CHAPTER 1
ACKNOWLEDGING COMMUNAL COMPOSING

That acknowledgments are ambivalent sites prone to generate charges of narcissism as well as pleasurable reading detours suggests something about composing itself. A site where writing about writing is foregrounded, acknowledgments epitomize the fraught qualities of composing laid bare by critics: we want to know how writing happens, *and* knowing how it happens potentially detracts from writing's power and value. Within composition studies, how writing happens has of course been at the center of the field since at least the 1960s. The evolution of the field, particularly tensions between product and process approaches to teaching writing, might be said to mirror in some ways the opposing views of acknowledgments laid out in the previous chapter. The efficiency of product gave way to the disorder of process, a broad statement that sets the stage for the following discussion of composing as a site of study in the field.

Composing, as an activity and object of study, arguably represents the most consequential body of research in writing studies. Looking back at the infamous Dartmouth Conference of 1966, we see a contest between teachers and scholars that, in the end, gave considerable legitimacy to the process movement and consequently to the idea that composing is recursive and inventional, an act of doing rather than knowing. Prior to insights of the process movement, writing, as Janet Emig memorably put it, was presented in such a way as to suggest "no wisp or scent anywhere that composing is anything but a conscious and antiseptically efficient act" ("Uses" 48). James Britton's growth model, which positioned developmental psychology as a basis for understanding composing, proved to be enormously influential, notwithstanding critiques of the expressive emphasis and resulting neglect of the social purposes of language and composing. As Harris points out in his history of composition studies, one appreciable result of the growth model is that writing and language use more generally became central to what students learned and teachers taught (*A Teaching* 21). In effect, Dartmouth catalyzed a new pedagogical and intellectual model for English. Instead of teaching English through text consumption, achieved by reading and analyzing literary texts, Britton and his British colleagues at Dartmouth advocated teaching English through writing. Of course, this is a much truncated and simplified account (for fuller ones, see Berlin; Harris, *A Teaching*; S. Miller, *Textual*), but suitable to my purposes, for I want to emphasize that positioning composing as

an activity remains a rupture point for our discipline. The shift in emphasis from consumption to production in English studies generated writing theories and practices focused on invention as well as conceptions of writing as interacting with other systems of activity, an idea central to my study.

This chapter excavates work by early influential women scholars of composing whose research anticipates my own. The groundwork laid by Mina Shaughnessy, Janet Emig, Ann Berthoff, Sondra Perl, Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, Marilyn Cooper, Linda Brodkey, and Margaret Syverson has encouraged me to look attentively at writing's conditions and surround in acknowledgments by turning me toward writing and embodiment; writing as interfacing with sensory and environmental conditions; and writing partnerships. Rather than explicitly focusing on acknowledgments, this chapter establishes the theoretical groundwork necessary for understanding writing partnerships that guides my study throughout this book.

Before moving on, I want to note that I didn't set out to map exclusively female contributions to composing theory. The work had a gravitational pull on me, as it welcomed (seeming) marginalia (e.g., hands, typewriters, bundles) into discussions of composing, providing a strong foundation for my own work. For example, when Berthoff calls paragraphs "gathering hands" (218) or Emig refers to writing habits like "sharpen[ing] all pencils before writing time" (50), they coax me to fixate on small moments and stay attentive to idiosyncrasies, as composing can be extrapolated from the everyday, from ritual, and from encounters with other things, people, and environments. Because my study of acknowledgments is a study of marginalia, the companionate theories of composing that frame my analysis throughout this book, theories that assert the marginalia of composing as worthy of study, offer compelling precedent. The valuation attached to what's around composing has influenced my treatment of acknowledgments—the fringe, or threshold genre—as a site where authors store provocative and mundane information about writing partnerships that can yield insights about how and where writing happens. The theorists whose work I draw from in this chapter demonstrate that the conditions of academic writing surface through isolated examples rather than overarching narratives. This attention to the small and inconsequential details of composing provides a lesson in how and where to look for records of writing activity.

By focusing on women scholars, I see an opportunity to intervene in the politics of citation that dominate research associated with my study of writing's surround via acknowledgments: object oriented ontology, actor-network and post-process theories as well as theories of materialism more generally in composition studies. Male theorists appear with regularity—i.e., Sid Dobrin, Byron Hawke, Martin Heidegger, Thomas Kent, Bruno Latour, Paul Prior, Thomas

Rickert—without discussion of what this regularity suggests about either theory or the field. Why are distributed models of writing an overwhelmingly male domain? Where are the women who pioneered work on composing that establishes precedent for exploring these issues? For Shaughnessy, Emig, Berthoff, and Perl, in particular, research originates with students. Perhaps this has something to do with why they are not often aligned with new composing theories today. Practice is generally overshadowed by theoretical concepts in current conversations (a notable exception is Shipka's work) in an effort to develop a robust theoretical and intellectual context for writing. My feeling is that we need not sacrifice one for the other; praxis, to my mind, is what gives our field not just definition but consequence. Bringing women's contributions to the foreground is one small way to maximize consequence and to interrupt academic citation practices—really, acknowledgment practices—a modest hope for this project. With that, I set out below to describe the theoretical basis informing my use of writing partners as a vibrant concept for the study of acknowledgments.

