CHAPTER 3
ACKNOWLEDGING TIME

"No matter how much we may feel that our thought takes weightless flight, or that its velocity transcends time, mental processes work within biological materiality and have actual duration."

— Eva Hoffman, *Time*

"A much-longed-for faculty professional leave permitted me the privilege of research, contemplation, and time to write. There is no better gift than time."

— Jacqueline Jones Royster, *Feminist Rhetorical Practices* (with Kirsch)

While working on this book, I have occasionally recorded my screen to see what my writing looks like in real time. Most notable is that, in any fifteen-minute period, so little happens. A typical episode shows me copying and pasting text, typing five to six words, deleting two of them, and the cursor blinking at the last deletion point while minutes pass. These slow increments of text production, characterized by seemingly minor additions and deletions, likely make up the real-time act of writing for many of us. The resulting impression is that writing doesn't look like much. Screen capture, of course, is limited in what it can record because much of writing happens off-screen: looking out the window, readjusting a chair, petting a cat, drinking coffee, reading and rereading, thinking, listening to music. After reviewing several of these screen captures, I remain amazed that my writing has filled pages when it appears that I accomplish so very little at any given moment.

The underwhelming documentation of writing in situ reveals writing as optimistic and future-oriented—how else to explain why so many people do this slow-moving thing over and over again, presumably believing it will amount to something? As we read how a writer traces the lineage of a project in acknowledgments, we realize that she had to decide, at some earlier point, that the project was worth undertaking for a perhaps undetermined amount of time. She had to envision a future in which the work would be completed. Acknowledgments themselves might be the site through which to visualize a future, as writers very often imagine, during a writing project, how they will write the acknowledgments when the writing is finally done. In addition to being future-oriented, acknowledgments are tied up with memory: the writer looks back at how she completed the work and records what seems at the moment of completion to be major influences, supports, and so forth. The genre exerts a pressure to re-

member and to document. No doubt this real or imagined pressure, in addition to what might be called genre coercion, produces a need for narrative, a need arguably fulfilled by the genre of acknowledgments.

In many acknowledgments, writing seems to require a destabilized present. Writers lose track of time; writing exerts weightlessness even as reality thumps all around. Joseph Williams' preface to *Style* captures both writing's weightlessness and its rootedness in a demanding present: "And finally, to my family—my thanks for your love and support and understanding, especially when Daddy's 'just one minute' stretched to an hour or two" (n.p.). Contrast Williams' ability to disappear into his writing with Adrienne Rich's comment in *Of Woman Born* (not part of an acknowledgment) about the difficulty of writing as children make claims on her time:

> The child (or children) might be absorbed in busyness, in
> his own dreamworld; but as soon as he felt me gliding into
> a world which did not include him, he would come to pull
> at my hand, ask for help, punch at the typewriter keys. And
> I would feel his wants at such a moment as fraudulent, as
> an attempt moreover to defraud me of living even for fifteen
> minutes as myself. (23)

Time is an urgency in Rich's account precisely because she doesn't enjoy its availability. Here and elsewhere, the grammar of time is insistent, percussive, defined by moments of near transcendence interrupted by the heaviness of daily life, which, in Rich's account, includes the gendered demands of children. For Williams, another kind of gendered demand emerges, one characterized by the lightness of falling into writing and bracketing, at least for an hour or two, children's needs. For a contrastive view, Judith Goleman, in her acknowledgment, references Margaret Mead's response to Harriet Beecher Stowe, who complained that "she couldn't get any writing done because her baby cried so much" (xxii). Mead countered that she wasn't able to get writing done "because the baby smiled so much" (qtd. in Goleman xxii). Building on Mead's counter-intuitive retort, Goleman addresses the productive role of a child in her composing life when she writes that "the baby's smiles, if anything, made writing more possible, and this is an acknowledgment I want to make as I send this book out to future writers" (xxii). Time (and, as it turns out, smiles) is indeed a "gift," as Royster writes in her acknowledgment cited in the epigraph, one inflected by social arrangements of various kinds.

Despite Williams' seemingly unfettered disappearance for hours, even "weightless flight," as Eva Hoffman terms it, cannot elude time's thickness, its pressures and delights, its inescapable imprint. Weightlessness may be a feeling

for some—a material reality, for others—but writing is irrefutably inseparable from time. In fact, writing's distinguishing feature might be that it unfolds in increments, revealing and becoming itself over time. That is, writing (the act) produces writing (the text) over time, and in so doing, writing (the act) becomes itself (the text). This idea is embodied in the commonplace yet arguably robust formulation of writing as a process. Process indicates creation over time even as it also denotes what Berthoff calls "allatonceness," the multidirectional demands particular to organizing language into written form.

The incremental aspect of writing is clearly visible as writers trace debts in acknowledgments. They frequently do so by emphasizing the long established origins that led to the final product. So, for instance, some identify "graduate school" as a starting point (Schell in Schell and Stock) or reveal the long timeline of a project—"this book is the result of seven years' work" (Hawhee, *Moving*)—or announce an unidentifiable single point of origin: "This book has deep roots" (Dunbar-Odom). These descriptions provide glimpses of how writing inhabits time, an emphasis that might more substantively affect writing theory and pedagogy than it does currently. Temporal materiality, more often than not, gets little attention, though this is changing as digital and multimodal pedagogies foreground the pace of composing when working with a wide range of tools, often in collaborative contexts.

Embodied realities of how we inhabit time while writing are remembered only vaguely once a project is complete, perhaps one reason why writing acknowledgments in fresh language that skirts genre conventions can be so challenging. Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, which describes how time and space are represented in literary texts, is useful here. For Bakhtin, the chronotope is an expression of genre-specific representations of time; for example, increments of time characteristic of an epic differ substantially from those of a lyric poem. Bakhtin explains, "In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope" (84).

