

CHAPTER 3

WHEN YOU ARE

Time as well as space creates problems for texts. Although texts are written at a point in time (or, more exactly, over a span of time, which has an end point at which the texts are considered adequate to be presented to the intended audience) and they are read at another moment (or again, more exactly, a finite span of time), those moments may be far apart and have little to do with each other except for the text that binds them together. Just as pieces of paper may appear to be tied down to no particular place, they seem attached to no particular time. The textual artifact can endure for years without being used or even looked at. While texts from the future are still a matter of science fiction, any text still surviving from the past is available for our current use. Nonetheless, texts arise from historical moments in situations, are directed toward others located in historical moments, with specific intent to accomplish ends—influencing people and events within history. So where and how do we locate texts in time?

In a large scale way we can see the temporality of texts in the changes of genres that give them shape and locate them within activity systems. Texts seen as being in older genres carry the scent of a world whose time has passed. Texts also date in more specific ways. The specific occasions which give rise to texts emerge, coalesce, then evaporate; or change; or become ossified to become curious historical landmarks that constrain a changing world. The specific occasions of reading may be also be concretely tied to immediate events, as one may refer to a weather prediction the evening before heading out on a fishing trip, but the weather prediction past its time is not much use, unless to settle a barroom bet by corroborating an elaborate fish story.

When long-standing texts are seen as still current in their force and meaning, they tend to maintain earlier moments and arrangements within changing circumstances, such as happens with sacred texts, constitutions, or (more obviously problematically) anachronistic laws. Usually the relevance and force of such enduring texts are supported by equally enduring cultural and social institutions and practices, such as schools, churches, and courts. Even if our attentions remain fixed on a long-lived historical text supported by enduring social institutions, changing events and contexts bring temporal mutability to the reading and thus the interpretation and meaning of the texts, such as the extensive theological arguments among religious sects and constitutional divisions among legal scholars attempting to determine an absolute meaning of

a text from long ago. The attention of readers and the sense they may make of the text change and evaporate as time and conditions move on, so no ossification can be absolute. More typically, when we read texts out of their specific cultural and activity time, we too are engaged in new activities at our moment. Our current concerns may lead previously ignored documents to suddenly become newly significant, warranting detailed reexamination. Literary history is filled with the rising and falling stock of different writers arising from changing cultural concerns and tastes. To read through the history of Shakespeare criticism is to learn as much about the obsessions of different cultural moments as it is to learn about Shakespeare. This is equally true of our changing views of political documents and philosophic texts.

These waves of history are what the Greeks called *kairos*, a term that finds its etymology both in an archery target made by stretched strings and the transient openings in the weaving of cloth as the shuttle passes through the emerging network of thread (Miller, 1992, p. 313). This etymology vividly highlights the transience of events and the opportunities and threats events offer, but even more how reacting to those opportunities and threats adds to the unfolding events, helps extend the cloth. Events are moments of cultural formation, of intersubjective attention, and of conjoint activity. Events are phenomenologically perceived by participants as salient in the organization of unfolding activity. In face-to-face conversation time seems to happen unremarkably. We all know the time of day and year, the *chronos* by which we have come to mark time as a regular periodicity. If we are uncertain we can check our watches and calendars or the sun (although calendars and clocks, we should note are inventions precisely to inscribe time in a regularized symbolic order, to be laid on top of unfolding events so we can plan, contemplate, hold each other accountable for timeliness. Less determinatively, however, we also sense the unfolding of events, the phenomenological time we move through in the presence of others—we estimate our days through the pace of the activities we are part of, and in the gathering of people and actions in focused events. At times this sense of the moment comes to conscious attention, such as when we await the right moment to enter into a discussion. Raising to conscious contemplation this sense of the right moment is the function of the classical term of *kairos*, to help us attend to the temporal location, moments that gather and fade, the passing opportunities we may perceive and grab, so as to change the course of events through our timely intervention.

