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Writing and the unconscious

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WRITING AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

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

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

by
Janis A. Brams
June 1987
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ABSTRACT

While making conscious choices is an integral part of writing, the unconscious also plays an important role in the composing process. Linguistic knowledge, images, and sensations stored in the unconscious provide input as authors select ideas to develop. These unconscious elements help writers choose among lexical and grammatical alternatives when they attempt to communicate personal visions to an audience.

Psycholinguists, like Slobin and Paivio, discuss linguistic competence or implicit linguistic knowledge and its influence on writing. Langer, Bodkin, and Klinger are among the philosophers and researchers who focus on other internal factors, like imagination and feelings. Many of these theorists claim that interactions with our external environment are preserved in the unconscious as images. These images and the emotions that accompany them emerge during imaginative play, dominating our fantasies and inspiring us to write.

Current writing theory supports the need for prewriting exercises, like modeling and clustering, in the classroom. Prewriting techniques can help students recover inherent linguistic knowledge, images, and feelings so that these elements can be applied during the composing process.
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INTRODUCTION

Linguistic knowledge, images, sensations and memories, stowed away in the unconscious, sustain writers; like the oxygen we breathe, these unconscious elements are intangible, untouchable, but necessary. Indeed, without them, our ability to communicate ideas and feelings would suffer enormously, and our poetry and prose would remain sealed away, lost to society forever. The images and sensations that emerge in our fantasies along with the words and forms to express them do more than adorn our texts; they are our texts. Our message and our style cling to one another, each dependent on the other for the "whole" to survive. The words we choose, the linguistic structures we devise, the comparisons we draw, the "realities" we create, all of these elements influence how we write, and, at the same time, what we write.

Since words bridge the chasm between our ideas and their expression, I will begin by exploring how our ability to generate language may be linked to our implicit knowledge, acquired as we interact with the environment. In Chapter 2, I will consider various concepts of imagination, its relationship to fantasy, and their role in the
composing process. I have also included observations made by three accomplished authors, Edith Wharton, Eudora Welty, and Virginia Woolf. All three allude to imagination as the birthplace for ideas and remark that they must pull words and forms from their unconscious before they put ink to paper.

In Chapter 3, I will focus on relationships among feelings, language, and writing. While some feelings are easy for us to identify, others, hidden in our unconscious, are difficult to describe. Our feelings, however, influence what we write as well as how we write.

Finally, while some are able to reach to their unconscious for ideas and a form to contain them, others seem unable to do so or are even unaware that such a reservoir exists. Educators must find ways, then, to help potential writers recover inherent linguistic knowledge and tap into images and feelings buried just beneath the surface. In my last chapter, I have applied theories that I studied, using them to inspire student writing when teaching in elementary school classrooms. I have used work done by Gabriele Lusser Rico on "clustering." While I found it necessary to modify some of her strategies when working with younger children, I was pleased with the level of enthusiasm elicited from students during "clustering" sessions. I will share some of my
results and will also discuss several different ways to combine "clustering" with other teaching methods.
CHAPTER 1

USING VERBAL AND NONVERBAL PROCESSES TO GENERATE LANGUAGE

Before we can write, we need language. Without words, our ability to communicate the ideas emerging from imagination is lost. No one knows exactly how we generate language; however, most theorists agree that our unconscious is instrumental to the process. The unconscious is not an easy construct to explore. The words, images, and feelings stored there defy direct observation forcing us to base our theories on introspections and overt language behavior. However, I believe that writing and the unconscious are bound together so that we must explore one to understand the other. Where are our ideas born? How do we find the words to express them? While definitive answers to these questions elude us, they invite discussion. Indeed, I hope to show that our unconscious houses the images and linguistic knowledge we need if we are to share our life experience with others.

If we believe that unconscious linguistic elements influence our writing technique, then it is important
for us to learn more about them. Psycholinguists like Dan Slobin identify the internalized patterns that exist in language as do cognitivists like Allan Paivio. However, while Slobin focuses on innate verbal processes and their effect on the way we write, Paivio insists that nonverbal imagery also plays an important role in the composing process. Finally, educators like Mina Shaughnessy apply both psycholinguistic and cognitivist theory to their classroom settings. They insist that students must write in order to tap their unconscious linguistic resources.

In addition to identifying linguistic patterns, psycholinguists also try "to determine how such structural knowledge is put to use."¹ How do writers decide on particular grammatical constructions as they grapple with ways to express ideas? Where do they store syntactic and semantic alternatives? Slobin suggests that we harbor certain linguistic information in our unconscious and refers to this implicit knowledge as our "linguistic competence." Since implicit knowledge cannot be directly observed, we must find other ways to explore this important construct. Thus, theorists study our "linguistic performance," our overt language behavior, hoping to gain insight into how we verbalize by analyzing what we verbalize.
To some extent, then, linguistic performance acts as a key for researchers, a key to our unconscious where valuable but otherwise unattainable linguistic information is stored. We should be willing, of course, to use whatever means are available so that we can make some theoretical headway as we explore linguistic competence; however, we should also recognize that important differences do exist between our competence and our performance. The grammatical and lexical choices we make do depend on our implicit knowledge, but they are also affected by psychological factors like memory and attention span and by environmental factors like noise and stress levels. Thus, the information we gather may provide us with some insight regarding linguistic competence but may not account for the entire construct. Indeed, as we examine current research, we should keep in mind that theories based on linguistic observation may suffer certain weaknesses.

We are left, then, with an interesting mystery to solve; that is, if linguistic competence does exist and all language users do indeed have some implicit structural knowledge, then where did this implicit knowledge come from? Researchers are not really sure. Like processes that occur in the unconscious, linguistic material stored there defies direct observation, forcing us to
base theories of origin on language that has already been generated. In Psycholinguistics, Slobin postulates that children know something about what words mean and how to combine them in their particular language before producing connected speech of their own. The author cites Sachs and Truswell (1976) who concluded that even youngsters' one-word utterances, like "me," "express underlying relational notions." Slobin goes on to say that children use symbols (e.g., images and words) to represent absent objects and thus internalize the outside world. As they grow, so does their symbolic reservoir and, in turn, their linguistic options. Thus, older, more experienced children are better equipped to search out conventionally accepted words and syntax or more effective ways to communicate their ideas to one another.

Cognitivists like Allan Paivio focus on nonverbal imagery and insist that it too plays an important role in composition. In Imagery and Verbal Processes, Paivio constructs a two-process model which links nonverbal as well as verbal representation to understanding and producing language. Paivio begins by distinguishing abstract thinking in discourse from concrete description. Although we use language to describe "concrete situations, events from memory, and manipulation of spatial concepts," he suggests that our verbal descriptions are
mediated by nonverbal imagery. First, we use our imagination to create mental pictures, and then we transform those pictures into verbal description using our internalized knowledge, both conscious and unconscious, to help us do an effective job. However, imagery does not always serve as mediator during our composing process. When discourse is predominantly abstract, writers tend not to use concrete images when conceptualizing and organizing ideas.

Paivio claims that "verbal behavior mediated by imagery is likely to be more flexible and creative than that mediated by a verbal symbolic system." He assumes that image systems are less affected by logical and sequential constraints than verbal systems; therefore, verbal systems resist manipulation while the images that inhabit imagination invite mental play. He concludes that the "understanding and production of concrete language... are more likely to reflect creative aspects of a grammar of a language than are understanding and production of relatively abstract language...."5

Paivio believes, as do most cognitivists, that imagery precedes the development of verbal skills; however, he goes on to say that both verbal and nonverbal processes grow once language production begins. During early childhood, we internalize the outside world by
storing images in our unconscious that correspond to both nonverbal and verbal stimuli. As we approach writing age, our associative skills improve, and we are able to connect names with referent images. Finally, as skilled composers, we are capable of making complex associations between words, images, or both.

Not all literary scholars agree with Paivio's model for language development. Many argue that imagery is not a precursor to language; indeed, some scholars believe that it is language that generates imagery. However, most psycholinguists do agree with Paivio that both verbal and nonverbal images populate our unconscious and influence the choices we make as we struggle to produce appropriate words and phrases. I believe that the important issue for writing teachers is that we recognize in such psycholinguistic concepts the potential for language locked away in each student's unconscious. Only then will we work hard to create teaching strategies aimed at unleashing those images and words that wait in silence to be heard.

If researchers like Paivio are correct and imagery does precede the development of verbal processes, then, initially at least, linguistic competence and linguistic performance depend upon the data that imagery provides. Paivio draws support from psycholinguists
like Slobin when he suggests that the sophisticated syntax used by authors is grounded in imagery. He postulates that even accomplished writers create their first grammar by noting the order or "syntax" associated with observed happenings and then incorporating that order into their representational imagery. For instance, a child throws down a bit of food from the highchair and, then, watches astutely as the nearest adult retrieves her treasure. She notes the object first lying passively on the floor and, then, the action initiated by mother or father to rescue her morsel. According to Paivio, such incidents occur in predictable patterns, which are eventually internalized by the curious child. Those patterns may influence syntax or word order later on, once the child begins to verbalize needs, wants, and ideas. Indeed, our vixen in the highchair may be internalizing subject/verb constructions while she watches Mom or Dad retrieve her discarded food.

Later, as novice language users, we learn to recognize word patterns during verbal stimulation in much the same way. We listen, noting the order in which words associated with certain objects or actions occur and, then, internalize this information. Both the words and the syntax become part of our unconscious and thus enhance linguistic competence. For Paivio, then, while
a writer's grammar may grow more sophisticated with time and exposure to language, syntax begins as a cognitive skill and is influenced by the way individuals perceive their external world.

Finally, despite evidence which suggests that verbal systems play a predominant role in generating abstract language, Paivio claims that writers attempting to communicate abstract ideas may also be stimulated by the images stored in their imagination. Indeed, he cites Werner and Kaplan (1963) who demonstrated that "abstract meanings in sentences can be represented in the form of specific images of concrete objects and events." Thus, while imagery provides the most assistance for authors writing concrete description, it can also help to generate some language when ideas are abstract.

Paivio recognizes the important role played by verbal processes in composing; however, he insists that there is also a place for nonverbal representation or imagery in theoretical attempts to explain language generation. He criticizes psycholinguists for failing to include imagery in their theoretical models; for, if we agree that nonverbal processes influence linguistic performance, then, they should be a part of any attempt to describe our implicit linguistic knowledge or competence.

Even after we are introduced to prescriptive
grammar, psycholinguists claim that our writing is still influenced by linguistic competence. Indeed, as educators, we often complain that our attempts to teach grammatical rules prescriptively fail. Students who perform well on worksheets may not apply what they have learned to their own composition.

A number of researchers have addressed this problem. And many, like Mina Shaughnessy, suggested ways to reach student writers who seem unable to "learn" grammar. Perhaps, these students have a grammar of their own, an unconventional one acquired as they listened to and observed peers and parents. Perhaps, our job as educators is to teach them a second grammar, a conventional grammar that will help them communicate with others in their society. If so, we must use methods that encourage students to internalize what we teach just as they internalized the grammatical patterns that they use now. We need to add new information to their linguistic competence and perhaps the most effective way to do this is to encourage student writing. Indeed, in Errors and Expectations, Shaughnessy insists that "writing is, after all, a learning tool as well as a way of demonstrating what has been learned. It captures ideas before they are lost in the hubbub of discourse, it encourages precision; it requires...that the writer make
judgments about what is essential, and finally, it lodges information at deeper levels of memory that can be reached by more passive modes of learning." Shaughnessy believes that we must work hard to extract linguistic knowledge buried in our unconscious and "that the effort to translate the 'inner' speech of thought into written language taxes and ultimately extends the writer's syntactic resourcefulness." Thus, if, as writing teachers, we want to help students discover rules, we should encourage them to write. The more they write, the better their access to information stored in the unconscious.
CHAPTER 2

IMAGINATION, FANTASY, AND THE COMPOSING PROCESS

Using Imagination to Compose

While Slobin and Paivio construct models hoping to explain how implicit linguistic knowledge affects our writing, theorists like Northrop Frye and Richard Koch explore imagination and its influence on composition. At the same time, novelists like Edith Wharton, Eudora Welty, and Virginia Woolf refer to imagination in their diaries and journals; all three agree that it plays a predominant role in their own writing process.