Examining writers' constructions of time in acknowledgments offers one view of time "thickening," a wonderful phrase that aptly describes time's density, always inadequately represented in language. Writing time is thick with bodies, feelings, materials, others, and what John Tomlinson, in *The Culture of Speed*, calls "sedentary speed," or speed that is not connected to physical movement. That is, writing requires some element of stillness, which may of course be punctuated by activity to interrupt the sedentary pose of writing, and often is, judging by the accounts of running, walking, swimming, and bicycling described in

acknowledgments. The simultaneously familiar and inscrutable qualities of the relationship between stillness and the forward orientation of writing complicates even the most basic commonplaces, like process and product—general terms that cannot help but gloss more nuanced experiences of writing.

Paul Prior and Jody Shipka make a similar point in "Chronotopic Lamination," in which they report on writers' literate activity as examined in four case studies. They begin with an example from one of their participants, a psychology professor who revises an article at home while doing laundry:

> She sets the buzzer on the dryer so that approximately every 45 minutes to an hour she is pulled away from the text to tend the laundry downstairs. As she empties the dryer, sorts and folds, reloads, her mind wanders a bit and she begins to recall things she wanted to do with the text, begins to think of new questions or ideas, things that she had not been recalling or thinking of as she focused on the text when she was upstairs minutes before. She perceives this break from the text, this opportunity to reflect, as a very productive part of the process. (180)

Time-based writing platforms perform a similar function vis-à-vis apps and online programs like the Pomodoro Technique, a writing timer that structures writing into 25 minute increments, punctuated by 5- or 15-minute breaks, during which users are encouraged to walk around, practice office yoga, or otherwise engage in some physical activity. A variation on Pomodoro that bills itself as more fluid, the Marinara timer (apparently Italian food provides a promising basis for timed writing) allows users—including teams of writers—to set whatever time increments they prefer. While writers could just as easily use their own timers to structure writing time, there seems to be something generative about a specialized writing timer, perhaps because it is sanctioned as a "method" or "technique."

A number of online writing tools embody the time-space fusion that Bakhtin attributes to the chronotope, as they prioritize daily word count (Word Counter), create a writing-focused window that disables access to the web and social media for a set period of time (SelfControl), and offer distraction-free spaces for writing. In that last category, for instance, is OmmWriter, advertised as "your own private writing room where you can close the door behind you to focus on your writing in peace. Everywhere you go, you have access to a beautiful distraction-free writing environment where your authentic voice is free to go where it is meant to go" ("Welcome"). In each case, customizable timers, writing spaces, and programs "mediate activity" by distributing work tasks in particular ways, effectively creating a writing ecosystem that aims for sustainability (cf. Prior and Shipka 180).

While time- and space-based approaches to writing emphasize that writing happens in and over time, these approaches are themselves transitory; used during the process of writing, they are ultimately overshadowed by the final product. In other words, with the presence of a final product comes the erasure of time as it was actually spent during the process. Calling attention to time-space, as the chronotope does, highlights writing's fleeting yet thick temporality. Using this concept as a guide rather than an explicit interpretive tool, this chapter focuses on how writers perceive and recount writing time, constructing narratives that make visible writing's temporality, usually well submerged, surfacing, if at all, in marginalia—dedications, acknowledgments, prefaces, and notes.

Acknowledgments offer a filtered, certainly incomplete, and partial view of that surfacing, but they nonetheless constitute a rich site of study because time emerges without prompting, in response to no particular expectation. When writers choose to narrate writing time experiences, what do they say? What constructs of cognition and writing emerge? What can we learn about writing, about teaching writing, through explicit attention to time? I'm particularly interested in understanding how writers identify time as an orienting device that gestures both to a writing past and to writing's future, a horizon of possibility. To think of writing as possibility is to view it as a series of promises that we make to ourselves and to readers; each incremental form of progress, no matter how ensconced in unease, gets us closer to a realized object. To return again and again to writing, without full knowledge of what those returns will bear, enacts possibility. Time, as a writing partner that intersects with possibility, attachment, and endurance, is made visible in acknowledgments, as I'll demonstrate in this chapter. Throughout, "time" represents an indexical concept that corresponds to writers' references to duration and indeterminate origins of a project, interruptions, wandering, shifting intellectual interests during the course of a career, losing oneself while writing, temporally based technologies, and cultural context as it intersects with writing. These references, which I excerpted from 25 acknowledgments, are organized into four sections that move from micro- to macro-scaled considerations of time. The first two sections, Elliptical Time and Slow Writing, focus on rhythm and pacing as writing partners identified in acknowledgments; the last two, Cultural Time and Composition Time, move outward to address how writing and time circulate in cultural and disciplinary composing contexts.

ELLIPTICAL TIME

Descriptions of writing as serendipitous wandering emerge in writers' representations of time in acknowledgments. Embedded in such descriptions are very often forms of physical and intellectual movement as well as distributed circuitry

through which ideas circulate and then take form. For example, Carl Knappett, in *Thinking Through Material Culture*, identifies an "indispensable" resource for his project as "time to head off along blind alleys and find a way back again" (vi–viii). The wandering necessary to complete his project, an archaeological study that seeks to understand "the status of objects and of the humans producing and using them" (vii), is central to Knappett's thinking and writing. Perhaps commonplace, he calls our attention to writing realities that figure minimally, if at all, in contemporary theories and practices of writing. That writing takes time and is propelled by not knowing, dead ends, and wrong turns is arguably part of the deep structure of academic writing permitted in acknowledgments and other marginal texts but rarely foregrounded in writing pedagogy and theory.

