

FICTION WRITING AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

A Synthesis Project Presented

by

KIT COYNE IRWIN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies, University of Massachusetts Boston,  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2007

Critical and Creative Thinking Program

c. 2007 by Kit Coyne Irwin  
All rights reserved

FICTION WRITING AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

A Synthesis Project Presented

by

KIT COYNE IRWIN

Approved as to style and content by:

---

Carol Smith, Associate Professor  
Chairperson of Committee

---

Peter Taylor, Professor  
Member

---

Peter Taylor, Program Coordinator  
Critical and Creative Thinking Program

To my parents  
who gave me  
life, love, and my sense of humor

## ABSTRACT

### FICTION WRITING AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

May 2007

Kit Coyne Irwin, B.A., State University of New York  
M.A., University of Massachusetts Boston

Directed by Associate Professor Carol Smith

In this paper, the expert knowledge of cognitive psychologists, writers, neuroscientists, writing teachers, social psychologists, Weight Watchers, marketing professors, historians, and a tennis pro, along with my experience as a published fiction writer, have been combined and synthesized into a collection of nuggets that give scientifically based ways to improve one's writing and one's writing process. Particular attention has been paid to the way that the unconscious affects writing and its effects on readers.

Cognitive psychologists Dijksterhuis and Nordgren's theory of unconscious thought (UTT) recommends using unconscious thought for complex decisions and conscious thought for simple decisions (Dijksterhuis & Nordgren, 2006). Neuroscientist Arne Dietrich's hypothesis of transient hypofrontality suggests that what are seen as higher level of consciousness, such as meditation and runner's high, may actually be reduced level of consciousness, and that Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow may occur when the unconscious's automatic processes are in control (Dietrich, 2007). Cognitive psychologist Kihlstrom's cognitive unconscious suggests that the unconscious plays a role in our thinking, learning, perception, and memory (Kihlstrom, 1987). Cognitive psychologist Wilson (2002) suggests that your concept of who you are is based on your observations of your behavior, and that if you change your behavior, you can change

who you think you are. Boice (1994), a writer and psychologist, suggests that the methods that work best for writing are the usually ones that are counterintuitive, such as stopping writing in the middle of a sentence can make it easier to start writing the next day. Writer Goldberg and psychologists Brewin and Lennard suggest that the mode of writing – handwriting or typing – can affect the emotional content of your writing (Goldberg, 1986; Brewin and Lennard, 1999). This knowledge and more has been synthesized into nuggets.

Zafris, Painter, other writers and writing teachers, suggest that a literary short story contains more than one story: an outer story that is plot driven and an inner story that is the emotional core of the story. I hypothesize that the outer story is written for the conscious mind and the inner story is read by the unconscious, and that near the end of the story, the inner and outer stories combine to produce an ending that feels surprising to the conscious mind and inevitable to the unconscious.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Unconscious in Psychology .....	5
My History of Psychology .....	5
My Freudian Period .....	6
My Pop Psychology Period.....	8
My Cognitive Psychology Period .....	10
The Unconscious in Cognitive Psychology .....	16
Emotional Unconscious .....	22
Brain Research Timeline.....	23
Conscious Conclusion.....	27
Diet, Writing, and Exercise.....	29
Schema .....	30
Writing classes .....	32
Brain and Exercise .....	34
Writing Phases .....	39
Opportunity, motivation, and skill .....	44
Unsuspected Influences .....	49
Research Limitations .....	53
Quiz: Writing Nature or Writer Nutured? .....	54
Nuggets .....	55
Expert Chunks.....	57
Reader Chunks.....	58
Reading for Writing Chunks.....	62
Structure Chunks.....	64
Story Structure Chunk Timeline .....	73
Nuggets .....	75
Self Conscious Reflection.....	76
Bibliography .....	80

## TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Photograph of some of my writing books and me.....	1
Figure 2. Photograph of Freud's couch which he used in his psychoanalytical sessions. Freud Museum, London.....	7
Figure 3. Photograph of Freud and Jung in front of Clark University, Worcester, MA, September 1909.....	10
Figure 4. Graph of a normal distribution that research scientists would love to have, and the outliers that would fall into the expert category .....	11
Figure 5. Diagram of Baddeley's working memory model.....	14
Figure 6. Diagram of Kihlstrom's cognitive unconscious.....	17
Figure 7. Graph showing Unconscious Thought Theory.....	19
Figure 8. Graph of relationship found in Dijksterhuis' study comparing relationship between confidence and satisfaction for conscious and unconscious thinkers .....	21
Figure 9. My drawing showing how building pyramids may have been the source of many smashed skulls .....	23
Figure 10. My drawing of brain trash and organs for afterlife .....	24
Figure 11. My drawing of the sources of the four humours .....	24
Figure 12. My drawing of Aristotle's radiator brain and hot heart .....	24
Figure 13. Drawing from Descartes book, <i>De Homine</i> , showing the movement of animal spirits from the pineal gland to the arm to cause motion.....	25
Figure 14. A 19th century Phrenology chart.....	26
Figure 15. Diagram of Hjortshoj's phases.....	42
Figure 16. Diagram of the three components of problem solving/opportunity seizing.....	45
Figure 17. Yin-yang symbol .....	57
Figure 18. Janet Burroway's diagram of short story as inverted checkmark.....	65
Figure 19. Fish Diagram .....	67
Figure 20. Diagram showing the connections between the two stories increase as the story progresses.....	68

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

*"Why shouldn't the truth be stranger than fiction? Fiction has to make sense."*

**--Mark Twain**

I don't know the exact number of books on writing that I own but if I stack them up, they're taller than I am. Almost all the books give this advice: write every day. At some point, I was reading one of these books and realized that they might be serious about this advice, that there is not some magic cure lurking somewhere (*repeat this affirmation three times during a full moon and writing success will be yours*). If I want to be a writer, I must write every day.

I don't buy diet books because I know they are just variations on the theme, eat less and exercise more, but looking at the Times best seller list, a lot of people are not immune to the promise of a new miracle solution (*eat chocolate at every meal and the pounds will melt away*). Both dieting and writing have a lot of people who are consciously committed to these ventures but who fail time and time again.



Figure 1. Some of my writing books and me.

If desire and conscious decision-making do not seem to be effective for helping a lot of people meet these goals; perhaps something else is at work, something stronger and harder to control. What is my unconscious up to?

Joining the Critical and Creative Thinking Program (CCT) was not a fully conscious decision. I saw the name of the program while researching masters programs, and felt an immediate overwhelming feeling that this is the program for me. I did the research to validate my conclusion: examined the web site from top to bottom, came in for an interview, met with

students enrolled in the program, and searched for similar programs at other universities.

Conscious decision making seconded my intuition. Dijksterhuis and Nordgren's theory of unconscious thought (UTT) recommends using unconscious thought for complex decisions and conscious thought for simple decisions. In this case, both concurred and I now believe they were right.

Recent studies by cognitive psychologists show the effects of the unconscious: how there are forces at work that we are ignorant of, such as that the size of the bowl that food is served in will affect how much you eat (Wansink, 2006); and how the opposite of what we assume can be true, such as that you will be more satisfied when you select from fewer choices (Schwartz, 2005). Timothy D. Wilson described the adaptive unconscious as being faster and able to process more information than the conscious mind, but that it is much harder to change (Wilson, 2004), and change mine must if I am to attain my writing life.

While I don't claim to know everything about how the unconscious affects fiction writing, I have gathered a set of nuggets that give scientifically-based ways to improve one's writing and one's writing process. These nuggets are aimed at writers and teachers of creative writing, and are based on and synthesize the research of cognitive psychologists, the teachings of many excellent creative writing teachers, and insights into the writing process from writers and from writing teachers who have decades of experience helping students with their writing. I believe these practices improve writing through using unconscious processes

The nugget selection is biased by who I am and what problems I think confront me. A classmate in a critical thinking class kept saying how emotion must be eliminated in order to think critically but what I discovered was that I needed to pay more attention to my intuition and emotions. In a writing class five years ago, Jesse Lee Kercheval told me that my writing showed

strong skills with language but needed more emotion unlike most students who had the opposite problem, they wrote with intense emotion, no plot, and poor word choice.

I became serious about my writing fiction twenty years ago, but even today, I wouldn't say I am seriously writing. That would require a dedication to the work that I haven't attained. The successes I've had—seven stories published, one in the *The Kenyon Review*, two stories anthologized, a writing fellowship, and experience as a co-teacher in fiction writing workshop—don't guarantee confidence when faced with a blank page. Successful writers talk about how when they start a new book, they feel as if they are plagued with the same fears and doubts as if writing for the first time.