What is imagination? Imagination hovers between our unconscious and awareness. It is a haven for images that represent our external world, a storage house for memories and felt sensations, and our safe place for experimenting with risky ideas. How are they linked, our imagination and our composing process? To gain insight, I will examine the theoretical construct labelled imagination and its relationship to fantasy as well as to writing style.

I begin by looking at Frye, who explores imagination and suggests that its primary purpose is to help us feel more a part of our external environment. Next I move on to Maude Bodkin, who theorizes that imagination
makes conscious our unconscious experiences and provides a link between our inner selves and the outside world. While exploring the role imagination plays in our composing process, I discuss theories developed by Donald Murray and Richard Koch. These researchers include both conscious and unconscious components in their theoretical models. Finally, I consider Susanne Langer and Eric Klinger, who look at the relationship between reality, fantasy, and imagination. Langer focuses on how reality influences our imaginative play while Klinger links fantasy to creative thinking.

Before discussing Frye, I will distinguish between imagination and fantasy. Theorists disagree on how they relate to one another. Some, like Frye and Langer, seem to use the words interchangeably. Klinger, on the other hand, limits the role of fantasy, treating it as a subset of imagination. According to Klinger, we do not fantasize about tasks that we are in the process of performing; we employ other forms of ideation or imagination when testing solutions for immediate problems and fantasize about less imminent concerns. While imagination includes many images that represent our experiences in the external world, fantasy is less concerned with representing reality; indeed, Klinger's fantasy plays havoc with conventional associations, focusing instead on more creative
thinking. Thus, though Frye and Langer use fantasy as a synonym for imagination, Klinger uses the term to represent something more specific.

During his discussion of imagination, Northrop Frye suggests that the mind has three levels and that a language exists for each of them. The first, the level of consciousness or awareness, emphasizes the difference between self and everything else and is associated with the language of self-expression. The language of self-expression is used to clarify our needs and our desires and to convey them to others. The second level, social participation, involves "working or technological" language, the language of practical sense. Finally, the third level, imagination, speaks in plays, poems, and novels and is associated with poetic language.

Frye believes that imagination contains elements of reason and emotion and that its chief concern is to establish an "identity between the human mind and the world outside it." We use our unconscious symbolic storehouse to construct "possible models of human experience." Since we do not necessarily experience what we write, we feel safe and continue exploring possibilities on paper without risk to ourselves. Poetic language (i.e., metaphors) helps us to reestablish, via our imagination, a feeling of oneness with the world that surrounds us, a feeling
lost to us as we grow older. In fact, according to Frye, man's fantasy is limited only by his humanity. When we write fiction, we are not as much concerned with truth or reality but with exploring possibilities, for we can imagine without commitment: "We can stand apart from a vicious world, vicious things and see them for what they are because they aren't really happening."¹³

For Frye, then, literature is the window to ideas born in our imagination. He goes on to say that literature is "more structure than content"; thus, we internalize certain structural principles gathered from the classics we encounter and, then, attempt to apply those principles to our own writing.¹⁴ In fact, Frye believes that we must listen to stories if we ever intend to write them, for listening provides us with a way to train our imagination. Thus, internalized patterns, as well as content, influence the way we think, the way we organize our own ideas and, finally, the way we write them.

As educators, we can apply Frye's theory in our classroom by exposing students to various forms of literature. Whether we read stories aloud to them or encourage our pupils to read independently, potential writers will benefit from studying what others have written. Quality literature or classics exist for students no matter what their age, for even very young children enjoy fables, poetry, and fairytales.
Our reading assignments are often directive; that is, we ask students to look for answers to specific questions or point out various linguistic patterns. I believe, however, that we should also encourage them to read for fun, without guidelines or focal points. They should have an opportunity to experiment with their own ideas, to let their imaginations take control. Indeed, sending students into stories with preconceived notions about what is important may inhibit their creative thinking.

Yet another teaching strategy often overlooked is storytelling. Teachers can tell stories as well as read them and then encourage pupils to model storytelling behavior. Why not use this oral art to encourage beginning writers, especially those who are timid about committing ideas to paper? Fortunately, we need not limit ourselves to one strategy but may use all of them in our attempt to do as Frye suggests and help students train their imaginations.

While many theorists allude to "inner voices" and "moments of insight," no one has been able to explain just how we make the leap from unconscious to awareness and back. In *Archetypal Pattern in Poetry: Psychological Studies of Imagination*, Maude Bodkin explores this problem. She theorizes that a mediating process exists
which links our unconscious but "lived" experience with our consciousness. According to Bodkin, we cross the abyss between them when we connect experiences with "actions and objects that affect the senses and can be contemplated, and with words that recall these objects in all their variety of human perspective." Although she does not explain just how we connect experiences with actions, objects, and words, she suggests that imagination plays an important role in this process, especially the poet's imagination. Poets do not limit imaginative play to personal vision. They also include "primordial images" and "archetypes," which are stored in the unconscious. According to Bodkin, the time poets spend rummaging through their imagination helps them to uncover those archetypes and images which might otherwise remain out of conscious reach.

Bodkin draws support from Carl Jung's work. According to Jung, these primordial experiences do not originate with one individual but are shared by all mankind. They make up our collective unconscious, that is, "...a certain psychic disposition shaped by heredity" in every human being. Bodkin claims that poets use this collective unconscious to stir readers, for we are all unusually sensitive to words and images that are our human inheritance, that mark us as members of the human community. Once again, she looks to Jung for
support. Indeed, while Jung admits that personal factors may influence a poet's choice and use of materials, he insists that great poetry must "draw its strength from the life of mankind"; it must reflect concerns and experiences common to all humanity. In fact, he describes the truly creative poet as only half a human being. The other half is an "impersonal, creative process" capable of making people conscious of life experiences that might otherwise remain locked in their collective unconscious.\(^{17}\) For Jung, one person's ability to be creative, to play imaginatively with primordial images and archetypes, affects us all: "Whenever collective unconscious becomes a living experience and is brought to bear upon the conscious outlook of an age, this event is a creative act which is of importance to everyone living in that age.\(^{18}\)

In summary, as we compose, we alternate between unconscious play and conscious articulation of ideas. First our unconscious supplies us with concepts to write about, and, then, we use imaginative play to help us prepare those images and intuitions for a successful debut in the external world. Next, we find ways to express our ideas, choosing among lexical and grammatical alternatives that may also originate in the unconscious. Finally, we read great literature only to discover that once again we are forced to visit with images and
intuitions that might have otherwise eluded consciousness forever.

While most theorists agree that imagination plays a role in composing, many disagree on the nature of that role and how it fits into the writing process. Donald Murray, for example, postulates three writing stages: prewriting, which he characterizes as a kind of pre-vision or intuition about ideas to come; writing, which involves setting down on paper the visions that emerge during mental play; and rewriting, which is a revision of the text put to paper during the writing stage. During revision, writers play back ideas and have a chance to sharpen their focus using semantic and syntactical alternatives as tools.

In "Polarity in the Composing Process," Richard Koch divides the writing process into conscious and unconscious components and suggests heuristics for each. Koch's unconscious elements include mediation and image, while his conscious elements are wish and analogy. According to Koch, mediation is grounded in fantasy and is primarily concerned with helping writers experience ideas stored in their unconscious. During mediation, authors use images to help them decide on an area of experience to write about. These images, which are part of imagination, provide people with a way to relive physical sensations. During this phase of the composing
process, the heuristics involved include generative writing, sensory decoding, and free writing.

Wish, a conscious element, motivates the writer to begin composing. Koch postulates that one writes to fulfill wishes, while analogy helps to discover the essence of a subject. In order to make analogies, people must see similarities between unlike objects, which requires the use of both reason and imagination. Koch suggests that exploring uncommon relationships helps authors to uncover the fundamental meaning of their subject. Analogy also helps writers to communicate their own ideas by providing readers with familiar objects and then encouraging them to make new connections. Thus, writers tend to use analogies in formal writing when they are most concerned with rhetorical techniques, purpose, and audience.

Finally, Koch, like Murray, characterizes composing as an alternating process. He believes that writers move from imagination to analysis and, then, back again to imagination just as they move among planning, translating, and revising. Thus, both Murray and Koch see imagination as an integral part of composing and the unconscious images stored there as temporary guests waiting for an opportunity to make their way into a writer's consciousness.

Cognitive researchers Flower and Hayes suggest
that writing might be "best understood as a set of distinctive thinking processes which writers orchestrate or organize during the act of composing." However, even their cognitive process model recognizes long-term memory and the part it plays in writing. Of course, buried in our long-term memories, are those unconscious images and ideas, waiting, once again, for the right cue so that they may emerge and influence the things we say and the way we say them.

We have spoken for some time about imagination and its role in the composing process. While our writing is influenced by elements that inhabit our unconscious, it is also affected by our external environment. I will now discuss the relationship between fantasy and reality and the effect of reality on writing.

If poets write what they imagine, then can reality also play a role in composition? In Feeling and Form, Susanne Langer discusses how the two concepts relate to one another. "Everything actual must be transformed by imagination into something experiential..." She suggests that this transformation is accomplished through the use of language, both spoken and written. Before we can write, however, we must think about what we plan to say. For "thought," says Langer, "arises only where ideas have taken shape and actual or possible conditions have been imagined."
How true to reality are the images and ideas living in an individual's imagination? Langer claims that our memories are not exact replicas of reality but are altered impressions, for while actual experience includes many extraneous "sights, sounds, feelings, physical strains, expectations and minute, undeveloped reactions," our memories select out only relevant emotions, only pertinent information. Thus, the perceptions recorded in our memory and used to nourish imaginative thinking are just "illusions," not real experiences. Langer labels them virtual experiences and refers to them as "semblances of life." She goes on to suggest that although the images stored in our unconscious may be grounded in reality, once internalized they are no longer actual things or events but exist only within our imaginations. Thus, the ideas we play with during prewriting or mediation are our own perceptions of the external world, and our virtual memories, not our actual experiences, dictate what we write. Reality may influence our choice of subject and our presentation, but only indirectly, for first, the real world must survive a journey through our imagination.

Often students are intimidated by reality. They are afraid to write about the world and its issues because they feel vulnerable putting their ideas on paper. We all want others to understand our point of view, to see
value in our opinions. We all want to be right. As writing teachers, we can help students to understand that reality is not necessarily the same for every person, and so our approach to issues may differ. Often one right answer does not exist so that we need not expend energy worrying that we are wrong. As writers, we should focus on developing a reasonable argument, one that supports our view of reality. Then, though others may disagree with our ideas, they will understand them.

Exploring Fantasy, Key to Creative Insight

Earlier, I discussed how theorists like Klinger distinguish between fantasy and imagination while others seem to use the terms interchangeably. While he does not offer a formal definition for imagination, Klinger seems to feel that fantasy is a special sub-category of imaginative thinking. He describes fantasy as "covert mental activity" which "involves ideation other than that required directly to perform present tasks"; however, even when we limit their subject matter, fantasies are a writer's playground equipped with images and ideas gathered from external and internal sources. In a sense, our fantasies are unique; they straddle the abyss between our unconscious and awareness. Theorists, struggling to learn more about the internal elements that influence our writing, look to fantasy, for here among our
"half-dreams," unconscious images and patterns first emerge. As writing teachers, we also need to become more familiar with this abstract construct, for concrete things happen here. Ideas are born, structural patterns are implemented, and insights are achieved.

During prewriting or mediation, we move among our fantasies looking for material to include in our composition and for ways to communicate the ideas we find. Thus, "imaginative play links the real with the unreal, what we think with what we say. In this next chapter, I will explore fantasy and how it relates to creative insight.

Klinger and Aristotle seem to agree that fantasy functions as a testing place for new ideas; in fact, both men associate our ability to fantasize with our ability to achieve creative insights. For Aristotle, fantasy and imagery share a symbiotic relationship, each acting as a host for the other. Images serve as fuel for human fantasy and, in turn, fantasy provides imagery with a road to the outside world. Aristotle defines images as "forms of objects that (have) been perceived previously and rearoused as a result of continuous psychical activity." He believes that mankind shares "imaginal processes" with animal souls but regards "reason" as a uniquely human attribute. Aristotle claims, however, that like imagery, reason is
also tied to fantasy. Human beings cannot reason or problem solve without fantasy; indeed, he believes that people need a place to test solutions without risk as they work to achieve insight.

