial emotional response as she grapples with the new perspective. She did not want to entertain her teacher's perspective because she was so angry at the outcome of the exchange, but halfway through her reflection she notes a piece of information that lets her empathize with the teacher. She realized that she could learn more about the exchange by imagining having so many things to do during a day and so little time and support. This connection lets her empathize with the teacher and realize the systemic nature of the problem: "the system that gave [her] the IEP and [the teacher] so little support."

Any teacher of beginning writers understands the difficulty of creating assignments and atmospheres that invite students to entertain other perspectives, especially those that

contradict their initial perceptions of good and bad, seemly and shameful, just and unjust. Flexibility of perspective does not come naturally to many writers, let alone beginning writers. Strout's exercise underscores the fact that entertaining other perspectives, especially those that contradict our own, is an emotional challenge. She states, stories are "written from the inside out, not the outside in" ("Exercise on Point of View" in Johnston, *Naming the World*). Fiction and nonfiction require that one learn the odd position of imagining experience through someone else's eyes, and that position does not come naturally, nor is it completely possible, since we instinctively use our life experiences as the springboard for imagining other lives. Strout writes:

Right away you will scribble along, sometimes smiling, sometimes scowling, and yet when you reread the piece, it becomes evident that you are—not always but quite often—still holding on to your initial point of view. You may be recording the argument from your husband's or mother's eyes, but you have not truly inhabited what it felt like to be in that other person's position. Often this exercise takes two or three revisions before the writer understands that he needs to let go—that it's alright, in fact essential, to let go—of his own personal sense of right and wrong. ("Exercise on Point of View")

Along with the experiences we use to imagine persons unlike ourselves come conscious or unconscious agendas and expectations of right and wrong. Strout proposes the effects of these conscious and unconscious agendas result in limiting our creativity, or "the freedom of our prose." One's ability to let go of a single, totalizing point of view and the conscious and unconscious expectations that guide that perspective can only be achieved through practice.

The ability to entertain perspectives outside one's own requires performative practice. Writing is an art, one that resists definition as a static body of knowledge or confinement to a particular body. Janet M. Atwill explains, "Art is a body of social knowledge that socializes the bodies that engage it. . . . An art is necessary only when a boundary between insider and outsider is marked—when agents who have not been socialized into the practices of certain rhetorical situations must learn by art what those who have long been in those situations have done by habit" ("Bodies and Art" 166-167). Writing, as an art, conditions bodies to new ways of thinking and behaving, and one of these dispositions is an attitude that resists the bias of fixed beliefs and totalizing perspectives. If writing teachers want to help students develop the emotional dispositions that allow them to empathize with other perspectives and move from fixed beliefs to a situated understanding of knowledge, they need exercises that nurture this habit by encouraging them to perform it.

Laura Micciche claims that equipping students with the emotional intelligence to effectively mobilize their emotions requires a performative praxis, one that teaches writers to use their emotions effectively by putting them in the situations that require the desired emotional disposition (47-49). Emotion does not occur within people; it occurs *in relation to* the world, which means equipping students with the wisdom to use the motivational power of emotion while acknowledging and resisting bias requires opportunities to practice these emotional skills (50-53). Applications of the *Dissoi Logoi* philosophy in instructional creative writing texts present students with opportunities to practice using emotion critically as they move back and forth between different perspectives.

Thus, the practice of *Dissoi Logoi* is an excellent companion to the Ciceronian *topoi*. *Dissoi logoi* asks writers to complicate how they make value judgments by changing their

perspectives. As a result, students learn to resist the assumption that a single correct perspective exists and move toward broader observations about the nature of the persons and actions involved. Together, these exercises encourage writers to use emotional responses as motivation while resisting fixed beliefs and totalizing perspectives.

## **Conclusion**

Creative writing genres carry the social expectations of risk-taking and emotional involvement. As a result, they give some students license and space to use emotion while exploring their topics. Any writing project involves a million tiny decisions, each of which are laden with emotional expectations about what the subject means and how we can affect that meaning in others. Micciche argues in *Doing Emotion* that we cannot avoid emotions, nor should we (12-14). Emotions bind our words together and alert us to opportunities for insight. Teaching our students to use emotion as a productive part of invention should be just as important as finding and integrating sources effectively.

Heuristics such as Cicero's *topoi* and the *dissoi logoi* are not systematic processes for facilitating invention. Under the right circumstances, they can generate the emotional responses that let writers choose the words that invoke that emotional response in others. Reading Cicero's *topoi* through creative writing instructional texts underscores the heuristic's ability to trigger inspiration by directing the writer toward significant details that let her intuit new insights.

My case studies also benefit rhetoric-composition scholarship and pedagogy by complicating how we understand the relationship between heuristics and inspiration. As

cognitive writing scholars proposed in the 1960s and 70s, heuristics provide a shorthand for stimulating those cognitive problem-solving processes that help us move from a “felt difficulty” through a “systematic investigation” and toward an articulation of the problem and its solutions (Young et al. 120). They also prepare us for epiphanies by submersing our minds in rigorous examinations of what we know and what we can yet learn. The Ciceronian *topoi* provide an ideal example when read in conversation with the framing language used to introduce their purposes in instructional creative writing texts.

Some creative writing exercises give students heuristics that act in the same manner as rhetoric-composition heuristics, but they frame the exercise with language that stresses its inspirational value. Ann Bernays, Pamela Painter, and Bret Anthony Johnston’s use inventories to help students discover significant details about their characters and stories. These inventories work in a similar function to the Ciceronian *topoi* that orators used to develop their understandings of their subjects through *narratio*—the background story from which they chose the reasons and observations most likely to persuade the audience. Similarly, creative writers use Ciceronian-like *topoi* to infer the personalities, habits, motivations, and possibilities that bring characters alive and predict the outcome of their stories. Reading how Bernays, Painter, and Johnston frame the importance of the heuristic shows that the Ciceronian *topoi* may begin as systematic work but can rapidly develop into playful, intuitive processes.