Among other things, what finished writing obscures is not only the daunting amount of real time that goes into making scholarly work, but also the traces of a writer's changing interests that form over time. Such disclosures are commonplace in acknowledgments: "The roots of this book," writes Janice Lauer in *Invention in Rhetoric and Composition*, "go back decades. . . " (xvii). "This project represents the fulfillment of a dream deferred," begin Patricia Donahue and Gretchen Flesher Moon in their acknowledgment for *Local Histories*. They continue, "It was over fifteen years ago that the two of us, each year at the CCCC conference, began to share our concerns about the relative invisibility of certain kinds of institutions. . . " (xiii). N. Katherine Hayles describes her shifting orientation in the opening to *Writing Machines*: "This book is also an encoded record of a decade-long journey I have made as I moved from an orientation based in traditional literary criticism to one that took seriously my long-standing interests in technology from a literary point of view" (7).

Writers sometimes use acknowledgments to articulate detachment from a former self, the one who existed prior to or sometimes during the writing process. In her essay, "Rhythm and Pattern in a Composing Life," Louise Wetherbee Phelps vividly illustrates this detachment. Phelps describes what she calls a writing "slump," which for her is marked by "a sustained period of discouragement, depression, confusion, loss of confidence and competence" (25). The slump casts doubt on her abilities:

> I wrote in my daybook: "listless, lethargic, no ideas, no new ideas, all ideas seem worthless. Nothing connects or reminds or leads anywhere." (I knew, of course, that it would pass; but that was an intellectual conviction, not truly felt.) I marveled at the descriptions I had written earlier of the generative moment; later, when I had passed out of the slump I could not remember how it felt or how one could ever feel that way. (250)

Like Phelps, Brodkey, in her acknowledgments for *Writing Permitted in Designated Areas Only*, catalogs a disassociation that happens while writing:

> I probably owe my patience as a writer and teacher to the
> fact that while my prose falls apart far more often than it
> comes together, the pleasures of writing are unlike the other
> pleasures of my life. It's not that others are any more or less
> pleasurable, but that the unexpected moments in writing
> when time becomes space literally and figuratively move me.
> For the duration of the convergence of time and space, I am
> in my body and the body of my text. (ix)

Both writers juxtapose real-time writing with writing's ephemeral, immersive qualities. The passage of time while writing is, for Phelps, thick and slow-going while simultaneously a blip that becomes unimaginable in the aftermath of completed work. And Brodkey offers a mind-body fusion during which time and space do not impinge on writing's pleasures but function as a sort of weightless surround. For both, the grammar of time is a powerful way to narrate duration and periodicity of writing episodes.

Other writers similarly narrate gratitude in acknowledgments by referencing interactions that call to mind time-space configurations. Examples include the following:

> Several dear friends have encouraged or endured important
> parts of this project too, from instant messenger conversations
> to long phone calls to scraps scrawled on napkins in seedy
> establishments. (Banks xiv)

> To Sid Dobrin, Julie Drew, and Joe Hardin, who cheerfully
> endure the rambling and often intemperate e-mails in which
> I try to work through pesky theoretical problems and who,
> with equal cheer, let me know when I am writing nonsense.
> (Sánchez x)

> Also important were the many casual conversations with
> friends and colleagues over the years. When asked, 'So what's
> your book about?,' I had to articulate an answer, trying out
> various synopses in twenty-five words or less. My responses to
> these people met with instantaneous, enthusiastic validation,
> some leading to extended or multiple conversations. These
> conversations, individually and collectively, kept me keeping
> on. (Monroe x)

Online chatting, extended phone calls, dashed off napkin notes, "rambling" emails, spontaneous and extended conversations—all genres of exchange that have very specific temporal associations: fast, slow, intermittent, periodic, enduring, fleeting.

The grammar of time, particularly the dialectic between weightiness and weightlessness, might drive urges toward narrative cohesion in acknowledgments, where such cohesion might otherwise be lacking. For example, Mina Shaughnessy begins her preface to *Errors and Expectations* as follows: "I keep in my files a small folder of student papers that go back ten years in my teaching career" (vii). She notes that when she first read the "alien papers," she had no idea how to respond to or make sense of them. Looking at them a decade later, she writes in her preface, generates "no difficulty assessing the work to be done or believing that it can be done" (vii). "This book began that afternoon," writes Shaughnessy, "although I did not start to write it until some years later" (vii). Through this description, we glimpse the long history of a project, the way in which writing and time turn a problem and source of inquiry into an informed practice, and the certainty of an origin point, though, notably, not the origin point of physical writing itself. Even as Shaughnessy's description reads overly compact, for it seems unlikely that the most consuming work of her career can be traced back to one moment, her desire to construct a writing timeline, to give it an arc that moves from ignorance to enlightenment, strikes me as a narrative impulse illustrating more likely what is sayable about writing as a subject than what is actually descriptive of the process. That is, documenting writing often requires that we construct—maybe even concoct—time-based narratives, lending structure to an ephemeral process that, in practice, infrequently can be said to have discernible peaks and valleys.

It is probably more likely that writers experience chance moments and encounters over time that contribute to a project, even if unconsciously, after writing is underway. Robert Scholes, in his acknowledgment for *The Rise and Fall of English: Reconstructing English as a Discipline*, produces the most detailed such account that I've come across:

> As I have worked on this book over the past several years—
> and in particular, as I have tried to rethink, revise, and
> conclude it in the past few months—helpful books have often
> come to hand serendipitously. Some years ago the late Elmer
> Blistein gave me a copy of Walter Bronson's history of Brown
> University, which started me down the historical path I follow
> in Chapter 1. More recently while escorting Marcus and
> Sarah Smith through the wonders of Warren, Rhode Island,

where Brown began, the *Autobiography* of Billy Phelps literally
fell into my hands from the shelves of an antique mall. Then,
on a visit to Iowa City, I received much useful feedback from
members of both the English and Education departments—
and from John Gerber. . . . Even more recently my colleague
Leonard Tennenhouse loaned me his copy of Franklin Court's
book about the rise of English studies in British universities.
To the authors of these books, as well as to the people who
led me to them, I am grateful indeed—but there is no end
to thanking the authors of books, so I will confine myself to
mentioning those who have helped in others ways. (xiii)

The resources important to Scholes' project are attributed to people, books,
strange occurrences (a book "literally fell into [his] hands"), accounted for in
time increments—years, months—and narrativized through temporal markers
like "started me down," "recently," "even more recently," and "then." His some-
times improbable narrative mimics the subtitle of his book by reconstructing
the path he took to tell this story of disciplinarity. What really comes through
is that the act of writing is but one piece of the story; other pieces include writ-
ing's partnership with books, histories, chance, others, and time—ever-present
recipients of gratitude.