COMPOSING COMPOSING

Mina Shaughnessy's groundbreaking *Errors and Expectations*, published in 1977, went a long way toward acknowledging composing as an activity that one can practice and refine. She argues, for example, that beginning writers often have no idea what it means to have a writing process, and instead conceive writing "as a single act, a gamble with words, rather than a deliberate process whereby meaning is crafted stage by stage" (81). Writing behavior is thus appropriate content to discuss in a composition course, in her view. Among the behaviors she describes are "idiosyncratic preferences for certain kinds of paper or pens or tables or times of day, as well as routines [writers] follow for arriving at final copy" (81). The "privacy" of writing is an impediment to beginning writers and to their willingness to trust what she calls "intellectual vibrations," or "inner promptings that generally reveal to writers where their best energies lie" (82). Shaughnessy balances writers' inner "felt thoughts" (80) with outer engagement—specifically, the value of dialogue, both with others and with oneself (82), contending that "[w]ithout these dialogues, thoughts run dry and judgment falters" (82). She also values talk because it creates a "real audience" of teacher and peers (83), which she views as crucial to writing with purpose and focus.

Shaughnessy addresses the physicality of composing, calling sentence-combining activities "finger exercises," which she relates to "piano or bar exercises in ballet . . . that must be virtually habitual before the performer is free to interpret or even execute a total composition" (77). She notes, however, that the "analogy weakens . . . when we remember that the writer is not performing someone else's

composition . . . , and that he cannot therefore as easily isolate technique from meaning" (77-78). Nonetheless, rooting language practice in the body reinforces the physical and mental interchange that characterizes language-making. While a beginning writer may have absorbed complex syntactic forms, he is "'all thumbs' when he tries to get them into written form" (78). Shaughnessy envisions sentence-combining as a progressive activity through which writers learn to inhabit what she characterizes as the underground and surface of language. Equipped with this layered understanding of how sentences take form, writers are prepared to "untangle" them and proceed unobstructed toward meaning: "[T]he process sharpens [a writer's] sense of the simple sentence as the basic, subterranean form out of which surface complexity arises, and this insight gives him a strategy for untangling any sentence that goes wrong, whether simple or complex" (78). There are elements of seizure involved in composing as Shaughnessy describes it; writers "brea[k] into" sentences as one would a locked safe (78). Writing is a lively activity, a social act, and as such, pedagogy and corresponding theory should not bracket the social world that includes behaviors, habits, interlocutors, materials and, as Shaughnessy addresses in *Errors*, language differences and strong, often negative, feelings about writing (see 10-11).

Of course, before Shaughnessy's influential work was published, compositionists were already beginning to describe the social worlds of writing in sophisticated ways. In her 1964 "Uses of the Unconscious," Emig calls attention to tactile, physical, material, and tool-oriented aspects of writing, envisioning writing as a swirl of activity. For instance, she attributes writerly habits to "that part of the writing self that observes a regular schedule; that finds a room, desk, or even writing board of its own; that owns a filing cabinet; that sharpens all pencils before writing time; that does not eat lunch or take a drink before dinner; that cuts telephone wires; that faces a bland wall instead of a view of the Bay; even that orders cork lining" (50). Emig constructs the writing self as surrounded by things and ensconced in ritual, while also invested in self-imposed limits through self-denial and hermeticism. The detail that gave me pause in Emig's list is the mention of "cork lining"—does she mean cork drawer lining? If so, this seems awfully peculiar and, in that way, a testament to idiosyncratic writing habits. (Cutting telephone wires seems more fitting to a horror movie than a writing scene.)