However, my analysis also shows that beginning writers who use the Ciceronian *topoi* need to be open to uncertainty and discontinuity in order develop new insights. Without this complimentary attitude, students in a creative writing or first-year composition class will use the Ciceronian *topoi* to simply select the details that make sense given their stereotyped

and cliché understandings of character and story. Cicero stressed that the orator needs wisdom in order to identify those details of a case that let her properly understand the people and actions of which she speaks. So, the classical tradition shows creative writing teachers that the ability to use these inventories successfully depends on the writers' ability to be open to uncertainties and discontinuities.

The *dissoi logoi* condition that habit by turning students' attentions toward the fact that good and bad, justice and injustice are situationally dependent. Recognizing that situational dependency makes the orator wise by productively complicating her understanding of situations. As a result, teachers may have the most success with exercises modeled after the Ciceronian *topoi* when they use them in combination with perspective changing exercises that embrace the philosophy of *dissoi logoi*, such as Elizabeth Strout's perspective-changing exercise. Her exercise helps writers recognize how their emotions and hidden biases constrain their ability to inhabit other perspectives.

In general terms related to the purpose of this dissertation, we see that heuristics are one of the writing teacher's greatest tools for nurturing and triggering inspiration in her classroom. Heuristics are not objective, systematic approaches to stimulating creativity. They carry the capacity to stimulate our emotions productively and make us more aware of our biases so that we can be open to the uncertainty and discontinuities that lead us to potential insights. Therefore, they are inspirational tools that the teacher can draw from as she seeks to instill in her students a critical appreciation of emotion's role in invention.

## CONCLUSION

When I first began writing this dissertation, I struggled to define inspiration and its relationship to invention. The more I coded the twenty textbooks assigned in introductory creative writing courses, the more I recognized that distinguishing inspiration from invention was counterproductive. I expected nuanced divisions and separations—language that defined inspiration and invention as related but distinct processes. Instead, I realized that creative writers use inspiration to refer to invention’s situated, emotional, and embodied nature—and the writer’s ability to recognize and use that knowledge productively.

The instructional creative writing texts in my study offer a lens that removes some of inspiration’s mystical connotation, and they pose practical strategies for nurturing and triggering it. During my MFA studies in fiction, I regularly turned to craft texts and memoirs of the craft while honing my creative process. The authors of these texts write openly, eagerly, and practically about inspiration’s role in the creative process. They share the challenges of writing for demanding audiences and deadlines, the distractions of everyday life, and the crippling anxieties that plague writers every time they face the blank page regardless of prior experience. Some of these authors occasionally depict inspiration as “divine energy” (Cameron) or “land[ing] flights of inspiration like an air traffic controller” (Lamott), but more often they depict the creative process as a *poux de deux* of inspiration and systematic method, where one simultaneously leads and follows the other (LaPlante). Instead of promulgating inspiration as natural, intuitive, or divine intervention, these authors share anecdotes and metaphors that collapse Cartesian mind and body divisions. Moreover, they share strategies to nurture and trigger inspiration.

Throughout this dissertation, I used the instructional creative writing texts from my study to render the theoretical nature of inspiration in practical terms. As I analyzed the twenty texts assigned in undergraduate, introductory-level creative writing classes, I asked how their underlying philosophies, practices, and heuristics compared with rhetoric-composition scholarship to recommend strategies for nurturing and triggering inspiration in first- and second-year composition classrooms. Creative writing and rhetoric-composition pedagogy share a joint history. I use rhetoric-composition scholarship to situate creative writing pedagogy in theory and critical practice, and the creative writing texts provide exposition, metaphors, and anecdotes that demystify inspiration for students and teachers.

Chapter 1 examines inspiration's mystic disposition. In the early Western tradition, inspiration conveyed spiritual possession. Plato argued that inspired music, dance, poetry, and all the fine arts were gifts of corresponding daemons or muses who possessed the artists and literally moved through them to produce their creative achievements (*Ion*). This lore of natural, intuitive, free-flowing and divinely gifted inspiration appears again and again throughout creative writers' literary references to inspiration, and it persists in our culture's stock characterization of artists in movies, television shows, and music.

Ironically, philosophers and psychologists who sought to demystify inspiration and claim it as a provision of human thought added to inspiration's mysticism by attributing it to unconscious or pre-conscious thought (Hawes, Duff, Bergson, Jung). Early theories of inspiration describe it as a form of positive knowledge that can be considered more certain or true because it does not suffer the cultural biases of language (Aristotle, Kant). Plus, by relegating inspiration to unconscious or pre-conscious, pre-verbal faculties, philosophers and psychologists marked language an unfit medium for defining and understanding inspiration.

Complicating matters even further, the early cognitive writing scholarship that paved the way for the process movement in rhetoric-composition pedagogy, distinguished inspiration from systematic, problem-solving approaches to invention, referring to inspiration as a “semi-autonomous” attitude toward invention (“Problem-Solving Strategies” 452). Some early cognitive writing scholarship did try to reconcile inspiration with deliberate, systematic methods. Young, Becker, and Pike’s *Rhetoric, Discovery, Change* defines heuristics as a means of triggering and developing the “felt sense” of an impending insight. Yet, most contemporary rhetoric-composition scholarship and pedagogy omits inspiration as a category of study, preferring less fraught language, such as affect, motivation, discovery, and the process of inquiry.