SLOW WRITING

"It is nearly three years now since I first started developing the ideas for
this anthology."

– Carmen Luke, *Feminisms and Pedagogies of Everyday Life*

"We especially thank Lil Brannon for her vision of a feminist project
that would place differences among women at its center. That vision
has helped sustain us from the spring of 1993, when this collection was
begun, through the arduous process that brought it to completion [five
years later]."

– Susan C. Jarratt and Lynn Worsham,
Feminism and Composition Studies

"The editors would like to acknowledge foremost the persistence and pa-
tience of the contributors to this collection, who stayed with the project
through its long initial planning stages and first publisher's bankruptcy."

– Christina Russell McDonald and Robert L. McDonald,
Teaching Writing: Landmarks and Horizons

Writing and publishing are forms of labor and labored processes. Writers develop ideas, persist through an "arduous process," withstand long "planning stages," and weather extraordinary circumstances, as did the McDonalds who endured a "publisher's bankruptcy" and deaths of contributors Robert J. Connors and Alan W. France prior to publication. This is to say, there are many reasons why writing slow is not only an effect of the difficulty of the task but also of the weightiness of reality bearing down on words and publications. Akin to the wandering advocated by Knappett and documented by Scholes, A. Suresh Canagarajah, in his acknowledgments for *A Geopolitics of Academic Writing*, depicts slowness as an opportunity for reflection and rejuvenation in the midst of a large project. Canagarajah writes, "My wife, Nanthini, daughters, Lavannya and Nivedhana, and son, Wiroshan (whose birth six months before the completion of this manuscript fortunately slowed down my writing and provided some invigorating time for reflection), continue to accommodate my life in scholarship and activism" (x). Writing cannot be bracketed from the moments and events that define us; it is part of the bundle, a commonplace observation, though one that has yet to influence seriously how writing is taught (the concluding chapter takes up this issue).

About the publication of *Writing Histories of Rhetoric* in 1994, Victor Vitanza reflects, "The particular book project—if I can assign it a place on the calendar—began in 1988" (xi). Even though instantaneous writing is everywhere around us thanks to social media, slow writing remains a reality for many writers, though a less visible one because it is less easily documented than, say, a tweet, Pinterest entry, or other mediated platform for quick writing. This might be why Doug Hesse, in "Writing and Time," argues that despite the ubiquity of writing in our culture, "relatively little of it happens in extended chunks drafted and revised over time. . . . We master the bon mot, we excel at snark" (1). Ultimately, he calls for "writing that takes time, both measured by episodes marked by butts in the chair but also episodes shaping over days and weeks. I'm not saying that such writing is nobler than the quick sprints of contemporary composition; it just provides a healthy counter-balance to frenetic fragmentation. Our writing ecologies need an increment of slow . . ." (5). Judging by writers' accounts in acknowledgments (as well as by my colleagues' and my own processes), I believe that slow writing is unthreatened and in fact, for critical work of any kind, normative (though it's less flashy and receives no attention in the mass media). What's perhaps less stable—and more consistent with Hesse's observation—are forms of documentation and systems of value that affirm slow writing as a practice that has worth. "Speed," writes John Tomlinson, "is always a matter of cultural value" (3). Since modernity, speed has been associated with "vigor and vitality" (4), forming a relatively coherent set of attitudes and values that adhere to speed. Thus Hesse's call for "writing ecologies" with "an increment of

slow" arises as a counter-balance to the systemic embrace of speed and its virtues.

The slow speed of writing conjures associations with writer's block and general difficulty; in direct contrast with the vigor of speed, slow writing telegraphs weakness and stasis, and, in some cases, mental instability, as is evident in filmic representations of blocked writers in movies such as *Barton Fink* and The *Shining*. Yet slowness, patience, and generally being in the moment while writing have pleasures as well as convincing justifications. Slow writing may be attributable to stages of invention that do not defer to linear time. In "Rhythm and Pattern in a Composing Life," Louise Wetherbee Phelps describes her critical writing process:

> After a while I discovered that there is a natural rhythm to
> creativity that cannot be altered simply by will power. When
> I chart the ebb and flow of generativity in my composing life,
> there are broad, slowly changing tides representing my power
> to compose over a period of time, and little waves and swells
> day to day, minute to minute. I am particularly susceptible to
> the ebb of creative energy in transition periods between work
> activities that are differently paced. (250)

Writing, pace, and creativity shape how writing inhabits time and, conversely, how time inflects writing.

