Creativity and the Comp Class

W. Ross Winterowd
University of Southern California

On March 14, 1976, I sat down to begin preparing the original version of the strange "paper" that follows. I had spent a year reading in and thinking about creativity theory, convinced that this field would be a fruitful source of ideas for composition and that the concepts embodied in it might well be crucial.

Early on in my reading, I began to perceive that certain issues and ideas were recurrent, running through many of the discussions and informing a great deal of the empirical research. Thus, I began to do a "factor analysis" of creativity theory. The result was a large brown box stuffed with 4 x 6 cards. (Prufrock may well have measured out his life with coffee spoons. I measure mine with brown and grey boxes.)

The original version of the paper was prepared for students in my seminar "Problems in the Theory of Discourse." In this revision, I have tried to maintain my sense of audience: a group of interested, respected colleagues who take their subject matter, but not themselves, seriously. The revisions themselves consist in certain expansions and in the deletion of remarks that would be meaningless out of the context of the seminar that was going on during the spring semester of 1976.

I would like to think that this "factor analysis" is a reasonable survey of creativity theory and, furthermore, that it will be a heuristic for teachers of composition.

Items cited in the text are listed fully in the bibliography at the end of the paper.

Analogy

We shouldn't be afraid of analogy, and probably ought to use it as a rough-and-ready heuristic in teaching. (For example, see Rohman and Wlecke). Koestler [pp. 199-211] tells how Kepler used an absolutely screwy analogy: the role of the Father in the Trinity with that of the sun in the solar system.

I have been accursed by my students of making outlandish analogic leaps, but I will keep on doing so, for they are productive. Recently I was quite willing to leap from speech act theory into a theory of master values (Winterowd, "The Rhetoric of Beneficence, Commitment, Authority, and the Negative"), and I fully intend to do a study of literature from the standpoint of these values.

Archetypes

The concept is basic to Northrop Frye. I'm not sure how to play around with this notion in regard to creativity — except to say that archetypes are not artifacts and must emerge from the language transaction. Notice that Koestler discusses the archetype [pp. 358-65].

Attitude

The best work on this (that I have found, anyway) comes from the self-actualization fellows. In The Farther Reaches of Human Nature [pp. 57-71], Maslow distinguishes between primary and secondary creativeness, roughly the initial inspiration and the subsequent work of creating the final product. (More about this later in another connection.) He lists some characteristics of the peak experience as primary creativeness: giving up the past, giving up the future, innocence, narrowing of consciousness, loss of ego, loss of self-consciousness, disappearance of fears, lessening of defenses and inhibitions, strength and courage, acceptance, trust (vs. trying, controlling, striving), Taoistic receptivity, integration of the being-cognizer, permission to dip into primary processes (poetic, metaphoric, primitive, mystic, etc.), esthetic perceiving rather than abstracting (which I call concretization), fullest spontaneity, fullest expressiveness, fusion of the person with the world.

In other words, primary creativity involves hanging loose, giving up inhibitions, relying on intuition, etc. It is perfectly clear that in the composition class, we are dealing with both primary and secondary creativeness. At the primary stage, the more we let students be themselves, the more successful we're likely to be as teachers. Paradoxically, primary creativeness demands concentration, but not "discipline." We should never confuse the mechanical aspects of writing with the more spontaneous, less controlled aspects. Outlining, editing, ordering—all of these belong to secondary creativeness. If we don't keep the two separate, we are bound to create havoc.

I can think of my own process of composition. It begins in chaos and ends in a kind of order. For example, I could show you the genesis of some of my papers (nor that I'm claiming they're highly creative); what you'd find is a movement from outlandish chaos toward more and more control and form. In fact, when I began this "factor analysis," I was trying to work myself up to a point that would result in some kind of coherent and relatively unique insight concerning creativity in language. In fact, the process was successful, for I completed a long paper, "Brain, Rhetoric, and Style," which is now in the process of publication.

And this makes me think of an interesting point. I wanted to come up with something! And if nothing had resulted from the work, the experience would have been bitter for me. I wanted to arrive at the point where I could say (to myself) "Eureka!" For it is a fact that the main purpose of this sort of mulling is the exhilaration of that Eureka. In a way, it doesn't matter if, subsequently, criticisms and contradictions let the air out of the balloon.

Bisociation

This notion permeates Koestler, of course. It's a fruitful one for me. For example, I can look at the graduate students in our rhetoric-linguistics-literature program and see how
extremely gifted people have been set off by the forced bisociation of the program.

In general, I think that bisociation is a good educational principle—and, of course, it's an old one. However, you can’t bisociate thin gruel with Irish stew and come up with anything but either a thickened version of gruel or a watered-down version of stew. In other words, the bisociated fields both need some depth.

On Nova a couple of weeks ago I was listening to Watson and Crick talk about their discovery of the double helix. Interestingly enough, Watson the biologist did the crystallographic thinking, and Crick the physicist made his greatest input in the biological component of the theory.

I also think that bisociation is an interesting principle in language. Can’t we see it as the function of metaphor? Irony? Paradox?

It is reasonable to assume that creative uses of language rely on a particular kind of bisociation. For example, from the standpoint of reading theory—the efficient processing of information—anything that gets in the way of efficiency is “noise.” The text itself is transparent. However, in poetry the text is not transparent; as I have pointed out ("The Three Rs: Reading, Reading, and Rhetoric"), the textual irony of poetry comes about precisely because the text reifies itself, dissociates itself from message. In short, the dissociation of the what and the how is one of the features of poetry.

Could we go on to say that style is bisociation? Roughly, a good news article has no style in the sense that it can be processed with maximum efficiency, but a work of art has style. Of course, we are talking here about a spectrum—and also about reading as a rhetorical transaction. It is possible for me to read anything either as information or as art. Do you see what I'm getting at?

A good heuristic forces bisociation. Think of Burke’s ratios. Or think of the tagmemic grid.

Blocks

In Conceptual Blockbusting, Adams lists three kinds of blocks to creativity, and I find these both commonsensical and tremendously useful when applied to the classroom. If every writing teacher would go through an awareness session based on these blocks, comp classes would be more productive places. For your convenience, I will give you Adams’ list.

(1) Cultural and Environmental—e.g., taboos and lack of cooperation and trust among colleagues

(2) Emotional
(a) fear of taking a risk
(b) no appetite for chaos
(c) judging rather than generating
(d) inability to incubate [My interpretation: the urge always to be doing, rather than sometimes meditating.]
(e) reality and fantasy—the inability to separate the two

(3) Intellectual and Expressive
(a) flexibility in use of strategies [I can’t help commenting on the current tendency in “good” schools to emphasize the three-point-topic sentence, the five-paragraph theme, and so on—not to mention the mindless dichotomizing of “creative” and “expository” writing. I cite Keith Fort’s essay, as well as Winston Wethers’ piece in FEN.]
(b) importance of correct information
(d) expressive blocks in general [Create your own lists.]

Character of the Creator

Right now, without batting an eye, I could do a 50-page essay on this subject. For instance, Eyring says one characteristic is “... inability to understand the obvious.” I’ll give you some citations: Fromm in Anderson, pp. 48-53; Rogers in Anderson, pp. 73, 75-78; Guilford in Anderson; Hilgard in Anderson; Adams, pp. 49-73; Bruner, On Knowing, pp. 24-28. What I'm going to do is read through my notes and then give you my idea of the creative person.

The creative person has the ability to become completely absorbed, eliminating the Cartesian duality between self and world. Along with this absorption come a variety of paradoxical traits: self-confidence coupled with an accepting attitude toward others; a feeling of omnipotence with the ability to be surprised in a childish way; the ability to make the end-goal the activity of the here-and-now, giving each step in the process teleological value, the process itself becoming the end. Of course, flexibility in thinking is an obvious characteristic, but less obvious is the ability to think in what Maslow calls esthetic terms, seeing “things” in their concrete particularity, not as abstract schemata. The creative person, needless to say, is quite likely to be “different,” not one of the crowd. And on and on and on.

A few thoughts. The person who is creative in language obviously becomes involved with the language at least to the partial exclusion of “context” or “content.” One characteristic that all of our authorities note is the playfulness of the creative person, and I think that the creative user of language plays language games, as did Joyce. The notion of creativity as play squares with the concentration on process as an end in itself, for a true game is an end in itself, the playing is what matters.

I seem to keep coming back to the composition classroom. Playfulness relates to primary creativity—with words, with sentences, with ideas. Secondary creativity has to do with skills, sociolinguistic facts of life, to the problems of effectively communicating with some reader in some time, at some place, for some purpose.

 Needless to say, primary and secondary creativity do an intricate dance during the process of composition.
Coherence

Poincaré (as quoted in Ghiselin) says that the ordering of elements is more important than the elements themselves, and it seems that one can have an intuitive sense, at a glance, of this coherence, this elegance.

In language, we must differentiate between coherence that can be traced in features of the text and coherence that arises only in the mind of the beholder (is constructed by the mind of the beholder). This is an old idea with me. To carry it just one step farther, might we not say that there are three kinds of coherence: that of the semantic field, that of features of the text, and that of—what shall I call it?—the beholding mind? Weathers, for instance, talks about the list as an alternate grammar for writing, and the list gains coherence because of the semantic field that it establishes.

More about coherence when we get to “form.”