As writers of texts we also ride the waves of time, time in which we perceive our own urgencies of action, time in which we see others pursuing their own course of interests with actions at their own pace. At some moment we perceive events coming together in a time where a text would serve us well.

Our perception of the moment includes whether the time is ripe for other participants to receive our text. Will they pay attention to it? Will it change the course of their actions? Will it redefine a situation for others so that they will receive another person's message differently. By inserting our texts in the right moment in the right situation, we not only assert ourselves, we assert our perception of time and events into the unfolding realities. If others recognize the moment and space of our utterance, they share with us a common moment, a common time of coordinated attention. The recognition of genre is important in this coordination. Insofar as we create a mutually recognizable act in such shared moments, we create a social fact that may have long-term consequences for us and the others who come after. In writing we need to shoot an arrow from our time to land within the time net of others.

In our texts we even create further senses of time. The text is something that is read within time, and has its own pace or affords the reader multiple options of time in reading. We may write a text that needs slow word-by-word attention if it is to be meaningful or we may design a text that allows a busy executive to find a significant fact rapidly. We may write a text that allows various readers to enter in with different sequence and pacing. We both mesh with their time and then ensnare the reader within the time and space of our text for as long as they stay engaged with our text. This phenomenological sense of textual time transforms the embodied reader's perceived path through the day into a space of information, reflection, and ideational comment, moving with the pace of the ideas held up for inspection in the text. Readers may then return to their embodied world carrying the remnants of the textual time, such as with a panicked sense of rapidly unfolding global climate catastrophe presented in the environmental report they have just read or with the contemplative sense of eternity in a poem. Reading takes time out from the embodied day to assert new time scales and events into it.

One further sense of time in the text is that of the events represented in the text. Our slowly-read text may nonetheless represent a rapidly moving world—a world that we vainly try to hold still by our acts of aesthetic lengthening. Or we may present a world of deep causality where paleolithic events still leave their mark on the current landscape around us. This world of represented time also may change the reader's perception of the embodied world around them. We may walk down the street thinking not only of the ripening season, but of the ripening economy, the ripening of philosophic questions, the geologic unfolding of our region, or the seasons of the heart. So texts are not just themselves part of cultural and historic moments, they influence the experience of moments and the reflective perception of moments. To know the moments of the texts we receive and shape the texts to create moments of attention, spots

of time, we need to start to construct a sense of the way texts sit within and locate themselves in time.

WRITING AND THE HISTORY OF CULTURAL MOMENTS

Anyone who has done historical work in archives of a previous century knows how the documents carry the aroma of an earlier way of life. A look at old family documents brings us back not only to past events, but to the pace and relations of past days. Even genres that seem to have a fairly fixed form over time depend on the enduring cultural activity systems in which they reside and thrive, even as these systems evolve. People read novels of a few centuries ago and from another culture, but only because of continuing institutions of leisure, access, and education. Except for a limited number of titles that are continually renewed by new editions and film remakes, these older texts vanish into the obscurity of libraries, to be only occasionally looked at by scholars or people with antiquarian tastes—people who as part of their own current activity seek to be transported backward. Jane Austen's novels may be constantly revived, but what about those of contemporary author Tobias Smollett of *Peregrine Pickle* fame, and even lesser literary lights of late eighteenth century England? The revivals of old texts in addition to reinserting those texts within current systems of text distribution and the economics of publication, update the pleasures, and renew and reinterpret tastes and cultural systems of prior dates, holding them up for our own uses of cultural ideals and nostalgia. They also in part reproduce prior structures of cultural consumption, as a culturally complex form of connoisseurship. People delight in being able to spend their leisure by going backwards in imagined time—not only in the subject matter, but in the style of reading.

