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INVENTING THE WRITER IN COMPOSITION STUDIES

> The first stage [of composing], the finding of material by thought or observation, is the fundamental and inclusive office of invention. . . . Yet this is, of all processes, the one least to be invaded by the rules of the textbook. It is a work so individual, so dependent on the particular aptitude and direction of the writer's mind, that each one must be left for the most part to find his way alone, according to the impulse that is in him.
>
> JOHN GENUNG, "The Study of Rhetoric in the College Course"

> Genres, in-so-far as they identify a repertoire of possible actions that may be taken in a set of circumstances, identify the possible intentions one may have. Thus they embody the range of social intentions toward which one may orient one's energies.
>
> CHARLES BAZERMAN, "Systems of Genres and the Enactment of Social Intentions"

The above observations by Genung and Bazerman, made more than a century apart, represent two possible ways of imagining the writer-as-agent in composition. Genung locates agency within the writer, whose self-motivated, private intentions guide his or her processes of invention. Bazerman locates agency within a larger sphere of social motives, which orients and generates a writer's intentions to act. In both cases, Genung and Bazerman acknowledge that intention "belongs" to the writer and shapes how he or she begins to write, but they present different visions of where intentions come from and how and why they are acquired, leading to questions about the nature of agency and where it resides. That writers "have" intentions and that writers are the most palpable agents of invention is not under dispute.

Under dispute, rather, is how writers come to have intentions in the first place. And here we return to the question of motive that we began to address in the previous chapter, namely, what is involved when we say what writers are doing and why they are doing it? Writers, of course, are the ones who do the writing; they are the most obvious and immediate agents of their writing, the ones who transform intentions into words and actions as they invent their texts. But to designate and treat writers as the sole agents of invention because they are its most visible agents, as is largely still the case in composition pedagogy (Howard 1999, 57, 163), is to overlook the less obvious but just as significant factors that are at work on the writer, factors that shape writers' intentions and motivate the choices they make as agents.[1] As I will describe at the end of this chapter, genre theory helps us extend the sphere of agency in the study and teaching of writing to include not only what writers do when they write, but what happens to writers that makes them do what they do. Extending the sphere of agency in this way allows us to explore Kenneth Burke's expression "the motivation to act" in the fullness of its complexity, as a process of simultaneously acting and being acted upon. Such a formulation recognizes the writer as a "double agent," one who is both an agent *of* his or her desires and actions and an agent *on behalf of* already existing desires and actions. Invention occurs at the intersection of this dialectic between the social and the individual (which includes what Marshall Alcorn describes as the relation between libidinal attachments and ideological structures [2002, 23]) where agency is acquired, negotiated, resisted, and deployed. As they invent, writers participate in this agency, but they are not its sole agents.

Generally speaking, process-based research and pedagogy in composition studies have privileged the writer as the primary agent of invention. Toward that end, scholars and teachers of writing have developed valuable methods of encouraging writers, alone and in collaboration with others, to discover, organize, construct, reconstruct, and reflect on their ideas and writing in ways that acknowledge and manage their agency as writers. As valuable as such work has been and continues to be, however, it leaves us

with a partial understanding of the agency at work when writers write, an understanding that imagines the writer as the point of departure for writing. Even when teachers acknowledge the social presence of writing by creating a space for and encouraging writers to collaborate with others, this social participation still mainly identifies and serves writers as the primary agents of writing, who invent privately and *then* subject the work of their invention to the influences of others (see Lunsford and Ede 1994, 431; and Howard 1999, 36–39). This partial notion of agency not only informs the teaching of invention, but, as I will argue in the final chapter, it also limits the teaching of writing in ways that ultimately threaten the place and purpose of post-secondary writing instruction. Yet it remains the prevailing notion, despite the work of composition scholars who have challenged it and offered in its place evidence of the thoroughly social nature of invention and authorship (see, for example, LeFevre 1987, Brodkey 1987, S. Miller 1989, Cooper 1989, Ede and Lunsford 1990, Faigley 1992, Lunsford and Ede 1994, and Howard 1999).

In this chapter, I investigate how and why process-based methodologies in composition came to privilege such a partial view of the writer and invention, a view that "invents" the writer as the primary site and agent of writing. At the end of the chapter and in the remainder of the book, I will examine what it would mean for the study and teaching of invention if we located intentions within a larger sphere of agency that includes not only the writer as agent but also the social and rhetorical conditions, namely genres, which participate in this agency and in which the writer and writing take place. Recasting invention in this way challenges us to reconsider entrenched assumptions about the writer and what it means to write in ways that will contribute, I hope, a richer, more pedagogically useful understanding of both.

THE PROCESS MOVEMENT IN COMPOSITION: RECLAIMING INVENTION

In order to uncover general assumptions about the writer and invention in composition, we need to locate these assumptions in the context of the process movement in which they emerged.

The writing process movement in composition studies, as is well known, developed in the 1960s and 1970s as a rejection of traditional, product-driven, rules-based writing instruction. And with its popularization in the years since, the process movement has helped legitimize composition as a theoretical and professional academic discipline by giving those involved in it something to study in addition to something to teach, namely students' composing processes (Crowley 1998, 191; see also Harris 1997 and S. Miller 1991). Such an emphasis on the process rather than the product of writing—really a shift in attention from textual *product* to textual *production*—resulted in a shift in focus away from arrangement and correctness (this is what a finished text should look like) and back to invention (this is how a finished text comes to exist), thereby encouraging composition scholars to investigate the archeology of textual production right down to its beginnings in the writer's mind, the very realm, Genung had explained a half century earlier, that textbooks and teachers cannot invade. Influenced by work in cognitive psychology and creativity theory, early studies of writing processes such as Janet Emig's (1971) and Sondra Perl's (1979) demonstrated that writing is not simply the product of already formulated thought, but rather the process of working through thought, the process, as Perl explains, of seeing "in our words a further structuring of the sense we began with and . . . [recognizing] that in those words we have discovered something new about ourselves and our topic" (1988, 117). This attention to process revealed and provided access to an entire cognitive geography behind textual production, a geography that led many process theorists once again to inquire, after a period of neglect, into the nature of invention.