As a result, inspiration retains its association with the romantic ideal of the pop or aha moment that magically manifests in a five-page persuasive essay. Whether in a creative writing class or a first-year undergraduate composition class, students regularly invoke the word as they describe and defend their creative processes. Some resist systematic approaches to invention such as outlining on the grounds that it runs counter to their perceptions of creativity. Others refuse to revise early drafts because they believe these drafts were inspired and revising will only interrupt the fluidity of their prose. Even more disturbing is the conviction some students share that their arguments and poetry must be true or exceptional because they were inspired. Each of these reactions result from inspiration’s romantic mystique, which we can trace back through the word’s literary heritage. Demystifying the word exposes these myths and fosters a critical appreciation of inspiration’s situated, emotional, and embodied nature.

Moreover, demystifying inspiration encourages students to think of themselves as creative individuals by deconstructing the barriers we erect around creative persons in our culture. In the Western tradition, creativity has always been considered economically and socially valuable. Associating inspiration with divine possession safeguards inspiration from the masses. In Antiquity, especially ancient Rome, inspiration was distinctly white and male (Albert and Runco). Today, our culture commonly associates inspiration with the Fine Arts and those who have the time and financial ability to cultivate their talents. Inspiration remains the province of highly skilled, privileged creative persons, while invention is the practical and utilitarian cannon that writing teachers share with the masses. Complicating that division shows students that inspiration is an experience that is available to all people.

Inspiration is a paradigmatic process. The divine and psychological traditions of inspiration reveal that inspiration is evoked; that it refers to emotional and intellectual transcending; and that inspiration constitutes a form of motivation. Contrary to the popular understanding of inspiration as epiphany, my definition assumes that inspiration occurs sporadically and fitfully, and that it is situationally dependent.

The etymological root of the word (*inspirare*) illustrates invention's situated, emotional, and embodied nature. Creative individuals breathe in the world around them, internalize, and transform that experience through their unique, experientially formed faculties. In other words, inspiration refers to the individual's role as a creative conduit within a larger locus of inventive activity. Additionally, my definition assumes that individuals can control their creative processes by recognizing how their situations, emotions, and bodies influence creativity, then exercising that knowledge productively. Using the instructional creative writing texts from my study in conversation with rhetoric-

composition scholarship (Rickert, LeFevre, Micciche) and psychological research (Csikszentmihalyi, Thrash and Elliot), I propose four characteristics of inspiration: 1.) inspiration is situational; 2.) it thrives on openness to uncertainty and discontinuities; 3.) it assumes emotional involvement; and 4.) it requires saturation or internalization.

The romantic conceptualization leads many beginning writers to think of inspiration as asystematic when inspiration depends in great part upon the systems we live and work within. In fact, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi states that creativity is so dependent upon situation, that the easiest way to enhance creativity is to change the individual's environmental conditions (*Creativity 2*). Rhetoric-composition scholarship on invention as a social and material act expounds upon the ways that our social environments, language, and material situations influence creation (Bawarshi, Bazerman, LeFevre, Micciche, Rickert). The authors of instructional creative writing texts agree with these assertions. Their anecdotes and metaphors illustrate abstract concepts such as how invention always reinvents itself depending on situation (Dillard, Turchi, Boswell), and they propose practices that make beginning writers more aware of how their writing situations affect creativity so that they can use that knowledge productively. This is perhaps the greatest lesson that my dissertation offers readers—that individuals can become more creative by recognizing how their situations influence their creative processes and taking control by conditioning their responses and selectively changing their environments.

Collectively, the creative writing texts in my study provide a nuanced understanding of inspiration. Chapter 2 explains that while inspiration cannot be taught in the traditional sense of the word, it can be nurtured and triggered. Doing so requires a different attitude toward invention: one that embraces the fact that the habits and situations that spark

emotional responses, insight, and creativity vary from person to person and situation to situation. Creative writing texts introduce inspiration through colorful anecdotes and metaphors that composition teachers can borrow for their classrooms. They also introduce shared invention practices and heuristics with observations about their inspirational value.

Creative writing and rhetoric-composition share a common history, invention practices, and heuristics. Creative writing as a disciplinary program of study developed as a movement to reform and replace the teaching of English literature and writing in middle and high schools (D. G. Myers). So, it is not surprising that rhetoric-composition and creative writing pedagogies share many of the same invention practices and heuristics: ritual, freewriting, journaling, imitation, and writing prompts. However, the instructional creative writing texts in my study frame these practices differently, emphasizing their roles in nurturing and triggering inspiration. Chapter 2 supports this argument with a survey of the invention activities in my sample texts and highlights how the authors relate the practices to nurturing and triggering inspiration. As a result, the chapter also demonstrates how teachers of first- and second-year composition can adapt their existing practices to nurture and trigger inspiration.

The relationship between rhetorical and poetic instruction stretches further back than the reformist movements of the 1920-1940s. This point comes into stark relief in chapters 3 and 4 as I compare imitation and two heuristics from the classical tradition with their counterparts in the creative writing texts. In the classical tradition, poets and rhetors used imitation to nurture and trigger inspiration. Creative writers regularly allude to the inspirational power of imitation, so in chapter 3 I aim to understand how imitation creates the conditions for inspiration by examining imitation's use in the Greek and Roman curricula,

then comparing that practice to applications of imitation in my sample instructional creative writing texts.

Chapter 3 begins with a brief overview of imitation's use in the Greek and Roman curricula, emphasizing its emotional and embodied nature, then considers how the creative writing texts from my study develop and expand imitation's classical tradition.

The creative writing texts in my study develop students' facility with craft through close reading or "reading like a writer" and imitation practices that parallel classical practices, such as copying and paraphrase. Additionally, they underscore the inspirational nature of reading and imitating. Sybil Estess and Janet McCann teach a practice of reading imagistic prose that they call creative reading, and Heather Sellers frames line-by-line imitation as an aid for triggering novel and surprising insights and associations. Therefore, chapter 3 provides strategies for nurturing and triggering inspiration through imitation while stressing that how and what we imitate matters.