More concretely, consider such apparently timeless documents as birth and death records. These are only maintained as continuous and accessible by the continuing institutions that collect and house them, such as churches and governments. Even then, as anyone who has worked with such historical records knows, they must be interpreted in terms of the practices and uses of document at the time of original collection. Were births recorded on the first day of life or at baptism or after a year survival, at the hospital, the city hall or a religious institution, of all people or only of certain segments of the population? Further, we only go back to inspect such documentary remains as part of our own current cultural activities, whether reconstructing economic and health conditions or recovering our family histories which carry meanings for us now. Old texts are occasionally revived and given new social meanings

by changing social concerns that give them new relevance—currently in the Americas early Spanish colonial documents are being dusted off because of our need to reevaluate colonialism and its impact on a world now trying to reach toward new forms of global organization. Similarly, continuing relevance of ancient legal documents may be affected by the continuity of legal systems that provides such prior documents current legal force or influence.

The continuing relevance of the most ancient and stable of texts, the sacred scriptures of living religions—the Bible, the Mahabharata, the Koran—again depend on the continuing religious institutions wherein they remain centerpieces of moral and philosophic worlds. Scriptural religions revive the texts, constantly reinserting them in people’s lives. Similar texts of now extinct religions—such as the Egyptian Book of the Dead—have a different kind of contemporary status, primarily in the activities of scholars or those seeking after hidden knowledge of the ancients. If, however, they should become the center of a renewed cult or are taught in surveys of world culture, they again take on new sets of meanings and new forms of circulation—such as, for example, occurred when the tablets containing the Gilgamesh epic were discovered in 1853 after remaining buried and unread for millennia.

However, even the most stable of sacred scriptures are parts of changing religions in changing worlds, and thus change their meanings. Changing congregations, liturgies, sermonic practices, philosophies, life problems, church economics, and ambient cultural practices—among many other factors—constantly reposition the ancient sacred texts within modern activity systems. Even the most conservative text-bound cults within those religions, most dedicated to maintaining the word as written, nonetheless, constantly change, even just in addressing the contemporary challenges facing them in their efforts to hold to the old ways. It is very different to be a literalist New Testament believer in seventeenth century England than in twenty-first century Georgia or Mexico City.

WRITING AND ACTION MOMENTS

Texts are often part of local and immediate events as these events unfold. For example, an annual projection of a city’s economy made by an economist in the employ of the chamber of commerce enables local government and business to plan and make decisions over the ensuing months. One year the release of a particularly dire forecast leads to a series of newspaper stories and statements by local leaders—followed by a plan issued by the local chamber of commerce to be placed before the city council. Each of these documents is timely, speaking

to the unfolding events. If a local industry seeks to use these events to gain tax abatement for a long planned expansion, they might time their request for tax relief to take best advantage of the increasing anxiety and to fit into the emerging plan for city action. While all the projections and plans may later be of historical and comparative interest (to answer such currently-oriented questions as how the economy has grown over the years, and what we can learn from responses to previous downturns), they are all in the initial moment directed at influencing actions to be taken in the near term.

Some documents are, however, designed to be used in a variety of situations that may occur over an extended period, such as a reference book like a dictionary. But even then each use is motivated by the particular circumstance and needs of the user, which a well-designed reference attempts to anticipate. What kinds of occasion will send people to a dictionary to check spellings or an alternative meaning? How can the dictionary be designed to be handy for these situations? Even general purpose dictionaries make assumptions about the level of detail and needs of the users, as well as how the users have to configure their behavior to be efficient or appropriate users—in fact we have to be taught in school appropriate and efficient methods of dictionary use.

INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP PERCEPTION OF MOMENTS

The constantly emergent and self-making aspects of *kairos* suggest we need to attend to the unfolding events in which we are engaged, and to notice the process of their unfolding so as to spot targets for our comments. But of course our spotting of openings is influenced by our perceptions, of what is unfolding and where things are going, of what kind of cloth is being woven, and what kind of yarn we may add to make it something that contains our own meanings and desires.

Some targets are clearly held up by others for us to notice as when a funding agency sends us a form that we are invited to complete or a company announces it is accepting employment applications. Our decision is only whether we will aim for those targets. Some of those targets we are even compelled by law to address, as when we are required to submit our annual tax returns or to report births and deaths. Even these communicative moments, however, we may turn our backs on, though at the risk of penalties.