Concretization and Symbolization

Here’s an idea that is really productive. See Koestler, 182-86; Guilford, 153-54; Maslow, Toward, 89; Maslow, The Farther, 69. Koestler says that the unconscious allows us to concretize and symbolize abstract problems—for example, Kekulé’s snakes.

Maslow says that the creative person has the ability to perceive esthetically. “The end product of abstracting is the mathematical equation, the chemical formula, the map, the diagram, the blueprint, the cartoon...the theoretical system, all of which move farther and farther from raw reality...The end product of esthetic, of non-abstracting is the total inventory of the percept, in which everything in it is apt to be equally savored, and in which evaluations of more important and less important tend to be given up. Here greater richness of the percept is sought for rather than greater simplifying and skeletonizing.”

Now let me speculate. The ability to concretize doesn’t necessarily depend on analytic intelligence. (In fact, the relationship between creativity and intelligence is questionable.) It is, I think, a fact that in literary theory and in the comp class, much of our thrust and our evaluation is based on concretization. “Give me details.” “We like the poem because it gives us experiences, not concepts.” And so on.

Suppose that we were able to make students more creative. (I think that we are able to do so.) Then they would become more concrete in their writing (would become creative as they became more concrete?). They would simply become better writers from most of the standards that we apply—editing aside.

One way to make students more concrete-creative is to give them some touchy-feely-smelly. But I doubt the efficacy of this method. All of the evidence seems to indicate that creativity arises from (a) self-image and (b) the right environment. Obviously, we can’t change the student’s image of him/herself overnight, but we can immediately create the right environment. (More about environment later.)

It’s almost truisitic to point out that there’s creative reading as well as creative writing. Readers who can’t enjoy the poem in its concrete particularity don’t enjoy poetry. I think that from both ends of the spectrum this inability to produce or perceive the concrete results from constipation. In order to enjoy particularity or to produce it, you’ve got to let yourself go, to let the mind rove freely and uncritically, to be almost un purposive and certainly to be unanalytical to a certain extent.

All of this suggests both writing and reading exercises. It also suggests a classroom ambiance that I find exceptionally attractive.

No, I’m not saying that only the highly creative should go on in the comp class. Remember the concepts of primary and secondary creativity. If you’ll think about it, every heuristic encourages a letting-go. I’d make this bet: get students onto and into a powerful heuristic, and then work seriously with it: the result, somewhere along the path, will be zaniness, laughter, “irresponsibility.” Such, in any case, has been my experience.

For more concerning “concretization” and “symbolization,” see “hemisphericity.”

Conditions for Creativity

Rogers (in Anderson) lists inner conditions: (a) openness to experience and extensionality, (b) an internal locus of evaluation, (c) the ability to toy with elements and concepts, (d) selectivity, an evidence of discipline, an attempt to bring out the essence, (e) the eureka feeling, (f) the anxiety of separateness and aloneness, (g) desire to communicate and share. Conditions fostering constructive creativity: psychological safety, psychological freedom.

From almost all of the sources, we get a sense of what a classroom would be like if it were designed to foster creativity—and I mean “classroom” with the features + or −. Concrete. In the first place, the teacher must gain the trust of the students, and this is not done through criticism and evaluation, which is not to say that both of these factors are not at some point inevitable. However, the martinet will not be successful, nor will the cynic. The creative classroom will inevitably be characterized by a degree of chaos, but also by warmth and trustiness.

All of this sounds so perfectly sensible to me—and yet I am in a continual fight with my neighbors, who see the classroom as a place in which kids, sitting neatly in rows, are bent over their books or exercises silently for fifty-minute stretches or are decorously raising their hands to answer questions that are posed. In fact, the kinds of classrooms that my neighbors want are almost bound to be unproductive. One of the problems is that my neighbors confuse skills with education, believing that skills are education, not just a part of it. And they feel that decorum is necessary for the learning of skills.

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Much of what I’m saying sounds truisitic, but I’ll say it nonetheless.

De-energization

I picked this notion up from May’s The Courage to Create. Statements like “human possibilities are unlimited” are de-energizing, for they terrify us. Creativity demands limits. In this same sense, the general theme topic is de-energizing. Remember Pirsig’s story about having a student write on one brick in a certain building? I’ve been working on some exercises that fascinate me—the old narrowing-the-topic bit. What I noticed is that as I nar-
rowed, I began to get whole floods of ideas. You might think about the possibility that narrowing is energizing.

**Definition**

Here are a few:

"... creativity is the ability to see (or to be aware) and to respond." — Fromm, in Anderson

"... the emergence in action of a novel relational product, growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life on the other." — Rogers, in Anderson

"... the occurrence of a composition which is both new and valuable." Murray, in Anderson [Note that both Rogers and Murray stress synthesis.]

"... an act that produces effective surprise..." Bruner, *On Knowing*

"... the process of bringing something into being." — *May, The Courage to Create*

**Desire to Communicate**

It is worth noting that both Rogers and Anthony Storr stress the desire of the creator to communicate the creation.

**Destructiveness**

Koestler, May, and others point out that creating something new involves destroying something old. At least, it must disrupt the old, rigid patterns of mental organization. This is why May says that creativity takes courage.

I guess students need courage to break the matrices of their neat five-paragraph essays and the strictures that their uptight teachers put on them.

**Displacement**

In *Fables of Identity*, Northrop Frye says that as we are reading fiction, we are directly concerned with continuity, but after we have read, we lose sight of and interest in sequaciousness. Our knowledge of is what generally called theme, and theme consists of subject, allegory (Hamlet personifies indecision, for example), and mythos, which is the work as a simultaneous unity, when the entire shape of it is clear in our minds.” It is *dianoia*, and Frye does argue that the same *mythos* can have various "surface" realizations. Frye says, "... because myths are stories, what they 'mean' is inside them, in the implications of their incidents. No rendering of any myth into conceptual language can serve as a full equivalent to its meaning... Its life is always the poetic life of a story, not the homiletic life of some illustrated truism.” Naturalism and realism are just indirect mythologies, to which Frye applies the term displacement. "Literary shape cannot come from life; it comes from literary tradition, and so ultimately from myth."

Koestler also talks about displacement (189-191). For example, realizing that a pendulum *weight* can also serve as a *hammer* to drive a nail to hang the pendulum on. An extreme example of displacement is the total shift from one frame of reference to another, accompanied by a "reversal of logic." For example, electric motors resulted from the accidental reversal of function of the dynamo.

**Ecstasy**

Among others, May talks about it.

**Ego**

It is worth noting that Fromm includes in the creative attitude not the loss of ego, but its heightening: experiencing oneself as the true center of the world.

**Elegance**

Here is one of the great principles, stated best by Poincaré in *Ghiselin*.

Now, what are the mathematic entities to which we attribute this character of beauty and elegance, and which are capable of developing in us a sort of esthetic emotion? They are those whose elements are harmoniously disposed so that the mind without effort can embrace their totality while realizing the details. This harmony is at once a satisfaction of our esthetic needs and an aid to the mind, sustaining and guiding. And at the same time, in putting under our eyes a well-ordered whole, it makes us foresee a mathematical law. Now, as we have said above, the only mathematical facts worthy of fixing our attention and capable of being useful are those which can teach us a mathematical law. So that we reach the following conclusion: The useful combinations are precisely the most beautiful, I mean those best able to charm this special sensibility that all mathematicians know, but of which the profane are so ignorant as often to be tempted to smile at it.

I could probably get myself into hot water here — for I'd argue that the most creative use of language is the most elegant, which would mean the most economical possible to achieve the desired effect, just exactly the point that Hirsch makes in *The Philosophy of Composition*. But clearly that puts us into just the kind of argument that literary scholars adore, and since I'm not a literary scholar, I'll retreat before I advance.

Yet the principle of elegance makes good sense, and it relates to the principle of coherence that we have already discussed. *Please note this*: it also relates to Northrop Frye's ideas about reading literature in "Myth, Fiction, and Displacement" (Fables of Identity). Namely, we remember not the sequence of events in the plot, but the *mythos* or *dianoia*. In other words, after we read a plotted work it becomes, if you will, lyric. And those works that we do remember are precisely the most elegant—not the most intricately plotted or elaborate, but the most elegant in Poincaré's terms.

**Encounter**

This is a fertile idea, one of the two or three that I gained from *May*. Encounter amounts to absorption, intensity, engagement. Therefore, escapist creativity is that which lacks encounter. Encounter is the intense interrelation with the world, and the "World is the pattern of meaningful relations in which a person exists and in the design of which he or she participates." In regard to what I said above, note this: "We cannot will to have insights. We cannot will creativity. But we can will to give ourselves to the encounter with intensity of dedication and commitment." And that is an important statement!

What May is saying is this: creativity results from encounter, but we cannot will creativity; what we can will is encounter. In a sense, that's what I'm doing right now: I'm...
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willing encounter. And it's amazing how mundane encounter can be. In my case right now, it involves a bunch of 4x6 cards, a typewriter, a pleasant study — and me. I guess it also involves what I've called commitment, or perhaps it's commitment that creates encounter. Would you think that possibly commitment is the spring of action for creativity?

Environment and Conditions

Congenial surroundings and stimulating company, according to Byring. You've already heard from Rogers. Look at Lasswell and Mean in Anderson and also at Adams.