In shifting the balance of inquiry from the product to its production, advocates of process pedagogy inaugurated a veritable renaissance in rhetorical invention. "It is no accident," Richard Young wrote in 1978, "that the gradual shift in attention among rhetoricians from composed product to the composing process is occurring at the same time as the reemergence of invention as a rhetorical discipline" (33). Renewed interest in invention, Young

explains, was heavily influenced by classical rhetoric, work in linguistics, and research in mid-twentieth century cognitive psychology and creativity theory. These different influences led to different and competing trajectories of inquiry into invention during the '60s and '70s, including Corbett's use of the classical topoi, Young, Becker, and Pike's development of tagmemic rhetoric, and Rohman and Wlecke's work on prewriting (Young 1978; for a more detailed account of competing theories of invention, see Lauer 1984). These influences also led to different heuristic procedures for teaching invention. Classical rhetoric contributed the topics, which provided rhetors with strategies for finding arguments; tagmemic rhetoric, developing from work in linguistics, provided strategies for inquiring into a problem from various perspectives and then formulating and solving it; and prewriting, growing out of work in creativity theory and developmental psychology, provided strategies to stimulate the discovery of ideas within writers through the use of journaling, meditation, and thinking-via-association. While classical and tagmemic rhetoric located invention for the most part externally in relation to an audience, argument, or problem, prewriting located invention introspectively in relation to the writer. Yet despite their different orientations, these theories and practices of invention did what current-traditional rhetoric had not done—they rendered invention accessible to inquiry, rendered it, that is, codifiable and teachable.

Rohman's and Wlecke's work on prewriting, referencing and reinforcing entrenched post-Enlightenment concepts of authorship, has had the most enduring influence on process-based pedagogies of invention. To this day, composition teachers and textbooks frequently refer to invention as prewriting and promote introspective heuristics such as freewriting, mapping, clustering, and brainstorming to help students discover and generate subject matter about which they will consequently write. These heuristics rightfully acknowledge and endorse writers as agents of their invention, the ones who access, develop, and articulate (with or without the collaboration of others) desires and

intentions. But alone, these heuristics do not account for the complex relations of agency in which writers participate during invention. Their use overlooks, for example, the extent to which invention situates writers within what I, following Schryer (1994) and Bazerman (2002), described in chapter 2 as genred sites of action in which writers acquire, negotiate, and articulate desires and intentions. Ironically, for example, teachers and textbooks frequently overlook the fact that heuristics such as freewriting, brainstorming, and clustering, far from "free," are themselves discursive and ideological sites of action, genres that position writers within situated commitments, relations, and subjectivities.[2] By texturing cognition in specific ways (both in the sense of locating cognition within textual formations and in the sense of organizing or "texturing" cognition), these genres not only enable writers to acquire and articulate certain kinds of desires, but they also enable writers to participate in as well as potentially resist the discursive relations and activities bound up in and deployed through these desires. Agency gets enacted within these genred sites of action, but, again, writers are not its only agents. When composition pedagogies position writers as the primary or originating agents of invention, they deny writers access to the agency in which they necessarily participate. In so doing, such pedagogies perpetuate what Howard, following LeFevre (1987), Crowley (1990), and Lunsford and Ede (1994), calls the "normative model of the inspired, autonomous author [which] so pervades contemporary composition pedagogy that it even informs models for classroom collaboration" (1999, 57). This model is symptomatic (in the psychoanalytical sense of the term) of the enduring attachments teachers have to the idea of invention as prewriting and of writers as its originating agents.

In reclaiming invention as a teachable subject, thus, the process movement shifted the focus of writing instruction from the text and toward the writer. This shift from text to writer resulted in the destabilization of the text, since the text became treated as an ongoing production rather than as a freestanding

product. The text now had a history that could be traced to its writer's mind and analyzed through the processes of its production. The process movement, hence, rejected the modernist stability of the new critical literary text as something somehow already composed only to be interpreted and evaluated, and embraced a view of the text as something contingent, something that is always in the process of being composed. Yet, for all its challenges to the text as a fixed, stable, and final product, for all its emphasis on revision, open-endedness, and recursivity, the process movement remains a decidedly modernist practice when it comes to its preservation of the writer as the self-possessed, identifiable agent of invention.[3] The process movement has left composition studies with an archeology and even a psychology of texts, but it has not equally provided a sociology of texts that accounts as fully for their social and socializing presence, as recent work in post-process theory has argued (see Kent 1999).

As a result, process-based theories of writing continue to posit the writer as an "originating consciousness" from which invention begins (Crowley 1990, 16). Indeed, Karen Burke LeFevre reflects, "composition theory and pedagogy in nineteenth and twentieth century America have been founded on a Platonic view of invention, one which assumes that the individual possesses innate knowledge or mental structures that are the chief source of invention. According to this view, invention occurs largely through introspective self-examination" (1987, 11). What I find curious about this concept of the writer is not so much that it still dominates our cultural and pedagogical imaginary, but that it remains as an assumption still shared by both current-traditional *and* process pedagogies. In what follows, I would like to consider briefly why even more recent process-based theories and practices of invention, despite having rejected so much of the current-traditional practices that had informed their views, continue, as John Genung did in 1892, to view invention as "a work so individual, so dependent on the particular aptitude and

direction of the writer's mind, that each one must be left for the most part to find his way alone, according to the impulse that is in him" (217).

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE . . . : THE DEATH (AND REBIRTH) OF INVENTION

By the time Genung wrote those words in the late nineteenth century, invention had been pretty much exiled from the public realm of rhetoric and relegated to the private workings of the writer's mind. So much so, in fact, that by the middle of the nineteenth century most composition and rhetoric textbooks no longer even bothered to deal with it in any substantial way. As Alexander Bain confidently explains in his popular textbook, *English Composition and Rhetoric* (first published in 1866), "The direct bearing of the Rhetorical act is, *of course*, not Invention, but Correctness; in other words, polish, elegance, or refinement" (1887,vii; my emphasis). The matter of fact way in which Bain makes this claim suggests how prevalent this assumption regarding rhetoric had become, but this assurance masks the fact that the assumption was at most only a hundred years old, largely a result, as I will explain in more detail shortly, of eighteenth century empiricism. For over two thousand years before that, invention was central to the rhetorical act.