Other targets are so fleeting and evanescent that they only exist when a visionary individual sees it and then speaks to it, providing the means in retrospect by others to recognize the moment that has been seized. Nobody else might have recognized that moment in that way nor seen it as an opportunity

to be seized. Imagine a group of people sitting in a circle talking. Each sees different moments to jump in, and each seems to jump in from a different angle, taking the conversation in a particular direction. If it is a particularly heated discussion perhaps several people will always be ready to jump in, as they each note a break in the previous person's talk, a moment at which they might interrupt. However, it is likely that each of these would-be speakers would want to contribute something different. They will each likely find in the discussion to that point a different and will each find a different opening in the moment for weaving a different kind of cloth.

Now extrapolate this situation from face-to-face conversation to communication at a distance. So many documents may be seen by individuals pursuing different sets of interests, that people may likely see the unfolding events and the moments for opportune intervention differently. The resulting texts in response will likely vary in how they represent the moment, what they say, and how they try to seize the moment. Even when many people, aligned in similar ways, are paying attention to widely known events, their senses of the moment may be varied and inchoate until a single text—a government report, the carefully composed speech of a political leader, the powerful sermon—crystallizes a mood and moment. Shared institutions, shared immediate public facts and events, shared social positions and urgencies, then make these audiences ready to accept the author's framing of the moment, letting them recognize through the utterance that this is exactly where they are at and what they need at this moment. No matter how much the speaker's situation is prepared by institutional and historical pressures creating an opportunity, it is only the rhetor's grabbing of the moment in a particular way that coalesces the moment and gives the audience the occasion to recognize what a powerful moment it is.

TYPICAL ACTION SEQUENCES

Even if our words are not part of dramatic one-time events, we often know when in a typical chronological sequence texts come to us and when we need to produce texts in response. Some texts are set according to chronological guidelines. Income taxes in the United States are due on April 15 of every year or the report is due on the boss's desk next Tuesday. These calendar times indicate a local organizational time. The April 15 tax deadline is timed within a cycle of financial record keeping and reporting based on financial events in the previous calendar year, but reported to us and the government early in the new year on forms familiar to taxpayers as W2, 1099, and so on. Tax review procedures

occur afterward when we may be held accountable for the information we filed, but there are limited periods of liability and compulsory record keeping. So we can throw away most of our records after seven years. All of these temporalities bear on how we fill out our forms.

The report to the boss is in relation to the unfolding of a project, the internal temporality and deadlines of that project, expectations of the management, the promised customer delivery date, the quarterly corporate earnings report, and so on. All of these may bear to some degree on what we write to the boss on that Tuesday. Similarly, candidates' statements and political news are shaped by the closeness of the impending election, the unfolding electoral events, and the dynamics of forming new administrations after the elections. Events, sources available to journalists, and the interests of the readers all conspire to make the texts time-sensitive.

Even if we are not writing within a specific chronological frame for known events or known organizations, still our texts are likely used at certain moments within repetitive and predictable activity systems and action procedures. Parts manuals in auto garages are consulted at specific junctures such as in establishing inventory, costing and planning repairs, assembling correct parts for individual jobs, and in billing customers. The construction of such manuals (or their new electronic equivalents with even greater capabilities of integrating and facilitating functions) needs to be aware of these typical activities, to fit the moments of use. TV schedules similarly incorporate innovations to facilitate the scanning of alternatives during a free moment between shows or in planning out the evening's entertainment. So even though documents are created and consulted asynchronously and participants may be attending to documents through multisynchronous frames (either conflicting or coming together over a specific event), yet chronicity guides both writer and reader.

INFLUENCING THE FUTURE

Particular documents may have the generic or specific mandatory force in directing the production of a sequence of future documents. A city council announcement of a special election sets in motion a predictable sequence of print and speech genres. Likewise, a directive of a committee chair can set out a sequence of reports, reviews, and comments that will lead to a committee ballot on a proposal. This sequence may further set out an enforceable sequence of calendar dates for deadlines, filings, and actions.