Eureka

A commonly noted phenomenon — one that all of us have experienced. (Rogers in Anderson, p. 77; Poincaré and Mozart in Ghiselin, p. 38, p. 45; Bruner, On Knowing, pp. 19-20.) The most thoroughgoing discussion is throughout Kosteler.

In my own writing, the Eureka concept is fairly interesting. In much of what I do, there is certainly no Eureka, but most of what I do is only secondarily creative, not primarily. In a couple of instances — imaginative writing aside — I think that I've been genuinely creative, that is, have come up with something new. One of these creations resulted from a decided Eureka moment, the insight coming in a flash and needing only a couple of hours to be written down. In the other instance, the Eureka phenomenon was incremental, accruing over a period of days and over a space of pages. Needless to say, there have been no Eurekas in these pages so far.

Evaluation

We must put the concept of evaluation into a rhetorical framework. What seems original and valuable to me, the producer, may be stale and useless to you, the beholder — in just the way that the corniest poem may tickle the freshman who wrote it and make you yawn or regurgitate. So I can evaluate my own creative elation, but you evaluate a product.

Specifically in regard to verbal creations (and other artistic creations) Kosteler (pp. 333-44) talks about infolding, by which he means implication: *in—pilie*—fold in. It is through implication that the artist captures the audience. Infolding creates economy and forces the reader to intrapolate, extrapolate, and transform. Related to implication also are originality and emphasis. Do we have a rubric for evaluation? Originality, emphasis, economy. That's a start, at least.

Hilgard (in Anderson) makes an interesting point: to be creative, one must be able to break out of sets. For example, if you have just used a hammer as a hammer, your ability to use it in novel ways will be decreased (p. 168). From the standpoint of evaluation, if a hammer can be only a hammer, it is not a creative product. The creative product must rearrange our "frames." So along with originality as a criterion, I think I'd put *unexpectativeness.* (Of course, in language creativity this quality is obviously a must.)

In "Creativity in Perspective," Anderson makes the point that evaluation can be external, internal, or dyadic: (1) you evaluate my product, or (2) I evaluate your product, or (3) we discuss the product and arrive at a mutual evaluation.

Poincaré on *elegance* is worth quoting: Which conceptions are elegant? "They are those whose elements are harmoni-ously disposed so that the mind without effort can embrace their totality while realizing the details . . . . The useful combinations are precisely the most beautiful . . . ." Here's what interests me: compare Poincaré's statement with Frye's notion of *mythos.*

You'll recall that Frye talks about two kinds of literature — in my terms, not necessarily his, lyric and narrative. In the final analysis, however, narrative becomes lyric because it is reduced in the mind to *mythos,* an archetypal pattern. We don't remember the sequaciousness of the details. Thus, *Tom Jones* becomes a lyric. Is it too much to say, then, that works of literature which are most memorable (meaningful) are precisely the most *elegant?*

So here we have another fragment of our inquiry into verbal creation: the principle of elegance. And I think that a lifetime could be spent working it out. At the grubbiest level, it clearly has to do with organization; at a more esoteric level, it has to do with "universals" of the human mind.

An unpublished manuscript by Charles Pyle is floating around the department. It concerns "Pragmatics," and I think that's the title. Pyle talks about creativity in language as deviance and says that there's good, bad, and ignorant deviance. But in a corrupt society, deviance which appears bad from within may appear good from without. And that's enough to keep us thinking for a while.

Form

If you'll think about Keith Fort's powerful article, you'll realize that formal tyranny can stultify creativity. But that's only one side of the coin. Somewhere, a long time ago, I read a discussion of neoclassic versus romantic poetry, and the writer made this interesting point, which has stuck with me since, I guess, my undergraduate days: the neoclassicist sat down to write a poem, whereas the romanticist sat down to write poetry. I'm probably misinterpreting my source; nonetheless, I can decide to write a sonnet, or I can decide to write a poem about my wife. Do you see the point? Form can be heuristic — and this relates to my concept of form-oriented and content-oriented heuristics ("Topics" and Levels in the Composing Process)."

In The Courage to Create, May says largely these same things. And, again, I'd urge you to read Winston Weathers' essay in *Freshman English News,* discussing alternate grammars of style.

Fostering

Since a great deal of what I'm saying in this excursion has to do with the topic, I won't recap here. But I will suggest strongly that you carefully read Rogers' piece in the Anderson collection.

Hemisphericity

[The following entry interests me because it is the first words that I wrote concerning this subject, the first glimmer of interest that I had expressed. As a demonstration that the glimmer became a fire, I refer you to "Brain, Rhetoric, and Style."]

Needless to say, I'm a virtual ignoramus on this subject. But I'd like to give you one quotation that you can think about: "The words of the language, as they are written or
spoken, do not seem to play any role in my mechanism of thought. The physical entities which seem to serve as elements in thought are certain signs and more or less clear images which can be 'voluntarily' reproduced and combined."

—Einstein, in Chiselin

[So dramatic has this subject become that one can hardly deal with creativity — let alone composition — if one has no introduction to the field. In my opinion, the best introduction is The Human Brain, ed. Witrock. Other useful sources: Ornstein, The Psychology of Consciousness; Rose, The Working Brain; Lutia, The Conscious Brain.]

Heuristics

As you know, I'm fascinated by this concept. A heuristic forces disassociation (Koesler). It makes a person jump from one frame into another. I don't want to extend this discussion unduly, but I would suggest two sources: Guilford, in Anderson (p. 156), where you'll find a heuristic for evaluating the creativity of your classroom; Adams, Conceptual Blockbusting. Let us also not forget Rhetoric: Discovery and Change, by Young, Becker, and Pike.

Hierarchy, Matrix, Code

Which is the basic framework of Koesler's The Act of Creation. Playing around with these terms is fascinating. For example, apply them to language behavior, use them as a view of sociolinguistics. The hierarchy is social organization. You are a member of that organization, and looking downward, you have freedom, whereas looking upward, you are bound by authority (and there's that word again). The matrix is the outer possibilities of your linguistic performance, and the code is your language. I see that this is hazy, but that's all right with me if it's OK with you.

Let's take another example: the classroom. The nature of the hierarchy is obvious, and, in a sense, you're at the top. The matrix is the limits you set. The code in this case doesn't create the game, but is only the counters used to play it.

Here are some pertinent notes from Pyle:

"... human interaction mediated by signs is game playing."

The concept of frames: "... a frame is a premise about how to evaluate or identify something." "It is a mental construct that categorizes the world."

Of course, frames are evaluative, as when I won't allow an object into my frame "chair" or "polite behavior."

"... frames set up expectations or predictions and unfulfilled expectations or incorrect predictions are often met with denial and rejection of the evidence."

"This response to marginal acts or things is not the only possible one. In fact the evaluation that something is inappropriate or odd is itself the imposition of a frame. An obvious alternative frame that can be imposed on marginal or deviant things is the creative frame. In the evaluation of deviant chairs, many people impose this frame, which is equivalent in some sense to stretching their chair frame. That is, of course, the intention of people who create marginal chairs. This normative aspect of frames, the performance of marginal or deviant acts or creation of deviant things and the frames that are imposed on deviance, goes right to the heart of language use and human interaction in general."

"The present and the uniqueness of an individual in the present can only be expressed by deviance. This creative function of deviance as an expression of individuality and nowness is manifest in metaphor, poetry, and art in general, and in the spontaneous creation of unique indirect speech acts in everyday language use."

Imagery Thinking

Again and again (e.g., Einstein) we hear that creative thinking is imagery. I've said a good deal about this elsewhere and, for once, won't repeat myself. But it's a fertile field for us. [The process of thinking in images relates directly to hemisphericity.]

Infolding

Koesler's term. I've already discussed it above.

Intuition

Enough said (but it relates to hemisphericity).

Lateral thinking

This is a term coined (I think) by de Bono. Mesbianic and a bit nutty, but interesting, his book is well worth looking at. In fact, haven't you noticed that creativity is almost dangerously attractive? It's so easy to think and write about (and if you don't believe that statement, look back over the pages of this piece). There's a whole category of pop creativity books: The Universal Traveler, Psycho-Cybernetics, even Conceptual Blockbusting. As you'll see in a moment, I'd put Maslow in the pop category.

Life Style

Just a bit of truism here—but nonetheless, chestnuts that are meaningful to me. I honestly think that you can find people — many of them — who simply live creative lives, without turning out any particular product. This sort of person is a lot of fun to be around; his/her house is likely to be an interesting place (and, I'd contend, a serene place); his/her cooking is likely to be somewhat different from the common run; there is a whole ambience of unstarring (but not unexpected) novelty. That's why I find so many "creative" people to be such a pain: they have to work so hard to be different— not creative, but different. You know what I mean: the lifestyle in which being too-too is such work that no one enjoys the results.

And I think that here's where English teachers fall down: they don't teach literature as part of the really creative lifestyle.

I'm going to quit before I get farther behind on this one.

Motivation

A few notes.