Aristotle, as is well known, defined rhetoric as the art of discovering the available means of persuasion in any given situation. Invention, as "the canon of classical rhetoric through which arguments, or the substance of a message, are discovered or devised" (C. Miller 1980, 243), was central to this art. As Scott Consigny argues, "the art of rhetoric is thus a heuristic art, allowing the rhetor to discover real issues in indeterminate situations" (1994, 63). To assist rhetors in discovering the available means of persuasion, classical rhetoricians devised a series of topics (topoi) or commonplaces to serve as heuristics to invention. The topoi, as the etymology of the word suggests, were "places" rhetors could go to locate the available means of persuasion for a given situation. Aristotle, for example, distinguished between

common and special topics. The former were invention strategies that could be used on any occasion—"depositories of general arguments that one could resort to when discussing virtually any subject"—and included definition, comparison, relationship, circumstance, and testimony (Corbett 1990, 97, 133). The latter were discourse-specific invention strategies "guiding the rhetor to subject matter as evidence for different rhetorical situations" (Lauer 1996, 725). In his *De Inventione*, Cicero extended Aristotle's topics as inventional techniques to include even more conceptual lines of discovering effective means of argumentation (Farrell 1996, 116). In their various manifestations, the topoi were publicly available to language users, quite literally, Sharon Crowley explains, "located in the participants' current or potential discourse" (1990, 68). As such, the topoi were part of the collected wisdom of a community, based on shared assumptions and communal knowledge, for locating one's discourse, including lines of reasoning, types of evidence, and appeals to audiences, within a social method of inquiry (Crowley 1990, 3, 68). To invent, to discover or formulate the available means of persuasion, a rhetor had to turn to these socially agreed upon topoi for guidance. Rhetors had to place themselves within these already existing rhetorical places.

Treating invention as an act so private as to be inaccessible and unteachable or, at its most extreme, as an act that does not even belong within the scope of rhetoric was very much a phenomenon that had its beginnings in eighteenth century empiricism—the birth of modernism. It had to do with a momentous shift in theories regarding the nature of knowledge, of epistemology—where knowledge comes from and how it is produced. "In classical epistemology," Crowley explains, "wise persons were those who had thought long and hard about the cultural assumptions that influenced their lives and those of other persons. In turn, their shared wisdom became part of communal knowledge. Knowledge itself was always changing its shape, depending on who was doing the knowing. Every act of knowing influenced the body of knowledge itself" (1990, 162). Classical epistemology thus proceeded

deductively from a set of social assumptions, with rhetoric being a discursive means of engaging in these assumptions and participating in the communal actions upon which they are predicated (the enthymeme is a case in point). The topoi or commonplaces enabled rhetors to gain access to this social knowledge, making classical rhetoric, as Robert Connors explains, a "public discipline, devoted to examining and arguing questions that could be shared by all members of the polity" (1997, 298–99). Modern epistemology, however, privatized the locus of knowledge so that inquiry proceeded inductively from external parts derived from sense impressions to an internal whole derived through mental association.[4] Such a privatized economy not only shifted the trajectory of invention from an outwardly directed activity to an inwardly directed activity, thereby placing invention outside the realm of rhetoric and within the logical workings of the individual mind, but as Howard, following M. Rose, explains, it also identified the results of mental labor as the property of the individual that produced them (1999, 79–80).

Whereas classical epistemology saw rhetoric as a means of socially participating in the shared knowledge of the polis, eighteenth century epistemology literally saw rhetoric as an afterthought, a means not of inventing ideas but of arranging them logically and clearly so that they could be communicated (or miscommunicated) to others (see Berlin 1987; Connors 1981; Crowley 1990; C. Miller 1979; Murphy 1990). The shift from invention to arrangement as the central focus of modern rhetoric had far-reaching effects on the teaching of writing for almost the next two hundred years, not to be seriously challenged until the early 1960s with the renaissance of classical rhetoric and, as we discussed earlier, the emergence of the process movement. The history of this modern rhetoric, what came to be known as "current-traditional" rhetoric, and its impact on the teaching of writing is by now well known to scholars in composition and rhetoric, and it is not necessary for me to rehearse it here.[5] Instead, I would like to explore in more detail why this modernist emphasis on the individual mind as

the locus of knowledge came to privatize the study and teaching of rhetorical invention to this day.

If one assumes that individuals accumulate knowledge empirically through experience, rational investigation, and research, and if one also assumes that reason is self-evident, then there is little need to teach invention since, on the one hand, writers either possess knowledge or they do not and, on the other hand, there is no need for writers to discover strategies for persuasion. Instead, the teaching of rhetoric involves helping the individual arrange already formulated ideas so that they can be communicated accurately to others. In his influential *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (first published in 1783), for example, Hugh Blair rejected classical invention altogether by arguing that rational investigation, rather than rhetorical inquiry, would lead to the shaping of arguments (Crowley 1990, 11). "In a single stroke," Crowley claims, "Blair placed the entire process of invention beyond the province of rhetorical study, arguing that the art of rhetoric can only teach people how to manage the arguments they have discovered by other [more empirical] means" (11).