The dialectical relationship between writing and time is plainly evident in Lisa Ede's acknowledgments for *Situating Composition*. Spanning nine years, the final product reflects Ede's sense of responsibility as a researcher as well as genre and voice goals she set for herself. Charting her progress via the table of contents and its transformations, she writes, "The first table of contents for this study that I have in my files is dated August 14, 1994. By the time this book was completed in September 2003, this table of contents had gone through nineteen iterations" (xiv). Ede explains her process as follows:

> I often approach issues in composition studies analogically via
> research in such related areas as feminist theory, critical peda-
> gogy, and cultural studies, and I needed time to read and digest
> this research. I also needed time to develop the blurred genre
> approach that characterizes this study. . . . Moreover, while the
> style and approach of *Situating Composition* are hardly radical,
> I invested a good deal of effort and time in trying to write a
> text that—while most directly addressed to other scholars in
> the field—might be accessible to others engaged in the work of
> composition, should they find their way to it. (xiv)

She adds that her mention of the "material conditions surrounding [her] work" pushes against the way "scholarly books and articles seem to appear magically out of nowhere. Such virgin births threaten to mystify the very material processes and collaborations that enable one scholar to bring a project to completion, while another finds it difficult to do so" (xiv-xv).

We can fruitfully attach Ede's temporal, materially conscious articulation of writing and its labors to Sara Ahmed's framing of writing time as embedded in social structures and arrangements. For Ahmed, time is always bound up with identity in some way. Referring to Adrienne Rich's observation about children and writing, Ahmed notes:

> This loss of time for writing feels like a loss of your own time, as you are returned to the work of giving your attention to the children. One does not need to posit any essential difference to note that there is a political economy of attention: there is an uneven distribution of attention time among those who arrive at the writing table, which affects what they can do once they arrive (and of course, many do not even make it). For some, having time for writing, which means time to face the table upon which writing happens, becomes an orientation that is not available given the ongoing labor of other attachments, which literally pull them away. ("Orientations" 250)

Taken together, Ede and Ahmed develop a theory of writing that foregrounds temporality, materiality, and attention practices. Writing surfaces as an incremental craft that is shaped by what adheres to us as political, social animals.

CULTURAL TIME

In other instances, acknowledgments anchor writing time in personal, intellectual, and/or cultural time. Ann Berthoff, writing with James Stephens in her 1988 edition of *Forming/Thinking/Writing*, originally published in 1978, writes with palpable disappointment about persistent stasis in educational practices in the U.S.: "I was thinking about this book during the days of campus protest against American action in Indochina, when I shared the hope of many that thoughtful, substantial changes in attitudes toward education could be institutionalized. They have not been, and one result is that illiteracy is by now a national crisis" (Preface, n.p.). I presume Berthoff is referring to *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, commissioned by President Reagan and published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983. That incendiary

report likens the alleged mediocrity of education (unsupported by research of any kind) to a declaration of war on our nation. The paranoia of this political moment—Americans are falling behind the rest of the world!—reflected the Cold War ethos and the jitters generated by a sputtering economy. That *A Nation at Risk* was a savvy political tool masked as an actual study of education in this country must have been chilling to progressive educators like Berthoff.

In another example of how the cultural time of the 1980s is expressed in acknowledgments, Ira Shor, in the second printing of *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life*, explains his reasons for not revising the manuscript. First published in 1980, with the second edition printed in 1987, the book represents for Shor a message in a bottle:

> I tell myself a few things about the passing of time: You can't escape your past, but neither will it desert you. Our experiences are cushions to fall back on when the going gets tough, as well as sources of energy that help us push ahead. They can also limit how far we can go and control what we choose to do. It's indispensable to know the past with a fearless intimacy and a critical detachment, but it's a great mistake to rewrite it. So, I don't want to revise this book. Not only does it continue to help teachers to transform their classroom practice, but it captures what I thought, felt, and did at a crucial moment in my life, in my teaching, and in a fateful episode of cultural democracy. (viii)

Writing is rooted in cultural and political time, and functions as a symptom of the state of democracy. Just as we cannot go back in time, release ourselves entirely from its grip, get too comfortable in the safety of the past, Shor suggests that we cannot discount the imprint of cultural time on intellectual work and its vitality in any given moment.

Emphasizing that imprint as the motivation to revise rather than preserve, Erika Lindemann begins her preface of the third edition of *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers* by explaining why she felt compelled to revise the first edition of her book. For the 1995 edition, Lindemann reflects on the major changes in the field and in her own practices since the original 1980 publication:

> I am no longer the teacher I was when the first edition of *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers* appeared. My students and my experiences in the classroom have changed me—and this book as well. In trying to make this an honest book, I have

> questioned and revised the suggestions it makes, the support
> for my claims, the examples, the order of chapters, occasional-
> ly even the tone of voice. In the process, I've had the privilege
> of wrestling with words written fifteen years ago—a construc-
> tive irritation if ever there were one—and of remembering the
> good company of students, teachers, and readers who contrib-
> uted to this project. (x)

The passage of time ages the book in ways Lindemann cannot abide; revision is a way of reckoning with a destabilized present, a way of looking forward rather than honoring what writing "captures," or holds in place as a record of cultural time, as in Shor's account. For both, though, explicit decisions emerge about how to acknowledge time and its significance to writing and the always growing gap between the record and the now.

Still others address cultural time not so much by explicitly calling attention to the passage of time but by performing something of the contemporary moment through the act of writing. Take, for example, this excerpt from Adam Banks' 2006 acknowledgment in *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology*:

> My chair and mentor, Keith Gilyard—if Bill Russell the
> player/coach had Erving's flavor, Oscar's ability to take over,
> the Iceman's finger roll, and Darryl Dawkins' backboard
> breaking thunder, he might have been close to what you bring
> the academy. You let a playa handle the rock and you always
> coached the game, gave me the support to get through and
> the challenge to get over. You made that barbershop your
> office became, that woodshed, real, putting more Black minds
> out in the academy in a shorter time than anybody I've ever
> seen. You meant everything to my getting out here and give
> a hell of an example of what intellectual work can be. I can't
> thank you enough for letting me get on the roster. (xiii-xiv)

Banks moves fluidly between home and school languages, just as he does between academic and basketball references, while honoring his mentor whose effects are both personal and political. Gilyard put Banks "on the roster," as he did many others, "putting more Black minds out in the academy in a shorter time than anybody I've ever seen." In this short passage (and in the complete ac-knowledgment), Banks communicates the urgency of nurturing Black students. He also constructs a community through language use and cultural references, configuring acknowledgments as a space that can (and should) account for the time of writing, a time during which the mentoring of black students in compo-

sition studies—and in the academy, more broadly—is still novel enough to be called out in explicit ways.