For comedy (per Koesler) it's aggressive or self-asserting. For Rogers and Maslow, it goes under the general name of "self-actualization." The one thing you get from Maslow is this: any theory of deficiency motivation just won't explain creativity, because in D-motivation, the moment the deficiency is removed, motivation ceases, which would mean that no one would be motivated to get more and more in any sense — more and more proficient at an art, more and more money, etc. For D-motivation, Maslow substitutes Being-motivation and Growth-motivation. I like this.
I think that you really ought to read Storr, which is a survey of motivation as neurosis. Not a debunking, but a survey, and an argument that motivation as neurosis is only part of the story. In fact, I wasn’t too impressed when I read Storr early in my exploring, but in retrospect, he stands out in my mind.

Bruner (On Knowing) talks about motivation as an internal drama: “I would like to suggest that it is in the working out of a conflict and coalition within the set of identities that compose the person that one finds the source of many of the richest and most surprising combinations.” In a way, this is a summary of Storr’s point.

I guess I needn’t point out that motivation is crucial in the comp class.

Neurosis

I’ve already mentioned Storr. Also important is Jung (reprinted in Critical Theory Since Plato), who argues against the Freudian notion of art as neurosis. Apparently Adler also developed a compensatory theory of creativity, which May effectively puts down (The Courage to Create).

Paradox

Bruner talks about the paradox of creativity. Creative people have both detachment and commitment (notice that word; it’s Bruner’s). They are detached from convention and deeply attached to that which they create to replace it. Passion and decorum: passion for the project, but decorum about methods, materials, etc. Freedom to be dominated by the object. Deferral and immediacy: the final joy is the finished product, but the proximate joy is creating it.

Peak Experience

This is another Maslovian concept. Maslow loves to make lists, and his list of characteristics of the peak experience is long—but you know what he’s talking about. It’s that eternal moment when all is right within the world; time seems to be suspended; you undergo a wonderful sense of exhilaration and well-being. When we are undergoing a peak experience, we have “permission” to dip into primary processes. “Part of the process of integration of the person is the recovery of aspects of the unconscious and preconscious, particularly of the primary process (or poetic, metaphorical, mystic, primitive, archaic, childlike).

“Our conscious intellect is too exclusively analytic, rational, numerical, atomistic, conceptual and so it misses a great deal of reality, especially within ourselves.”

An aside: The other day when I mentioned Maslow to the director of our school of religion, he said, “Stay away from that guy!” Sounds ominous, doesn’t it?

Play

The idea of creativity as play is pervasive. Maybe there’s a small lesson here. Since “writing with a purpose” is almost impossible in the comp class, why not writing as play?

Preparation

Everybody talks about it: incubation, immersion in a subject before the flash of insight will come, the necessity of rest and distraction before insight. Again, we can draw very practical advice for students from this.

Primary and Secondary

I think I’ve already discussed this. Isn’t it the case that most scholarship is secondary creativity? But it need not be. Of course, I’m putting a value judgment here. The terms also imply something else, as May, I think, points out: after the first flash of primary creativity, there’s all the painstaking work of secondary creativity.

Ripeness

This is analogous to preparation, but from a slightly different angle. The time must be “ripe” for certain kinds of creativity. Take all of the new programs in composition/rhetoric for instance. Most of them are unique enough to qualify as creative endeavors, but what really makes them possible is that the time is ripe. And here are some of the factors of ripeness: the literacy “crisis” in the nation; the job crisis among students in English; the turn of literary criticism away from its single-minded objectivity; the political upheavals which, in large part, caused a change in the professional associations, particularly MLA; the advent of modern linguistics. And we could extend the list greatly.

Science

Here’s one that ought either to disgust you or to warm the cockles of your hearts: “If I wanted to be mischievous about it, I could go so far as to define science as a technique whereby noncreative people can create . . . Science is a technique, social and institutionalized, whereby even unintelligent people can be useful in the advance of technology.”—Maslow, The Farther

Self-Actualization

See here and there in these notes. See also Fromm in Anderson.

These people are gripping for the first thirty pages—but after that they become a pain. Maslow, for instance, wrote the same things over and over again: B- and G-motivation versus D-motivation. Creativity as growth. Anti-behaviorism. But it would be worth your while to take a look at what Maslow says about the self-actualizing person.

Self-Transcending Emotions

Koestler (pp. 285-86) talks about them, but they are also a big part of self-actualization.

Syntactic Fluency

In regard to this topic, let me outline Guilford’s notions and the relationship of syntactic fluency to them. He discusses the primary traits related to creativity:

generalized sensitivity to problems
flueney of thinking
word fluency—ability to produce words containing specified letters or combinations thereof
associational fluency—ability to produce synonyms
expressional fluency—ability to produce phrases and sentences
idealational fluency—ability to produce ideas that fulfill certain requirements
flexibility in thinking
originality
redefinition (improvising)
elaboration

Syntactic fluency relates, of course, to expressional fluency, and note how heuristics relate to other primary traits of creativity.

Talent

May makes a commonsense observation that startled me, but that I like: creative people are not necessarily talented and vice versa. Think of the implications of this for language creativity.

Unconscious

I said all that I have to say, but take a close look at Sinnott in Anderson.

Values

Rogers in Anderson: Since the individual creates in order to actualize him- or herself, "we get nowhere by trying to differentiate 'good' and 'bad' purposes in the creative process. . . . It has been found that when the individual is 'open' to all of his experience . . . then his behavior will be creative, and this creativity may be trusted to be essentially constructive."

Bruner, On Knowing: The benefits of learning through discoveries that one makes oneself: (1) Increase in intellectual potency; (2) shift from extrinsic to intrinsic rewards; (3) learning the heuristics of discovering; (4) aid to conserving memory.

And Maslow makes a list of adjectives that describe the peak experience: truth, beauty, wholeness, etc. He says these are the same as what we have always called eternal values. So the nature of the peak experience defines the basic values. Of course, in saying this, he's saying everything and therefore nothing. He also says that facts have a "vectorial" nature which makes them value-laden.

Will

Rollo May: "We cannot will to have insights. We cannot will creativity. But we can will to give ourselves to the encounter with intensity of dedication and commitment." And I realize that I have already quoted this once before, but it's worth two readings, isn't it?

Note what a wonderful heuristic my brown box is. It's created about 10,000 words, and the process was almost painless to me.

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The Great Punctuation Game
Patrick Hartwell
University of Cincinnati

Let's begin with the game itself. The instructor enters the classroom with an overhead projector, some blank transparencies and marking pens, and recent issues of seven or eight magazines—a broad range of them, say Rolling Stone, Newsweek, New Yorker, Scientific American, Playboy, Mi., and maybe even Freshman English News. These instructions are distributed to the class:

1. Form five teams. Each team should pick up a magazine, a transparency, and a marking pen.
2. Find two sentences in the magazine and copy them on the transparency exactly as printed—but without any of the punctuation marks, except quotation marks and hyphens. The first sentence should be one that uses either a single semi-colon (,), a single colon (:), or a single dash (—); the second sentence should be one that uses two or more of those marks (and parentheses may also be included.) Identify the magazine at the top of the transparency and write down the page number of each of the sentences. (And be sure to note the difference between a hyphen, that connects two parts of a word, as in first-rate or part-time, and a dash—printed as a double-width hyphen or typed as two hyphens.)
3. Groups will be asked in turn to project their first sentences, and other groups will guess the punctuation used; then the same procedure will be followed for the second group of sentences.

4. Scoring. A group that punctuates a sentence exactly as the professional writer did will receive two points; a group that uses a reasonable alternative will receive one point. If no group punctuates a sentence exactly like the professional, the team offering the sentence will receive two points. Any group may challenge that a sentence has been miscopied; if they are right, they receive five points, and the group offering the sentence loses its turn.
5. Time Limits. You have ten minutes to read these instructions and copy your sentences. You will be given two to three minutes to punctuate each sentence.

The instructor may serve as referee, awarding points for alternative punctuations, or he or she may play the game, letting each team award points for alternatives. I like to play as a team of one—I seldom win, but that in itself is instructive.

Most of the 'rules' of punctuation come up for discussion as the game goes on. I usually give the class, at some point, Harold Whitehall's distinction between linking punctuation (semi-colon, colon, and dash), separating punctuation (commas for series constructions), and enclosing punctuation (paired commas, dashes, and parentheses)—adapted from his Structural Essentials of English (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956); I treat the semi-colon as a teeter-totter or see-saw, noting the need for balanced elements, the colon as a pointer, an arrow throwing the reader forward, and the dash as an interrupter, marking an unexpected addition.

The rules, as such, disappear soon enough, though, as the players discover that rules aren't nearly as important as 'feel': 1) a feel for differing magazine practices (New Yorker still separates each item in a series with commas; Rolling Stone, like most newspapers, omits the commas before the conjunction; Woman's Day is much more likely than Scientific American to separate initial modifiers with a comma); 2) a feel for the 'weight' of various punctuation marks—commas, dashes, and parentheses, for example, can all set off parenthetical items, the choice between them being more a matter of meaning, of emphasis, than of rule; and 3) perhaps most important, a feel for Francis Christensen's point that professional writers punctuate by the paragraph rather than by the sentence (in Notes Toward a New Rhetoric, 2nd edition [New York: Harper & Row, 1978], p. 98). We often find that the punctuation of a single sentence can't be explained without placing that sentence in its context, so that the 'logic' of the punctuation becomes clear.