Chapter 2 looks at the unconscious from a cognitive psychology point of view. Some of the current thinking on the unconscious – adaptive unconscious, cognitive unconscious, and emotional unconscious – is described. My unconscious wanted to include histories and timelines, not something that I usually would want, but given the topic, it didn't seem right to ignore my intuition. Since your prior experience will affect your schemata, I have included my history with psychology from Freud to cognitive psychology. I also include a timeline on major developments in brain research since cognitive science relies on neuroscience for validation of its theories. I believe that the timeline and history will illustrate points that your unconscious will understand even if your conscious mind says, *what was that about?*

Chapter 3 looks at the writing process based on the work cognitive psychologists, neuroscientists, and writers and writing teachers whose decades of experience have given them insights into the writing process. The writers and writing teachers include Robert Boice, Peter Elbow, Keith Hjortshoj and Donald Murray. This chapter looks at how the unconscious can help or derail the writing process, how often what affects your writing are things that your common

sense tells you has no effect. I look at what cognitive psychologists and neuroscientists have to say about intrinsic motivation and flow. At the end of this chapter will be a set of nuggets suggesting ways to improve your writing process. Many of these nuggets are counterintuitive, but a small change, which seems to your conscious mind insignificant, can have a large effect due to unconscious processes.

Chapter 4 looks at techniques and rules used by expert fiction writers, and looks at how writing affects readers. Nancy Zafris, Pamela Painter, and Ron Carlson, fabulous writing teachers all, spoke about a literary short story being more than one story. I believe that one story is written for the conscious mind and another for the unconscious mind. At the end of this chapter is a set of nuggets for ways to improve the craft of writing. They rely on the unconscious's strength in handling complexity and use complementary processes to enhance each other.

Chapter 5 contains my conscious reflections on what I have learned from my investigation, and what my intuition tells me should be my next steps.

## CHAPTER 2

### UNCONSCIOUS IN PSYCHOLOGY

*"The mind I love must still have wild places – a tangled orchard where dark damsons drop in the heavy grass, an overgrown little wood, the chance of a snake or two, a pool that nobody's fathomed the depth of, and paths threaded with flowers planted by the mind." (Smith, 2001)*

**-- Katherine Mansfield**

Many people upon hearing the term *unconscious*, think of the Freudian unconscious. The term *unconscious* can mean different things: from being knocked out, to being unaware, to the Freudian notion of the unconscious, to the meanings that cognitive psychologists apply to it.

In this chapter, first I reflect on my thinking about psychology in what I see as my three periods of thinking: my Freudian period, my pop psychology period, and finally my cognitive psychology period. In the second and third sections, I clarify which unconscious I am referring to in later chapters. The second section discusses the adaptive and cognitive unconscious, and Dijksterhuis & Nordgren's theory of unconscious thought. Since emotion is so important to fiction, I devote the third section to the emotional unconscious. In it, Lang's multiple system theory of emotions and implicit attitude are discussed. The fourth section is the timeline of brain research since my unconscious thought it important. The final section is my conscious conclusions.

#### ***My History of Psychology***

This section covers my education in psychology and the changes in my beliefs. Since my beliefs were so often founded on the popular culture of each era, they are fraught with misconceptions of the times. This is also a love story: from my early first love of Freud and his ideas of the unconscious, to my more skeptical dalliance with popular psychology, and finally to my more mature respectful love of cognitive psychology.

## My Freudian Period

When I was young, Freud's ideas had wormed their way well into popular culture. The id, ego, and superego were commonly known. The superego with its parental attitude constantly ordering you to behave; the id, childlike, looking only for pleasure and not caring who it hurt; and the ego, the cool adult trying to mediate between the other two. It seemed as if you had three people inside your brain, each trying to control your actions. Perhaps because I was in Catholic school, I drew an analogy between those three and the Holy Trinity. The superego aligned with God the father, the ego with Jesus, and the id with the Holy Ghost/Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, Freud's ideas of sexual repression resonated with me at the time—I was at an all-girl Catholic high school, never had a date, and prospects didn't look good. The day a nun told my class about sex, I was home sick. When I got up enough nerve to ask my mother about it, she looked uncomfortable and said, "I thought you would have learned about it from your friends by now." Enough said.

Freud changed the language. Unconscious mind, Oedipus complex, on the couch, repression, Freudian slip, sublimation, oral complex, anal complex, phallic stage, defense mechanisms, libido entered the common vernacular. "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar."

Perhaps I was infatuated with Freud because psychotherapists and writers have a lot in common. Sarah Boxer, writer for *The New York Times*, described this affinity.

On the face of it, writers and psychoanalysts are made for one another. Psychoanalysts are concerned with memory, guilt, anxiety, dread, longing and puns, as are writers. (Think of Sophocles, Shakespeare, Woody Allen.) In 1907 Freud wrote an essay titled "Creative Writers and Daydreaming" in which he suggested that the two were alike, with one crucial difference. Daydreamers

---

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Ghost underwent a name change during my Catholic school years and became the Holy Spirit. I don't remember ever hearing an announcement of the name change, rather I learnt about it by nuns telling me I was wrong whenever I said, "Holy Ghost." The reasoning behind the switch had to do with people confusing the Holy Ghost with dead people, and perhaps, for marketing considerations.

completely hide their fantasies from the world, while creative writers disguise them and turn them into stories (Boxer, 2002, p. 1).