Theorists like Koch and Murray, who have researched the composing process, suggest that writers experience insight as they pass back and forth among prewriting, writing, and revision. Indeed, poets mull over fantasies waiting for that creative moment when they will see how to use an idea, a phrase, or a word effectively. Once they experience creative insight, they are ready to record their mental play on paper; after, they read what they have written and ruminate once more. Klinger claims that this moment of insight occurs "when an individual recognizes that an element embedded in one frame of reference belongs also to another frame of reference, its double membership thus revealing a relationship that can solve a problem." Klinger's description of insight sounds much like Koch's construct of analogy. Both benefit from fantasy, a covert process that provides composers with an opportunity to meld external stimuli with unconscious ideation.

Klinger goes on to divide creative thinking into two stages, preparation or immersion and incubation. Immersion, the first stage, is a "prolonged period of concerted struggle with a problem in an effort to solve it,"
while the second stage, incubation, provides thinkers with opportunities to experience respondent processes. Respondent processes occur when creative thinkers note similarities between their "concern-related stimulus" and a second stimulus found in their environment. These two stimuli should resemble one another but in "some non-obvious respect." Great poets often make unlikely comparisons and, then, record them, providing readers with an opportunity to make new associations and expand their thinking.

Once again, Klinger's work in creative insight fits neatly with current writing theory. In "Mashing Little Red Devils: Teaching the Process of Writing," John Oster explores several different writing models all of which include some form of "insight." Oster alludes to the "discovery aspect" of writing which he says occurs when writers finally find a "way to reveal their own thoughts." He suggests that "inner voice" and "mental rehearsal" play an important role in this discovery process, for we listen closely to our inner voice and then rehearse the ideas we hear mentally before putting them on paper. In a sense, our inner voice acts as our negotiator, negotiating with our unconscious for the release of ideas, images, and structural principles that may help us to write.

Finally, Klinger admits that fantasy is not always
accompanied by "purposeful behavior"; in fact, sometimes people fantasize to avoid dealing with problems or other external stimuli. However, he claims that we can turn fantasy to creative purposes if we adhere to one important principle; that is, we must "receive ideas hospitably." Thus, according to Klinger, if we intend to put our fantasies to work in our writing, we must allow them time to develop, and we must pay close attention to their content.

Writing teachers who agree that fantasy can serve creative purposes should develop teaching strategies that reflect their thinking. These strategies need not be elaborate but should include opportunities for imaginative play. Perhaps students given a chance to fantasize about a writing assignment will uncover ideas and patterns hidden away in their unconscious; in fact, some may achieve creative insights all their own.

Using Fantasy to Write, the Artist's Point of View

While theorists search for ways to explain linguistic performance, authors go on writing, turning primitive ideas into full-blown composition. Some authors pay little attention to their writing process, but others, who are introspective, attempt to record what they experience. Certainly, theoretical constructs like imagination, creative
insight, and inner voice help to make unconscious contributors to writing style more viable; however, these concepts would not have survived without empirical evidence to support them.

In their diaries and autobiographies, authors like Virginia Woolf, Edith Wharton, and Eudora Welty furnish us with such empirical evidence as they explore their own writing processes. Their meditations help us to understand how unconscious elements influence writing; indeed, what better words to use as passwords into the unknown than the author's own. Many of the personal observations recorded by Woolf, Wharton, and Welty tend to support theories discussed earlier in my paper, theories that link writing with elements like linguistic competence and imagination. In this next section, I will look at the unconscious, imagination, fantasy, and reality through the eyes of these three authors. I believe that all writers are influenced by implicit knowledge and internal images. My hope is that sharing introspections with Woolf, Wharton, and Welty will give us all some insights into the composing process, insights that help us to become better writing teachers as well as better writers.

In her book, Becoming a Writer, Dorthea Brande suggests that both our unconscious and our conscious minds perform important tasks as we begin to shape a story. For Brande, the "unconscious must flow freely and richly,
bringing at demand all the treasures of memory, all the emotions, incidents, scenes, imitations of character and relationship which it has stored away in its depths" while the "conscious mind must control, combine and discriminate between these materials without hampering the unconscious flow."\textsuperscript{32} Brande claims that "types of all kinds" are buried in our individual unconscious: typical characters, typical scenes, and typical emotional responses. She assigns the "task of deciding which of these is too personal, too purely idiosyncratic to be material for art" to the conscious mind; however, she associates "genius" with the unconscious. Indeed, for Brande, the unconscious "is the great home of form; ...it is quicker to see types, patterns, purposes than our intellect can ever be."\textsuperscript{33}

In \textit{A Writer's Diary}, Virginia Woolf also alludes to unconscious play and its vital role in the acquisition of stylistic elements. As she discusses the birth and subsequent development of \textit{Mrs. Dalloway}, Woolf admits to "a year's groping" before her discovery of the "tunnelling process," a stylistic technique that involves telling the "past by installments," rather than chronologically. She refers to the "tunnelling process" as her "prime discovery so far" and credits her unconscious with its invention. Indeed, according to Woolf, "...the fact that I've been
so long finding it proves, I think, how false Percy Lubbock's doctrine is—"that you can do this sort of thing consciously."³⁴

Woolf expends great energy analyzing her mental play. In *A Writer's Diary*, she explores what she has written and describes how images and ideas move from her unconscious to fill an empty page:

I note...that this diary writing does not count as writing, since I have just reread my year's diary and am much struck by the rapid haphazard gallop at which it swings along, sometimes jerking almost intolerably over the cobbles. Still if it were not written rather faster than the fastest type-writing, if I stopped and took thought, it would never be written at all; and the advantage of the method is that it sweeps up accidentally several stray matters which I should exclude if I hesitated, but which are the diamonds of the dustheap.³⁵

Woolf's description of how quickly she writes entries in her diary and her allusion to the "diamonds" created amid her "dustheap," foreshadow current writing theory. Theorists, like Gabrielle Lusser Rico whom I discuss later, have since linked introspections like Woolf's to right brain/left brain research. As a result, they encourage freewriting, especially in the early stages of the composing process.

During her writing of *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf explores her unconscious once again and discusses how this silent but constant companion interacts with consciousness to produce a writing style. She concludes that expending less energy in our internal world results in a more
spontaneous writing style; however, she does not discount that there are other times when we must dig deep into our unconscious. She questions whether qualities like spontaneity can survive the turbulence that often accompanies deeper thought. Indeed, she wonders "...if I dig, must I not lose them?" Woolf's response to her own question is uncertain but rather hopeful. Perhaps, her unconscious and conscious mind can work together, somehow, for the good of her prose: "And what is my own position toward the inner and the outer? I think a kind of ease and dash are good;--yes: I think even externality is good; some combination of them ought to be possible."

While writers like Woolf try to understand the "unconscious" and how it influences their work, theorists like Klinger and Oster go on constructing models meant to account for the leap it takes to move material out of the unconscious toward awareness. Earlier, I discussed Maude Bodkin's work which linked imagination with a mediating process intent on making lived, but unconscious, experience conscious. As Eudora Welty describes "finding a voice" in her book One Writer's Beginnings, Bodkin's theory echoes in our head. Like synchronized gears, components of the outside world mesh with Welty's inner life. In fact, she refers to the external environment as a vital component of her inner self. Welty also believes that
imagination mediates between her outer and inner worlds and suggests that "imagination takes its strength and guides its direction from what I see and hear and learn and feel and remember of my living world." Thus, her prose integrates material gleaned from external stimulants and unconscious components, both conveniently housed in memory.

For Welty, who traveled extensively in her early life by auto and train, it became important to capture transience in her writing. In fact, she likens her own writing process to a kind of journey that starts when she puts pen to paper. As she composes, she begins to understand how her worlds will fit together, how one happening influences the whole:

Connections slowly emerge. And suddenly a light is thrown back, as when your train makes a curve, showing that there has been a mountain of meaning rising behind you on the way you've come, is rising there still, proven now through retrospect."

Thus, for Welty, gaining "insight" into her stories, into what she will say and how she will say it, requires that she move in the same way described earlier by Koch and Murray; that is, alternating between imagination and analysis, among prewriting, translating, and revising.

Virginia Woolf also notes how insights, which occur after she has lived with an idea, help her to shape a
story. She attributes creative power to the unconscious as she describes the birth of a book, in this case *Jacob's Room*: "Whether I'm sufficiently mistress of things--that's the doubt.... What the unity shall be I have yet to discover; the theme is a blank to me; but I see immense possibilities in the form I hit upon more or less by chance."\(^{40}\)

Writing good prose, however, was not dependent on a single insight but on a series of them for despite "a gleam of light" one afternoon, Woolf admits that she "...must still grope and experiment"; indeed, she goes on to say that "...the creative power...quiets down after a time" and that then "...the sense of impending shape keeps one at it more than anything."\(^{41}\)

Woolf emphasizes that the creative process exerts a powerful force on the artist and claims that it is sometimes difficult to keep the personal self sustained when the novelist is writing. As she reflects on the artist's situation, I recall how Carl Jung described the "truly creative poet" as only half human; the other half was "impersonal, creative process."\(^{42}\) Indeed, after being interrupted by a friend during work hours, Woolf, herself, confesses that "Sydney comes and I'm Virginia; when I write, I'm merely a sensibility."\(^{43}\) Thus, Virginia Woolf the writer is not just influenced by unconscious ideas struggling to find their place on paper.
but is overwhelmed by them and in turn becomes their tool. Her ideas, her words, her grammatical choices march along the roadways that lead to awareness and demand expression. They fill her dreams, her fantasies, and even her unconscious musings until finally they become her prose.

Perhaps the ability to roam freely through fantasy is the writer's greatest gift, for Wharton, Woolf, and Welty all describe the time they spend there as vital to their writing. Earlier I discussed research done by Eric Klinger which linked fantasy with creative insight. According to Klinger, fantasies provide thinkers with their own testing ground, imaginary places where they can try solutions and not worry about consequences.

In A Backward Glance, Edith Wharton discusses "getting started" on a work of fiction. Where does the story come from? Where do the words and the form originate? For Wharton, they emerge from within and suddenly present themselves to her conscious mind. Sometimes she felt the situation or case came first; other times a character came to her "asking to be put in a situation." Wharton's writing technique was closely tied to her fantasies, for soon after characters appeared before her, they "would actually begin to speak with their own voices." Like Woolf, Wharton became the tool whose job it was to watch and record as her characters moved toward their destiny.
When a situation presented itself first, she allowed it to rest undisturbed in her imagination until "...characters (crept) stealthily up and (wriggled) themselves into it."^46

Just as Wharton describes a period of immersion when ideas are little more than infants squealing to be heard, Virginia Woolf alludes to a similar stage in her writing process. While ideas move in and out of her unconscious, Woolf searches her head for the proper words, the proper sentences to express them. Indeed, she suggests that "...the process of language is slow and deluding" so that, "One must stop to find a word. Then, there is the form of the sentence, soliciting one to fill it."^47 We can almost watch the thoughtful writer, reaching down into her "linguistic competence," pulling out one grammatical form after another, then discarding them all until she "discovers" the form that fits.

John Oster calls an author's struggle with words and form the "discovery aspect" of writing. He theorizes that inner voice plays an invaluable role here, a tenet supported by Wharton's description of her own writing process. Indeed, in A Backward Glance, the novelist is quite specific about what her inner voices say. She claims that her dialogue comes through the voices of her characters and that she just records "what these stupid or intelligent, lethargic or passionate
people say to each other in a language and with arguments that appear to be all their own." \(^{48}\)

Wharton is not the only author to reflect on inner voice; Eudora Welty alludes to it in her reading as well as her writing. In fact, Welty attempts to describe the sound of her silent counterpart: "It isn't my mother's voice, or the voice of any person I can identify, certainly not my own. It is human, but inward, and it is inwardly that I listen to it." \(^{49}\)

When Welty begins to write, this inner voice helps her to revise passages, to sharpen her writing technique:

> My own words, when I am at work on a story, I hear too as they go, in the same voice that I heard when I read in books. When I write and the sound of it comes back to my ears, then I act to make my changes. I have always trusted this voice. \(^{50}\)

Thus, while inner voice is an elusive concept, both theorists and artists speak of it often. We may be limited in our access to those elements thriving in our internal worlds; however, time and again empirical evidence supports not only their existence but also their ability to influence what and how we write.