In a later essay, Emig comments again on what writers need in order to write, focusing this time on the body's contribution to writing practices. Her 1978 essay "Hand, Eye, Brain" describes writing as a physical act by which writers have "begun to do something" (111). The essay asks what role the hand, eye, and brain play in the writing process. Reflecting timely resistance to machine writing, Emig notes that "the impersonal and uniform font of the typewriter

may for some of us belie the personal nature of our first formulations. Our own language must first appear in our own script" (112). She continues, "In writing, our sense of physically creating an artifact is less than in any other mode except perhaps composing music; thus, the literal act of writing may provide some sense of carving or sculpting our statements, as in wood or stone" (112). Of course, composing a sound artifact surely involves playing instruments, physical movement (tapping feet, snapping fingers, swaying, etc.), and feeling, as when sound transports or roots you in place, putting you in touch with something that resonates in your body. Emig's castaway comment here doesn't indulge in the full potential of her own claims, but that doesn't diminish the original thinking she contributes to the field. Writing, for Emig, is an inscription and a cultural artifact, something with physical presence that results from bodily participation. It makes sense, then, that she views mediating writing through a typewriter as removing direct involvement of the body and ritual from the process, an idea that emerges in Shaughnessy's work too, as when she notes that handwriting is an extension of the self (15). As I'll address in more detail in the next section, Emig views writing as involving what she calls "significant others," and one could reasonably infer from the examples herein that the rituals, habits, and bodily involvement she identifies as central to writing have influence enough over the writing process to be considered significant others. This attention to others in the composing process represents an influential precursor to my thinking about composing partners.

The insertion of writing into worldly scenes gets more attention in Ann E. Berthoff's ambitious, contemplative textbook, *Forming/Thinking/Writing*. Rereading the book today, I easily forget that it's a textbook, for it has none of the tell-tale signs of that genre's current conventions (images, chunked text, color, wide margins, organization keyed to an outcomes-based composition course, etc.). Berthoff's writing is more philosophical and meandering than instructional, though the book has a clear pedagogical function, as she works out a process- and action-oriented theory of composing powered by verbs. Describing composing as an "organic process" that is active and always changing (229), Berthoff implores writers to look, construe, name, form, articulate, and gather. The writer is the doer, busily making things and interacting with the world while doing so. The textbook begins with a bold claim that makes clear her view of writing as a relational, immersive activity: "This book teaches a method of composing that focuses on the ways in which writing is related to everything you do when you make sense of the world" (1). She continues, "Making sense of the world is composing. It includes being puzzled, being mistaken, and then suddenly seeing things for what they probably are; making wrong—unproductive, unsatisfactory, incorrect, inaccurate—identifications and assessments and correcting them

or giving them up and getting some new ones" (3-4). Berthoff comes at writing with arms wide open; there is a remarkable freedom and lift in her description. She constructs no discreet boundaries around inquiry, interpretation, description, writing, and the world. Writing is not partitioned off from other subjects and experiences; it is total immersion. Berthoff encourages non-instrumental writing that I (and probably others) would like to see more widely valued in composition studies today.

Like Shaughnessy and Emig, Berthoff addresses writing habits and partners. All three mention typewriters, calling to mind a sensory detail no longer so intimately attached to writing: the feel and sound of fingers hitting keys hard (not tapping, as most of us do today) in order to make a literal imprint, and of keys striking paper, sometimes clumping together, requiring the typist to separate and re-set them. In addition to being longstanding accompaniments to writing, typewriters, for Berthoff, are cognitive mechanisms much like handwriting or doodling:

> Some writers compose at the typewriter or the word processor because they can type faster than they can write and because they can't think consecutively until they see what they're saying in type or on the screen. Others write by hand because they need to doodle; that kinetic activity acts as a kind of starter motor. Many writers can't start until they have the right pen, the right paper, the right chair, the right writing surface. (262)

Activity and tools assist thinking, and so writing. Though immersed in a field abuzz with cognitivism, Berthoff fixates on components of writing not located exclusively in the brain: kinetic activities, surfaces, sensory attachments, motors, tools. While she acknowledges differences in composing processes, she also generalizes from her own predilections for a productive writing environment in the form of general advice to writers: "Dogs and cats and roommates are hazards, to say nothing of strong gusts of wind and two-year-olds, but a large flat surface in a still room provides one of the best devices for getting a composition together" (266).

As we'll learn in chapter four, dogs and cats (and other creatures) function not as hazards but as important composing partners for many writers—though admittedly roommates, gusts of wind, and two-year-olds remain wildcards. The mention of non-writing influences, even if to disparage them, represents acknowledgment of the world beyond the text that is ultimately part of its production. Composing is part of the whole surround for Berthoff; throughout her book, she constructs classrooms as ecosystems that facilitate interaction with a wide variety of stimuli, objects, and experiences. The composing process, writes

Berthoff, "is a continuum, an unbroken and continuing activity" (5), which suggests that composing is integrated into our daily lives in unobtrusive ways and is not set off from "ordinary" activity. Her book aims to take advantage of this fact through "assisted invitations" that evocatively immerse composing in daily life (i.e., journaling observations, writing grocery lists, etc.).