I knew Freud so well I could almost see him at work: sitting in his chair out of the patient's view, nodding his head, saying, "hmmm," while the patient lies on the smooth dark leather couch and talks away.



Figure 2. Photograph of Freud's couch which he used in his psychoanalytical sessions. Freud Museum, London.

Okay, I had a few things wrong. The couch was covered by an oriental rug.

When I finally got to formally study Freud in college, I was disappointed. Instead of understanding Freud fully, the professor went on about these other psychologists/psychiatrists whose facts and theories I had to memorize. He even dared to suggest these mortals might have surpassed Freud. Perhaps the lingering effects of Catholic school caused my strong reactions to the professor's suggestions. I was used to dogma. Faith was stressed over proof, and questioning was labeled as the sin of pride.

When I finally read Freud himself, I quickly lost enthusiasm. I found his writing (or at least, the translation of it) to be convoluted and dense, nothing like what would be published in *Psychology Today*<sup>2</sup>. The magic was missing.

The more I studied Freud, the less satisfying I found him. Instead of one elegant notion of the unconscious, he had three concepts of the unconscious (descriptive, dynamic, and system) and a preconscious (memories that could come into consciousness but weren't there yet), and I had to memorize them all. My professor made allegations that Freud's methods were not "scientific." Even worse, research showed psychotherapy to be less effective than behavioral therapy for most people. Years on the couch exploring your psyche bested by a limited number of sessions with a behavior change therapist, unthinkable!

Two years later, influenced by women's liberation, I threw Freud off the pedestal I'd placed him on and turned him into a symbol of male subjection of women. According to Freud, "The only bodily organ which is really regarded as inferior is the atrophied penis, a girl's clitoris," (Freud, 1965, p. 75). Penis envy could only have been thought up by someone who couldn't give birth.

Wait a minute, I never gave birth. I'm as nulliparous as Freud.

## **My Pop Psychology Period**

After my Psych 101 class, I was content for years to get my psychology information (disinformation) from the mainstream media and from book titles. *Inner Child. Healing the Shame that Binds You. I'm Okay, You're Okay. Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus. Drawing From the Right Side of the Brain.*

---

<sup>2</sup> The first issue of *Psychology Today* appeared in 1967 and Freud died in 1942. Maybe if the magazine was in operation during his lifetime, Freud would've adjusted his writing style to fit the magazine, but I doubt it.

During this period, left brain/right brain became common talk about the art community. I always felt creatively disadvantaged because I was right handed.

Throughout this period, Carl Jung's name kept popping up. The Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), based on Jungian theory, became the thing for businesses during this period. "What's your type?" became as common "What's your sign?" Some art teachers and writers talked about getting inspiration from Jungian archetypes and the collective unconscious. One art teacher had us make mandalas (drawings within a circle) and recommended we do them daily. She told us that Carl Jung had drawn one every morning and that it revealed his internal situation.

I began to view Freud as the stuffy repressed killjoy, the superego incarnate, and view Jung as friend to artists, inspiration, guide to all good things id. A friend, who was a college psychology professor, had a picture of Freud and Jung on her desk. When I looked at it, I immediately knew who was who. Jung had the fun devilish grin on his face. Freud looked dyspeptic. Ahem, I was completely wrong. My friend explained how Freud was the one who showed warmth and that Jung was known to be hard to get along with. I couldn't follow closely what she was saying because I was in the midst of a mind shift. It was obvious I knew little about either man and that my whole framework for psychology was suspect.