Since all utterances are designed to have some influence or uptake they all speak not only to their moment but to the moments that follow. Some texts

may embody specific designs for influence and aim at specific consequences: the home improvement loan application, the advertisement with a return form or discount coupon, the student essay that aims to have the teacher writing an A on top. Some documents may be embedded within institutions that carry out substantial consequences of the text—the judicial decree that can send someone to prison or set them free, the CEO's directive that can authorize a hefty bonus, the military order that will set assault teams in motion.

Sometimes that desired influence will be more modest: to gain the recognition that you have filed the necessary papers in a timely way so that you will not be penalized for negligence or to announce that you are aware of certain facts. The influence a text may seek on future events may be less clear-cut. Even a private journal of personal experiences affects the diarist's thinking, perceptions, and consequent actions. The diarist feels better or worse, more determined and focused on action or confused and uncertain, leading to inaction. The diarist comes up with phrases to be used in more public communications in the future, now that he or she knows his or her thoughts and feelings.

Because of this desire to influence future actions, the effectiveness of documents may be improved if we can reasonably project the moment at which the document will be taken up by others, under what conditions, constraints, and motives. For example, if we are writing a letter of application for a job, it may help us to be aware that the letter will go to a personnel officer reviewing documents for five different positions simultaneously, each of which may have a hundred applicants. And further, before the officer goes home today he or she must pick a short list of people to interview for each position. Those constraints may help us decide what would get favorable attention. What works under these conditions of reading and decision making, however, may not work when we are among a small hand-picked group invited to apply for an elite position, where our letter will be read and discussed carefully by a blue-ribbon committee and held in explicit comparison to the letters of three other hand-picked candidates. To have any hope of influencing future events in either case, we need some plausible sense of what those future moments would be like.

In those moments of uptake the readers usually only have a limited number of plausible actions to choose from. Being able to project this future can help shape our writing to better effect. If the applications are to be initially reviewed to select a short list for further interview, some issues may be premature to raise. On the other hand, if hiring happens directly from the application, we may want to be explicit about our requirements for pay and privileges.

Most wide-circulation publications as well have short shelf-lives, even if later they take on different existence as historical documents. Newspapers and

online news sites measure life in hours and days. Magazine articles need to be of interest in the month of release, and any extended reprint life is a bonus. Most wide-circulation books need to gain popularity fast or vanish from the bookstore shelves within months; only a rare few books gain a long-standing place on publisher backlists. Even libraries, except for research libraries that need to keep an historical archive, periodically get rid of older books that no longer are of interest to the community. Research articles in scientific and scholarly journals may be read for a number of years, but only a few get noticed, read and cited as the years go on. Citation half-life, a concept from information sciences, measures the extinguishing relevance of research articles for current publications.

Writing that is intended for relevance to multiple readers over an extended period of time still has temporality. Self-help books are read by people at particular junctures in their lives; further, the tides of fashion, culture, and knowledge make likely that the book will eventually be dated. Textbooks are used with temporal sequences of classroom activities which the books must support; additionally, knowledge grows and changes—so a textbook usually must report the most current disciplinary findings while avoiding uncertain new results that may be discredited during the anticipated life of the book. Reference books, likewise, must walk the line between being current and being transiently faddish. The best way to assure a text some enduring life is for it to gain a central role in an enduring institution, such as a church, university, or a government not troubled by coups, revolutions, or reconstitutions. (I would mention the recent attempts of L. Ron Hubbard, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, and Uzbekhi tyrants to live by this wisdom, but their attempts may evaporate soon, thereby dating this current book which I am trying to fit within the very slow rhythms of academic rhetorical theory, which even keeps alive fragments that predate Socrates). Of course, even if you get the work a safe institutional home, then the rhythms and patterns of institutional activity will still shape when and how the old book will be pulled out and read.