Since the ideas and images that preside in our stories first appear in our unconscious, they are not real; indeed, they are only our "impressions" of reality. Susanne Langer labels these lived but unconscious
experiences "virtual experiences." We must remember, however, that "virtual experiences" are grounded in reality; that is, they originate in the outside world. Therefore, reality influences both the images included in our writing and the stylistic choices we make as we attempt to convey the messages that hide behind our symbols. Welty, Wharton, and Woolf all allude to "reality" and the role it plays in their writing.

Eudora Welty discusses how the external environment influences her prose when she looks back on the beginning of her short story "Levvie" and recalls how her encounter with a "bottle tree" (i.e., a tree whose limbs are decorated with various empty containers) stimulated her thinking. However, Welty goes on to distinguish between the actual bottle tree and the one that ultimately appeared in her story. She alludes to the latter as a "projection from (her) imagination" and suggests that the "fictional eye" sees beyond the physical properties of an object. For Welty, the "fictional eye" sees in, through, and around what is really there.51 It is the author's task to choose appropriate words and an effective form to put them in so that readers may share the writer's insight.

Although Welty and Wharton agree that the characters populating their stories are imaginary folk, both feel
that attributes belonging to real people often appear in their fiction. Indeed, while describing her characters as inventions, Welty admits that "attached to them are what I've borrowed, perhaps, unconsciously, bit by bit, of persons I have seen or noticed or remembered in the flesh--a cast of countenance here, a manner of walking there, that jump to the visualizing mind when a story is underway." And even Wharton, who claims that chunks of dialogue come to her as she listens to things her characters say, recognizes that her fictional people are at least influenced by their real counterparts. Where do her characters come from? According to Wharton, they are born when "experience, observation, looks, and ways of 'real people' are melted and fused in the white heat of creative fires." She warns, however, against simply transposing real people into stories: "Characters that seem real must be created by the author's imagination." So the people in our stories are our visions, and the techniques we use to make them seem real depend on how we want others to view them.

While Woolf does not spend as much time discussing the evolution of her characters in A Writer's Diary as do Welty and Wharton in their autobiographies, she does reflect on the nature of reality and its importance to her writing. Reality was not always easy to recognize. First, she
disengaged herself from the society that surrounded her; for only then was she able to distinguish reality from fantasy. Woolf defines reality as "a thing I see before me: something abstract; but residing in the downs or sky; beside which nothing matters; in which I shall rest and continue to exist.... And I fancy sometimes this is the most necessary thing to me...." However, like Welty, Woolf believes that the outside world changes somehow before reappearing in our prose. Indeed, she wonders aloud: "But who knows--once one takes a pen and writes? How difficult not to go making 'reality' this and that, whereas it is one thing." As an artist, Woolf tries hard to incorporate her view of reality into her writing. She attempts to "give the moment whole"; that is, to include "...thought, sensation," and even "...the voice of the sea" if need be. When searching for the right words and the right form, she includes all those things that comprise that particular moment. "Waste, deadness, superfluity," she says result when we include "things that don't belong...."

As Woolf examines what she experiences during her composing process, I am reminded of Allan Paivio's work in imagery and the generation of language. Paivio insists that nonverbal images help us to produce language, a necessary skill for writers. In fact, he believes that nonverbal images affect our linguistic choices, both
lexical and syntactical, as profoundly as our innate verbal processes. Woolf's reflections on her own writing process echo Paivio's theoretical model. She describes how "the look of things has a great power over (her)" and sadly admits that her ability to substitute words for images is limited. However, Woolf believes that what is "vivid to her eyes" is also vivid to "some nervous fibre, or fanlike membrane in (her) species," and so she goes on asking, "What is the phrase for that?" when faced with objects or with the images that represent them. Indeed, even as she watches "...rooks beating up against the wind," she tries "to make more and more vivid the roughness of the air current and the tremor of the rook's wing slicing as if the air were full of ridges and ripples and roughness."59

While Woolf is intent on making her language precise when immersed in physical description, her attitude toward abstractions is not necessarily the same. In 1931, as she worked on To the Lighthouse, the novelist confided in her diary that images, when used as symbols, should be suggestive rather than directive. She marvels at how her "imagination picked up, used and tossed aside all the images, symbols which (she) had prepared" and then goes on to say, "I am sure that this is the right way of using them--not in set pieces, as I had tried at first, coherently, but simply as images, never making them work out;
Although Welty, Wharton, and Woolf see their novels as their own, they insist, as does Northrop Frye, that writers gather certain structural principles from the literary classics they encounter. These principles are internalized, only to reappear again and again in great literary productions. Indeed, Woolf maintains that, "It is a mistake to think that literature can be produced from the raw." Welty proudly alludes to the connection between her own stories and Greek mythology, calling this connection the "most provocative of all." She goes on to describe "a shadowing of Greek mythological figures" who populate her stories, "gods and heroes, that wander in various guises, at various times, in and out, emblems of the character's heady dreams." Perhaps then, our greatest legacy is the poetry and prose that our ancestors left behind, for from their writing strategies, have come our own. Ironically, it seems that modern writing techniques are dependent upon some very old friends living on in our unconscious waiting for the chance to be heard once more.

Finally, we come to a discussion of fantasy, a place inhabited by ideas and images bubbling up from our unconscious. Fantasy is the safe house for our inner voice, a place to rehearse alternative words and structures before committing them to paper. Fantasy provides shelter for
those unconscious elements that influence not only what we write but how we write it. Eric Klinger notes in his book *Structure and Function of Fantasy* that we all fantasize; however, we do not all write. Indeed, left undisturbed, our dreams remain just that. Welty, Wharton, and Woolf agree that turning fantasy to poetry or prose requires great concentration and time, the time it takes for an idea to evolve or for the right word and the right form to surface from below. Welty first distinguishes between daydreaming and composing while writing what she calls her first "good" story, "Death of a Traveling Salesman." Suddenly she realizes that, "Daydreaming had started (her) on the way; but story writing, once (she) was truly in its grip, took (her) and shook (her) awake."\(^{63}\)

In the initial entries of *A Writer's Diary*, Virginia Woolf notes that "looseness quickly becomes slovenly." She warns us that "a little effort is needed to face a character or an incident which needs to be recorded. Nor can one let the pen write without guidance; for fear of becoming slack and untidy...."\(^{64}\) Woolf theorizes that genius has two sides, a "play side" (i.e., "unapplied gift") and a "serious side" (i.e., "going to business") and that one must "relieve the other" for great literature to result.\(^{65}\) Thus, according to Woolf, writers must play with their fantasies but, then, go one step further: real writers must be willing to wrestle with their visions
and get them down on paper.

Finally, Edith Wharton works hard in *The Writing of Fiction* distinguishing between inspiration and application. She believes that authors must be inspired to write; they must be willing to live with their fantasies and listen to the characters that dwell among them. However, recording inspiration requires hard work, for we must interpret our fantasies so that others understand them. According to Wharton, inspiration comes "most often as an infant, helpless, stumbling, inarticulate, to be taught and guided." Great writers help inspirations to grow and develop until they become the poetry and prose that, in turn, inspire others.

As writing teachers, we can use the insights that Woolf, Wharton, and Welty share to help frustrated students, especially those who believe that, for some, writing is a one-step procedure. Students seem encouraged to learn that writing is a process, that we write in stages, and that even professional authors face several rewrites before achieving "success." In fact, I often show students samples of my own rough drafts as they struggle to compose.

Often beginning writers do not give infant ideas a chance to develop. Certainly, Woolf, Wharton, and Welty all agree that "time" is important to their writing. They all need time to incubate ideas, to search for words,
and to rewrite phrases. As writing teachers, we need to consider time when scheduling assignments. We need to include prewriting exercises designed to stimulate fantasy and encourage students so that they spend additional hours with their topic. Finally, while our own time with students may be limited, we should try, initially at least, to schedule revision into our beginning writer workshops. Indeed, we must model that behavior for novice authors since revisions require more self-discipline than many writers have.

Imagination and Composing: A Conclusion

Authors like Wharton, Welty, and Woolf reflect on imagination and the role it plays in their own writing while researchers, like Paivio, Murray, and Koch, construct theories to explain the role unconscious knowledge plays in our composing process. Our unconscious, they say, fires our fantasies. It provides us with ideas to write about as well as alternative ways to express those ideas. The artists reflecting on their own experiences and the researchers looking to outside data for support seem to agree, however, that imagination is the key to composition. Imagination, or fantasy, is our forum: a place to explore fuzzy ideas and risky solutions, a place to play with images that represent our external world and help us to generate language, a place to manipulate the
words and forms we know so that we can share ideas and insights with those who read our writing.

In 1925, after completing *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf discusses this dilemma as she struggles with some new ideas. Finally, she writes, "...I have, at last, bored down into my oil well, and can't scribble fast enough to bring it all to the surface. I have now at least 6 stories welling up in me, and feel, at last, that I can coin all my thoughts into words." Authors need to tap their "wells" in order to write, and our imaginations provide us with a way to do just that. Without them, we might all run dry.

Thus, linguistic elements, images, and ideas begin as seeds, invisible but persistent. While we gather much of our linguistic knowledge and imagery from the outside world, our unconscious keeps them safe. During "mediation" or "incubation," we dig below the surface unearthing the characters and forms that populate our fantasies. These fantasies grow in our imaginations and provide us with a place to manipulate ideas and test linguistic options. Professional writers exploit their fantasies; beginning writers must learn to use them.
Feelings in Composition

Do our "feelings," both conscious and unconscious, affect the way we write? Literary scholars like Middleton Murray, Susanne Langer, Max Black, and Paul Ricoeur see a strong connection. While both Murray and Langer believe that we write because we feel, Black and Ricoeur claim that authors sometimes have trouble describing the feelings they experience. These scholars suggest that writers, intent on sharing otherwise unidentifiable sensations, often use metaphors to communicate their thoughts.

Why are metaphors helpful when authors write about emotions? Since feelings do not necessarily come to us labelled, writers must invent labels; they must find innovative ways to use words that are familiar when describing sensations that are unfamiliar. Metaphors encourage both authors and their readers to make unconventional connections between otherwise familiar objects and events. Black believes that these new associations stimulate imaginative play and so help readers gain insights into feelings that lack precise labels.
In the first section of this next chapter, I will discuss Middleton Murray, who believes that effective writers must convey the feelings attached to their experiences and Susanne Langer, who makes similar claims. While Langer focuses on the poet, her ideas parallel Murray's when she says that great poets must capture images in their poems as well as the feelings associated with those images. Finally, I explore how symbols help us to recount past experiences and how metaphors contribute to our writing process.

Do the feelings we have influence writing style? Do they affect the lexical and grammatical choices we make during our composing process? Middleton Murray assumes that authors and feelings are inseparable; in fact, he equates style with those techniques used by authors to convey emotion. According to Murray, we develop personal idiosyncrasies as we try to describe feelings that hover uncertainly between our unconscious and awareness. These "idiosyncrasies of expression" are the writer's hallmark so that readers come to expect certain techniques from certain authors.

When authors describe the real world, they are writing about their world or reality as they perceive it. However, like Bodkin and Jung, Middleton Murray does not limit human feelings to personal feelings; instead he
discusses our "mysterious accumulation of past emotions" and how they help "writers to give particular weight and force to the universal."\textsuperscript{69} Thus, Bodkin, Jung, and Murray agree that as human beings we inherit certain ideas and images which influence our writing though they live in our unconscious. For all three, archetypes play a primary role in the composing process, supplying authors with powerful symbols. These primordial images touch readers by stirring up their collective unconscious or inherited psychic disposition. Thus, a writer's work and a reader's reaction are both influenced by innate feelings, feelings that operate on an unconscious level.