Such a privatized notion of invention held "the quality of an author's mind solely to account for the quality of his discursive intentions" (Crowley 1990, 54). After all, as Samuel Newman observed in his *Practical System of Rhetoric* (first published in 1827), "the store-house of the mind must be well filled; and [a rhetor] must have that command over his *treasures*, which will enable him to bring forward, whenever the occasion may require, what has here been accumulated for future use" (1838, 16–17; my emphasis). In this formulation, ideas and intentions not only reside pre-rhetorically within a writer's mind, but, as suggested by the word "treasures," they are also a form of capital that a writer owns. It is not surprising, then, that by 1892 John Genung can describe invention as an act so individual, "so dependent on the peculiar aptitude and direction of the writer's mind," that writers must be left to invent alone. Equally not surprising is the move, toward the latter part of the nineteenth century, to abandon the teaching of invention altogether, since

invention was so introspective, so individual, that it could not be taught. A. S. Hill, the Boylston Chair of Rhetoric at Harvard from 1876 to 1904—the time during which some of the earliest first-year writing courses were being developed (see Berlin 1987)—placed invention out of the reach of rhetoric when he proclaimed in his extremely popular textbook, *Principles of Rhetoric and Their Amplification* (1878), that rhetoric "does not undertake to furnish a person with something to say"; it "shows how to convey from one mind to another the results of observation, discovery, or classification" (iv). It was in this context that the first-year writing course emerged as an institutional reality, a context that saw rhetoric as product replace rhetoric as production, signaling not only the privatization of invention, but also the diminishment of rhetoric as an epistemic process.

Today, our teaching of invention remains so invested in a private economy of the writer as a self-possessed agent that we forget that it was this very invention of the writer as self-possessed agent that led to the diminishment of rhetorical invention in the first place. So many of our contemporary perceptions of invention assume the writer as its starting point that the way we understand and teach invention today is premised on an epistemology that has well nigh destroyed it. Even by the 1960s when the process movement in composition studies tipped the rhetorical balance from product back to production and hence rescued invention by once again giving it a central role in the teaching of writing, it maintained the partial view of the writer as the primary agent of invention rather than as an agent who participates within a larger discursive and ideological agency. Yet whereas current-traditional rhetorics dismissed it as unteachable because inherent, process-based rhetorics recognized invention as generative (as the stage of the writing process in which writers construct knowledge rather than recall it), and developed a range of strategies for helping writers, alone or in collaboration with others, to *learn* through writing. In so doing, the process movement defined the writer's growth as the subject of writing instruction.

D. Gordon Rohman and Albert O. Wlecke's 1964 federally funded research project on "prewriting" reveals this focus on the writer's development as the subject matter of writing instruction. As Rohman defines it in his 1965 article, "Pre-Writing: The Stage of Discovery in the Writing Process," prewriting is all that happens before the point at which the "'writing idea' is ready for the words on the page" (1994, 41)—that is, before arrangement. Prewriting has been neglected, Rohman argues, because it exists "within the mind and [is] consequently hidden," yet it marks a formative stage in the writing process (42). It is formative because it shapes thinking, which Rohman describes as

> that activity of mind which brings forth and develops ideas, plans, designs, not merely the entrance of an idea into one's mind; an active, not a passive enlistment in the "cause" of an idea; conceiving, which includes consecutive logical thinking but much more besides; essentially the imposition of pattern upon experience. (41)

Here we recognize many of the assumptions that guide the process movement, the most significant of which is that far from being simple mental reflections of the external world, our ideas actually emerge as we organize and impose a pattern upon them. Teachers of writing were encouraged to nurture this process through such heuristic techniques as journal writing, meditation, and analogy.

Rohman describes prewriting as an introspective process of invention located within writers and meant to help writers express their experiences to themselves both before and while they communicate them to others. Such a view of invention presupposes a concept of the writer as a self-contained sphere of agency, "one," Rohman tells us, "who stands at the center of his own thoughts and feelings with the sense that they belong to him" (43). Contemporary practices of invention that encourage the use of prewriting heuristics such as freewriting, brainstorming, and clustering inherit the concept of the writer that informs them. Unlike

the classical topoi, which were publicly available rhetorical strategies, these introspective heuristics assume that an individual possesses a priori topics "inherently there, waiting to be mined" (Ohmann 1976, 150). To "unlock discovery," for example, Rohman recommends the use of meditation as a heuristic. He advises students "to compose a *'place'* for your subject, one where you can live. Keep composing until you reach the point that your understanding of your 'subject' is experienced within, until, in other words, the 'event' of your subject happening to you becomes an experience happening within you" (46; my emphasis).

This advice marks a major turning point in invention theory, for it signals the rebirth of invention in composition. Rohman not only rejects current-traditional, product-based theories of writing, but he also rescues invention as the central canon of rhetoric. Yet his work maintains a privatized economy of invention as a "place" writers foster within themselves rather than as social "places" (topoi) to which writers turn in order to orient themselves within social methods of inquiry, as classical and tagmemic rhetoric had described. In a way that classical and tagmemic rhetoric could not, Rohman and Wlecke's work on prewriting gained credibility in part because it referenced and confirmed deeply held beliefs about authorship, beliefs that had been gaining momentum since the late eighteenth century as a result of copyright laws, Romantic theories of originality, literary assumptions about authorship, the influence of the printing press, and Enlightenment privatization of knowledge (LeFevre 1987; M. Rose 1993; Woodmansee and Jaszi 1994). Not only did Rohman and Wlecke's work draw on such beliefs; it also supported them by turning to contemporary work in creativity research, which was emerging as a subdiscipline of cognitive psychology at about the same time as the process movement was emerging.

INVENTION AND/AS CREATIVITY

Rohman and Wlecke's research was heavily influenced by mid-twentieth century developmental psychology and creativity theory. Like their contemporary Janet Emig, they drew from

Brewster Ghiselin's collection of essays on creativity, *The Creative Process* (1952) and *The Paris Interviews: Writers at Work*, which began to be published in 1958; as well as Jerome Bruner's work on cognition and discovery published in the early 1960s (Crowley 1998, 195; Schreiner 1997, 88). In "The Uses of the Unconscious in Composing" (1964), for instance, Emig turns to the testimony and advice of artists in order to understand writing processes, claiming that contemporary textbooks rarely acknowledge "that writing involves commerce with the unconscious self and that because it does, it is often a sloppy and inefficient procedure for even the most disciplined and longwriting of professional authors" (7). Seven years later, in *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, Emig once again takes writing textbooks to task for encouraging students to use externally schematized sources such as topics for invention when they should focus more on a writer's personality and feelings, in short, a writer's psychology (1971, 16). It is not surprising, then, to find Emig beginning *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* with a review of contemporary theories of literary creativity, including Joseph Wallas's four stages of creativity: preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification (17–19). Indeed, as Steven Schreiner has argued, Emig's work on composing, work that was to have such a profound influence on process theories and pedagogies, was predicated on a view of literary creation and authorship, one built on the assumption that writing reflects and serves the needs of its writer, who is also its primary agent (1997, 87, 100–102).