Chapter 4 examines the relationship between heuristics and inspiration, first by identifying how the social environment of writing prompts differs from composition classrooms to creative writing classrooms, then by comparing two shared heuristics: the Ciceronian *topoi* and the *dissoi logoi*. Creative writing prompts can productively complicate first- and second-year composition students' expectations of academic writing and nurture habits of mind that are conducive to inspiration. I recommend two types of creative writing prompts. Some creative writing prompts use similar invention heuristics to classical heuristics such as the Ciceronian *topoi* and the *dissoi logoi*. Comparing these shared invention heuristics modernizes classical practices for today's classrooms and demonstrates

that heuristics become inspirational triggers when they engage students' emotions and subjective experiences.

Interdisciplinary study between rhetoric-composition and creative writing demystifies tacit subjects, such as inspiration. There used to be—and still is in the minds of at least some researchers—this bright line distinguishing inspiration from deliberate, systematic invention strategies. Yet, when we account for how to be creative, whether in a creative writing course or a composition class, we need to recognize the wedding of these concepts and the dynamic that occurs between them. For beginning writers, a deliberate invention heuristic such as Heather Sellers's scaffolding technique or the Ciceronian *topoi* can rapidly transform into an emotional and intuitive exploration, and an argument that at first seems so lucid can just as easily shift into a deliberate, systematic affair. As I found from my sample, many of the texts assigned in undergraduate, introductory-level creative writing courses embrace a nuanced perspective of inspiration's role in invention, posing instead that inspired writing is the product of a marriage between regular, deliberate, systematic process and free-flowing, unexpected, and sometimes frenzied ideas (LaPlante, Lamott, Dillard, Sellers). Systematic, deliberate invention processes nurture and trigger the habits of mind that predispose people to creativity, and they internalize the knowledge and moves that develop students' creative facilities.

Overall, this dissertation displays the productive power of interdisciplinary scholarship and pedagogy between rhetoric-composition and creative writing. In 2000, Jeffrey Walker showed that the conventional way of thinking about rhetoric and poetic as distinct was inaccurate when looking at it through antiquity. Early teachers of the language arts such as Aristotle compartmentalized logic, rhetoric, and poetic as separate subjects.

However, Walker showed that this division misrepresents the dynamics that exist between rhetoric and poetic. Rhetorical power depends upon language's poetic nature. My study shows in this same spirit that the relationship between rhetoric-composition and creative writing is dynamic and recursive and incredibly beneficial when understood in harmony.

Creative writing applications of shared invention practices and heuristics reveal that how we experience writing matters. The effectiveness of any deliberate, systematic invention strategy depends upon the individual body and emotional disposition working through it. This study demonstrates the recursive relationship that exists between creative writing and rhetoric-composition and provides strategies for using creative writing pedagogy to further the goals of composition classrooms.

## APPENDIX A

### BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PRIMARY SOURCES

#### Primers

Burroway, Janet. *Imaginative Writing: The Elements of Craft*. 3rd., Longman, 2010.

Burroway, Janet, Elizabeth Stuckey-French, and Ned Stuckey-French. *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*. 9th ed., Longman, 2014.

Cameron, Julia. *The Artist's Way*. 10th ed., Tarcher, 2002.

Davis, Gary. *Creativity Is Forever*. 5th ed., Kendall Hunt Pub., 2004.

Goldberg, Natalie. *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. 2nd expanded ed., Shambhala, 2005.

Estess, Sybil, and Janet McCann. *In a Field of Words: A Creative Writing Text*. 1st ed., Longman, 2002.

Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. 1st edition. New York: Anchor, 1995.

LaPlante, Alice. *Method and Madness: The Making of a Story: A Guide to Writing Fiction*. Revised ed., W. W. Norton & Co., 2008.

Prose, Francine. *Reading Like a Writer: A Guide for People Who Love Books and for Those Who Want to Write Them*. Kindle ed., Harper Perennial, 2007.

Sellers, Heather. *The Practice of Creative Writing: A Guide for Students*. 2nd ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012.

## **Prompt Books**

Bernays, Anne, and Pamela Painter. *What If? Writing Exercises for Fiction Writers*. 3rd ed., Longman, 2009.

Johnston, Bret Anthony, ed. *Naming the World: And Other Exercises for the Creative Writer*. Kindle ed., Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2008.

Kiteley, Brian. *The 3 A.M. Epiphany: Uncommon Writing Exercises That Transform Your Fiction*. 1st ed., Writer's Digest Books, 2005.

## **Memoirs and Essays on the Art of Writing**

Boswell, Robert. *The Half-Known World: On Writing Fiction*. Graywolf Press, 2008.

Bradbury, Ray. *Zen in the Art of Writing: Essays on Creativity*. Joshua Odell Editions, 1994.

Dillard, Annie. *The Writing Life*. Harper Perennial, 2013.

King, Stephen. *On Writing: A Memoir of The Craft*. 10th ed., Scribner, 2000.

## **Theory**

Adams, James L. *Conceptual Blockbusting: A Guide to Better Ideas*. 4th ed., Basic Books, 2008.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. Reprint ed., Harper Collins, 2009.

Turchi, Peter. *Maps of the Imagination: The Writer as Cartographer*. First Trade Paper ed., Trinity University Press, 2011.