Consider, as an example, a sentence that came up in class last week. A group projected this sentence about John R. Silber, President of Boston University, taken from Newsweek, March 27, 1978, p. 74:

Silber seemed to relish every moment in the spotlight until last week when a student newspaper accused his administration of selling admissions to its medical and law schools.

The sentence stumped us all, and we didn't make sense out of the actual punctuation until we returned it to its context. It made sense in context—following a general sentence
about Silber's "abrasive style" and leading into a full discussion of the controversy. The stress then seemed exactly right, in effect raising the subordinate clause to the lead sentence of the rest of the article:

Silber seemed to relish every moment in the spotlight — until last week, when a student newspaper accused his administration of selling admissions to its medical and law schools.

Discussions of sentences like this one move naturally from apparently trivial matters of punctuation to larger matters of rhetorical form and emphasis.

The game itself is good for at least a couple of class sessions, and the lessons learned can be developed in several ways: by asking students to write their own sentences for the game; by punctuating transcriptions of taped oral discourse; by imitating sentences that use punctuation for rhetorical effect; by introducing the notion of the cumulative sentence, again a concept of Francis Christensen, noting the importance of punctuation in marking free modifiers.

And I think there are larger benefits to activities like this in the freshman English class. Students are confronted with live writing, hot off the presses, and it's real writing, sentences they choose, not contrived examples from textbooks. The models they select are expansive, even generative, for the correct answers grow from the transfer and complication of meaning, not the mechanical manipulation of set rules. Finally, the game connects writing with reading, for the mastery of punctuation in writing is inseparable from the parallel ability, in reading, to grasp the meaning inherent in such tacit signals. The Newsweek sentence above, for example, must be understood by the reader in terms of the weight of its punctuation, or else the basic movement of the sentence — from general to specific — is lost, along with the basic movement of the article as a whole. I keep a set of prepared transparencies to explore such issues. Here's a set of problems that explore restrictive and nonrestrictive modifiers:

1. Which teacher, in these headlines, certainly doesn't have a job?
   a. INSTRUCTOR QUILTS, CRITICIZING STUDENT WRITING.
   b. INSTRUCTOR QUILTS CRITICIZING STUDENT WRITING.

2. Which writer makes the sillier claim?
   a. Everyone I know likes duck feathers for breakfast.
   b. Everyone, I know, likes duck feathers for breakfast.

3. Which instructor would you like to have?
   a. All students who work hard will receive an A.
   b. All students, who work hard, will receive an A.

I'm always surprised at the number of students who have difficulty with such reading problems, and those students are inevitably weak in writing.

The problem is clear enough. Punctuation is commonly presented to students negatively: they are confronted with a seemingly endless catalog of do's and don'ts, mostly don'ts, and their inevitable response is one of self-protection. Self-protection usually means trying to get away with as little punctuation as possible. Since everything they try is 'wrong,' students restrict their sentence forms unnecessarily, to only the most obviously 'correct' forms. They banish dashes, colons, semi-colons, and parentheses — they're too difficult — and settle for the comma, used sparingly. In their reading, as a result, fine discriminations are blurred and important shades of meaning lost. And in writing, nothing marks off the difference between student writing and professional writing more immediately than punctuation. Professionals punctuate freely, actively, and positively: their pages crawl with all the relationship markers available to them. Students, on the other hand, punctuate defensively, negatively, and awkwardly: that's one reason why their prose limps along in restricted sentence forms, helped only by an occasional and hesitant comma.

The Great Punctuation Game is not designed to eliminate error. It's instead a step toward the larger goal of syntactic fluency, of opening to students the richness of the linguistic resources available in print. Developing writers, I think, need to investigate that richness by exploring it in its full complexity, not by being restricted to an artificial world where the rules always work.

Heuristics in Composition and Literary Criticism

B. Eugene McCarthy
College of the Holy Cross

This essay developed out of a number of impulses and speculations about the relation of composition to literary criticism. At least one of these was the desire to relate what one taught about writing subject matter in composition classes to what one taught about reading literature in introduction to literature courses. Another was the hope of designing a framework by which the practical applications of literary criticism could be taught in a little more coherent and systematic fashion. Yet I also wished to avoid adding a new body of terminology to critical procedure which would do little more than obscure the teaching and the practice. With the publication of Young, Becker and Pike's Rhetoric: Discovery and Change (1970) and their introduction of the "particle, wave, field" heuristic as a method of "gathering materials about a problem and asking fruitful questions," there seemed to appear the device for linking compositional methods to critical ones. This heuristic has the merit of remarkable flexibility of application; its first relevance established by the authors is to composition and rhetoric, but insofar as it is designed to be highly transferable to any other discipline or field of inquiry, its application to the study of literature is only one of many potential uses and one thus far very little considered. In some of my relatively loose applications of the heuristic to short stories in an Introduction to Fiction class, students seemed to find this tripartite heuristic workable and helpful. Since then I have seen it in practice by others on individual poems, but not in any fully elaborated system, which is what I hope to offer here.

A heuristic is, to use the words of Young, Becker, and Pike, a method of systematic inquiry which "provides a series of questions or operations that guides inquiry and increases the chances of discovering a workable solution. More specifically, it serves three functions:
1. It aids the investigator in retrieving relevant information that he has stored in his mind.
2. It draws attention to important information that the investigator does not possess but can acquire.
3. It prepares the investigator's mind for the intuition of an ordering principle, or hypothesis.

The first may be of dubious value to students beginning the study of literature, even seriously misleading if it prompts them to run off on tangents of random association. Young, Becker, and Pike go on to describe one "particularly useful" heuristic: "a unit of experience can be viewed as a particle, or a wave, or a field. That is, a writer can choose to view any element of his experience as if it were static, or as if it were dynamic, or as if it were a network of relationships or a part of a larger network."

The authors illustrate this heuristic, in fact a metaphor taken from physics, by examining a house as a static unit, relatively unrelated to its surroundings; then as a dynamic, changing — aging — building; and then as part of a system surrounding it, or even as a system itself. Questioning in this manner can apply to a specific house, such as in James Agee's wonderful study of the Gudger house, or to the concept "house." In his treatment of this heuristic, Ross Winterowd in *The Contemporary Writer* shows briefly how it can relate to a poem as a mode of asking questions:

- View the poem as a static unit. What can you say about its form?
- View the poem as one among many of its class. How does it differ from other poems you have read?
- View the poem as part of a larger system...
- View the poem as process...
- View the poem as system...

The first, fourth and fifth correspond to particle, wave, and field respectively, and the second is a subcategory of particle by which one identifies the object by contrast to objects similar to it (for example, of the same genre), and the third is an aspect of five, the field. In an implicit and unconscious way, criticism already employs these perspectives, for certain procedures fall readily into one perspective or another. If we take the poem "Lycidas" for example, and study it as particle, a separate thing, we will be approaching the principles and procedures of New Criticism, somewhat as John Crowe Ransom did in "A Poem Nearly Anonymous," objecting to "the weight of many perfect glosses, respecting its occasion, literary sources, classical and contemporary allusions, exhausting us certainly and exhausting, for a good many persons, the poem," and advising treatment of "Lycidas" as "a literary exercise." It is furthermore apparent that if we take that poem in a field perspective, we would engage its relation to a larger system, the tradition of pastoral, or the other poems to Edward King, and so forth. Stanley Fish refers to *Paradise Lost* in a wave perspective when he writes of the dynamic impact upon the reader: "Recently I have argued that the true center of *Paradise Lost* is the reader's consciousness of the poem's personal relevance, and that the arc of the poem describes, in addition to the careers of the characters, the education of its readers." While we can see the heuristic demonstrated in various critical studies, we can in turn apply the heuristic as a method of determining the approach of criticism itself: the critic reading the work as particle only, or as wave and field, for example? And not only works and subjects and criticism, but literature itself responds readily to particle, wave, field study: what is literature? what are its forms? what changes has it undergone? how does it relate to other modes of inquiry, for instance sociology, biology, history and so forth? While it is no doubt neither useful nor possible to "place" every critical method into one of the three perspectives, the following will outline some of the main critical approaches as we explore the application of this heuristic to literary criticism.

When we look at a poem such as "Lycidas" as a particle, we examine what it is in itself: the words, through linguistic analysis, the images such as of water, the myths of death, rebirth, and resurrection, the prosodic elements of rhythm and meter or rime, the narrator, and so forth. Such a perspective necessarily limits the range of critical approach; for instance, we would look at the Orpheus myth within the poem itself, not in its historical meaning or relation to Christian myth. Linguistic analysis of the poem as particle would bear on the poem itself and avoid its relation to the language of, say, John Cleveland's elegy on Edward King, or of Milton's other elegies. As such this perspective helps control one's viewpoint, yet allows for a large variety of critical approaches, all useful and fruitful.

In treating fiction as particle, the approach is basically the same: instead of prosody one would study prose style, of course, or plot, or point of view in the work as a single discrete whole. I have at times assigned students to write on one story of Flannery O'Connor's separately from the others in the series *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*; then in a subsequent assignment they go on to see the story in relation to the others and to the developing series culminating with "Displaced Person." Even at this uncomplicated level of application, the particle, wave, field approach helps identify and unify one's procedures. An excerpt from Edward P. J. Corbett's analysis of Swift's style in *A Modest Proposal* illustrates the use, implicit of course, of the particle perspective:

Any stylistic analysis must start out, I think, with some close observation of what actually appears on the printed page. One might, for instance, sense that a particular author uses a great many short sentences. Now, sentence-length is one of the features that can tell us something about an author's style. But it should be obvious that we cannot make a tenable generalization about an author's characteristic sentence-length until we have determined, by some rather tedious counting and tabulating, just how long or short his sentences are...