Berthoff's method for composing outlined in *Forming/Thinking/Writing* privileges chaos, wonder, and exploration as heuristics for writing and is encapsulated in her call to "cultivate a habit of 'careful disorderliness'" (243). It's not surprising, then, that she has pointed things to say about outlines as prewriting tools: "A method of composing that requires that you work out an outline before you start writing cannot possibly help you find the parts or guide you in bundling them: an outline is like a blueprint and, in the design of a building, drawing the blueprint is the final stage of the architect's work" (268). While my writing style complies with Berthoff's claim, I've worked with student writers who find outlines to be enabling starting points and bases for invention. If moving backwards through the process works for some, why deter writers from using outlines? Fewer imperatives for writing processes and practices are required at this point in the field's history; the diversity of our students and the sophistication of our research demand nothing less.

Berthoff's rejection of outlines is embedded in an architectural comparison that constructs writing as physical and structural; it produces shapes and contours, and forms habitable spaces and relationships. A "composition is a bundle of parts," we are told repeatedly (23). Extending this idea, Berthoff depicts poorly balanced paragraphs as "boxcars" because "each element is given the same weight and assumes the same shape" (232). Everywhere Berthoff speaks of gathering and shaping ideas, sentences, paragraphs. At one point, she memorably refers to a paragraph as that which "gathers like a hand" (218). The "gathering hand" has various functions:

> [T]he hand that holds a couple of eggs or tennis balls works differently from the hand that holds a bridle or a motorbike handle. When you measure out spaghetti by the handful, scoop up water by the handful, hold a load of books on your hip, knead bread, shape a stack of papers, build a sand castle, your hands move in different planes and with different motions, according to the nature of the material being gathered. But in any case, the hand can gather because of the *opposable* thumb. . . . A paragraph gathers by opposing a concept and the elements that develop and substantiate it. (218)

To describe writing as a gathering hand with an opposable thumb is to un-

derscore the embodied aspect of composing, emergent from her grounding claim that "[w]e're composers by virtue of being human" (5). For Berthoff, there is a meaningful connection between bodies and composing, a delightful insight to propel a first-year writing textbook! Insofar as Berthoff's motivation for writing is shaped by her passion for writing as a living art rather than by programmatic, institutional, state and federal, or assessment constraints, it reflects a radically different moment in the history of writing instruction than the one we inhabit today. The physical product of composing—a bundle of parts, a series of box-cars, a set of relationships—is paired for Berthoff with a process that has phys-ical (as well as cognitive) components. So, for instance, she encourages writers to "develop an ear for language" through activities like reading aloud, crafting imitations, and memorizing (211).

Berthoff's awareness of the world of composing is an interesting complement to Sondra Perl's elaboration of felt sense, a bodily based sense of when writing feels right. As described in her 1980 essay "Understanding Composing," felt sense "calls forth images, words, ideas, and vague fuzzy feelings that are anchored in the writer's body. What is elicited, then, is not solely the product of a mind but of a mind alive in a living, sensing body" (365). Writing is often preceded by a "dawning awareness that something has clicked" (365). Perl is careful to note that writers do not "discover" hidden meaning but instead craft and construct it through what she calls a "process of coming-into-being" (367). During that pro-cess, we might find ourselves surprised by our writing, in much the same way that Berthoff courts surprise through her chaos heuristic, or her use of Marshall Mc-Luhan's "allatonceness," connoting everything happening at once in composing.

In Perl's later book, *Felt Sense: Writing with the Body*, she articulates "Guide-lines for Composing," available in both transcript and CD form, which walk writers through a process of paying attention to their bodies and their minds in open-ended but disciplined ways. (Berthoff likewise describes her textbook as developing a composing method that embraces uncertainty and ambiguity en route to complex thinking and writing.) Perl's approach to composing as involv-ing emotional, cognitive, and intuitive elements relates to my study in its fo-cus on bodily based composing partners. More generally, though, Shaughnessy, Emig, Berthoff, and Perl offer fine-grained examples of how to be attentive to composing and take nothing for granted, for presuming writing to be only what appears on the page or screen is a reduction that can too easily forget the world. Rereading work by these women alongside each other, it occurs to me that at-tentiveness is both method and content of their studies.