COMPOSITION TIME

Time has preoccupied the field of composition studies from its beginnings, though this is not obvious when surveying existing scholarship. That is, with the exception of early process research. Emig, for example, in her 1971 landmark study, *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, develops an outline of her study participants' writing processes in which she includes the time-sensitive "tempo of composing" and its subcategory, "combinations of composing and hesitational behaviors" (35). Under "other observed behaviors," Emig lists "silence" and "vocalized hesitation phenomena" (35). Major categories in the outline include "starting" and "stopping," both of which link to subcategories for "contexts and conditions under which writing" started and stopped, and "interveners and interventions" (34-35). Emig again addressed temporality and writing, though this time in partnership with technology and memory, in "Hand, Eye, Brain," originally published in 1978. In her discussion of the value of writing by hand, Emig notes that doing so "keeps the process slowed down," which can yield surprises, though she also mentions as potential disadvantages that "a slow pace" can cause writers to "lose as well as find material since such a pace obviously puts a greater strain on the memory" (112). During the same period, Elbow, in *Writing Without Teachers*, advocates the process approach for which he has become nearly synonymous, contending that "[m]ost processes engaged in by live organisms are cyclic, developmental processes that run through time and end up different from how they began" (33). Because scholars were actively building a case for resisting static approaches to writing pedagogy that prioritized a product, it makes sense that early research names time explicitly as a significant writing partner.

In the aftermath of process writing's high water mark, though, time is typically not foregrounded but is a subject of interest in conjunction with something else. It's worth noting, however, that the very origins of the field are inextricably bound up with time in the form of timed writing exams, most famously the exam instituted by Harvard in 1874 that led to the development of the nation's first college-level required writing course. Timed writing exams for placement have long been staples in composition programs, despite ongoing debates about their validity (see Perelman; White). Time also looms over strategies for managing the paper "load," a subject that has gotten considerable attention on a cyclical basis (see, e.g., Golub; Jago). Time is a precious research resource, particularly in relation to longitudinal studies that span a year or more in an effort to

understand how writing skills change and evolve. And, of course, time regulates academic culture, where careers are structured by "clocks" and we speak of "writing time" and "teaching time."

In looking back at the emergence of composition courses in the United States, it's impossible to detach them from the low-status labor force they demanded and reproduced. The extreme time commitment required of the first composition teachers is documented to persuasive effect by Robert Connors, among others. For example, Connors cites the Hopkins Report, produced in 1913, which was based on surveys completed during a four-year period between 1909 and 1913 by American composition teachers. Connors quotes the following findings from the report:

> The average necessary duty of an English instructor according to the class and hour standards in effect was almost double (approximately 175 percent) that of an instructor in any of the other departments concerned . . . . The theme reading labor expected of a college freshman composition instructor is more than double (250 percent) that which can be carried on without undue physical strain . . . . Conscientious and efficient teachers are brought to actual physical collapse and driven from the profession . . . . (qtd. in Connors, "Rhetoric" 71)

We cannot outrun the time inequity woven into the origins of composition courses. It's no surprise that time frequently emerges in relation to contingent workers in the field who teach four or five sections a term, often at different institutions, in stressful, poorly compensated conditions.

Teaching is limited by time in ways that drive pedagogical theory and practice, for what we can do in a given time frame necessarily shapes pedagogy. The minimal explicit references to time in writing pedagogy are in some ways reasonable given that time is a fundamental, rather than exceptional or extraordinary, component of experience and reality. Time is woven into familiar terms and practices without much fanfare. Freewriting, quick writing, chat room discussions, twitter use, and "speed-dating" peer review sessions are explicitly time-bound activities. Revision is often described as a recursive process involving, as Nancy Sommers pointed out in 1980, "significant recurring activities—with different levels of attention and different agendas for each cycle" (386). Those different levels and agendas remind me of the oft-heard admonition to treat revision as a process of "re-seeing," for which time passage and cyclical returns are integral to encountering a piece of writing with fresh eyes. This makes sense if, with Hoffman, we agree that the "problem of time is inseparable from that of meaning" (185), as meaning emerges (or gets obscured) in and over time, often as a result of a series of returns.

In his 1991 "Reflections on Academic Discourse," Peter Elbow calls for teaching both "nonacademic" and "academic" discourse in first-year writing classrooms. One foundation for his argument has to do with time. "[L]ife is long and college is short," writes Elbow, as he begins to build his case for teaching writing as a life-long pursuit rather than an exercise mired in the conventions of academic discourse (if there really is such a thing). For him, "the best test of a writing course is whether it makes students more likely to use writing in their lives" (136). This rationale is very similar to what I heard from a running coach who was training a group of novice joggers to prepare for a marathon. He was fond of saying that whether or not we ever ran another marathon was completely irrelevant to him; he wanted us to become life-long runners—that would really mean something. Discussions of writing transfer, likewise, are geared toward writing futurity, or how students will be able to apply the skills and strategies they develop in one course to unforeseen sites of writing activity.