The next step in the procedure — and a more significant step — is to relate what the statistics reveal to the rhetoric of the piece being analyzed... in our relating of fact to function,... we will experience a perceptible growth in our powers of analysis and criticism.

The critic now begins to apply the particle observations, has already shifted somewhat to wave — the function — and in the next lines, moves to field perspectives, the larger relationships of the particle observations:

An author's style may change as his subject-matter or his purpose changes. Moreover, his style may have evolved over a period of time, and the stylistic feature that we may have observed in this particular prose piece, may be a mannerism that he eventually outgrew.
As we move to the wave perspective, one immediate question arises: how can the perspectives be kept separate? First of all, the perspectives need not, should not be an either-or procedure. They will overlap, for one may be necessary for the success of the other(s). Distinctions can be made between perspectives even when they work together, and it will become apparent that some "units of experience" are more accessible to one perspective than to another.\(^\text{11}\)

I have suggested that analysis by plot is in the particle perspective, yet plot is by definition a process of change and therefore more dynamic in quality than static. Plot is not, in R. S. Crane's words, "a framework or 'mere mechanism'" but rather "the final end which everything in the work... must be made... to serve."\(^\text{12}\) As such, plot can be viewed in the wave perspective in its dynamic aspects. "Parts and devices," Norman Friedman says, "are there in a work... to do a job, to forward a purpose, and that purpose is its end or form."\(^\text{13}\) Just as plot can be viewed as a static unit or as dynamic, so also these "parts and devices" can be seen as particles or as dynamic parts of the whole form. The particle elements thus contribute to the dynamic process of plot. A similar shift from particle to wave applies to other elements of fiction or poetry; if we look to the elements of myth, we will find it pertinent to account for the dynamic power of myth, the movement of "Lycidas," for example, from classical to Christian myths and mythologies and the inclusion in that process of the water, music, regeneration figures and so forth. Again, then, the particle perspective leads one to further study, while still establishing a demarcation of that procedure and signalling when one crosses from static to dynamic functions. Perception of an object as particle, consequently, may be simultaneously rewarding and incomplete, possibly misleading or fragmentary, but in any case challenging and urging one to proceed from the analysis toward the synthesis, the final goal.

Examination by the wave perspective is especially pertinent when dealing with literature in dynamic presentation, such as the sung song, the recited poem, or the staged and acted play. A play is, in one sense, a textual object until it is performed, whereupon it becomes dynamic and must be so treated by audience, reviewer, or academic critic. In similar manner architecture or free-standing sculpture (not frieze or relief) is static until one moves around it and realizes its dynamic form, yet it can be seen as particle as well if one so chooses. Paintings are fascinating subjects to view as particle or as wave, some paintings being more of one than another. There is little that cannot be so treated to advantage.

If we think of the particle perspective as a mode of identifying a thing or parts of a thing, and if we think of the wave perspective as finding out what the thing does or parts of a thing do, then the field perspective may be taken as the method of seeing what the relationships of a work are. Field: a system of parts, involved in a large network. Many critical procedures come under this heading. All historical criticism, for one thing. Robert Spiller writes: "the literary historian... must answer such questions as How? When? Where? Why? A work of literature exists or has existed and what its relationships are or were to other works of literature, and to the whole history of man as a sentient and social being."\(^\text{14}\) A large order certainly, but such critical methods are almost entirely in the field perspective, concerned with relationships. For example, one would perceive "Lycidas" in the context of the tradition of elegy, pastoral, monody, Classical, Christian and Renaissance traditions, the sources of lines and images or form, the contemporary historical setting of the poem, the personal, biographical setting, the relation of the poem to Milton as aspiring poet, to the other "Obsequies to The Memorie of Edward King," the relation to the history of elegiac performance before and after, or to human emotion as we know it, and so forth.

The hazards of this procedure are again evident as before. One must know the text of a poem and its internal workings before approaching with certitude the historical or other relationships. Overemphasis on the field to the jeopardy of particle considerations is what John Crowe Ransom believes is exhausting to both reader and poem. On the other hand, ignorance of the field possibilities leads to Northrop Frye's judgment on those critics who in rejecting those works of 1922, "Ulysses" and "The Waste Land," "went wrong, not through the failure of their taste or judgment, but through not knowing enough about literature. They did not understand the traditions of literature that made "Ulysses" and "The Waste Land" possible."\(^\text{15}\) Too little awareness of the relations of tradition and the poet can and will lead to ineffective criticism.

What I have wished to suggest so far is, (1) the meaning of particle, wave, and field perspectives; (2) how certain critical approaches relate to each of the perspectives; (3) how each of the perspectives can serve as guides for our critical sense to keep our view more securely directed toward the work as an isolated thing, or a dynamic thing, or in its relation to another body of work; and (4) how the three perspectives can serve as a warning that a critic cannot afford to ignore one perspective as meaningless if he intends to be thorough and balanced. What I wish to offer now is, first, a brief analysis of Blake's "The Lamb" to suggest how one might read a poem by these perspectives; and then a relating of the methods of critical analysis suggested here to what critics have suggested as proper methods, for there is in this essay nothing new in criticism proper, only a new way of placing critical approaches.

If we were to read Blake's "The Lamb" by means of these perspectives, we would begin seeing it as particle to identify the lamb and its unique qualities, and the speaker and his views. The first half of the poem is a series of questions to the lamb, suggesting an idyllic, lovely creature: "delight," "softness," "woolly," "bright," "tender," in a setting of "streams," "meads," and "vales" that rejoice. In the second half, the speaker answers, telling the lamb that he was made by another Lamb, one meek and mild, in fact a child. The idyllic peace and gentleness fills this part too, as the lamb is Maker and child and the speaker is child. We grasp the character of the lamb and speaker and Maker with a clear sense of the unique quality of each: the lamb is not a diseased, beshitten sheep, the Maker not an arrogant Creator, the speaker neither an adult spectator nor a silly infant, but a conscious child singer. We must not only identify the things in the poem but also the unique qualities of each, and thus negate or hold temporarily stilled our experiential or prejudicial views of lambs, or Jesus, or children singing poems.

We soon observe that the structure of the poem works internally in a number of ways. The inevitable effect of questioning is an increased development of new questions, new observations and further questions. The speaker in his questioning tells us a great deal; he does not question as if he is in doubt but rather with a strong sense of knowing about the
lamb: Who gave thee softest clothing? When in part two he answers, much of the answer is already known. We are well into the dynamic aspects of the poem. We learn of the speaker's confidence through his knowing assertions. The meanings begin to grow. "Who made thee? Gave thee life, & bid thee feed" are literally true versions of an almost Special Creation, for in the second part the direct identification of lamb with Christ with child insures that the Lamb is not a live, country lamb but an elevated image of lamb. All this time, of course, our ears and minds are being soothed by the word and line repetitions, the emphatic rhymes and simple lucid rhythms, the regular half-line caesuras in the first part which continue in the beginning and end of the second part.

Although I do not think I could read the poem this way, it probably would be quite complete in its identification of lamb-Maker-child, even if I did not think at once of Christ the child and Lamb of God, drawing upon the greater body of relationships which the poem calls us to know. In short, we probably move without effort to the field perspective of Christ the Good Shepherd in the New Testament who was born a Child and who celebrated in the Sermon on the Mount the meek, of whom he was one. The speaker then becomes a child-teacher of the lamb, instructing it in the greater values and circumferences of its life and calling on it to rejoice, with the vales and with the speaker, in its special relationship with Jesus, just as the child rejoices in his special relationship with the Christ-child.

All these perspectives develop from the twenty lines of the poem. If we glance up, however, to the top of the page of the text and see "Songs of Innocence," we find another field, the relationship of this poem with the others in its series: what kind of innocence is here expressed? like other kinds? does this poem add a new dimension to innocence? to the animals in other songs, such as those in the prior poem:

To this day they dwell
In a lonely dell;
Nor fear the wolfish howl
Nor the lions' growl.

or that of the following:

Merry, Merry Sparrow!
Under leaves so green . . .

The complex relationship of the poem to the others in its field of related poems begins a whole new set of field perspectives. And obviously there are others too. Those wolves and lions prompt one to another field — the contrary state of "Songs of Experience" and its "Tyger."

To proceed with "The Tyger" as particle as we did with "The Lamb," we would again identify the quality of the tiger and speaker. But having once seen that lamb, we would almost invariably compare poems and animals: why does the structure of "Tyger" differ? why is the tone so different? why does the speaker question with such a sense of doubt and fear — "On what wings dare he aspire?" — and continue to question rather than answer. Yet we must to some extent adhere to the tiger and identify his mechanical nature — "hammer," "chain," "furnace," "anvil" — as well as his greater-than-machine character, the spiritual and eternal dimension, "forests of night," "distant deeps and skies," "deadly terrors."