## Works Cited

- Ackerman, John M. "Reading, Writing, and Knowing: The Role of Disciplinary Knowledge in Comprehension and Composing." *Research in the Teaching of English*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1991, pp. 133–178.
- Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. 2nd ed., Edinburgh, UP, 2014.
- Albert, Robert S. and Mark A. Runco. "A History of Research on Creativity." *Handbook of Creativity*, edited by Robert J. Sternberg, Cambridge UP, 1999.
- Alexis, Cydney. "Let's Banish the Phrase 'Creative Writing.'" *Inside Higher Ed*, 3 Jan. 2017. Accessed 14 April 2017.
- Andrews, Kimberly. "A House Divided: On the Future of Creative Writing." *College English*, vol. 71, no. 3, 2009, pp. 242–255. JSTOR. Accessed 11 June 2014.
- Arieti, S. *Creativity: The Magic Synthesis*. Basic Books, 1976.
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by W. D. Ross. *The Internet Classics Archive*, Web Atomic and MA I of T, 2007. Accessed 25 Aug. 2015.
- . *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. 2nd ed., Oxford UP, 2007.
- . *The Poetics of Aristotle*, translated by S. H. Butcher. Project Gutenberg. Accessed 21 March 2017.
- Atwill, Janet M. "Bodies and Art." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 36 no. 2, 2006, pp. 165-170.
- Ballenger, Bruce. *The Curious Writer*. 4th ed., Pearson, 2013.
- . *The Curious Researcher*. 7th ed., Pearson, 2012.
- Bartholomae, David. "Inventing the University." *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader*, edited by Victor Villanueva. 2nd ed., NCTE, 2003.

- . "Writing with Teachers: A Conversation with Peter Elbow." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 46, no. 1, 1995, pp. 62–71. JSTOR. Accessed 6 Nov. 2013.
- Bastick, Tony. *Intuition: How We Think and Act*. John Wiley & Sons Inc, 1982.
- Bawarshi, Anis. *Genre & The Invention of the Writer: Reconsidering the Place of Invention in Composition*. Utah State UP, 2003.
- Bazerman, Charles. "Genre and Identity: Citizenship in the Age of the Internet and the Age of Global Capitalism." *Ideologies of Genre*, edited by Richard Coe, et al. Hampton P, 2002.
- Bergson, Henri. *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Dover Pub, 2010.
- Bernays, Anne and Pamela Painter. *What If? Writing Exercises for Fiction Writers*. Harper Collins, 1991.
- Berthoff, Ann E. *Forming, Thinking, Writing*. 2nd ed., Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1988.
- . "The Problem of Problem Solving." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1971, pp. 237-242.
- Bishop, Wendy. "Crossing the Lines: On Creative Composition and Composing Creative Writing." *Writing on the Edge*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1993, pp. 117-133. JSTOR. Accessed 12 June 2014.
- Bizzaro, Patrick. "Research and Reflection in English Studies: The Special Case of Creative Writing." *College English*, vol. 66, no. 3, 2004, pp. 294–309. JSTOR. Accessed 12 June 2014.
- . "Should I Write This Essay or Finish a Poem? Teaching Writing Creatively." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 49, no. 2, 1998, pp. 285-97.
- Boswell, Robert. *The Half-Known World: On Writing Fiction*. Graywolf P, 2008.

- Bradbury, Ray. *Zen in the Art of Writing: Essays on Creativity*. Joshua Odell Editions, 1994.
- Brande, Dorthea. *Becoming a Writer*. Harcourt, Brace and Co, 1934.
- Burke, Kenneth. *A Grammar of Motives*. U of CA P, 1969.
- . *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose*. 3rd ed., U of CA P, 1984.
- . *Attitudes Toward History*. 3rd ed., U of CA P, 1984.
- Burke LeFevre, Karen. *Invention as a Social Act*. 1st ed., Southern IL UP, 1986.
- Burroway, Janet. *Imaginative Writing: The Elements of Craft*. 3rd ed., Longman, 2010.
- , et al. *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*. 9th ed., Longman, 2014.
- Buscemi, Santi V. "Sources of Inspiration: Using literature in the developmental writing class." ERIC Document Reproduction Service, 1989, pp. 324-378.
- Cameron, Julia. *The Artist's Way*. 10th ed., Tarcher, 2002.
- Carr, Nicholas. "Is Google Making Us Stupid?: What the Internet is Doing to our Brains." *The Atlantic*, July/Aug. 2008. Accessed 12 Oct. 2016.
- Cicero. "From *De Oratore*." *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, edited by Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg. 2nd ed., Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2001.
- . *On Invention. The Best Kind of Orator. Topics*. Translated by H. M. Hubbell, Loeb Classical Library, 1949.
- . *Cicero, Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Translated by Harry Caplan, Loeb Classical Library, 1954.
- Corbett, Edward P. J. "The Theory and Practice of Imitation in Classical Rhetoric." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 243-250, 1970, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/356450>. Accessed 30 June 2016.

- Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the National Writing Project (NWP). *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*. CWPA, NCTE, and NWP, 2011.
- Creme, Phyllis and Celia Hunt. "Creative Participation in the Essay Writing Process." *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 145-166.
- Cross, Michelle. "Creative Writing in the Composition/ Communication Course." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1957, pp. 137-38.
- Crowley, Sharon and Debra Hawhee. *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed., Pearson, 2011.
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Creativity: The Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. Harper Collins, 2013.
- . *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. Reprint ed., Harper Collins e-books, 2009.
- Dillard, Annie. *The Writing Life*. Harper Perennial, 2013.
- "*Dissoi Logoi* or *Dialexeis*," translated by Rosamond Kent Sprague in *Mind*, vol. 77, no. 306, 1968, pp. 155-167.
- Duff, William. *An Essay on Original Genius*. Nabu P, 2010.
- Duncan, Seth and Lisa Feldman Barrett. "Affect Is a Form of Cognition: A Neurobiological Analysis." *Cognition & Emotion*, vol. 21, no. 6, 2007, pp. 1184–1211. EBSCOhost. Accessed 22 May 2015.
- Ede, Lisa and Andrea Lunsford. "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 35, no. 2, 1984, pp. 155–171. JSTOR. Accessed 30 Jan. 2014.