In identifying the writer as the point of departure for writing, Rohman and Wlecke's and Emig's work drew on the work of creativity researchers who were beginning to investigate how ideas, particularly novel ideas, are created in the mind. Such research was based on the assumption that the mind does not only combine what it takes in through sense impressions, but can also invent something valuable and new (Feldman et al. 1994, 1). Because creativity theorists were beginning to focus on the cognitive processes involved in creative production, and

because the process movement in composition developed in part out of such research, we can learn a great deal about process-based theories of invention by turning to work in creativity theory, so I will briefly turn to it now. As I will argue, however, while such work helped describe the complex cognitive processes involved when writers invent, and encouraged writing teachers to treat student writers as agents of their own writing and to respect their writing choices in ways that greatly enhanced the teaching of writing, it nonetheless presented a partial view of this process by focusing on the writer as self-contained agent of invention rather than on the larger sphere of agency in which the writer as agent participates.

In *Changing the World: A Framework for the Study of Creativity*, Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, and Gardner describe how, since the 1950s, modern creativity research, as a branch of cognitive science, has attempted to locate and describe the various cognitive traits creative individuals might possess (1994, 4), hence books such as Ghiselin's *The Creative Process* and *The Paris Interviews* which encourage creative individuals to describe such activities as their work habits, personality traits, and psychological states while composing.[6] Once observed, these traits could then be presumably taught to others. (Cognitive research into student writers' composing strategies is very much predicated on this mode of inquiry.) By the 1970s, Feldman et al. explain, creativity research became more specialized, focusing not on general cognitive traits but rather on the nature and development of creative thinking in specific fields or disciplines (12–15). And yet, the focus of research, while more domain specific, continued to be on the cognitive processes of the individual involved in creative thinking. For example, in *The Emerging Goddess* (1979), Albert Rothenberg locates creativity in a "form of cognition" he calls "janusian" thinking, a way of conceiving "opposing or antithetical ideas, images, or concepts . . . as existing side by side and operating simultaneously" (138, 139–40). In a suggestive statement, one which in many ways reflects the goals of the process movement, Rothenberg argues that his primary concern "is not

with whether the final [creative] product does or does not conform to objectively verifiable reality, intrinsic reality, or to any other metaphysical criteria for truth, *but with the thought processes responsible for the creation of that product"* (139; my emphasis).

Silvano Arieti's influential book, *Creativity: The Magic Synthesis* (1976), also focuses on the thought processes involved in creativity. Even though at the end of the book Arieti does admit the need for what he calls a "creativogenic society," one which provides the appropriate conditions for creative persons to achieve their potential (312–25), his focus is ultimately on the cognitive and precognitive stages of creative development as they are seemingly abstracted from the forms of social organization that organize and generate cognition. For example, he begins by taking recent creativity theories to task for neglecting the unconscious thought processes that account for the "birth" of ideas (20) and then calls for a more thorough use of what he calls a "deep psychology" in creativity study (34).

This deep psychology traces the creative process back to what Arieti calls its conceptual, primitive, and amorphous stages, each respective stage reaching further back into the private recesses of the mind. Arieti describes the origins of the creative process as based in an individual's "amorphous cognition," which is not expressed in images, words, or even thoughts, but instead as a form of preconscious cognition he calls an "endocept." The endocept alone does not mean anything, not even to the individual in whom it occurs. Within the individual, it just feels like an inspiration that is incubating. In order for the endocept to become manifested in any way, it must first be transformed into a concept that is meaningful to its host, the individual, and then to others, the culture. This occurs through the primary and secondary processes. Primary processes are a form of "primitive cognition" in which what is formless first enters the world of conscious signification, of words and ideas. It is at this point that the endocept becomes recognizable to its host and only to its host, since primitive cognition, while conscious, is very illogical. For example, primitive

cognition will identify and group objects according to whim, perception, or feeling, not according to any kind of culturally accepted systemic logic, classes, species, or categories. It is imagination running freely, moving unpredictably through metaphor and simile without being subjected to critical or evaluative judgments.

As Arieti warns, however, primitive cognition cannot be allowed to dominate the creative process. In fact, the very reason that lunatics or schizophrenics are generally not considered creative is because they do not progress from the primary to the secondary processes, and so have no means of socially forming or conceptualizing their imaginations. During the secondary processes, then, conceptual cognition dominates. As Arieti explains, conceptual cognition evaluates primitive cognition; it either affirms or denies the formulations of the primary processes. At this conceptual stage, the individual begins to consider how best to represent his or her primitive cognition to others, how, that is, to make it public through the use of already existing formal and rhetorical conventions such as appropriate syntactic and semantic rules, literary techniques, and genres.

According to Arieti, social conventions factor late in the cognitive processes. They allow creative individuals to synthesize and develop what they have already nurtured privately through endoceptual and primary cognitive processes. Still, this view ignores the extent to which cognition evolves not from the private to the social but is rather formed throughout life in organized linguistic interactions. Vygotsky (1986) offers a way to understand cognition in relation to, rather than as a precondition of, social action. Bazerman, for example, describes how, "from a Vygotskian perspective, the mediating communicative patterns [of various fields and activities] are tools both for action and cognition, or cognition in relation to action" (1997a, 305). As we learn patterns of action and interaction, we also acquire and practice related patterns of cognition that organize and generate these actions and interactions. Drawing on work in distributed cognition and activity theory, Freedman and

Smart describe how, "within specific activities, thinking, knowing, and learning are distributed among co-participants, as well as mediated through the cultural artifacts in place—artifacts that include semiotic, technological, and organizational structures" (1997, 240). Without denying that preconscious and libidinal structures exert a force of their own on individuals' cognitive development and attachments, we can also recognize that these structures are elicited by and operate in inescapable relation to ideological structures (Alcorn 2002, 25). Consciousness is an ongoing, dynamic social and discursive accomplishment.