Elizabeth Wardle and Douglas Downs, in their first articulation of the writing about writing pedagogy, frame their expectations around time constraints, noting that imperfect student writing is a reasonable outcome. Because their students are conducting field research, often for the first time, they have a lot to learn. They write that "accepting imperfect work recognizes important truths about all research writing: it takes a long time, is inevitably imperfect, and requires extensive revision. The rewards of accepting imperfection as part of a challenging research and writing curriculum outweigh the deficiencies of courses in which students produce more-polished but less-demanding and realistic writing assignments" (575). This claim is consistent with literature on transfer, which argues that writing improvement is difficult to track because it is progressive rather than evident during a 10- or 15-week course, for example. In the second edition of *Helping Students Write Well*, Barbara Walvoord articulates a familiar refrain among writing specialists, particularly WPAs who field questions from colleagues across the disciplines about student writing: "Writing is so complex an activity, so closely tied to a person's intellectual development, that it must be nurtured and practiced over all the years of a student's schooling and in every curricular area" (4).

Constructs of time and orienting oneself in relation to then, now, and later are of particular significance to democratizing pedagogies geared toward change. To take perhaps the most famous example, Paulo Freire frames problem-posing education in temporal terms when he calls it "revolutionary futurity" (72). Such education, he writes, "corresponds to the historical nature of man. Hence, it affirms men as beings who transcend themselves, who move forward and look ahead, for whom immobility represents a fatal threat, for whom looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are

so that they can more wisely build the future" (72). Also geared toward change, though through less revolutionary methods, contemplative pedagogies make conscious use of time to stimulate good thinking in the service of rhetorical action, particularly argumentation. For example, Barry Kroll, in *The Open Hand*, describes how he teaches "meditation and mindfulness as practical arts that enhanc[e] ones' effectiveness in the world, especially in difficult conversations, interpersonal disputes, and arguments about divisive issues" (13). Likewise, in "Beyond Belief," Donna Strickland describes a pedagogical activity, inspired by Peter Elbow's believing game, called the "trying game." She includes two example reading prompts from her class, both of which make explicit use of time by asking students to pause, relax, and notice their bodies while reading (85). Both Kroll and Strickland advocate strategies of slowing down aimed at helping students learn how to pay attention to internal and external factors while communicating and reading.

PEDAGOGICAL TIMES

> "If you think something is boring, try doing it for two minutes. If you still think it's boring, try it for four. If you still think it's boring, try it for eight, then sixteen, then thirty-two, and so on and so forth. Soon enough you'll find that it's really not boring at all."
>
> – John Cage (see Asia)

In cartoonist and writer Lynda Barry's extraordinary pedagogical book *Syllabus*, she presents a compilation of activities, teaching notes, and syllabi for several drawing courses she teaches at the University of Wisconsin. Many of Barry's activities intentionally manipulate time to produce certain results and affects around creative work. Some rely on speed, producing work quickly without over-thinking and with the goal of building skills, habits, and confidence. For example, one activity requires students to spend three minutes drawing a house on fire that fills an entire page of a composition notebook (102). Other activities reinforce the value of simplicity and repetition, as illustrated by her approach to taking attendance. Students spend two minutes each class drawing self-portraits on index cards; she collects these in lieu of taking attendance and then returns the whole batch to students at the end of the course. "There are usually about 30 drawings in all, most of them completely forgotten until our last day of class," writes Barry. "My hope is that they see the extraordinary result of doing something as ordinary as drawing a 2-minute self-portrait on an index card twice a week" (57). Out of the mundane comes the extraordinary, an idea that might just as well inform Cage's advocacy of repetition.

In another effort to highlight ritual and repetition, Barry assigns a daily diary in which students color, write stories, and make drawings. In her note to the students about this assignment, she says,

> Daily practice with images both written and drawn is rare once we have lost our baby teeth and begin to think of ourselves as good at somethings and bad at other things. It's not that this isn't true . . . but the side effects are profound once we abandon a certain activity like drawing because we are bad at it. A certain state of mind (what McGilchrist might call 'attention') is also lost. A certain capacity of the mind is shuttered and for most people, it stays that way for life. (115)

Barry's explanation calls to mind similar claims made about writing journals, including the belief that ongoing, low-stakes writing helps to cultivate good habits and to practice paying attention to texts and to the world as a means for building writerly flexibility and confidence. In composition scholarship, journals have been variously extolled as a tool for settling students at the beginning of class, a site for recording informal thoughts about reading material, a free space for getting in the habit of writing with no concern for content, and a learning log for documenting development over time. The value (and utility) of journals has been linked, in one way or another, to efforts that capture a moment in time and that often require time commitments beyond the classroom. Barry's methods, too, prize independent, focused work not bracketed by classroom time that cultivates everyday life practices (not unlike Berthoff and Elbow's recommendations in relation to writing).

Because Barry models a pedagogical method that can be adapted to different learning tasks and environments, *Syllabus* is valuable to anyone who makes art, including writers, and to teachers of any subject. Barry's deliberate foregrounding of time as a partner of art-making is a powerful heuristic for writing instruction, particularly in terms of how teachers might more explicitly exploit the affordances of time for multiple purposes. If quick and repetitive—like freewriting can be, for example—time-conscious activities can increase muscle memory, reinforce the "ordinariness" of writing, and thereby build confidence; if slow and recursive, activities might coach deep attention, or what it means to stay with an idea over a sustained period and allow thinking to evolve.

Before outlining pedagogical approaches that exploit time as a resource for writing, I want to point out that the partnering of time and writing has been addressed in especially powerful ways by advocates of equitable pedagogies. For example, disability studies advocates suggest that teachers meet with students off campus when they can't make office hours, and disability policies common at

most universities call attention to time as one resource that students with learning disabilities may need more flexibility with, whether in relation to turning in work, reading assigned materials, or participating synchronously or asynchronously in classroom discussion and/or group projects. In these cases and others, time is a resource directly relevant to learning and performing knowledge; it is a partner whose normative status cannot be assumed for all learners (see, e.g., Dunn; Lewiecki-Wilson and Brueggemann; Wilson and Lewiecki-Wilson). Pedagogical approaches that benefit students with disabilities may very well benefit all learners, as suggested by the authors cited above, a key insight of universal design principles in general.