This perception of the poem as particle moves us readily to the dynamics of the poem, the sudden shifts near the end from the tiger to "When the stars threw down their spears," and to the more radical shock of, "Did he smile his work to see? Did the lamb make thee?" and the final refrain repetition. The poem instructs us to compare it with "The Lamb," the particle of one with the particle of the other. Then we would proceed as with "The Lamb" to place "The Tyger" in its larger contexts of "Songs of Experience," in Blake's views of innocence and experience and their place in Blake's thought as a whole. The more we know of Blake and of poetry, the more fields we discover in which to observe relationships. In other words, this mode of proceeding is a mode of learning to read Blake's poetry, a process which could form the structure of a course in itself, allowing the reader to discover not only through the analysis of poems but through the synthesis of relating poems to larger contexts.

Even here, however, simple as these procedures appear, we realize that at times, the particle perspective cannot proceed without help from the field perspective: the lamb must be associated with Christ so the reader must be aware of the New Testament; we may need to be aware that the anvil creation of the tiger was perhaps done by the character Los, the divine smith and artificer. This demand of field perspective aiding particle is even more obvious in other poetry: textual information may be needed to clarify the reading of a line of Chaucer; footnotes are a necessary part of The Dun- ciad text when we approach such lines as,

Then rose the Seed of Chaos, and of Night,
To blot out Order, and extinguish Light,
Of dull and venal a new World to mold,
And bring Saturnian days of Lead and Gold. (IV, 13-16)

And so too with many other works of literature.

The discipline we saw Corbett exercising in his stylistic analysis is healthy for readers and critics. Another critic, Norman Friedman, has constructed a diagram, for systematic examination of a work, with the Work in the center, surrounded at four points by History, Reader, Reality, and Writer, each of which interrelates with the other so that "one can frame an inquiry into the relation of the work and reality, or between the work and reality and the author, and so on." His methods are very close to the heuristic set forth in this essay, just as the step-by-step procedure of the heuristic is similar to Northrop Frye's summary of critical procedures:

Academic criticism is part of the systematic study of literature... Its approach is categorical and descriptive: it tries to identify a writer's work... The primary understanding of any work of literature has to be based on an assumption of its unity. However mistaken such an assumption may eventually prove to be, nothing can be done unless we start with it as an heuristic principle... The process of academic criticism begins, then, with reading a poem through to the end... Once the end is reached, we can see the whole design of a work as a unity. It is now a simultaneous pattern radiating out from a center, not a narrative moving in time. The structure is what we call the theme, and the identifying of the theme is the next step.

Frye then goes on to "imagery," to the "texture... of the poem... the ambiguities of syntax and complex meanings of words used," in each case proceeding as if the work were an isolated unit, a particle, but within that unit seeing the func-
tion, what the parts do — the wave perspective. Finally, of course, he insists that these critical preliminaries only open the way to true criticism, finding the place of the work in the context of literature, for, moving to the field perspective, "every poem belongs to the total body of writing produced by an author," and "to the work of completely different poets."

Much of the rest of Frye's essay supports the contentsions of this essay: the systematic procedure, the movement from particle through wave to field perspective, conscious at each step of the process one is in and of the process one has yet to undertake, yet conscious too that at times the field must support the particle: "it can be said that you cannot reasonably place a work historically before you have analyzed it formally; on the other hand it can just as reasonably be said that you cannot properly understand a work formally before you have placed it historically." There is no magical apparatus in criticism.

NOTES


2My colleague and director of composition, David Higgins, who introduced me to this heuristic and contributed greatly to this essay, showed me several samples from a workshop at University of Detroit, Summer 1976.

3Young, Becker, Pike, p. 120.

4There is a growing resistance to the cautionary and restrictive aspects of this sentence in the newer inclinations toward non-traditional, non-linear modes of expression, such as Winston Weathers in "Grammars of Style: New Options in Composition" in Freshman English News, 4 (Winter 1976) describes as Grammar B, "with characteristics of valeation, synchronicity, discontinuity, ambiguity and the like." Such forms encourage the essay as process with room for the "tangents of random association." See also another treatment of the issue by Keith Fort, "Form, Authority, and the Critical Essay," in Contemporary Rhetoric, ed. W. Ross Winterowd (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), pp. 171-83.

5Young, Becker, Pike, p. 122.

6Quoted in ibid., pp. 66-68, from Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.


11Models of critical procedure consisting of most of the critical methods relative to particle, wave, and field could be pedagogically effective; students could also be encouraged to write our particle, wave, and field perceptions of works to be taken in class.


15"Literary Criticism," in Ibid., p. 74.


17Northrop Frye, pp. 73, 75, 77, 78, 79.

18Form and Meaning in Fiction, p. 7.

Language, Metaphor, and Creativity in Discursive Prose

William T. Ross
University of South Florida

A great many people take the discipline of composition seriously, but for many more it is simply the necessary but uninspiring portion of their teaching schedule. Even more disturbing are the despairing complaints of instructors at some two-year colleges that they almost never get to teach a literature course. All that work in the salt mines, so to speak, with only the most occasional peek at the glowing sunshine. And even among those who do not regard composition as Cinderella's ugly and undesirable step-sister, one sometimes hears derogatory words. Both Ross Winterowd and Francis Christensen, for example, have opposed the teaching of exposition, with Winterowd opting for "self-expressive" discourse as the only kind worth teaching and Christensen desiring to substitute heavier doses of narration and description. (See Winterowd, "Introduction," Contemporary Rhetoric: A Conceptual Background with Readings [New York, 1973], p. 12; Christensen, "A Generative Rhetoric of the Sentence," reprinted in Winterowd, p. 347.) Perhaps I do not fully understand their positions, but I fail to see how a discipline can be justified when one of its major components is so derided.

The source of so much of this dislike, I am convinced, lies in our theoretical inheritance from the nineteenth century, in the absolute cleavage Romanticism engendered between poetry and rhetoric, between ordinary language and literary style, between creativity or imagination and mechanical invention. Such dualisms are surely familiar to anyone who has studied literature in the past thirty years, since it is a hallmark of the New Criticism that the language of poetry is a "special way of knowing" not available to the discursive prose that encompasses the models for composition.

In recent years, however, literary criticism has been less monolithic in its acceptance of New Critical dogma. Two critics, in particular, I think, have done work of special value for those interested in composition. I refer to Morse Peckham and Stanley E. Fish. Because their main concerns are elsewhere, I suspect they have not received the attention they deserve from those interested in composition. In particular I have in mind Fish's "How Ordinary Is Ordinary Language?" New Literary History, 5 (Autumn, 1973), 41-54, and to four essays by Morse Peckham: "Metaphor: A Little Plain Speaking on a Weary Subject" and "The Intentional Fallacy?" in his The
Triumph of Romanticism (Columbia, South Carolina, 1970), pp. 401-420, 421-444; and "Poet and Critic: Or, the Damage Coleridge Has Done" and "The Deplorable Consequences of the Idea of Creativity" in his Romanticism and Behavior (Columbia, South Carolina, 1975), pp. 196-205, 206-221. In what follows I make no attempt to be faithful to Fish's or Peckham's overriding concerns, and, of course, I cannot reproduce their "proofs." But a general outlining of their positions is enlightening and refreshing in itself, and those wishing to pursue the matter further should have little trouble in securing the appropriate essays.

Linguists have traditionally been suspicious of some of the claims for the specialness of literature, but Fish begins his essay by pointing out that both they and literary critics have managed to hypothesize "ordinary language"—i.e., value-free referential utterance. Linguists have done so by being too apt to accept the notion that their "scientific" study of language can apply only to ordinary language, while literary critics have been too apt to insist that "value" inheres only in literary texts—not in "mere" utterance. Both sides, in effect, concede that literary language is a deviation from the norm, and, as Fish states it aproposistically, "deviation theories always trivialize the norm and therefore trivialize everything else." That is, by defining literature as a deviation from ordinary language, ordinary language is trivialized by being assigned none of the honorific categories associated with literature, and the deviant itself is trivialized since it cannot be appreciated for its totality but only for its deviations.

Fish's solution to this dilemma is to make a frontal attack on the concept of ordinary language itself. Invoking arguments from "philosophical semantics and the philosophy of speech acts," Fish insists that there is no such thing as ordinary language, language which simply conveys messages. Instead what we have is a world of utterances issued in specific situations by human beings, beings cognitively incapable of value-free discourse. At the heart of these utterances, Fish notes, "is precisely that realm of values, intentions, and purposes which is often assumed to be the exclusive property of literature."

Thus literature is no longer defined as ordinary language plus embellishment (i.e., as reference plus ornament) or as embellishment for its own sake and thereby free of referential function. Instead, literature is defined as "language around which we have drawn a frame, a frame that indicates a decision to regard with a particular self-consciousness the resources language has always possessed. What characterizes literature then is not formal properties, but an attitude—always within our power to assume—toward properties that belong by constitutive right to language."

The implications of this statement are crucial for any teacher of composition. Not only is the language the student uses the same as the language of literature, but the instructor is free to stand back and, without denying a work's referential aims or primary purpose, admire its aesthetic aspects—i.e., the beauty of its formal austerity, the harmony or euphony of its language, its conscious sense of structure, or whatever other aesthetic category is appropriate.

If Fish tries to augment ordinary language, Peckham examines two of the features often taken as identifying (and dignifying) characteristics of literature. One is the rather fuzzy but tenaciously held belief that metaphorical language is a "special way of knowing" and that its predominance in literary language makes literature a source of unique knowledge. The other is the allied belief that this "special way of knowing" is accessible without reference to "intention."