In George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) we see a way in which Arieti's cognitive processes might be recast in more thoroughly dynamic and social ways. Investigating how individuals learn and use metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson argue that, far from being hardwired into and stemming from our preconscious cognition, metaphors are actually social concepts we learn as part of our social and linguistic development. As already existing social conventions, metaphors structure the ways individuals conceptualize reality. For example, Lakoff and Johnson describe how a conceptual metaphor that we in contemporary Western culture live by, "argument is war," structures the way we experience and enact arguments. The resulting metaphors we create to describe how we argue—in fact, the way we actually argue—do not stem from some endoceptual, precoginitive process but from this larger conceptual metaphor we have available to us, so that, for instance, we might say, "He shot down all my arguments," or "If you use that strategy, he'll wipe you out" (4). The way that we re-*cognize* argument and describe it metaphorically is thus coordinated by our overarching cultural metaphors. Likewise, the conceptual metaphor "time is money," so prevalent a part of how we culturally talk and write about time, structures the various metaphorical ways we are able to conceptualize and experience time, even at the level of "primitive" cognition, since such a metaphor seeps into our most private, most intuitive understanding of what time is.

Process-based views of invention, informed by work in creativity theory such as Arieti's and by Jerome Bruner's work on cognition and discovery, largely continue to imagine the inventing writer as a cognitive free agent. While overlooking the systems of linguistic and social interaction that necessarily inform even early-stage cognitive processes, such a view of the writer has nonetheless helped writing teachers productively acknowledge and encourage the writer's agency. It has helped make the writer a more active and conscious participant in the writing process, one who makes decisions, shapes meaning and reformulates it while writing, and performs different activities at different stages of writing. But by focusing mainly on the writer as the agent of his or her cognitive processes, the writing process movement has provided only a partial view of invention. While the writer is certainly an agent of writing, to locate him or her as the prime agent is to ignore the agency that is already at work on the writer as he or she makes decisions, shapes meaning, and reformulates it. So while the writer may be the most visible agent of his or her writing processes, these processes take place within and against a larger sphere of agency that shapes them. To describe how these larger spheres of agency affect how and why writers invent, I will now turn briefly to work in composition studies that examines invention as a situated activity. Looking in particular at Karen Burke LeFevre's influential *Invention as a Social Act*, I will first describe how social views of invention locate writers within spheres of activity and then, turning to work in genre theory, I show how genres can give teachers, students, and researchers of writing specific access to these spheres of activities that build on and add to our understanding and teaching of invention.

INVENTION AS A SOCIAL ACT

LeFevre's *Invention as a Social Act* was one of several important books published in the late 1980s and early 1990s to challenge the dominant assumption "that invention is the private, asocial act of a writer for the purpose of producing a text" (LeFevre 1987,

13). For example, Brodkey (1987) challenged the modernist view of the writer in composition; S. Miller (1989, 1991) identified the writer as a textual subject; Cooper (1989) described an ecological view of writing; Ede and Lunsford (1990) demonstrated how writers are never alone when they write; Crowley (1990) traced the privatization of invention in current-traditional rhetoric; and Faigley (1992) showed how postmodernist theories could inform notions of subjectivity in composition. More recently, Howard (1999) has examined how dominant notions of authorship continue to inform attitudes about plagiarism, and Halasek (1999) provides ways of thinking about writing from a dialogic perspective. This genealogy of work has helped identify and describe the systems of language, culture, and interpersonal and intertextual relations in which writers and writing take place, a larger system of agency in which the writer as agent participates.

Drawing on the work of Richard Young and Janice Lauer, for example, LeFevre argues that invention is thoroughly a social act, "first, an act that is generally initiated by an inventor (or rhetor) and brought to completion by an audience; and second, an act that involves symbolic activities such as speaking or writing and often extends over time through a series of social transactions and texts" (LeFevre 1987, 38). As LeFevre explains, this definition of invention is predicated on the following assumptions: that the inventing "self" is both socially influenced and socially constituted; that the language or other symbol systems individuals use to invent are communal, "socially created and shared by members of a discourse community"; that invention is more a continuative than an originative activity, built on already existing foundations of knowledge; that invention involves an interaction with others, whether through internal dialogue with real or imagined others, or through the actual participation of others such as collaborators, editors, critics, mentors, and patrons; and, finally, that invention is shaped and enabled by social collectives (institutions, bureaucracies, governments, paradigms, etc.) which structure the ideological boundaries not only of what inventing individuals assume to be

knowable, doable, and possible, but also of how an invention comes to be received and evaluated by others (33–35).

According to LeFevre, invention includes not only how we discover and develop ideas, but also how we inquire into them in the first place, because invention involves the use of symbolic systems such as language. Following Ernst Cassirer, LeFevre argues that language does not mirror or copy an external reality; it helps constitute that reality (111). We come to know and understand the world around us by way of the language we have available to us, since language is a symbolic system that mediates between us and a reality out there. Invention, therefore, is not only social because it almost always involves more than one person, real or imagined; it is also social because it involves the use of language, which immediately connects even the most solitary inventor with others in a symbolic social collective. Even one's most private inquiry is ultimately social because it involves the use of language.