Other points of contact for my research include Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford's three decades of work during which they've developed theoretical and pedagogical models of collaborative writing as well as put it into practice Their

work perhaps represents a common sense interpretation of "writing partners" in that they write together. Beyond the obvious, though, their challenges to dominant ideologies of authorship represent a sustained example of what it looks like to recognize writing as more than a belonging, which the academy strives to reinforce through merit, reappointment and tenure awards, among other means. In "Collaboration and Concepts of Authorship," they ask, "What might it mean . . . to acknowledge the inherently collaborative nature of dissertations and the impossibility of making a truly original contribution to knowledge? Would the sky fall if, on occasion, PhD students wrote dissertations collaboratively?" (172). The essay casts a wide net on collaboration in relation to academic hierarchies and credentialing procedures as well as legal and professional contexts regarding copyright and intellectual property. In the acknowledgments section of their article, Lunsford and Ede list the many people who helped to shape the piece, and then remark that their "citation practices relentlessly suppress such collaborative response and engagement while continuing to privilege traditional authorship" (180). Acknowledgments offer a space where writers can name otherwise invisible sources of productivity and inspiration; this is surely one aspect of their quietly subversive power in many texts.

Framing acknowledgments as a site where collaborative webs are made visible is consistent with Marilyn Cooper's 1986 proposal for considering writing "an activity through which a person is continually engaged with a variety of socially constituted systems" (367). This model of writing is distinct from contextual ones, in vogue when she was writing, in the following ways:

> In contrast [to contextualist models], an ecology of writing encompasses much more than the individual writer and her immediate context. An ecologist explores how writers interact to form systems: all the characteristics of any individual writer or piece of writing both determine and are determined by the characteristics of all the other writers and writings in the systems. An important characteristic of ecological systems is that they are inherently dynamic; though their structures and contents can be specified at a given moment, in real time they are constantly changing, limited only by parameters that are themselves subject to change over longer spans of time. (368)

Writing is capable of both responding to a situation and changing it. Her guiding metaphor to describe this interactive functionality is a web; one strand affects every other, remaking the whole (370). For Cooper, the ecological model envisions "an infinitely extended group of people who interact through writing" (372). Margaret Syverson's 1999 study of writing as an ecological system widens

interaction to include the interplay of writers, readers, texts, and environments large and small. Syverson prepares us to consider writing matter as at once encompassing and minute, complex and ordinary, situated and distributed, individualistic and embedded in "co-evolving" environments (xiv). For Syverson, "writers, readers and texts" are part of

> a larger system that includes environmental structures, such as pens, paper, computers, books, telephones, fax machines, photocopiers, printing presses, and other natural and human-centered features, as well as other complex systems operating at various levels of scale, such as families, global economies, publishing systems, theoretical frames, academic disciplines, and language itself. (5; cf. Prior)

Writing is a primary activity through which we participate in the social world and composing is capaciously inclusive. These ideas are formative for me, as is the notion that the social world always participates in writing, cannot be excised no matter how much we might wish it otherwise.

A powerful expression of the writing-world dialectic appears in Linda Brodkey's 1987 study, *Academic Writing as Social Practice*, in which writing is anchored in scenes. Her work is fueled by a resistance to cognitivism (an inspiring adversary for social constructionists, as time has shown), which located writing too much in the writer's mind and not enough in the material world, and of course to modernism, to which she attributes the image of the writer in the garret and its desultory effects on thinking about writing. Instead, she emphasizes the social function and materiality of language. To help make her point, she uses an excerpt from cultural theorist Raymond Williams' "The Tenses of the Imagination":

> I am in fact physically alone when I am writing, and I do not believe, taking it all in all, that my work has been less individual, in that defining and valuing sense, than that of others. Yet whenever I write I am aware of a society and of a language which I know are vastly larger than myself: not simply "out there," in a world of others, but here, in what I am engaged in doing: composing and relating. (Williams qtd. in Brodkey 414)

The world is in the scene of writing, though Brodkey's example indicates that, rather than an inescapable reality of writing, the presence of the world is cultivated through, in this case, Williams' "ability to imagine himself in the company of others even as he sits alone writing" (414). Indeed, Williams' con-

sciousness of and ability to articulate his relationship to the world is a learned response, but the world is always in composing, whether we opt to recognize its presence or not. Developing consciousness of writing's entanglement with the world is central to Brodkey's project, for she views the purpose of "all writing research" to be "instituting writing as a social and material political practice in which writers endeavor to reconstruct society even as they shape and construct and critique their understanding of what it means to write, learn to write, teach writing, and do research on writing" (415).

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

"Thanks, too, to Lolo the cat who continued to provide embodied and, often rather snugly, embedded desktop presence."

– Andy Clark, *Being There*

"To the many friends I haven't named, to the strangers with whom I've conversed at bus stops, in cabs, at academic conferences, and along the wild path of life, your stories, experiences, and insights regarding emotions have given me the strength to go on."

– Megan Boler, *Feeling Power*

"Without access to the excellent produce we get from local farmers, the job of writing this book would have been much harder. What would I have done without my lacinato kale? I'm not sure how orthodox it is to thank a food co-op in book acknowledgments, but being a member is an honor and I deeply appreciate the work of the farmers, suppliers, coordinators, and member-shoppers who make it run so smoothly, against all odds."