Since language and form are the tools that writers use, their ability to communicate emotions associated with objects and ideas depends somewhat on the linguistic knowledge available to them. While they work harder to extract information stored in their unconscious, writers searching for appropriate words and forms do not discriminate between implicit and explicit knowledge. Indeed, they use all the resources they can muster during the composing process. Thus, as authors, our success is influenced by linguistic competence as well as classroom learning. Both provide us with the semantic and syntactic alternatives necessary for developing an effective writing style.
Susanne Langer believes that we experience products of our imagination just as we experience "direct datum" coming to us from the outside world. Like Murray, Langer claims that emotions attach themselves to objects and events whether they are products of our imagination or stimuli from external sources. She goes on to say that when we experience our fantasies, we also experience "any emotional import" conveyed by them, and that the poet's job is to communicate both image and feeling to readers. Langer claims that poetry "is meant to be emotionally transparent"; that is, to reveal the emotions the poet wishes to convey. The poet's purpose is "to create the poetic primary illusion, hold the reader to it, and develop the image of reality so it has emotional significance above the suggested emotions which are elements in it...." Thus, according to Langer, emotions shape both the content and the form of our poems.

Often, authors write to clarify their feelings, to dispel their own confusion over issues or disconcerted passions. Emotions, then, direct our thinking; we search out images associated with certain feelings and use them in our writing. Choosing words and forms to house ideas is a complex process influenced by what we feel as well as what we know.

Our fantasies tend to be inclusive rather than
exclusive; objects, events, sensations, emotions, ideas, and even fuzzy notions are admitted to our imagination. And while we fantasize about abstractions, like love and honesty, they are not always easy to talk about when we write. Feelings may be physical, felt sensations, or they too may be abstractions, like remorse, excitement, and confusion. We look to language for help in communicating our emotions; it provides us with the symbols we need to represent abstractions or, as Langer says, to "conceive the intangible." Thus, language functions as our tool while we rummage about in search of words hoping to clarify what we think and feel, trying to achieve concordance between expression and original thought. Separating our ideas and our feelings from the forms that express them seems an insurmountable task. In fact, Flaubert suggests that "there are no beautiful thoughts, without beautiful forms...just so it is impossible to detach the form from the ideas, for the idea only exists by virtue of the form." 

Let us turn to symbols now and the role they play in helping readers to share an author's experience. Murray claims that emotions cannot be expressed precisely without symbols to represent them. He invents the term "crystallization" which, like insight, occurs when artists suddenly see a way to talk about those experiences and feelings that exist without names. Crystallization refers to that
creative instant when a "concrete image is evoked to
give definition to the silent thought." Creative writers hoard, in their unconscious, a vast number of
"sensuous perceptions" which they draw upon during their search for concrete images to represent intangible feelings and ideas. According to Murray, well-chosen symbols force readers to experience feelings similar to an author's and give "preciseness to 'emotion' never possessed by emotions which (do) not find their symbols."  

In *Problems of Art: Ten Philosophical Lectures*, Langer talks about the connection between symbols and imagination. From our imaginations come ideas to write about, but without symbols, our fantasies and the emotions that travel with them would live as prisoners, locked away inside our heads. Words, our most familiar and useful symbols, provide infant ideas with names so that we can refer to them, identify them, and manipulate them; thus, otherwise intangible ideas and feelings become a part of our writing process. Langer believes that we must give "form and connection, clarity and proportion to our impressions, memories, and objects of judgment..." before we can actually "think" about or comment on an idea or feeling. She labels this evolutionary process "conception" and suggests that we must "conceive" ideas and then find symbols to represent them before they can be born to imagination.
Thus, symbols, whether they be words or images, represent something more than themselves. Admittedly, they help us to make the unimaginable imaginable and to articulate and present concepts. However, symbols evolve; indeed, their meaning may change for us even as our understanding grows. Owen Barfield reflects on this uncertain relationship between words and the ideas they represent: "The full meanings of words are flashing, iridescent shapes like flames--ever flickering vestiges of the slowly evolving consciousness beneath them." Though symbols are somewhat transient by nature, shying away from a permanent bond with any one idea, they remain necessary tools for writers. Without them, many of the ideas and the emotions which live in our unconscious might remain concealed forever, cut off from the writer's pen.

**Using Metaphor to Express the Inexpressible**

Authors spend important time playing with their fantasies, experimenting with novel, even unreal ideas. In fact, both theorists like Koch and novelists like Woolf concur; imaginative play is important to the writing process. Often, however, our fantasies inspire thoughts and encourage feelings that defy discursive description. Middleton Murray and Susanne Langer believe that metaphors can help authors communicate unconventional ideas.
Is it important to convey "feelings" when we write? Novelists like Wharton and Welty and literary scholars like Murray agree that the feelings attached to objects and events are major contributors to writing style. In fact, Murray claims that writing style is effective only when artists use language to convey precise emotion. How, then, can authors share feelings that defy verbal expression? Once more, both Murray and Langer believe that metaphors can function as powerful aids.

For Murray, metaphor is much more than a simple comparison; it becomes the "unique expression of a writer's individual vision." Langer also depicts the metaphor as more complex than a comparison and even questions the relationship between metaphor and language. According to Langer, metaphors are "not language but ideas expressed by language," ideas "that in (their) turn function as symbols to express something." She rejects the notion that metaphors convey ideas through direct statement; instead, she suggests that they create brand new concepts or ways of looking at things for our imaginations to ingest and absorb. Thus, for Langer, metaphors are more than vehicles helping writers move ideas along unconscious pathways; they are "works of art." They are non-discursive symbols articulating "what is verbally ineffable, the logic of consciousness itself."
In his book *Models and Metaphors*, Max Black points out that metaphorical meanings are often uncertain, yet we continue to use them in our prose forcing readers to "solve the riddles" they create. Certainly, if artists have no other way to express a feeling or idea, they must use metaphors; frequently, however, authors choose to use these figures of speech when literal statements are available to them. For instance, instead of writing "Lynn is cowardly," we say "Lynn is chicken" or "Lynn is yellow."

Why use a metaphor when we have access to concrete, discursive description? Black says that "stylistic" considerations influence our choices. For example, he postulates that "metaphorical expressions may refer to more concrete objects than their literal equivalents" and that readers seem to enjoy this appeal to the concrete. Perhaps readers have an easier time understanding abstract ideas when authors associate them with concrete objects. However, even more important, metaphorical statements do not just restate similarities that exist between objects or events. They invent or create their own so that readers are forced to look at ideas in a new way and, in doing so, experience new insights. Where do these unconventional connections originate? Perhaps they originate in our unconscious, where impressions, sensations, and memories live along with implicit linguistic knowledge waiting to
make their way into our fantasies and then, finally, our prose.

As writing teachers, we need to help students experiment with metaphor and with other kinds of comparison. Metaphors make fine linguistic tools, for as Black suggests, they expand limited vocabularies allowing writers to communicate ideas which lack precise labels. Murray, Langer, and Black agree, however, that metaphors affect more than vocabulary; they also encourage both authors and their readers to think creatively. Authors who invent metaphors and comparisons must know about their subject to make new associations while readers must reflect on less conventional passages in order to understand them. Indeed, both authors and readers must be willing to view old ideas from new perspectives if they are to achieve valuable insights.

Unfortunately, beginning writers shy away from unconventional comparisons. In "The Child is Father to the Metaphor," Gardner and Winner suggest that third and fourth graders are too busy fitting in to worry about being different. Adults who feel uncertain about writing also tend to use cliches and familiar phrases. Somehow we feel less vulnerable when the ideas we commit to paper are not entirely our own. As educators, we must push students to move beyond the conventional. In addition to surveying more traditional models, we must
help beginning writers explore those "fantastic" ideas living in their imaginations and, then, go one step further. We must provide students with opportunities to express their ideas; we must encourage them to write.

Often pupils are more comfortable with their own fantasies after reading what others have written. I have shared both professional and peer pieces with my students and have found that they respond positively, even enthusiastically, when presented with writing models. Writing samples give students a starting place, a way into their own composing process.

While metaphors may originate in our unconscious, these literary figures serve as successful writing tools only when readers sense the same connections as an author. How do readers interpret metaphors? According to I.A. Richards, they reflect on new connections and try hard to make them fit. Most readers' manipulations occur in their unconscious; indeed, imagination is a hothouse, prepared to nurture primitive notions and provide both audience and writer with a place to cross normally unrelated ideas. Richards suggests that metaphors begin as thoughts of two separate things occurring together. Eventually both thoughts can be stimulated by a single word or phrase whose "new" meaning is born when these original, separate ideas interact. Somehow, readers,
like authors, must draw enough information from conscious and unconscious sources so that they can connect two otherwise isolated objects. Richards goes so far as to claim that "in this connection resides the secret and mystery of metaphor." While theorists are not yet prepared to explain how we dig out memories, sensations, and information from our unconscious, researchers and authors concur that making implicit ideas explicit is an integral part of the writing process.

In his article "What Metaphors Mean," Donald Davidson suggests that "metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation mean and nothing more." Thus, Davidson claims that metaphors work not because words take on additional meanings but because they are used in unexpected ways (e.g., Richard is a lion). He insists that an "adequate account of metaphor must allow that the primary or original meanings of words remain active in their metaphorical setting." If, however, the words used to create metaphor retain their literal sense, then why do these figures of speech seem to imply much more? Davidson attributes the power of the metaphor not to meaning but to truth. As we contemplate a passage, we note words whose ordinary meanings have little to do with the context of a sentence. In fact, since the sentence appears to be false (i.e., Richard is a lion), we tend to "disregard the question of literal truth" and
search, instead, for hidden implications. Our search
for less obvious connections may lead us back again to
our unconscious where we reflect on what we read and
struggle to achieve valuable insights.

Therefore, whether we are authors hunting for ways
to express inexpressible ideas or readers hoping to
grasp what authors have to say, we must somehow make
"new" connections between familiar objects and events;
our descent into the unconscious is an inextricable part
of the writing process.

As educators, we should consider that metaphors are
powerful teaching tools. In fact, comparisons of all
kinds force students to examine objects and events, to
look from every angle, to search out similarities in un-
expected places. If metaphors stimulate creative think-
ing, teachers should work hard at exploiting them.

Metaphor and Imagination

As we write, we journey to imaginary places; metaphors
require that we travel down, within ourselves, looking for
new ideas or insights. We test the material emerging
from our unconscious, plugging it into fantasies and read-
ing back the result. Sometimes we choose to record our
imaginative play; other times we do not.

In "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination,
and Feeling," Paul Ricoeur explores the vital but intangible
link between metaphor and imagination. First, Ricoeur claims that metaphor both "abolishes (and) preserves literal sense"; he maintains that metaphors sustain ordinary visions (i.e., literal sense) while at the same time encouraging new ones. The old and new exist together like dear friends, bound to one another despite their differences. Finally, Ricoeur attributes our ability to entertain different points of view simultaneously to imagination which he says "...contributes concretely to epoché (suspension) of ordinary reference and to projection of new possibilities of redescribing the world." Thus, we spend the time between our encounter with metaphor and our insight into the relationship it suggests moving around in our imagination, trying hard to fit disparate shapes together.

Ricoeur believes that "imagining and feeling" are necessary components of metaphor and that theoretical explanations must include both; he also insists that we "assign semantic function to what seems to be mere psychological features...." How do we go about fusing psychology of imagination with semantics? Ricoeur offers an explanation. He divides the metaphorical process into three steps or stages: first, we tap the productive aspect of imagination; second, we call upon imagination's "pictorial dimension"; third, we experience "insight"
when we move from "sense" (i.e., ordinary image) to "reference" (i.e., new image).