- Elbow, Peter. *Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing*. Oxford UP, 2011.
- . *Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process*. Kindle ed., Oxford UP, 1998.
- . *Writing without Teachers*. 2nd ed., Oxford UP, 1998.
- Emig, Janet A. *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*. National Council of Teachers of Education, 1971.
- Erard, Michael. "Escaping One's Own Shadow." *The New York Times*, 29 Sept. 2012.
- Estess, Sybil and Janet McCann. *In a Field of Words: A Creative Writing Text*. 1st ed., Longman, 2002.
- Feldman, Carol Fleisher. "Genres as Mental Models" in *Psychoanalysis and Development: Representations and Narratives*, edited by Massimo Ammaniti and Daniel N. Stern. NYU P, 1994.
- Fish, Stanley. "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics." *New Literary History*, vol. 2, no.1, 1970, pp. 123-162.
- Flower, Linda S. and John R. Hayes. "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 32, no. 4, 1981, pp. 365–387.
- . "Problem-Solving Strategies and the Writing Process." *College English*, vol. 39, no. 4, 1977, pp. 449-461.
- Forster, E. M. *Aspects of the Novel*. Edward Arnold, 1927.
- Freud, Sigmund. *On Creativity and the Unconscious: Papers on the Psychology of Art, Literature, Love, and Religion*. Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2009.
- Garberich, Mark David. "The Nature of Inspiration in Artistic Creativity." Ed.D. Department of Education, MI State U, 2008.

- Giroux, Henry. "Lessons from Paulo Freire." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 27 Oct. 2010. Accessed 25 Sept. 2016.
- Glenn, Cheryl and Mellissa A. Goldwaite. *The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing*. 6th ed., Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2007.
- Goldberg, Natalie. *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. 2nd Expanded ed., Shambhala, 2005. Print.
- Gourlay, Stephen. "Towards Conceptual Clarity for 'Tacit Knowledge': A Review of Empirical Studies." *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2006, pp. 60–69.
- Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. 2nd ed., Norton & Co, 2009.
- Haefner, Joel. "Democracy, Pedagogy, and the Personal Essay." *College English*, vol. 54, no. 2, 1992, pp. 127–137. JSTOR. Accessed 7 Feb. 2014.
- Hairston, Maxine. "The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 33, no. 1, 1982, pp. 76–88.
- Hanauer, D. "Meaningful Literacy: Writing Poetry in the Language Classroom." *Language Teaching*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2012, pp. 105–115.
- Hartmann, Eduard von. *Philosophy of the Unconscious*. Translated by William Chatterton Coupland, vol. 2, Macmillan and Co, 1884.
- Havelock, Eric Alfred. *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present*. Yale UP, 1986.

- Hawhee, Debra. "Kairotic Encounters" in *Perspectives on Rhetorical Invention*, edited by Janet M. Atwill and Janice M. Lauer. U of Tennessee P, 2002.
- . *Moving Bodies: Kenneth Burke at the Edges of Language*. U of South Carolina P, 2012.
- Hawk, Byron. *A Counter-history of Composition: Toward Methodologies of Complexity*. U of Pittsburgh P, 2007.
- Hertel, Paula and Daniel Reisberg, editors. *Memory and Emotion*. 1st ed., Oxford UP, 2003.
- Hesse, Douglas. "The Place of Creative Writing in Composition Studies." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2010, pp. 31-52.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Project Gutenberg, 2009. Accessed 12 June 2015.
- Holdstein, Deborah Helene. "The Muse Re-Evaluated: Diverse Manifestations of Poetic Inspiration." Ph.D. Comparative Literature, U of IL at Urbana-Champaign, 1978.
- Holman, Elizabeth. "Behind the Screen of Consciousness: Intuition, Insight, and Inspiration in the Writing Process." *Presence of Mind: Writing and the Domain Beyond the Cognitive*, edited by Alice Glarden Brand and Richard Layton Graves, Boynton/Cook Pub, 1994.
- "Inspiration, n." *OED Online*. Oxford UP. Accessed 30 April 2015.
- Johnson, Nan. "Reader-Response and the Pathos Principle." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1988, pp. 152-166.
- Johnson, T.R. *A Rhetoric of Pleasure: Prose Style and Today's Composition Classroom*. Boynton/Cook Pub, 2003.
- Johnston, Bret Anthony, editor. *Naming the World: And Other Exercises for the Creative Writer*. Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2008.

- Jung, C. G. *Psychological Types*, edited by R. F. C. Hull and translated by H. G. Baynes, Princeton UP, 1976.
- King, Stephen. *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. 10th ed., Scribner, 2000.
- Kiteley, Brian. *The 3AM Epiphany: Uncommon Exercises that Transform Your Fiction*. Kindle ed., Writer's Digest Books, 2005.
- Klatzkin, Karen Alexandra. "Intertextuality as Inspiration." Ed.D. Teachers College, Columbia U, 2012. ProQuest. Accessed 21 Oct 2014.
- Kiyokawa, Sachiko et al. "Cross Cultural Differences in Unconscious Knowledge." *Cognition*, vol. 124, no. 1, 2012, pp. 16–24.
- Klatzkin, Karen Alexandra. "Intertextuality as Inspiration." Ed.D. Teachers College, Columbia U, 2012. ProQuest. Accessed 21 Oct. 2014.
- Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. 1st ed., Anchor, 1995.
- LaPlante, Alice. *Method and Madness: The Making of a Story: A Guide to Writing Fiction*. Revised ed., W. W. Norton & Company, 2008.
- Lauer, Janice M. *Invention in Rhetoric and Composition*. Parlor Press and the WAC Clearing House, 2004.
- Leavitt, J., editor. *Poetry and Prophecy: The Anthropology of Inspiration*. U of MI P, 1997.
- LeFevre, Karen Burke. *Invention as a Social Act*. 1st ed., Southern Illinois UP, 1986.
- Leff, Michael C. "The Topics of Argumentative Invention in Latin Rhetorical Theory from Cicero to Boethius." *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1983, pp. 23-44.
- Light, Gregory. "From the Personal to the Public: Conceptions of Creative Writing in Higher Education." *Higher Education*, vol. 43, 2002, pp. 257-276.