Peckham's argument against the mystical view of metaphor is both theoretical and historical. Historically, he reminds us that literature in some eras is intensely metaphoric; in others, it is not. More to the point, while providing a formal definition of metaphor which does not differ too much from that of F. R. Leavis, he points out that the more important questions to be asked are how does one interpret a metaphor and why does man make metaphors. The answer to the first is that wherever a metaphor occurs a reader or listener must decide how many of the imported term's features (in Richards, the tenor) to apply to the local term (i.e., the vehicle). When the context lacks appropriate hints or signs, the act of interpretation becomes much more difficult. As to why man makes metaphors, man does it either out of a sense of ignorance—i.e., a non-scientist trying to explain a scientific phenomenon—or because the speaker judges current language to be deficient or non-existent for describing the phenomenon in question.

My own opinion is that Peckham errs in not adding the sheer joy of exuberant invention as a third reason, but the combination of his answers to the first and second questions goes a long way toward bringing home the simple points he wants to make. Vivid metaphors can occur anywhere, and those who make them do so because they are linguistically talented, not because they are poets. And metaphors are metaphors—i.e., linguistic constructs which must be approached in the same manner by the reader whether they occur in literary or non-literary contexts.

An essay on Wimsatt and Beardsley's "intentional fallacy" might not seem to be promising material for composition until one remembers that the two critics' famous essay which introduced the term rests on the same distinction between "ordinary" discourse and literary language that we have seen challenged in Fish and the earlier Peckham essay. In ordinary discourse, Wimsatt and Beardsley aver, intention is important; in literature it apparently is an illicit or at least false category. This translates into the position that the only thing that counts in discursive prose is clarity of literal meaning, whereas in literature one looks for the aesthetic meaning which arises autonomously out of the organic relationships within the work.

But in all discourse, Peckham insists, we are searching for intention whether we choose to call it that or not. Peckham rewrites Northrop Frye's description of literature as a "picnic to which the author brings the words and the reader the meaning" by insisting that it is not merely a description of literature but "of all linguistic utterances without exception" (Peckham's emphasis). Whether one has a literary text or another kind of discourse in front of him, he must examine either kind in the same manner for signs of how he is to supply meaning to the text. We can call this searching for intention or not, but the process is exactly the same for all texts.

The import of both these essays, of course, is much the same as Fish's. Literature is really not made less interesting: ordinary language is simply made far less ordinary. Robbed of its mystique, metaphor can resume its rhetorical role of both delighting by striking comparisons and instructing by combining categories for which denotative language does not exist. And that a reader is always in search of "instructions" for how to determine meaning suggests that in studying discursive prose we need to pay far more attention than we do.
now to local texture, stylistic complexities, foregroundings, and alogical and conventional features which may carry such "instructions."

In Peckham's more recent collection of essays he turns to a consideration of the supposed uniqueness of literary "creativity," raising difficulties in "Poet and Critic: Or, the Damage 'Coleridge Has Done'" which he only satisfactorily resolves in "The Deplorable Consequences of Creativity." Briefly, in the first essay, he traces what he calls the modern "distinction between poetry and rhetoric" back to Coleridge, whose definition of imagination has the effect of perceiving poetry and "rhetoric" (i.e., any other form of discourse) as mutually exclusive categories. Peckham suggests that they are not mutually exclusive but merely independent, their differences apparently not based on linguistic features but on literature's (or poetry's) lack of pragmatic effect. Peckham would obviously prefer to bring literature back into the fold of rhetoric, to see it, in other words "as a special mode or modes of discourse." To consider literature this way is to consider it at least as an accessible linguistic phenomenon. One of the problems with the Coleridgean imagination as a defining characteristic of poetry, as Peckham points out, is that, whatever Coleridge means by "imagination," it has not proved useful "in subsuming empirical phenomena" and is really not a definition limited to a linguistic form — i.e., "in the Coleridgean sense of the term, there is no difference between the scientific imagination and the poetic." Furthermore, to view poetry as rhetoric is "to see at once that rhetorical modes change, and that their changes are linked to other cultural changes" —a feat impossible with Coleridge's Platonic definition.

But the question remains. Why did Coleridge want to separate poetry from other discourse? Peckham's answer is that Coleridge, a highly innovative poet, admired innovation (at least that which met with his approval) and chose to reserve for such poetry the term "imagination." And since that time we have associated terms like "imagination," "creativity," and "innovation" with radical departures from aesthetic norms.

But, as the next essay makes clear, at the same time that Coleridge was applying the term "imagination" to highly innovative poetry and appropriating it as a badge of honor for the poet, Kantian epistemology was redefining mind as the power which creates some kind of sense out of the chaotic stream of experience. The result is the emergence of a cultural contradiction, with epistemology insisting that mind is inherently creative, and poetic theory proclaiming that the creative imagination "is the unique function of the artist."

Peckham points at this contradiction in the essay on Coleridge, but it is only in "The Deplorable Consequences of Creativity" that he delineates and then attempts to resolve it. He obviously believes that we are the victims not so much of contradiction as of semantic confusion, but he begins by proving that the larger, more encompassing thesis cannot be dismissed. "Innovation," Peckham insists, "is the norm of human behavior." One innovates every time he utters a sentence he has not uttered before; one innovates every time he engages in discourse. It cannot be otherwise, because the brain is a stochastic (random) system. It will constantly create innovative behavior patterns. If we follow Peckham's arguments to this point (with his appeals for proof to behavioral theory) we can stop with the reassurance that there is nothing "rote" about non-fictional discourse. But we have still not explained the "confusion" Peckham alludes to. In their rush to separate art from the everyday imagination, critics from Coleridge on have confused "creativity" (a talent we all possess) with "socially validated patterned divergence." That is, the criterion for judging art has come to be innovation markedly divergent from previous norms but still acceptable by the culture. (This criterion, of course, enforces far more rapid stylistic changes in poetry than occur in non-fictional prose.) But such creativity is just one kind of innovation. Innovation, in its totality, remains the norm of human behavior, and there is no inherent reason why other forms of discourse could not witness as many radical stylistic and formal divergences as literature has. And even without these divergences such forms are still the product of innovation or "creativity."

The result of Peckham and Fish's work, to repeat, is not disparaging of literature. But their work does make it impossible, I think, to consider literature as a linguistically discrete category. Discursive prose, even if restricted to exposition is equally value-laden, equally replete with the same metaphor which enhances literary discourse and with the signs which guide interpretation of activity. And, like all manifestations of human behavior, it is creative.

II

But how will such an insight into the nature of discursive prose affect classroom practices? I always find it useful to keep in mind Frank Smith's admonition in his excellent Understanding Reading (New York, 1971, pp. vii-viii) that changes in theory do not lead to inevitable changes in teaching technique, although new theories may help explain how some techniques work. More strongly than Smith, I assume that teaching is a function of personality and that changes in intellectual conviction will lead only to changes in emphasis. For example, almost every instructor probably devotes some time to the sentence-combining and "generating" techniques associated with Francis Christensen and others. An instructor persuaded that discursive prose is indeed creative will probably alter his motives for such exercises. Where he may have been using them as a means of training the logically discriminating faculties via exercises in subordination and modification (not Christensen's emphasis, incidentally), now he will be more likely to emphasize their potential for encouraging an awareness of the power to innovate, the power to create a more complex and delightful surface. And he will tend to re-enforce the natural delight the student enjoys upon discovering this creative power — not just call the student's attention to the effect created by a superior sense of logical proportion or intellectual complexity.

Similarly, the instructor, while still eschewing the occasional student's purple passage, may decide to handle "overwriting" in a different manner. Instead of stamping it out as a totally unnatural and undesirable growth in the garden of rational discourse, he may try to retain its creative dimensions while tying it to the content or sense to be communicated.

The instructor may even change the way he approaches the inevitable and wearying paper which seems to have no redeeming value. Instead of searching for the one coherent idea, or the one instance of minimal clarity as something on which to build the student's future progress, he may look
instead for the successful creative moment — the perfect metaphor, the apt turn of phrase — and elect to praise that and have the student begin to work back from style to logical coherence and development.

But the most important change should be in the instructor's attitude towards his subject matter, a change that should be readily transmitted to his students. In a culture that puts great emphasis on creativity and innovation, he can assure himself of the legitimacy of searching for such manifestations in the discursive prose which he must correct and edit and in the prose models which he must teach. And his students — part of that same culture — will be encouraged to know that they are using their creative faculties, that the arresting or delightful moments in the prose they read can be duplicated in their own papers to bring delight to others and satisfaction to themselves. And, furthermore, this interest in the creative aspects of discursive prose can remain with them, can challenge them to turn out something truly worthy of note even when the assigned subject matter does not especially interest them — a situation bound to occur on at least several occasions in any college career.

Surely everyone is tired of panaceas for Freshman English, and this shift in point of view is certainly not offered as one. There are no shortcuts to good writing or good teaching. But at least the acceptance of the creativity of discursive prose can immunize both teacher and student against conceiving their tasks as being of the lesser, mechanical order of things. When such false despair is no longer present, the prognosis for future improvement and self-satisfaction has to become much brighter.

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THIRD CLASS