Likewise, the unique circumstances of military veterans in college classrooms call for pedagogies that treat time as a special resource. In both disability and veteran-focused pedagogies, we are reminded of how social and personal temporalities encompass diversity, a reality that can sometimes become obscured by the linearity of institutional time. In a 2015 NCTE position statement, "Student Veterans in the College Composition Classroom: Realizing Their Strengths and Assessing Their Needs," organizers cite the Wounded Warrior Project's description of on-campus challenges for student veterans: "Participants cited such difficulties as being unable to move quickly from one class to the next across campus, hyper-alertness and anxiety caused by PTSD, difficulty concentrating due to TBI, and difficulty relating to other students" ("Student Veterans"). In terms of assignments, the statement notes that "[W]riting programs should have plans in place to accommodate veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) concerns and with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI concerns), as both of these sometimes manifest in a need for additional time for reading and writing as well as difficulties concentrating and short-term memory loss" ("Student Veterans"). These excerpts reference diverse enactments of time in relation to learning: movement across campus; heightened sensitivity to environment, which surely is related to time and associated exigencies; organization of classroom time; the labor of reading and writing; and attention practices and memory capabilities. This position statement increases awareness of non-normative time, an awareness that can revise existing pedagogical approaches when we take seriously time as a partner whose affordances are much more than background to writing.

In that spirit, the remainder of this section generates some ideas aimed at using time in deliberate ways that call attention to it not so much as the condition of existence for teaching but as an explicit partner whose capabilities we can exploit for pedagogical purposes.

Scale back: Writing classes, especially required first-year courses, tend to include a series of scaffolded assignments that build on one another, adding complexity as they progress. It's not unusual for a FYC curriculum to include

three or four major assignments (i.e., literacy narrative, rhetorical analysis, synthesis paper, and research project). While I have advocated for a curriculum at my institution that looks very much like the composite one suggested here, I have also come to question the value of completing four major assignments in one 10 or 14 week course. The pacing of such assignments is often rushed, particularly if factoring in time for reading, discussion, and multiple drafting, and can feel like a hustle. Before we settle into the conventions and requirements of one assignment and identify its problems or student confusion related to it, we begin prepping for the next one. The pace is often frenetic and does not allow for sitting with an idea as it changes and evolves through deliberative thinking, researching, and writing. Thus, it's worth experimenting with curricula in a way that allows writing to stretch and sprawl, the way it often does for scholarly writers, in unexpected ways.

Develop time-sensitive activities: In an effort to make time visible as a major ingredient of writing, we might ask students to conduct observations of peers, followed by interviews, to document what writing looks like in real time. In addition, students might record their screens during a writing session, share what they observe with classmates, and narrate to the class what they learn about writing by viewing their own screencasts as well as those of their peers. How exactly does writing unfold over time? What kinds of decision-making can we see on screen that tells us something about writing practices, problems, tendencies, and so forth? Such an approach might be especially useful in courses that adopt writing about writing pedagogies. Documentation of writing as it happens could form the basis of a research project.

Write together: Perhaps building on the "flipped" classroom model, use class time to write together (teacher too). In a recent graduate class, Critical Writing in English Studies, essentially a workshop for critical writers, I set aside one three-hour class period for writing together. Nearly every student in the class made a note of this session in the course evaluation, suggesting that I integrate more writing time into the class schedule during future iterations. I was not surprised to read this suggestion, as the session was charged with excitement; being in a room together with other writers created a positive vibe that allowed us all to be task-oriented. We also generated a valuable discussion at the end of the session about our goals for the three hours, our achievements, and what our next steps will be. Writing as an act in time became highly visible and material, a change from our usual post hoc conversations of writing as already made.

Enact different temporalities: My research has challenged me to consider how I might make room for non-normative temporalities in a classroom setting. Is it possible, in other words, to create the conditions necessary for students to wander down blind alleys; experience serendipity; feel lost; appreciate the

hypnotic power of time disorientation while writing? I'm not sure, but I have experimented by relocating several class sessions to the stacks in our library, where I ask students to spend a class period browsing one section of the stacks, opening books and documenting provocative, troubling, or confusing sentences, references, and ideas that they come across. Students find a source in the bibliography of one book that sounds promising and then track down that book in the library (or on the internet). While this exercise was not a universal success by any means, some students reported that they fell into a sinkhole during these class sessions, forgetting that we were "in class" and enjoying the time to rummage, as it were, without clear direction or purpose. Because a great deal of critical writing seems to emerge from surprising connections and networks of ideas that could not be mapped beforehand, I like the idea of manufacturing a random reading day for the habits of mind it teaches (or unteaches) as well as the thinking and writing it could inspire. In these sessions, I foreground not content but time, a shift in focus that calls attention to research as bounded and concrete. That is, the experience helps us come to terms with research activity in real time, making it more tangible and something we can recount when we reconvene.

One thing is clear: time might be writing's most faithful partner, ambitious compass, fearsome threat. Acknowledgments offer a view of the micro- and macro-constructs of time that bear on writing and that constitute an always present partner. Writing is unthinkable outside of time structures, in other words, even if such structures are routinely under-emphasized in writing pedagogy. To view writing as that which we endure, withstand, and return to is to understand it as always inhabiting time and always pitched toward futurity. The next chapter extends the ongoing study of writing partners that show up in acknowledgments by focusing on other living creatures that take up residence in writers' space, time, and hearts. Drawing attention to animals in scenes of composing, chapter four sketches a broad theory of "withness" that considers how time and feeling as well as animals co-contribute to writing activities and experiences.