- Lloyd-Jones, Richard. "Theoretical Problems in Studying Creativity and Composition."  
*College Composition and Communication*, vol. 21, no. 3, 1970, pp. 261-66.
- Longinus. *On the Sublime*, translated by H. L. Havell. MacMillan & Co., 1890. Project Gutenberg. Accessed 10 October 2016.
- Lunsford, Andrea A., John J. Ruszkiewicz and Keith Walters. *Everything's an Argument*. 6th ed., Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2012.
- Macrorie, Ken. *Telling Writing*. Heinemann P, 1970.
- . *Uptaught*. Hayden Book Co, 1970.
- Micciche, Laura. *Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, Teaching*. Heinemann P, 2007.
- Miller, Carolyn R. "Genre as Social Action." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 70, 1983, pp. 152-267.
- Miller, Hildy. "Sites of Inspiration: Where Writing is Embodied in Image and Emotion."  
*Presence of Mind: Writing and the Domain Beyond the Cognitive*, edited by Alice Glarden Brand and Richard Layton Graves. Boynton/Cook Pub, 1994.
- Minock, Mary. "Toward a Postmodern Pedagogy of Imitation." *Journal of American Culture*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1995, pp. 489-509.
- Moffett, James. "Introduction." *Presence of Mind: Writing and the Domain Beyond the Cognitive*, edited by Alice Glarden Brand and Richard Layton Graves. Boynton/Cook Pub, 1994.
- Murray, Donald M. *A Writer Teaches Writing Revised*. 2nd ed., Cengage Learning, 2003.
- Myers, David Gershom. *The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing Since 1880*. U of Chicago P, 2006.
- Newkirk, Thomas. *The Performance of Self in Student Writing*. Boynton/Cook, 1997.

- Northam, Paul. "Heuristics and beyond: Deconstruction/inspiration and the teaching of writing invention." *Writing and Reading Differently*, edited by Atkins, G. Douglas and Michael L. Jonshons, pp. 115-128, UP of KS, 1985.
- Ochs, Donovan J. "Cicero and Philosophic *Inventio*." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1989, pp. 217-227.
- Ong, Walter J. "The Writer's Audience Is Always a Fiction." *PMLA*, vol. 90, no. 1, 1975, pp. 9-21.
- . and John Hartley. *Orality and Literacy: 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*. 3rd ed., Routledge, 2012.
- Palmer, William. *Discovering Arguments: An Introduction to Critical Thinking, Writing, and Style*. 4th ed., Pearson, 2011.
- Perkins, D. H. *The Mind's Best Work*. 1st ed., Harvard UP, 1981.
- Plato. *Plato on Rhetoric and Language: Four Key Dialogues*, edited by Jean Nienkamp. Erlbaum, 1999.
- . *Ion*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. *The Internet Classics Archive*. Web Atomic and MA I of T, 2007. Accessed 25 Aug. 2015.
- Poindexter, Wanda. "Creative Imitation: An Option for Teaching Writing." M.F.A. Division of Language, Reading and Culture, U of AZ, 1988.
- Prose, Francine. *Reading Like a Writer: A Guide for People Who Love Books and for Those Who Want to Write Them*. Reprint ed., Harper Perennial, 2007.
- Quintilian. "From *Institutes of Oratory*." *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, edited by Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg. 2nd ed., Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2001.

- Rackham, Harris, translator. *Cicero: De Oratore and De Partitione Oratoria*. By Cicero, Harvard UP, 1960.
- Raymond, George Lansing. *The Psychology of Inspiration: An Attempt to Distinguish Religious from Scientific Truth and to Harmonize Christianity with Modern Thought*. Funk and Wagnalls Co, 1908.
- Rhodes, Keith. "The 'Weird AI' Style Method: Playful Invention as Serious Pedagogy." *Refiguring Prose Style: Possibilities for Writing Pedagogy*, edited by T. R. Johnson and Tom Pace Logan, UT State UP, 2004.
- Ribot, Théodule-Armand. *Essay on the Creative Imagination*. Translated by Albert H. N. Baron, Open Court, 1906.
- Rickert, Thomas. *Ambient Rhetoric: The Attunements of Rhetorical Being*. 1st ed., U of Pittsburgh P, 2013.
- Robertson, D. W. Jr. "A Note on the Classical Origin of 'Circumstances' in the Medieval Confessional." *Studies in Philology*, vol. 43, no. 1, 1946, pp. 6-14.
- Robillard, Amy E. "Shame and the Personal Essay." *Journal of American Culture*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2008, pp. 713-726.
- Sellers, Heather. *The Practice of Creative Writing: A Guide for Students*. 2nd ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012.
- Shakespeare, William. *Love's Labour's Lost*. 3rd ed., Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 1998.
- . *Titus Andronicus*, edited by Jonathan Bate. 3rd ed., Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 1995.
- Shaughnessy, Mina P. *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing*. Oxford UP, 1979.

Sheridan, David Michael, et al. *The Available Means of Persuasion: Mapping a Theory and Pedagogy of Multimodal Public Rhetoric*. Parlor Press, 2012.