THE TIME WITHIN THE TEXT

Some texts are designed to fit within the rhythms of life—such as the phone book consulted when there is an immediate need for information. Any significant delay in finding the phone number, pulling the reader away from the pressures of life, will be a cause for irritation. Other texts, in contrast, are designed to remove us from the here and now—to help us forget a long airplane ride or to lift us from our living room easy chair to pre-Cambrian rain forests.

The texts used within daily time urgencies need to be designed for convenient and easy access during those activities and to provide desired resources for those other activities to justify whatever time out required for reference. The encyclopedia article must make its information easy to locate and must provide good and useful information worth the time to read paragraphs. During that period the reader enters encyclopedia time, becoming a processor of encyclopedic information, engaged in highly focused search for desired information and building up a schematic representation of the subject. But the reader also enters into a world of disrupted chronologies, of atomized parallel sequences that can be jumped across by cross-reference. The reader, familiar with the organization of such texts as encyclopedia articles or research papers, though, can restructure the order of reading and the amount of time devoted to various parts to meet personal need.

On the other hand most of our expectations and training of reading predispose readers to giving their time over to the writer. The writer then can sequence the movement through topics, holding various objects and ideas up for the reader's contemplation—lingering on some, passing rapidly through others, transforming ideas sequentially.

The writer may also attempt to control the temporal experience of the reader more minutely by controlling the rhythms of the text, the difficulties of the syntax, the technicality of the language, the digressions or explanations—or by the directness and simplicity of a narrative. The writer may try to make the reader stop and figure things out or hold up a multi-faceted object for wonder, or the writer may move the reader rapidly across a clearly marked landscape where pieces fall quickly in place.

While such issues may bring to mind the aesthetic concerns of poetry and fiction, they are pervasive in many kinds of daily texts. In an article in a management magazine the bulleted lists of advice facilitate the reader stopping to think about their own current situations and problems. An economics article in the same magazine may alternate between easy to read scenarios of business activities and short dense paragraphs of economic reasoning over which the reader may need to pause, but not too long, before being given another fast moving survey of the current economic landscape. Such issues are characteristically discussed under the heading of style—but they are as much a matter of moving the reader through states of consciousness, attention, and mood as they are about the specifics of the language used to do so.

In between these extremes of reader-timed texts and writer-timed texts are many middles. The writer may assist the reader in shuttling between alternative times and current concerns. The management article discussed just above are part of a class of self-help articles that do not so much tell the reader remarkably

new things as give the reader a leisured opportunity to contemplate their current situation with the reminder of some familiar prescriptions. Other kinds of instructional and do-it-yourself texts provide guidance for a hands-on operation, but in a slowed-down instructional mode. A plumbing guide may take time to explain how valves work—for a moment transporting the reader inside the valve to notice the seating of the washers and the mechanisms of flow and interruption—so that the home-owner can diagnose and repair the leaky faucet.

Even the most abstracted intellectual texts may need to bring the reader out of the world of abstractions back down to their daily experience and concerns so they can understand concretely what the ideas mean in practice and perhaps identify moral or ethical applications. Spiritual books, for example, often mediate between the eternity of timeless truths inscribed in long-enduring sacred texts and the daily worries and puzzles of people taking time to contemplate their lives, relations, and souls.

Even fictions and entertainments draw on readers concerns, frustrations, and experiences of the daily world, pulling the readers from their street presence into an audience—as the old tradition of dramatic prologue explicitly did. Throughout the fiction daily experiences and life knowledge are transformed and played upon. Sometimes this worldly connection is explicit as in political satire or social problem literature, with perhaps some intention of transforming the audience's perception and experience of the world. Sometimes the connection with the world is more distant, as the audience is left only with a sense of refreshment, a reminder of emotions not felt in a while, and perhaps a different way of looking at people or events.