LeFevre's *Invention as a Social Act*, along with the work that it followed and the work that continues to follow it, helps teachers and researchers of writing recognize that there is more at work on invention than just the writer. There is a writer's social context, made up not only of others who help and hinder invention, but also of social collectives, "supra-individual entit[ies] whose rules and conventions may enable or inhibit the invention of certain ideas" (LeFevre, 80). These collectives, LeFevre explains, powerfully "serve to transmit expectations and prohibitions, encouraging or discouraging certain ideas, areas of investigation, methods of inquiry, types of evidence, and rhetorical forms" (34–35). When Frank D'Angelo, therefore, advises students to invent by reaching "into the recesses of your mind [and spinning] out of yourself a thread of thought that will develop into an orderly web" (1980, 34), he is overlooking the ideological and discursive formations that are already institutionally in place before the student has begun to write and that organize the student's cognition in textured ways. These formations include such genres as freewriting and clustering. In fact, D'Angelo's own metaphor breaks down when we realize that a web can never be a

freestanding structure. Rather, it takes its shape in relation to its surroundings, so that whatever web a student spins (through his or her own agency) must take shape within an already existing social web (which gives shape to and motivates his or her agency). These social webs, informed by and articulated in language, comprise the social collectives within which individuals function. Their presence complicates our partial understandings of the writer as the primary agent of his or her desires by reminding us that desires are informed textually, ideologically, and materially. The work of LeFevre, S. Miller, Ede and Lunsford, Cooper, Howard, and others in composition studies has contributed mightily to our understanding of how writers participate within social, interpersonal, and textual formations.[7]

At the end of *Invention as a Social Act*, LeFevre calls for continued inquiry into "the *ecology of invention*—the ways ideas arise and are nurtured or hindered by interaction with social context and culture" (126; my emphasis). In the years since, scholars have taken up this call by examining the interpersonal, textual, material, and ideological nature of this ecology. In the remainder of this book, I build on and add to their work by turning to genre theory, which both recognizes and gives teachers, students, and researchers specific access to the dynamic relations and interplay of agency at work within textured spheres of activity. As I described them in chapter 2, genres are sites of action which locate writers within specific relations, practices, commitments, and subjectivities. Within such discursive ecologies, writers not only acquire and articulate specific desires, but they also participate in, resist, and enact the relations and activities bound up in and deployed through these desires. To identify genres as sites of action is also to identify them as sites of invention. As I hope the following example will begin to demonstrate, treating genres as such sites allows us to interrogate analytically how writers position themselves, consciously and unconsciously, within desires to act as well as how they articulate and fulfill these desires as bounded, recognizable, meaningful, and consequential actions. In giving teachers, students, and

researchers access to the ecology of invention, genres can provide a richer account of agency as well as a more useful means for describing and teaching invention in composition.

GENRE AS SITE OF INVENTION: THE EXAMPLE OF D. H. LAWRENCE

As I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter, genres are indeed ecological. As rhetorical ecosystems, genres help communicants recognize, act within, and reproduce recurring situations. They rhetorically delimit the ways we conceptualize our environments by "identifying a repertoire of possible actions" as well as the possible intentions and identities we may assume within those environments (Bazerman 1994a, 82). As such, it is perhaps more accurate to say that invention does not so much begin in the writer or even in some abstract social collective as it begins when a writer locates himself or herself within the discursive and ideological formation of a genre and its system of related genres. This is the case even when we are dealing with a literary "author" who is ostensibly writing about "personal" experiences. As the following example of D. H. Lawrence suggests, even those writers whom we popularly designate as geniuses, whose work seemingly emerges from some inspired and mysterious depth, are actually constituted by the genres in which they write. The literary genre Lawrence uses to explore and communicate his "private" experiences in part shapes and enables how he invents these experiences, so that the genre he turns to in order to invent ends up simultaneously inventing him.

It is well known that Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* is an autobiographical novel, a *Künstlerroman*. It is perhaps less known that Lawrence also wrote a number of autobiographical poems at the same time as he was writing *Sons and Lovers*. In both the novel and the poems, Lawrence grapples with similar issues, in particular his relationship to his mother, whom he names "Mrs. Morel" in the novel (he names himself "Paul") and "She" in the poems. Yet in each genre, a very different experience of the relationship emerges. In the novel, for example, Lawrence's

father, Mr. Morel, is an imposing, interfering presence who in many ways represents the realism of the world that Paul is trying to avoid. Mr. Morel is an unavoidable function of the novel. It is in part his presence in the novel that precludes Lawrence from describing the mythic, idealized relationship with his mother that appears in the poems.

Part of the mythic, idealized relationship between Lawrence and his mother that is described in the poems can be ascribed to the absence of Lawrence's father from the poems. There is no counterpart to the Mr. Morel figure in the poems. Gone is the interfering, ugly, destructive force that Mr. Morel embodies in the eyes of Paul and his mother. In the poems, there is no drunk father, no coal dirt, no fighting, no financial troubles, no self-conscious Paul, no aggressive Mrs. Morel. Instead of Paul and Mrs. Morel there is "I" and "She." This rhetorical shift from proper nouns to personal pronouns transforms the specific to the universal. It takes a very real, context-specific relationship and makes it a timeless, almost mythic, relationship. "She" is no longer bound by name to a physical, identifiable being; no longer particularized by dialogue and title as wife to Mr. Morel, mother to Paul, William, Annie, and Arthur; no longer specified by her place in Bestwood, Nottingham, and so on. "She" becomes the essence of mother, lover, virginity, beauty, inspiration, as in the poem "The Bride," in which even on her deathbed, she is a beautiful bride:

> She looks like a young maiden, since her brow
> Is smooth and fair;
> Her cheeks are very smooth, her eyes are closed,
> She sleeps a rare,
> Still, winsome sleep so still, and so composed.
>
> Nay, but she sleeps like a bride, and dreams her dreams
> Of perfect things.
> She lies at last, the darling, in the shape of her dream,
> And her dead mouth sings
> By its shape, like thrushes in clear evenings. (1977, 464–65)

The poem provides a useful and telling contrast to the way Lawrence describes Mrs. Morel's death in the novel, which seems to resist such idealizations. Here is Mrs. Morel on her deathbed in *Sons and Lovers*:

> [Paul] heard a cart clanking down the street. Yes, it was seven o'clock, and it was coming a little bit light. He heard some people calling. *The world was waking.* A grey, deathly dawn crept over the snow. Yes, he could see the houses. He put out the gas. It seemed very dark. The breathing came still, but he was almost used to it. (1977, 397; my emphasis)

What is striking about this scene is its materiality. Mrs. Morel's march towards death is not accompanied by her "dead mouth" singing "like thrushes in clear evenings" as it was in "The Bride." Her death is not singular as it is in the poem, but rather takes place while a cart clanks beneath her window and people are heard calling to each other. Through the narrator, Lawrence seems aware that, indeed, the world *was* waking, and, quite frankly, getting on with its business. In addition, the bride-like face of the dying mother in the poem is replaced in the novel with a very different face: "She lay with her cheek in her hand, her mouth fallen open, and the great, ghastly snores came and went" (398). What is it that accounts for this difference between thrushes singing and ghastly snores? It is at least plausible to say that the genre Lawrence chooses in part organizes and generates not only how he perceives significant events in his life, but also how he invents them.

Not dependent on the detail, dialogue, characters, and narrator in the same way as the novelist, the poet D. H. Lawrence can universalize his personal experience, transcending proper names, time, and place. This universalizing quality of poetry allows Lawrence to remember his mother not as a snoring, decrepit old woman, but as the great mother/lover—the eternal beauty and essence of woman. Poetry does this by not insisting on a strictly linear ordering of time. As such, Lawrence can reconstruct the image of his mother without sacrificing, as he would in the novel,

the unity of the plot. Poetry allows for a greater degree of abstraction. It rhetorically allows Lawrence to abstract his mother from the conditions that define her in the novel, so that she becomes husbandless and virginal. Lawrence writes:

> Now come west, come home,
> Women I've loved for gentleness,
> For the virginal you.
> Find the way now that you never could find in life,
> So I told you to die. (476)

She dies, it seems, so she could be reinvented into Lawrence's poetry.

Ian Watt, however, argues that the early novel resists such idealizations because of its realist orientation (1983). As a genre, the novel emerged as a rejection of universals, driven by a desire to record a seemingly naturalistic account of the "real" behavior of "real" people. This desired fidelity to human experience forced a collapse between interiority and exteriority, between the external material world and the internal psychological worlds of the people who inhabit it. Such a collapse implied that the characters within novels are bound to a particular time and place. Not only, for example, are individuals defined by time, especially past time, but they are also defined by their environment. In short, the nineteenth century novel is realistic because it embodies a circumstantial view of life, situating individuals both temporally and physically.

It is in its rejection of neoclassical universals and absolutes and its privileging of individual experience and perception that the nineteenth century novel resists idealizations. This is the genred orientation and commitment that Lawrence positions himself within. Any desire on the part of Lawrence to idealize his mother in *Sons and Lovers* is repressed by the novel's generic orientations and commitments, of which Mr. Morel is a part. Lawrence, for example, cannot ignore the fact that Mrs. Morel has a husband, that this husband works in the mines, drinks, and, in general, does not live up to her expectations. As one more personality in a

cast of characters, all influenced by their time and place, Mrs. Morel cannot be abstracted from her conditions. If Lawrence decontextualizes her, she will lose her identity in the world of the novel. Because the novel as a genre requires a certain fidelity to the human experience in all its complexity, because, that is, the "realistic" novel's generic conventions demand that characters be situated, named beings who engage in specific dialogue, Lawrence, if he is to successfully write within this genre, must decenter, or, better yet, demythologize his perception of his mother. That is, he must invent her differently.

There is something to be learned about invention from this example, in particular, something about why and how writers acquire and articulate desires and intentions as they participate in genred sites of action, whether in literary representations or, as we will see in the next chapter, in actual social practices and relations. Positing genre in addition to the writer as the locus of invention suggests that invention is not only a process of introspection but also a process of socialization, a process of positioning oneself within and managing one's way through a set of relations, commitments, practices, and subjectivities. In this case, the genres within which Lawrence chooses to write (and this choice is not as free as it seems, as we will see in the next chapter) become very much akin to situated topoi or commonplaces—socio-rhetorical sites and strategies of action—within which he locates and invents his "autobiography."[8] Each genre, then, represents a different topic or commonplace, a situated and typified way of rhetorically organizing, conceptualizing, relating to, and acting in our real or imagined environments. When Lawrence begins to think about writing his autobiography in a certain genre, he enters into that genre's discursive and ideological space, including what Bazerman calls its "repertoire of possible actions" (1994a, 82), and so is in part habituated to experience and narrate his life story in ways made possible by the genre's rhetorical conventions. In such a way is a writer a double agent, an agent of his or her actions as well as an agent on behalf of already existing social actions. By extending the

sphere of agency in this way, we acknowledge that the writer participates in this agency, but is not its sole agent.

Obviously, there is much that could account for why Lawrence's intentions differ in the novel and the poems, including his working through of libidinal desires. However, I just do not think we can understand these intentions and desires independently of the genred discursive and ideological formations within which they are generated and operate. The genres Lawrence uses to articulate his experiences also locate him in positions of articulation. As the sites or topoi within which he invents, the genres both habituate Lawrence within a social motive and provide him with the rhetorical conventions for enacting that motive as invention. We need to pay more specific attention to the situated discursive conditions within and against which communication and communicators take place and are made possible—the conditions that prompt us to invent. Genres provide access to and help us to understand and describe these conditions, since genres do not just ideologically structure the way individuals conceptualize situations; they also provide individuals with the discursive means for acting within situations, so that genres maintain the social motives which individuals interpret and enact as intentions. In the next two chapters, I will describe how genres function as textured sites or topoi of invention that rhetorically maintain the social motives that shape and enable writers' intentions—maintain, that is, the desires they help writers fulfill. In the final chapter, I will argue for a pedagogy that makes visible and teaches students how to access these genred sites of action so that they can participate more critically and effectively as agents within this agency.