During Ricoeur's first stage, we use imagination to produce new stimuli which relate to our original stimulus despite or through the differences that exist between them. We manipulate images and play with possibilities much like Richard Koch's mediation phase or Donald Murray's prevision period. While engaged in Ricoeur's pictorial stage, we slip into an "iconic mode" using nonverbal symbols to represent our ideas. Thus, our exploration of metaphorical meaning leads us back to Allan Paivio's work which focused on the role of nonverbal imagery in the production of language. Both men link our semantic skill to nonverbal as well as verbal processes which we store in our unconscious until needed. Finally, we come to Ricoeur's third stage, during which insight actually occurs. He postulates that the images produced by imaginative play cause us to disregard, for a moment, our "ordinary references." Instead, we experience new visions that emerge from our unconscious and spill over into our fantasies. The metaphorical process encourages both writers and readers to reach beyond familiar boundaries; metaphors can "make and re-make reality" and, during that process, even change our way of thinking.91

We use the symbols that are available when
communicating our insights to others. Edith Wharton recalls how sometimes her visions are accompanied by language, ready for paper; other times she must wait until the images find words. During discussion of their writing process, Eudora Welty and Virginia Woolf describe periods when they actively search inside themselves for words that give shape and form to impending ideas. Metaphors provide options; they offer authors the linguistic structures they need to describe those thoughts and images that at first seem indescribable. While we may experience new visions without them, metaphors certainly encourage creative thinking.

Just as imagination contributes to the metaphorical process, so does feeling. Ricoeur claims that feeling involves "mak(ing) ours what has been put at a distance by thought, in its objectifying phase; not merely inner states but interiorized thought." According to Ricoeur, we must feel as well as see new connections, or they never become a part of us, a part of our thinking; thus, "feelings accompany and complete imagination as 'picturing' relationships." In Problems of Art, Langer also discusses feeling and metaphor, but her focus is different. She alludes to "primitive forms of feeling" which she says cannot be expressed through discursive symbols since discursive symbols describe rational thought, and primitive feelings
are not rational. Metaphors, however, force us to look past conventional, reasonable relationships, and encourage us to experiment with the irrational, the unreasonable. Because they are not tied to ordinary meaning, they allow us to describe extraordinary feelings and give form to extraordinary sensations. In fact, Langer claims that our metaphorical images are "...our readiest instruments for abstracting concepts from the tumbling stream of impressions." They are the notes which help us to communicate our music to others; without them, our great composers, our great poets would be lost forever.

In their book Metaphors We Live By, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson suggest that these figures of speech not only help us to express the inexpressible but also influence the way we structure our experiences. They go on to link metaphor with gestalt, a complex of properties occurring together so often we experience them as a whole rather than as separate occurrences. According to Lakoff and Johnson, although we experience gestalts as wholes, in our unconscious, they exist as multidimensional structures made up of participants, roles and activities, stages, linear sequence (i.e., the ordering of stages), causation (i.e., the conclusion of one activity results in onset of another), and purpose. They claim that these dimensions or "categories...emerge naturally
from our experience" and that we acquire the ability to "see coherence in diverse experiences when we can categorize them in terms of gestalts with at least the above dimensions." 97 Thus, during mediation or prewriting, we dissect our gestalts, noting individual dimensions which together create whole experiences. We search carefully, for although these dimensions exist in our experience, we do not always recognize them immediately. Our hope is that even diverse gestalts have some common dimensions which will, in turn, help us make new connections between objects and events. From these connections, come metaphors, tools that enable us to talk about feelings and happenings despite the voids in our vocabulary.

While Lakoff and Johnson believe that metaphors help us to structure our experience, they also believe that our experiences influence the way we interpret and use metaphors. For example, when a problem is resolved we say, "The matter is settled"; however, when an issue is not resolved, we say, "That's up in the air." Lakoff and Johnson claim that we choose to use these particular "orientational metaphors" (i.e., metaphors that give concepts spatial orientation) because experience has taught us that "it is easier to grasp something, to understand it, in a fixed location than if it is floating in air." 98 Therefore, a matter that we have resolved
is "settled down" while a matter that remains an issue is "up" above us, out of reach.

Lakoff and Johnson continue to discuss how experience and metaphor are related. Like old party-liners, they rely on one another; they support the same world view. Indeed, our "ontological" metaphors (i.e., our way of viewing events, activities, emotions or ideas as substances or entities) are based on the way we experience our physical world. For example, Lakoff and Johnson suggest that we refer to a "mind" as "brittle" when we believe that someone has a "fragile ego," that is, one that can be broken easily like "brittle" bones or "brittle" candy.

Think back to my discussions regarding the uncertain relationship that exists between the external environment and our internal world. Both psycholinguists, like Slobin and Paivio, and literary scholars, like Middleton Murray, agree that we internalize our experiences with the outside world, storing them away in our unconscious until needed. If inventing "ontological" metaphors means that we must relive these experiences, then, as writers, we look to our unconscious for help. The impressions, sensations, and memories buried there fuse with images and linguistic knowledge until, finally, we are able to "assign semantic function" to "psychological features" and the metaphor is born.
Not only do these figures of speech, conceived in our unconscious, influence our writing technique, they also influence the way we perceive or understand concepts. According to Lakoff and Johnson "certain concepts are structured almost entirely metaphorically." Love and hate are such concepts. We tend to understand them better when expressed in metaphorical terms rather than as definitions. Metaphorical figures are usually more concrete, more specific. Perhaps, as we discussed earlier, readers have less trouble understanding abstract notions when authors compare them with sensations or events that are familiar. For instance, while we may describe love as an emotion, "love is...a journey, madness, or war," evokes far more feeling from readers, an objective that most writers strive to attain. 

Earlier, I cited Middleton Murray's definition for writing style which equated "style" with those techniques used by authors to convey emotion. Thus, the metaphor serves as an important stylistic tool.

These complex figures of speech mold our writing like gifted hands shaping clay. They influence the way we structure our experience; they provide words to describe intangible feelings and a form for unfamiliar concepts. Indeed, according to Lakoff and Johnson, they can even "create new realities." This occurs when we begin to think in terms of the metaphors that we have
created. When we say that "love is war" rather than sharing and then act on that assumption, our reality changes. We act differently and people in our environment respond accordingly. Thus, "changes in our conceptual systems changes what is real for us"; Lakoff and Johnson attribute these changes to new and imaginative metaphor.¹⁰³

Metaphors do more than decorate a text. Literary scholars and philosophers, like Murray, Langer, Black, and Ricoeur, agree that metaphors are symbols for ideas and encourage insight. They spring from our unconscious ready to help us communicate the inexpressible and understand the incomprehensible.
CHAPTER 4

THEORY AND THE CLASSROOM

Applying the Theory

Our unconscious houses the images, the sensations, and the linguistic knowledge we need to become better writers. While these internal elements seem accessible to some, others have trouble reaching down inside themselves to pull out ideas and linguistic structures. Educators need to make students aware of their unconscious resources. We must find ways to help our potential authors gain access to implicit knowledge so that they can recover images and forms to use in writing assignments.

In Writing the Natural Way, Gabriele Lusser Rico attacks this problem. Instead of writing by rule, she insists that great poets and authors write naturally; that is, their writing "emerges from within." They tap into ideas and linguistic knowledge stored in their unconscious. Rico believes that we all have the potential to become natural writers. She uses current research in "left brain, right brain function" as a foundation for her ideas. She alludes to the left brain as the "sign mind" and the right brain as the "design mind." According
to Rico, the left brain is most concerned with "rational, logical representation of reality and with parts and logical sequences," while the right hemisphere "thinks in complex images." Our "design mind" searches out patterns, even patterns in language, and in doing so makes unconventional connections that evoke new insights and feelings. For example, the sign mind defines "woman" as a "female human being" while the design mind "gives us a 'feel' of womanness through patterning."106

Rico suggests that Susanne Langer's work on symbolic thinking served as a forerunner to later research dealing with brain function. Assigning language two intellectual tasks (i.e., naming entities and then conceptualizing the relationships that exist between them), prompted research which examined our ability to see things as wholes, as well as our ability to analyze or classify the parts. While our right brain experiences images, sensations, and sounds as wholes, our left brain provides us with the syntax, semantics, and spelling that we need to "express ourselves literally, specifically, and verifiably."107

In The Centered Skier, Denise McCluggage refers to the metaphor as the "bilingualist" of the brain, looking to the left hemisphere for verbal input and the right hemisphere for imagery. According to McCluggage, the metaphor's power lies in its ability to create insights,
stimulate new feelings, or clarify familiar sensations by joining image to word. Metaphors help us to express what we feel, a vital prerequisite for writers, and so we must explore methods that "re-awaken our talent for metaphor-making," or for tapping into the material stored in both hemispheres of our brain. 108

Before beginning my methodological survey, I will back-track for a moment, taking time to tie together several theoretical threads. Generating language is certainly a necessary writing skill whether the words produced are used to construct metaphors or other linguistic figures. Earlier, I discussed research conducted by psycholinguists like Slobin and Paivio which suggests that our language originates in the unconscious, a place we use to store images gathered from the outside world. Paivio believes that as we grow older our associative skills grow stronger until, finally, we are able to connect names with referent images, and language is born. McCluggage alludes to a similar process when she theorizes about metaphor. This time, however, we create unconventional ties, joining words and images together that, at first, seem to have little in common. Thus, Paivio and McCluggage have a similar focus. They allude to a connection made between images roaming our unconscious and words destined to express them.

Unfortunately, while both scholars agree that
"bonding" between words, images, and ideas happens somewhere in the unconscious, neither can say for sure just how this "coupling" occurs. Paivio and McCluggage are two links in an important chain that focuses on the vital but uncertain relationship that exists between the things we imagine and the things we write. Fortunately, authors like Wharton and Woolf take time to study their own writing process and then record salient observations. They provide us with empirical evidence that supports the work done by theorists. For example, Virginia Woolf laments the difficulty she has translating what is "vivid to her eyes" into prose. In fact, she observes in the physical world and then internalizes her observations, hoping to use them when she writes. Woolf discovers, however, that often she must struggle, reaching down into herself, to find words or phrases which describe images she has internalized. Thus, it appears that both theorists and artists believe that elements housed in our unconscious exert a powerful force over the lexical choices we make during the composing process.

I return, now, to my study of Rico's "natural" writing, a process fueled by implicit knowledge rather than by prescriptive rules. Rico likens the natural writing process to a journey we make; she postulates that "...we move from the wandering, exploring, inquisitive, receptive right brain in the productive, idea-generating stages
to the sequential, syntactical, sequentially organizing capabilities of the left brain in the later stages of the writing process." Thus, while the right brain supplies us with patterns, images, sensations, and memories, the left brain uses stored linguistic knowledge, as well as information accrued during encounters with literary classics, to help us implement our intuitions or apply what we know to what we write. Rico's description of the natural writing process fits comfortably with models devised by Donald Murray and Richard Koch. Murray, as I mentioned earlier, talks about prewriting and writing while Koch discusses mediation and analogy. Prewriting and mediation are both constructs meant to explain how images and ideas move from our unconscious into awareness; writing and analogy occur when authors feel ready to write ideas down. Thus, all three theorists agree that authors must spend time plying ideas on both a conscious and an unconscious level in order to compose effectively. They also suggest that during the composing process we move back and forth from conscious to unconscious thinking, from analogy to mediation, from prewriting to writing, trying on one idea and then another.

How then do we "train" novice writers to exploit unconscious resources? Prewriting exercises, designed to encourage imaginative thinking, can help students get
used to experimenting with ideas and then discarding those that don't work. Often beginning writers seem less threatened when working in groups and more willing to experiment with unconventional ideas when surrounded by others willing to do the same. Teachers can initiate imaginative thinking by exposing pupils to out-of-the-ordinary writing models, like Shel Silverstein's poems, and by pushing them to contribute ideas even after their reservoir of traditional responses runs dry.

Rico believes that natural writing develops along with the young child; in fact, she claims that until the age of nine or ten implicit knowledge and feelings, rather than prescriptive rules, control our pens. She uses the stages of creative development described by Harry Broudy in his article "Impression and Expression in Artistic Development" to trace the evolution of a writing style. Broudy divides creative development into three stages: innocent eye, ear, and hand which occurs between ages two and seven; conventional eye, ear, and hand which occurs between ages eight and sixteen; and cultivated eye, ear, and hand which occurs once we have learned to integrate our innate story impulses with our acquired linguistic knowledge.