– Sarah Benesch, *Considering Emotions in Critical English Language Teaching*

The above excerpts from acknowledgments grant access to partnerships that writers have seen fit to describe in the pages of their books. Clark's mention of his cat is not without precedent, as chapter four explores in depth, but it *is* without a correlate in writing theory and pedagogy. If animals are considered part of the scene of composing, enough to be deserving recipients of writers' gratitude when the project is complete, what can we say about this partnership beyond this particular example? For example, how can we conceive of such partnerships within research studies, teaching practices, theoretical frameworks? Likewise, how does Boler's attribution to strangers and random, unexpected events and encounters inflect composing as a partnered activity? Can randomness amount

to anything of import to teachers and scholars? What about food and community food suppliers? Rather than treating these and other forthcoming examples as gratuitous, irrelevant, or divorced from writing activity, this book lingers on the writing fringe, the locale of suspected excessiveness, where the mechanics of gratitude meet everyday recognition of livelihood and sustenance, sometimes linked directly to writing activity, sometimes not. In the paratextual scene of acknowledgments, writing partners are on unusual display and have the potential to enhance existing studies of writing's communal, partnered dimensions.

Before beginning this project I was aware of research on writers in collaboration with others writ large, but I was surprised to stumble upon Emig's discussion of "significant others" in her 1971 study of writers in action, *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*. If you're not looking for it, this quick reference easily escapes notice (91). Emig does not emphasize her word choice, nor do her critics or admirers; the groundbreaking aspect of the book—framing composing as an object of study and basis for research—is what's remembered, and for good reason. But Emig does offer a vocabulary for discussing composing that anticipates my project in unexpected ways. In her discussion of the "Components of the Composing Process," she includes the following within her discussion of context:

> More specifically, who the significant other in the composing process of secondary students is seems dependent upon whether the writing is school-sponsored or self-sponsored. For early self-sponsored and school-sponsored writing, when the subjects are preschool age or in elementary grades, parents and teachers seem fairly equally significant others. For school-sponsored writing in the secondary school, teachers are the most significant others, with parents occupying a very minor role except, occasionally, when they themselves are teachers. For self-sponsored writing among adolescent writers, particularly the able ones, the significant others are peers who also write. (92)

Emig concludes that writing in secondary schools is too other-directed, particularly too teacher-directed, and is likely a direct result of the lack of writing that secondary teachers do themselves, which she presumes leads to an over-simplification of how the composing process is taught (she later notes that she was too hard on teachers in her conclusions (see *Web* 62)).

Upon rereading this passage, I stumbled over "significant other," completely undetected in my previous readings and teachings of this text. Emig offers no explanation of how she's using that term. Some initial research as well as a check

of the *OED* led me to few references during the period when she was writing. Harry Stack Sullivan's *Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry*, published in 1947, is credited with introducing the term, and his later book, *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry*, published in 1953, further elaborates its significance. For Sullivan, "significant other" referenced "those who directly socialize the person to whom they are significant" (Owens). His understanding of the term emerged from his research on schizophrenia, the onset of which he traced "to unsuccessful interpersonal relationships with significant others during childhood" (Owens). Thus, a significant other was not initially defined in terms of a romantic relationship, as is common today, but designated "those persons who are of sufficient importance in an individual's life to affect the individual's emotions, behavior, and sense of self" (Owens).

Sullivan (along with social psychologist George Herbert Mead) suggests that socialization hinges on whether others view you as important. This seems consistent with Emig's usage of "significant other" in the above passage. Also likely relevant was Joseph Woelfel and Archibald Haller's "Significant Others, the Self-Reflexive Act and the Attitude Formation Process," published in *American Sociological Review* in February of 1971, the same year that Emig's book was published. It's unlikely that she read it, but perhaps the ideas were in the air, as often happened in a slower paced publishing environment. In their sociological study, Woelfel and Haller define significant others as "those persons who exercise major influence over the attitudes of individuals" (75; emphasis in original). "Attitudes" are for them "relationships between a person and an object or set of objects" (75).

The use of significant other to indicate influence is consistent with Emig's and is an evocative progenitor of "partners" in this study. Influence does not exactly match how I use partners in this study, but it does have some bearing. Influence usually evokes effects, direct and indirect power over and affect. And intriguingly, influence derives from the Latin *influentia*, meaning "to flow in." The first definition of influence in the *OED* reads, "The action or fact of flowing in; inflowing, inflow, influx: said of the action of water and other fluids, and of immaterial things conceived of as flowing in." Influence flows in and infuses, bereft of hard boundaries and clear start and end points. This idea captures very well the curatorial, distributed, and immersive characteristics of writing made visible in acknowledgments. What flows in can't be stopped, represents an agency that exceeds human involvement, and might suggest being overwhelmed or overcome by forces outside the self. Indeed, this latter implication emerges in the *OED*'s fifth definition of the term: "The capacity or faculty of producing effects by insensible or invisible means, without the employment of material force, or the exercise of formal authority . . . ascendancy, sway, control, or authority, not formally or overtly expressed."