Smith, Michael. "Worshipping at the Altar: Creative Writing and the Myth of Inspiration." *Writing on the Edge*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2011, pp. 65–70.

Spigelman, Candace. *Personally Speaking: Experience as Evidence in Academic Discourse*. Southern IL UP, 2004.

Starkey, David. "Teaching Imaginative Writing in Composition Courses." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 20, no. 3, 1969, pp. 259-60.

Sternberg, Robert J., editor. *Handbook of Creativity*. 1st ed., Cambridge UP, 1998.

Thrash, Todd M., Laura A. Maruskin, et. al. "Mediating between the Muse and the Masses: Inspiration and the Actualization of Creative Ideas." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 98, no. 3, 2010, pp. 469–487. EBSCOhost. Accessed 30 Aug. 2015.

Thrash, Todd M. and Andrew J. Elliot. "Inspiration as a Psychological Construct." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 84, 2003, pp. 871–889.

---. "Inspiration: Core Characteristics, Component Processes, Antecedents, and Function." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 87, no. 6, 2004, pp. 957–973. EBSCOhost. Accessed 12 Aug. 2015.

Turchi, Peter. *Maps of the Imagination: The Writer as Cartographer*. 1st Trade Paper ed., Trinity UP, 2011.

Vernon, P. E. *Creativity*. Penguin Books, 1970.

Walker, Jeffrey. *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*. 1st ed., Oxford UP, 2000.

Wallas, Graham. *The Art of Thought*. Solis P, 2014.

Wortham, Jenna. "I Had a Nice Time with You Tonight. On the App." *New York Times*, 5 April 2014. Accessed 12 Oct. 2016.

Young, Richard. "Arts, Crafts, Gifts, and Knacks: Some Discontinuities in the New Rhetoric." *Visible Language*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1980, pp. 341–50.

---. "Inventing: A Topographical Survey." *Teaching Composition: Ten Bibliographic Essays*. Texas Christian UP, 1976.

Young, Richard E., Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth Lee Pike. *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*. Harcourt College P, 1970.

## VITA

### Personal Background

Jessica Renay Kontelis  
Born March 8, 1987, Lancaster, PA  
Daughter of Robert and Donna Menkin  
Married Jeremy Kontelis on December 22, 2011

### Education

Ph.D. Rhetoric and Composition  
*Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX, 2018*  
M.F.A. Creative Writing: Fiction  
*Mills College, Oakland, CA, 2011*  
B.A. English  
*Bloomsburg University of PA, Bloomsburg, PA, 2009*  
Diploma, Manheim Township High School, Lancaster, PA, 2005

### Experience

Graduate Instructor  
*Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX, 2011-2018*  
Graduate Teaching Fellow  
*Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX, 2015-2016*  
Graduate Assistant to ePortfolio  
*Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX, 2016-2018*  
Assistant Director to the Center for Digital Expression  
*Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX, 2013-2014*  
Assistant Director to the Writing Center  
*Mills College, Oakland, CA, 2008-2009*

### Professional Memberships

American Culture Association  
Association of Writers and Writing Programs  
Conference of College Teachers of English  
Modern Language Association  
National Council for Teachers of English  
Rhetoric Society of America

## ABSTRACT

### INSPIRE: CREATIVE THEORIES AND STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING WRITING

by Jessica Renay Kontelis, Ph.D., 2018  
Department of English  
Texas Christian University

Dissertation Director: Dr. Richard Leo Enos, Piper Professor (State of Texas),

Holder of the Lillian Radford Chair of Rhetoric and Composition

Dissertation Committee: Dr. Ann George, Professor of English

Professor Matthew Pitt, Assistant Professor of English

Dr. Jason Helms, Assistant Professor of English

Interdisciplinary scholarship from creative writers and rhetoric-composition scholars and teachers has long set the stage for blending the concerns and practices of creative writing and rhetoric-composition in order to conceptually and pragmatically reinvent the study and teaching of writing (Bishop, T. R. Johnson, Newkirk, Hesse). My dissertation responds to calls for a jointly rhetoric and poetic approach to composition pedagogy by asking how instructional creative writing texts introduce students to tacit, emotional, and often unconscious aspects of the creative process, such as inspiration.

Though rhetoric-composition scholarship heavily discusses and theorizes invention, discourse on tacit, quasi-mystical subjects such as inspiration remains sparse. Melding rhetoric-composition scholarship on invention (Flower and Hayes, LeFevre, Rickert, Micciche) with analysis of twenty assigned texts from a survey of undergraduate introductory creative writing classes and psychological research, I revisit conversations about the body's

conscious and unconscious role in composing to open inspiration for overt study and share strategies that nurture and trigger inspiration.

This dissertation demystifies inspiration by examining the historical narratives, economic concern, and academic skepticism that relegate inspiration to mysticism. Demystifying inspiration collapses Cartesian divisions between inspiration and invention that distinguish them as separate but complementary processes. I pose an alternate definition of inspiration that highlights creativity's situational, emotional, and embodied nature, and I use the instructional creative writing texts in my study to offer strategies that nurture and trigger inspiration.

Creative writing and rhetoric-composition pedagogy share history and interdependency (Walker, Myers). The instructional creative writing texts in my study frame shared invention strategies from modern and ancient times (ritual, freewriting, journaling, imitation, writing prompts, the Ciceronian *topoi*, and the *Dissoi Logoi*) with metaphors and anecdotes that explain how systematic invention practices nurture and trigger inspiration. As a result, my study proposes opportunities to adapt current and classical rhetorical invention strategies to facilitate inspiration in first- and second-year composition classrooms. Overall, my dissertation demonstrates the productive power of interdisciplinary partnership between rhetoric-composition and creative writing and provides strategies for applying that partnership to the study and teaching of inspiration.