Rico believes that our right brain dominates during the innocent eye, ear, and hand stage, a stage "characterized by wholeness at expense of logic, by vivid images,
by accidental metaphors, by sensitivity to language rhythms, by frequent recurrence of key words, and by juxtaposition of logically incommensurate elements." Research conducted by developmental psychologists Howard Gardner and Ellen Winner supports Broudy's description of early creative thinking. In their article "The Child is Father to the Metaphor," Gardner and Winner share with their readers metaphors created by preschoolers. These literary figures demonstrate how adept young children are at using innate knowledge to help them express ideas despite their limited vocabulary. Instead of drawing upon the kind of precise definitions we have housed in our left brain, children focus on images and sensations living in our right brain. They experience things as "wholes"; they identify patterns; finally, they make connections that older children or adults, equipped with larger vocabularies, often overlook. Gardner and Winner believe that children under the age of six base their metaphors on the physical attributes of elements; however, this limitation does not dampen their spontaneity or their inventiveness as is evidenced by the following examples: a "mother's hair" is likened to a "dark forest"; a "plastic baseball bat" to "corn on the cob"; and a "bald man" to a "barefoot head."113

Ironically, the researchers claim that youngsters
do not use metaphors purposefully until they are eight or nine and thus rapidly approaching the next stage of creative development, the conventional eye, ear, and hand period noted for its lack of spontaneity and originality. During this time, children are immersed in prescriptive learning. They are trying hard to master the mechanics of language and to "eliminate logical gaps in stories"; thus, their focus is on detail, on the parts that make up the whole rather than on the whole itself.

Fitting in becomes an obsessive goal and conformity the means to that end. Adolescent writing reflects adolescent concerns and is, in turn, plagued by cliches and overused language or observations. Moving students beyond the literal is an important goal for educators working with middle school, junior high, and even high school-aged students. How? Rico suggests that we start by teaching them to "cluster."

**Using Clusters and Models**

In *Writing the Natural Way*, Rico refers to clustering as the "design mind's shorthand"; it is an associative process that involves reaching into our unconscious stockpile for ideas and images. We begin to cluster around a stimulus of some sort: a word, a phrase, a picture, or even a piece of sculpture. As we search our imagination for more ideas, our responses reflect less conventional
thinking, and the words and phrases that seemed unrelated at first begin to form patterns. Rico describes clustering as a "self-organizing process," one that provides writers with two necessary elements, choices and focus. Certainly, clustering increases the number of choices that we have available to us as we struggle with ways to develop our ideas, but it also influences the quality of those choices. While not all the ideas we cluster will appear in our finished piece, the process inhibits our left brain censor, permitting us access to fantasies that might otherwise remain sealed away in our unconscious. We recognize different patterns; we make new connections; we experience insights. The next step in the natural writing process involves communicating those insights to others.

A fourth grade teacher, looking for ways to elicit more inspired comparisons from her class, asked me to attack this problem. I decided to approach comparison through poetry and combined some of Kenneth Koch's ideas with Rico's clustering theory. After reading the class several comparison poems, written by both peers and professional poets, we "clustered" on a literary figure, the metaphor. I held up an object and asked pupils to compare my stimulus with other stimuli in their environment. As I moved from student to student, their responses grew less conventional. Just as Rico might have predicted,
eventually students were able to connect objects that seemed to have little in common. The metaphors that resulted were certainly inspired as is apparent from the samples that follow: "pine cones" were "pineapples," "mouths with pointed teeth," and "porcupines"; a "plastic crazy straw" was a "loop-to-loop roller coaster," a "snake coiled to strike," and, finally, an unsuspecting mom's "baked lasagna."

While I used "clustering" in this instance to encourage isolated examples, Rico moves beyond the mere accumulation of ideas, insisting that we search among them for a unifying thread. These threads are hard to ignore; in fact, they join words to images making it difficult to keep ideas isolated from one another. Identifying patterns helps potential authors to focus their thinking which, in turn, inspires them to write.

Rico suggests that teachers limit their students' initial composing time to ten minutes. Pupils should be encouraged, however, to write "vignettes" rather than paragraphs which lack direction. A vignette has a beginning, a middle, and an end and resembles a very short story. Authors, given just ten minutes to compose, have little time to dwell on a particular word or image; instead, they use the ideas they've clustered, moving freely from one association to another. Writing a vignette, "a whole, a complete thought or statement on a subject,"
in such a short span of time disrupts left brain function; the critical censor housed there has "no time to intrude with 'yes, but...' objections." Our vignettes, then, are basically right brain productions, unbridled pieces emerging from fantasies that we may fail to even recognize as our own.

While clustering worked well as a stimulant, I found that many elementary school students had trouble writing vignettes. I decided to start them off with a more structured format until they had gained experience with the clustering process. I began my next comparison workshop with another brainstorming exercise; however, this time, we focused on two objects rather than a literary form like metaphor. We clustered on refrigerator and school desk which then became topics for the poems they wrote. With a blackboard full of ideas to get them started, I told the class that they were to compose a comparison poem; however, these comparison poems would also be magic poems. Whether they chose to write about a school desk or a refrigerator, their job was to convince readers that the desk or "fridge" in their piece had magical qualities. I supplied students with two lines to begin their poem and two to end it. They were to write the body making sure that each new line contained a comparison. In Appendix A, I have included a sample handout and several of the poems submitted by
student poets. While two of my sample authors enjoyed writing, the others had trouble completing written assignments. I was pleased with their level of involvement and with the poems many produced.

I continued to experiment with clustering and used it in conjunction with several different teaching strategies. I remembered Howard Gardner's work on early childhood images and wanted to include some of his ideas in my teaching presentations. Since Gardner claims that our early experiences with imagery are multisensory in nature, I designed prewriting activities that focused on several different senses. I have chosen two sample lessons to discuss since both excited the children and inspired some quality writing.

I presented my first lesson to a fourth grade class made up of children with varying academic capabilities. I introduced clustering techniques during a discussion which focused on writing as a process. First, we brainstormed on the word process and, then, on writing process. In the end, we established that composing happened in stages and required more than an initial draft.

Our next activity centered on a large conch that a friend had patiently taught me to sound. We talked briefly about Polynesian people and how they used the shell as a means of communication. After asking the class to close their eyes and listen, I sounded the conch and asked them
to contribute the first word that came to their mind. One word led to another until the blackboard was full of ideas, each the seed for a story. Finally, I did as Rico suggested and had each student write for ten minutes about the conch. I encouraged them to use words we had clustered in their vignette but reminded the group that they did not need to include all of our ideas. After examining their productions, I decided that children this age should be encouraged to expand their thinking by moving on to another draft and thus experience writing as a process. I commented on the papers, offering some direction. Next, I requested that the children take their stories one step further. In Appendix B, I have included work submitted by several different students. Once again, I have chosen samples written by pupils who have difficulty producing any written work in class as well as those written by more prolific students. I felt that our prewriting activities inspired some of the slower students as well as the high achievers.

The second lesson I taught was to a "gifted and talented" class, composed of kindergartners, first, and second graders. Because of the differences in academic skills that exist between kindergartners and second grade students, I decided to involve as many of the senses as possible during our prewriting exercises.
Our first activity centered on a redwood burl that I brought into class. We studied the burl, noting its size, color, and texture. Next, we looked at pictures of redwood trees varying in age and size. The children talked about why they felt some of these trees were able to survive 3000 years and about their own experiences with the redwoods in our surrounding national parks. We clustered on the word "tree" and were able to expand our thinking to include many different species.

Next, we pretended to be trees living through sun, wind, and cold, housing a variety of creatures. After using our bodies to express our ideas, we looked at poems written about trees taking some time to study the language. We discussed poets and how they used words not only to describe objects like trees but also to express their feelings about them.

Finally, with rolled newspapers and scissors, we made our own trees and used them as characters for our story. I decided to introduce a second character, a creature who lived among the trees in the forest. A friend provided me with the head of a wild boar which, needless to say, piqued the children's interest and stimulated some fascinating clusters. Surrounded by blackboards filled with ideas, we broke up into three groups, each with an adult to act as scribe. I settled on scribes to record the group stories so that my beginning writers could
concentrate on ideas rather than printing and spelling. We did read back our work quite often, and the children were quick to hear syntactical errors which we then corrected. Later, I printed their stories on the word processor and gave each of the students a copy; they were proud of their productions and a little surprised at the differences between them. I have included all three stories in my Appendix C.

Like Wharton, Welty, and Woolf before her, Rico claims that we all have feelings as well as images locked inside, waiting to emerge in our poetry and prose. Perhaps clustering can help "blocked" writers push past left brain concerns and tap into their "oil wells," just as Virginia Woolf "bore down" into hers. While we need images, sensations, and memories to write about, we also need access to words and forms so that we can communicate ideas to an audience. Where is our linguistic knowledge stored and how do we reach it? Earlier, I discussed research done in this area by psycholinguists like Slobin and Paivio. I distinguished between linguistic competence and performance and explored how innate linguistic knowledge influenced writing style.

I also examined Northrop Frye's ideas about imagination and literature and noted how he stressed listening and reading for potential authors. Frye insists that literature is "more structure than content" and that when
exposed to literary classics, we internalize important structural principles, principles that emerge later in our own writing. In Writing the Natural Way, Rico's suggestion that "modeling" serves as an important teaching technique parallels Frye's thinking. Like Frye, Rico claims that our imaginative play is influenced by the literature we read and that a "master's" work provides novice writers with a "structure, an aesthetic pattern to follow, within which to treat our own discovered content."

Edith Wharton, a master herself, broaches the same issue when she addresses "beginning writers" in The Writing of Fiction. She warns novices against turning away from literature that has proven its worth over the ages and, instead, encourages them to absorb what they can. As a young society girl, Wharton's only real literary training came from the stolen hours she spent hidden away in her father's library ravaging the classics. Thus, this author chides beginners who worry about "doing what has been done before," arguing that "true originality is found not in a new manner but in a new vision." Originality, for Wharton, involves looking at a subject over time, turning it round and round, noting patterns and perspectives until connections emerge that are that writer's own.

In fact, the pupils I have worked with love to hear
what others have written. Before asking students to write comparison poems, I read them a number of peer samples taken from Kenneth Koch's *Wishes, Lies and Dreams*, as well as poems produced by professional poets. They listened intently but were especially inspired after reciting, as a group, the ultimate poetic metaphor, Shel Silverstein's "Jimmy Jet and His TV Set." While we must write poetry to become poets, reading poems produced by others can only help us to compose our own.
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We end here as we began, trying to identify those elusive elements that live in our unconscious yet control what we compose. Can we be specific and attach precise labels to these constructs called unconscious elements? Unfortunately, we have trouble tracing our implicit knowledge back to its source; in fact, just gaining access to our internal images and ideas is often challenge enough.

These unconscious contributors to writing are not concrete; we cannot touch them or hold them. Instead, we must wait for them to emerge in our fantasies or speak to us through our inner voice. In fact, unconscious elements defy direct observation, and so researchers interested in language and composing must resort to using overt linguistic behavior, introspection, and recorded observation to attain data. I have explored theories that dealt with linguistic structures, the composing process, imagination, and the relationship between language and feeling, all based on information gathered from these secondary sources. Thus, while linguists, psycholinguists, psychologists, authors, and literary scholars recognize that unconscious factors are difficult
to isolate, these theorists continue to study them using accessible information as support for their ideas.

What did we learn about the nature of these elusive constructs? Psycholinguists, like Slobin and Paivio, insist that our "linguistic competence" or implicit knowledge affects the way we write. They focus on those syntactic and semantic elements stored inside us waiting for a chance to emerge in our poetry or prose. Indeed, our "unconscious" does our internal banking, dispensing the information we deposit there for safekeeping.

While linguistic elements certainly contribute to our writing, other internal factors, like imagery and feelings, also play important roles. We interact with our external environment and then internalize our experiences using imagery to preserve events, objects, and the feelings that accompany them. Langer suggests that the images we internalize are our own perception of reality rather than "reality" itself; however, these "illusions" or "semblances of life" inspire us to write. How do we move them from our unconscious to awareness? According to Bodkin, imagination allows us access to our unconscious but lived experiences, experiences that influence what we write.