Texts have the potential of linking our time and other times overtly discussed in the text. An account of prior periods may exercise our historical imaginations, add to our knowledge, and draw us back to an earlier time for a few hours. It may also help us recognize our current moment as analogous or even continuous with earlier moments, so we see our contemporary concerns as part of larger flows of economic or political developments. Texts also introduce readers to alternative ways of thinking about time—as we perhaps first experience Proustian reminiscent time or we start to become aware of geologic time. Some texts give us means to think of ourselves positioned in that time—as accounts of biological and or cultural evolution may do. Texts further can make these time frames visible and important to us, helping us see the multiplicity of times in our lives. This transforming of our sense of our own time can change our ideational or ideological orientation to the embodied world. Chapter 10 of this volume will explore more fully how a writer can help direct and organize the reader's experience of time.

THE TEMPORALITY OF MULTIPLE TEXTS

Sequences of text, too, bring their temporality in how they represent our time and how they construct times for literate interchange. Emails may come rapidly on one another, pressing for immediate response, while journals have monthly or annual cycles and represent events with longer flows. Records of our life events, educations, and careers add up over a lifetime, while great intellectual and aesthetic traditions are seen in the flow of centuries.

Academic courses for the most part are linearly sequential processes, defined by the structured time of a syllabus. Major asynchronicities only arising from students' bending of deadlines and teachers' delays in returning marked papers—with well-known difficulties arising from both. The main potential source of multi-synchronicity is in the assigned readings that come from different times, places, and activity systems. Many classes avoid these complexities by only using a textbook of recent vintage that homogenizes and codifies knowledge in what appears to be a timeless way, but actually reflects an author-imposed consensus slightly behind the leading edge of disciplinary inquiry and controversy. Synchronic discontinuity is only foregrounded when textbooks are clearly out of date or late-breaking highly publicized findings directly contradict the book's teaching.

History and literature courses which consider temporally and culturally distant themes and materials, however, often introduce texts that are explicitly asynchronous with the classroom moment. That asynchronicity is foregrounded and managed by the standard classroom distinction of primary and secondary texts to be read in distinctively different ways—the primary to be interpreted as historical fact or privileged literary experience out of time, and the secondary as reliable knowledge in the synchronic now of the classroom. Only in more advanced classes in the subject, as students start reading multiple, conflicting texts are issues of multi-synchronous relations of texts usually dealt with. And even then, an official narrative of a main textbook may put all the developments into a normalized historical narrative, fitting all the texts within classroom time that unfolds from the handing out of the first day syllabus until completion of exam and posting of grades.

The task of attuning to asynchronous and multi-synchronous processes of literate interaction is more invisible and harder to monitor—but to people who have been engaged in an academic or professional specialty for a while, it is apparent who the newcomers are, those who may do things technically properly but don't know the underlying dynamics and pacing of the discussion and the most effective moments for intervention. Neophytes are characteristically judged as either too hesitant to enter when they need to or too quick to speech when they might wait for events to unfold a bit more.

Lawyers, for example, learn to juggle the asynchronicity and multi-synchronicity of relevant precedents, antiquated laws that have been reinterpreted in practice, larger judicial issues that are making their way up the court system, changing legislative mandates on county courts, the politics of impending district attorney elections, the particular events involving the victim and the accused, the commitments and habits of the presiding judge and the unfolding of this particular trial, with multiple filings, appeals, and actual courtroom events that lawyers must respond to. The complexity of events moving on different time scales is ignored at the client's peril.

TIME TO PRODUCE TEXTS

Finally, writers should consider the time it takes to develop a piece of writing—what has been called the writing process. During this process, a writer engages in many different kinds of activities that ultimately bear on the final text produced but that are not necessarily represented or manipulated in the final text. Early idea-generation activities differ from those that developed concrete plans, those that produced some text, and those directed at reviewing and improving produced text. Such differing activities are often identified by terms such as pre-writing, inventing, planning, draft-writing, revision, editing, and proofreading. People do not necessarily follow these activities in a simple-stage-like manner, but rather move around them in a recursive fashion. Further, people's processes turn out to be highly individualistic, depending on personal habits and tastes, along with the particular circumstances of each writing situation. Yet the overall sequence of activities helps a writer bring a text into being, emerging from first thoughts into polished prose.