Agents that lack overt sway over composing have emerged as significant to scholarship on ubiquitous technologies like paper, calling attention to the production and consumption of material writing partners that otherwise seem to have no intent or whose presence is simply taken for granted. Catherine Prendergast and Roman Ličko contrast paper consumption in an American university and a Slovakian one, revealing how, at the former, faculty expect paper to be widely available yet fail to realize how costly it is (her department spent $11,424 on paper during 2007-2008) (204). In Slovakia, however, the scarcity of paper and minimal access to a photocopier make plainly evident paper's expense and identity as a central technology of writing. English department faculty are allotted 70 copies per academic year, and those copies are limited to exams. The authors note that "Roman, with 60-75 students in one course, is hardpressed to adhere to the 70-photocopies a month limit, even if only for exams. In order to fit his exam into the limit, he narrows margins, chooses small font sizes, and worries about the resulting legibility" (205; cf. Mortensen).

In a similar vein, A. Suresh Canagarajah describes the conditions that framed academic research in the 1980s in his home country, Sri Lanka, explaining that paper was hard to come by so he and his colleagues used recycled pamphlets. Revision, in these circumstances, "depended on the amount of paper one could find" (*Geopolitics* 9). Since electronic and postal communication were also severely limited, they frequently learned of new developments in their fields, new books, or announcements of fellowships or conferences after the fact, limiting their ability to participate in contemporary conversations. In his own research on periphery scholars, Canagarajah faced such extreme circumstances as when an interview with a research participant was cancelled because "of a bombing raid or some other emergency" (14). In another example, he describes writing by kerosene-fueled lamps in the absence of electricity.

Shifting from environmental partners to those of form, John Trimbur and Karen Press focus on the page. Far from an empty site of inscription, a page is "active and alive, with its own invisible understructures and semiotic potentialities" (93). A written page, they explain, consists of "material forms, such as the type and quality of paper and ink in use; its own conventions, such as the rhetoric of transparency and the grid as an underlying compositional matrix; and the labor of composing pages through the available means of production, which change over time" (95-96). This argument is consistent with Trimbur's earlier discussion of delivery as a neglected rhetorical canon, which he believes "has led writing teachers to equate the activity of composing with writing itself and to miss altogether the complex delivery systems through which writing circulates" ("Composition" 189-90; cf. Ridolfo and DeVoss). All of these authors highlight the materials of writing—very real writing partners. In order to make

something, we need materials that are themselves endowed with energy and agency, contributing to the final product in non-trivial ways. Without a page (screen, tablet, scroll, wall, etc.) as a surface of inscription, for example, what is writing? How would it present? The line of thought developed here operates as a thinking-partner for my effort to shift attention to companionate partners, in addition to tools and forms, as writing essentials.

Writing partners, as made visible in acknowledgments, exert indirect, seemingly immaterial, often invisible influence over writing; and sometimes thinking partners surprise, taking the lead and directing attention in unforeseen ways. Partners of all sorts overtake writing, with or without conscious awareness, and contribute to its creation. This point was reiterated for me when I recently read David Bartholomae's "Living in Style," the lead essay in his collection, *Writing on the Margins*. He begins by noting that he has always kept a commonplace book in which he includes passages from his reading and teaching that represent "striking eloquence" (1). In addition to functioning as a storehouse for what catches his attention, these passages "serve as points of reference to individual performances and positions in a larger field of ideas or debate" (1). In "Against the Grain," Bartholomae says more about the presence of others while writing:

> I feel a sense of historic moment when I write—not that I'm making history, but that I am intruding upon or taking my turn in a conversation others have begun before me. I feel a sense of the *priority of others*. Some of them, I think, are great writers, some of them are my colleagues and contemporaries, some of them are my teachers, some of them are strangers or students. . . . When I write I find I am appropriating authority from others while trying to assert my own. This is the dialectic that I feel when I write and that shapes what I do when I put words on a page. (20-21; emphasis added)