Our imagination is our playground, a place to play with thoughts, feelings, and memories. We dream; we meditate; we cluster. From the visions stowed away in our unconscious emerge fantasies, and from our fantasies, we
write our poetry and prose. The forms we choose, the grammar and the words, are influenced by our "linguistic competence" or implicit knowledge, by the prescriptive learning that we have internalized, and by the message we wish to convey. Thus, the grammatical and lexical choices authors make are based in part upon their accessible linguistic alternatives and, in part, on the message they wish to communicate to others. For example, writers may repeat phrases or use parallel structures in order to emphasize an idea, or, as in the case of metaphor, they may make unlikely comparisons using words in unexpected ways to help readers achieve new insights. Thus, authors choose from the linguistic options available to them; however, the choices they make are influenced by what they want to say.

Do most established authors have an end fixed in their head before they start a story? Wharton, Woolf, and Welty feel that writing begins with isolated ideas moving round in circles of their own waiting to join up with one another. Welty likens writing to riding on a train watching distant ideas grow closer and then clearer:

Connections slowly emerge. Like distant landmarks you are approaching, cause and effect begin to align themselves, draw closer together. Experiences too indefinite of outline in themselves to be recognized for themselves connect and are identified as a larger shape. And suddenly a light is thrown back, as when your train makes a curve,
showing that there has been a mountain of meaning rising behind you on the way you've come, is rising there still, proven now through retrospect.

As we write, things happen in our head. Images, both personal and universal, surface in our imaginations, intruding on our fantasies, begging for space on a page. Both personal visions and "primordial images" (visions shared by all mankind) are important to us as individuals; however, Bodkin and Jung suggest that "great literary figures" borrow from archetypes, experiences buried in the unconscious of every human being. Writers manipulate images, feelings, words, and phrases until, finally, the bits and pieces floating aimlessly in space converge and a whole is born. Since we write from our unconscious, we should expect that the elements lurking there exert a powerful force when we compose.

Obviously, I think that unconscious factors play a vital role in molding writing style, yet I also believe that "prescriptive" learning has an effect on the development of technique. As educators, we need to expose beginning writers to a variety of grammatical possibilities that can enhance their style while providing them with different ways to express ideas and feelings. We also need to help students develop vocabulary so that they can describe their "nonverbal images" and their "virtual" experiences as well as the feelings that accompany both. However, we cannot expect students to use techniques
before they have internalized them or made them their own. Even established writers must feel comfortable with a word or syntactic structure before using it in their writing.

How can educators help students to internalize vocabulary and grammar? We should try to have pupils do more than simply alter given examples. Instead, we should style exercises so that our beginning writers are forced to use words and syntactic structures which we have taught in sentences of their own. Our methods need not be elaborate. For instance, we can use paintings or photos to elicit clauses when teaching compound and complex constructions. I used a ski photo and a sailing photo as stimuli and asked students to write a series of independent and dependent clauses describing the actions pictured. Next I had them join independent clauses to form compound sentences and then dependent and independent clauses to form complex constructions. We were all a bit surprised by the variety of responses elicited from just two stimuli, two simple photos.

While these ideas are not "new" discoveries in educational theory, they are well-worth mentioning here, for if internal forces do shape writing, then we must use teaching methods that focus on making explicit knowledge implicit. Our students must learn to do more than
verbalize rules or definitions. They must practice using what we teach; otherwise, the elements already housed in their unconscious are stowaways, waiting for the opportunity to mutiny and overthrow prescriptive rules.
APPENDIX A: WRITING COMPARISONS

Sample Handout:

Writing Comparison Poems

We are going to write comparison poems today; however, these comparison poems will also be "magic" poems. Whether you choose to write about a school desk or a refrigerator, your job will be to convince readers that the "desk" or "fridge" in your poem has magical qualities.

I have supplied the first two lines and the last two lines. Have fun filling in the body!

Assignment

1. First two lines:

   My desk in school is a magic desk,
   I know from what I've found there,
   Sample line:
   Erasers big as air balloons that spell wrong words correctly.
   or

   My fridge at home is a special fridge,
   I know from what I've found there,
   Sample line:
   Eggs like pies that taste like peanut candy,

2. Body of poem:

   a. Each line must contain a comparison.
   b. You may make comparisons by using "like" or "as" or by pretending that one thing is the other thing.
      Example: Worms like overcooked spaghetti or Worms are overcooked spaghetti
   c. Body of the poem must include a minimum of 3 lines.
3. Last two lines:

My desk in school is a magic desk,
I know because I sit there.

or

My fridge at home is a special fridge,
I know because I eat there.

Student Poems:

"Fridgerator and Desk"

My fridge at home is a special fridge,
For I found a giant pie that tastes like ice cream sandwiches.

My desk is a special desk,
It has a paper roll as big as the world.

by Mike, Grade 4

"My Desk"

My desk at school is a magic desk,
I know because I sit there,
My desk has chewed up pencils,
Like chewed bubble gum,
I have a checkbook like a wallet,
I have so much stuff in there like,
A crowded city,
My desk at school is a magic desk,
I know because I sit there.

by Chris, Grade 4

"My Magic Desk"

My desk at school is a magic desk,
I know from what I've found there,
Books as thick as mission walls,
Pencils as flat as paper,
Spare staples as sharp as heads of pins,
English books blown up like balloons,
Crayons that write like rainbow falls,
Pennies that grow up into dollars,
My desk in school is a magic desk,
I know because I sit there.

by Rebecca, Grade 4

"My Magic Desk"

My desk in school is a magic desk,
I know from what I've found there,
My desk has a lot of junk like the dump,
My pencils are skinnier than string,
My crayons are like a rainbow,
My desk is a magic desk,
I know that because I sit there.

by Ceci, Grade 4
Once there was a little animal who lived in a conch shell in the bottom of the ocean.
It was a smooth shell with a pinkish coloring to it. It was the kind of shell you could hear the ocean in.
All his friends, Katina, Albert, and Carrie called him Pinkie. But, as time went on, Pinkie grew bigger and bigger and bigger until it was hard for him to get through his door.
His friends were afraid that someday he would get caught in his door. So, one fine ocean day, he went to a shell seller and told him to try to find a new bigger conch shell with a bigger shape. The shell seller knew how much Pinkie loved his home.
"All right," he said. "I'll have it ready in five days."
"Bye," said Pinkie.
"Bye," said the man.
One day Katina, who lived next to Pinkie in a conch shell you could blow in, Albert, who lived across the slippery, Seaweed Street from Pinkie in a twisty shell, and Carrie who lived next to Albert in a very small shell, all heard a scream.
Katina ran over to Pinkie's house and looked at the door. Pinkie was stuck!
"Don't worry," called Katina. Arnold and Carrie appeared at the door.
"Pinkie, you're stuck," cried Carrie.
"Are you alright?" asked Arnold.
It was hard for Pinkie to talk, but he knew if he didn't say something, his friends would be worried. He gathered his stomach in and said "Don't worry." (Pant) I'll be ok. (Pant, pant)
"Let's go," cried his friends, and they raced off for help.
Soon, a shell help man was cutting the door of the shell wide enough so that Pinkie could squeeze through.
It seemed to Pinkie hours before he could be pulled out of his shell.
Two days later, Pinkie walked to the shell seller's shop. There, in the door was a beautiful new shell. On it there was a sign that read:

Here's your house, Pinkie!

by Rebecca, Grade 4

"The Shell"

I was at the beach. I went to the other side of the beach. All of a sudden, I fell in a large pit. At last I hit the bottom. I hurt my ankle so I started to crawl. It was dark. My ankle felt a lot better. I got up. I tripped. I got up and grabbed a torch and lit it. I saw a cave filled with conch shells, so I filled my shell bag. I went and looked around. There were bats and rats and all kinds of ledges. I walked to the end of the cave. There was a wall. I fell and pushed the wall, and it opened. I walked in. People were walking and running. I was about to show myself when suddenly the guards grabbed me. I tried to run. They took me to the king.

by Mike, Grade 4

"The Big War"

When I was steadily working, I heard a conch. It was a war. So I ran and grabbed my spear and sword. I went out to fight and won my fair maiden. She was queen. I was king. So we ruled happily ever after.

by Mike, Grade 4

"The Story of the Conch Shell"

One day, I was on the beach of Hawaii. I was in the water. It got a little cold for me. I got out for awhile to dry off. I went over by some rocks. I stepped on a very sharp thing. I screamed! I picked up the thing that I stepped on which was apparently very sharp. Then I looked at it very close. Why it looked like some kind of beautiful shell! It was huge. I couldn't believe it! I brought it in and got it all cleaned up. The next day when we left Hawaii and got back to our own house, I put it in my room for awhile. I left it there and went out to play.

Suddenly, when I came back in my room, it was all different! Colors were swaying back and forth in my room!
The conch shell was MAGIC!!! I patted it and it took me back to the ancient Polynesians!!! Then it took me way back in time where the dinosaurs were! I couldn't believe it!!!

Then suddenly, a Tyrannosaurus Rex was chasing me. He got me in his mouth and almost bit me!!! I thought I was dead! Just at that point, I appeared back in my own room. I was safe!!!! Boy, just think, a MAGIC CONCH SHELL!!!

by Carrie, Grade 4
APPENDIX C: LESSON 2, PRIMARY

Student Samples:

"The Lonely Boar Finds the Friendship Tree"

One rainy day, the lonely boar went looking for food. He was lonely because he was ugly and everyone was afraid of him. He found a shady oak tree with lots of soft green grass under it. Lester ate 50 acorns and then fell asleep on the soft green grass. Meanwhile, some chipmunks came out to play and gather acorns. While they were playing in the branches, they dropped an acorn on Lester's poor head. Surprised, Lester woke up and saw a frightened little chipmunk. Lester gave the little chipmunk the acorn that had dropped on his head and smiled at him. The chipmunks decided Lester was O.K., and they all became good friends. Lester decided the tree was very special because that's where he found his friends. He made the "friendship tree" his home for the rest of his life!

by Laura, Ethan, Tiffany Cullen and Michael

"Lester and Winston"

Once upon a time a wart hog named Lester was walking in the forest. He was looking for food because the mother wart hog had just had her babies. Then he found an oak tree with lots of acorns. Lester was happy that he had found some food, but he also felt sad because the acorns were too high up in the tree for him to reach.

Lester said, "Oh darn."
Then a voice said, "I will help you."
Lester was startled by the voice. He looked up and saw that the tree was talking to him.
"My name is Lester," said the wild boar. "What is your name?"
"My name is Winston," said the oak tree. "What is your problem, Lester?"
"I need some of your acorns for my family to eat." Winston said, "I will just shake my limbs and you can have all you want."
"Thank you very much," said Lester. "I will help
you any time you need me," said the wart hog.

So winter came and a man came and wanted some firewood. Winston was frightened and so he called out "Lester, Lester!" Then Lester came running with his whole family. The woodcutter saw a herd of dangerous wild, wild boars. He dropped his ax and chainsaw and ran back home.

They were now friends forever!
They lived happily ever after!

by Brandon, Phillip, Cathleen, Ryan, Lisa, and Marika

"Lester's and Winston's Adventure"

Once upon a time there were two pals living together named Lester and Winston. Lester was a wild boar and Winston was a tree. And they lived in a cave. Once they went out on a journey in the forest. Lester fell from a cliff and hurt himself. Winston put down his branches, and Lester grabbed them. Winston pulled Lester up. Then they discovered caves, and one of them had a treasure. The treasure was brown with a golden plate in the middle with a keyhole in it. The treasure was wet. Then a bear came out of the cave, and they were attacked. So they ran out of the cave until they thought the bear was gone. They went back to the cave, found the key under the golden plate, and unlocked the treasure.

Then Lester and Winston found a journey and went on it. They found a maze that looked like a zig-zag, and there was a golden crayon and ring at the end. The maze had traps, and no one got through it. But the maze never had a wild boar and tree come to it before, and Lester and Winston tried the maze and made it to the end. They took the treasure back to their home, put it in a safe place, and celebrated. Lester ate nuts, and Winston drank water.

Signed Lester and Winston

by Jason, Mickey, Kristyna, Erin, Robbie, and Brett
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