Awareness that writing takes time and only gradually emerges through a variety of activities relieves a writer from the anxieties that come from a sense of incompleteness and imperfection. Writers do not have to produce fully-formed text from the beginning. After all, writers are solving problems and figuring out what they have to say as they go along, so necessarily the partially emerged text will appear flawed and imperfect with problems still to be solved. Awareness of process opens up the temporal space of production as something to be thought about, worked with, perhaps rearranged or managed, rather than something to be simply painfully endured or to suppress from consciousness.

Even though writing processes may not always be carried out in a clearly marked stages with definitive borders as one moves from one stage to the next, the awareness that the writer's primary attention is now focused on one level of work, and that the writer can rely on one having previously thought through

certain levels of work, and that other kinds of things will be worried about later, keeps the writer from having to feel compelled to juggle too many tasks at once. The writer can think about sketching out big ideas, or search for strong examples without having to worry about sentence coherence or spelling or accurate typing. All will be worried through and done in its time.

An awareness that processes vary according to personal habits, task, and situation, invites writers in each situation to articulate and improve their habits without imposing an uncomfortable general model. And it invites writers to think of the nature of the task and situation facing them and how their personal habits may be accommodated and exploited to advantage in any particular case. Chapter 12 of this volume provides further thoughts on the nature of writing processes and how they can be managed effectively.

The perspective on genre and activity systems presented in this book also provides additional dimensions to observing, understanding, and managing writing processes. Each genre suggests the kinds of resources that need to be drawn on and brought into it, the ways in which they should be typically represented, the aspects that will be evaluated and expected and therefore need to be attended to with special care, and thus the kind of work needed to produce those documents. If a psychological experiment will likely be evaluated on its methodologically correct and precise account of how the data was produced and recorded, a writer will design one's experiments and record the design and ensuing events so as to produce an accountable narrative of method. If an autobiographic reverie is dependent on the depth and richness of texture of memory, an essential part of the writing process is to find ways to tap into deep sensory memory. In writing for a job application, where judgments about competence are likely to be made on final appearance and formal correctness, then the writer might build in multiple end-of-the-process inspections.

Further, each genre just as it carries out typical forms and activities carries with it typical situations and processes of production, learned as part of learning the genre. Learning to write a news story occurs at the city hall, in making connections with informants, in conducting interviews, as well as at the keyboard. It involves learning how to keep a reporter's notebook and when to make an audio recording. It means learning when and where to compose a story so as to meet deadlines, but not too early to miss late-breaking events. It has to do with learning about the typical ways of the newsroom and the editor, and a thousand other things that old hands know about the profession in general and idiosyncratically at a particular newspaper.

The story of the newsroom highlights that processes of text production are embedded in the entire discursive activity system—and learning the genre and how to do it is learning the activity system, where the process of writing

documents within the system fits in to all the ongoing activities, including editorial assignments, paper policies, and budget meetings. Further, it lets one know where the supports and resources are—the ongoing relationships with informants and public relations offices, the available files in the newspapers, the wire services.

One can even predispose audiences to positive reception of the text by engaging them in the production. Gaining the opinions of the upper management on what kind of information is needed in a business report and requesting access to relevant file, can increase the likelihood that the report will speak to their needs and perceptions in highly effective ways. Having the right people reviewing document drafts may turn these influential readers into committed advocates even before the document is released.

Every piece of writing is deeply embedded in some activity system, and the more deeply one understands that system and its rhythms, the more one can let the activity system help one produce the document—drawing on, being directed by, leaning against, and creatively resisting the ongoing welter of events, artifacts, resources, and personalities, to produce an emergent text that draws on the strengths of that system to be influential within it. Some students learn how to use the activity and rhythms of the class to build their papers and some never manage to get in the swing of things, so that they seem to be taking a correspondence course—sending in papers from cognitive, social, and temporal places that are distant from the activity of the classroom. A paper submitted three months after the end of the class, when the student and teacher are off doing and thinking about other things, goes without the supportive environment that surrounds other students writing to the same assignment. Strong writing draws on its time and speaks to its time. It knows when it is.