What is most important—takes precedence—are others, rather than, say, ideas, inspiration, or purpose (all of which, for Bartholomae, are inflected by others). In place of a relational model, in which various materials and agents interact to produce writing, Bartholomae depicts his writing process in terms of more and less powerful affordances. In other words, all contributors/partners are not equal. With Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, my thinking throughout this book is shaped by materialist concepts of agency that "account for myriad 'intra-actions' between phenomena that are material, discursive, human, more-than-human, corporeal, and technological" (5), and yet I sometimes find the minimized role of power variables inherent in such descriptions to be inexact and, at worst, potentially dangerous when applied to analyses of oppression,

trauma, and systematic violence. Thus, Bartholomae's description serves as a useful reminder that partners are not neutral. This point sometimes gets lost in materialist descriptions of assemblages that rely heavily on unweighted relationality. We can become dependent on certain partners in ways that aren't wholly enabling, that constrain productivity and entrap us in unworkable situations. Bartholomae's example is definitively not an example of the latter; rather, his emphasis on priority while writing highlights for me the larger stakes in presuming a benign relationality.

Donna Haraway emphasizes this point in her articulation of *significant otherness*, which she defines as involving "non-harmonious agencies and ways of living . . . accountable both to their disparate inherited histories and to their barely possible but absolutely necessary joint futures" (*Companion* 7; emphasis in original). When I invoke writing partners, then, I have in mind animals, feelings, technologies, matter, time, and materials interacting in both harmonious and antagonistic ways. My thinking is shaped by material feminist reconfigurations of agency. Feminists have rethought corporeality to acknowledge the mingling together of human and nonhuman matter, setting the groundwork for understanding identity as never entirely divorced from environment, medicine, science, toxins, and so forth. This view creates a case for distributed agency and for intersections with nature and environment, long a troubling pairing for feminism because of women's longstanding vexed relation to Nature. One of the main points that emerges from material feminist research is that all forms of matter, living and non-living, are significant to sociocultural, political, as well as biological systems. Applying these ideas to writing has the potential to help us describe writing practices with vibrant awareness of all that writing entails and signifies. Writers are not autonomous. Bruno Latour articulates a broader, related point in a recent article: "To be a subject is not to act autonomously in front of an objective background, but to share agency with other subjects that have also lost their autonomy" (5).

A striking example of linked agency appears in Nicholas Carr's *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*. He discusses the desperate, ailing Friedrich Nietzsche who, in 1882, after struggling with failing vision that threatened his continued writing, ordered the world's first commercially produced typewriter, the Malling-Hansen Writing Ball. Carr describes the enormous difference the Writing Ball made in Nietzsche's writing life:

> The writing ball rescued Nietzsche, at least for a time. Once he had learned touch typing, he was able to write with his eyes closed, using only the tips of his fingers. Words could pass from his mind to the page. He was so taken with

Malling-Hansen's creation that he typed up a little ode to it:

> The writing ball is a thing like me: made of iron
>
> Yet easily twisted on journeys.
>
> Patience and tact are required in abundance,
>
> As well as fine fingers, to use us.

In March, a Berlin newspaper reported that Nietzsche "feels better than ever" and, thanks to his typewriter, "has resumed his writing activities."

But the device had a subtler effect on his work. One of Nietzsche's closest friends, the writer and composer Heinrich Koselitz, noticed a change in the style of his writing. Nietzsche's prose had become tighter, more telegraphic. There was a new forcefulness to it, too, as though the machine's power—it's "iron"—was, through some mysterious metaphysical mechanism, being transferred into the words it pressed into the page. "Perhaps you will through this instrument even take to a new idiom," Koselitz wrote in a letter, noting that, in his own work, "my 'thoughts' in music and language often depend on the quality of pen and paper."

"You are right," Nietzsche replied. "Our Writing equipment takes part in the forming of our thoughts." (18-19)

The sensory elements of writing, relayed through description of Nietzsche's closed eyes and fingertips, in addition to the philosopher's depiction of the typewriter as a "thing like me," offers a robust intermingling of writing agents. This relationship between equipment and thinking is hardly evoked by Carr's assertion that words "could pass from his mind to the page," which suggests an osmosis-like process through which words are "passed" effortlessly. If anything, the account, particularly Koselitz's observations, emphasizes the effort exerted by Nietzsche in order to produce writing, and the role of the machine in not only production but also the "forming of our thoughts."

This final image of the writer collaborating with tools provides an apt reminder of what I have sought to accentuate in this chapter: theories of communal composing encourage unconventional looking at writers' encounters with things and others. And, as subsequent chapters illustrate, acknowledgments are a rich site for such looking, as they draw attention to subterranean aspects of composing, including a diversity of writing partners. Chapter two develops this claim by focusing on good feeling as a writing partner that has a distinct pres-

ence and function in acknowledgments. I'm interested not only in how writers use acknowledgments to archive good feelings but also in the effects of this use on conceptions of writing that influence theory and pedagogy.