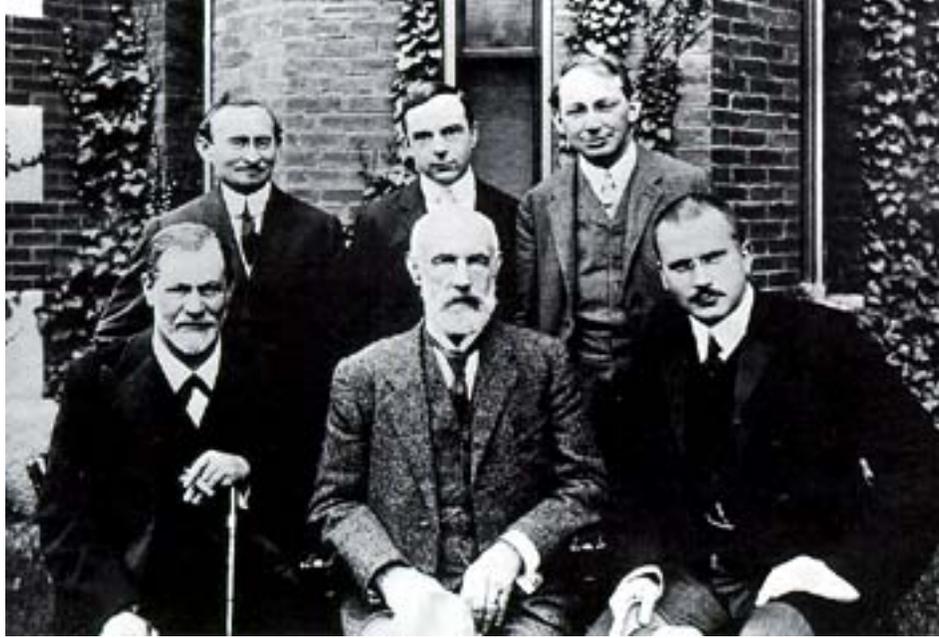


Figure 3. Photograph of Freud (front row, left) and Jung (front row, right) in front of Clark University, Worcester, MA, September 1909. Photo taken from Clark University publication.

## **My Cognitive Psychology Period**

I waded into my cognitive psychology period, starting with statistical research. Perhaps it is my undergraduate degree in mathematics or my years spent programming computers, but a research study with its statistics, graphs, and probabilities, makes me think, wow! these people know what they are talking about.

Synchronicity (I haven't fully given up Jung), led me to teach a unit on SPSS, a statistical computer application. Playing with a real dataset, put together by Dr. Jill Rierdan of UMass Boston, I stumbled upon a correlation between alcoholism and being in the military. I was thrilled by the discovery. Dr. Rierdan was not impressed, she already knew of the correlation, and said, "Correlation does not prove causation." I think this may be the rallying cry of research scientists.

Wanting more of these thrills, I audited an advanced statistics course for psychology grad students and soon saw the limitations of statistics. The more I learned the less trusting I became of studies.

Most disturbing to me were outliers, those participants whose results lay two standard deviations above the mean level for the population. These people existed and for them perhaps the result didn't apply.

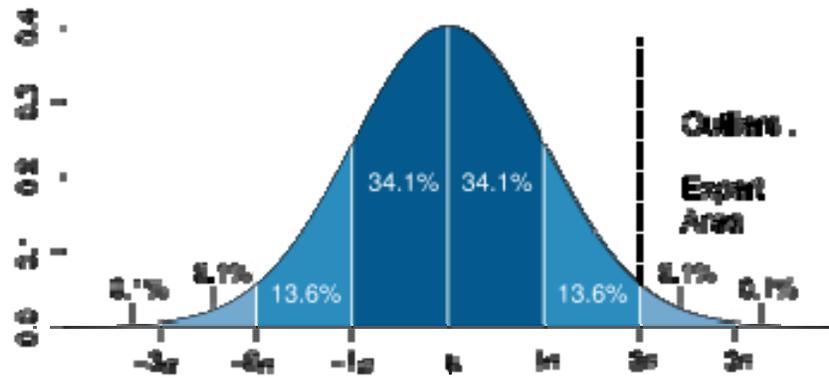


Figure 4. Graph of a normal distribution that research scientists would love to have, and the outliers that would fall into the expert category (Kemp, 2007).

Research studies speak about generalities, not about specific individuals. For instance, a research study showed that people who get a bachelors degree make more money than those that don't (Day & Newburger, 2002), but look at college dropout William Gates III (you probably know him as Bill Gates) who was ranked by *Forbes* as the richest man in the world (Forbes, 2007). How much does a masters degree in CCT add to your earnings? Looking at research on expert performance, Ericsson and Charness recommend using outlier as a heuristic for determining if someone is an expert (Ericsson & Charness, 1994).

Once in the CCT program, I was faced with a career choice. When faced with a question of what my career should be, I tried to apply critical thinking skills. Critical thinking stresses gathering as much information as you could, but faced with such a large decision with so many unknowns, a plethora of conflicting variables, none of the critical thinking methods seemed up to

the task. I wondered if there was a heuristic that I could use when faced with such a decision, and found intuition, expert knowledge, hidden bias, emotion, and the unconscious.

Amos Tversky, a pioneer in cognitive science, and Daniel Kahneman, Nobel Prize winner and psychologist, divided decision making into two processes/systems: intuition and analysis/reasoning. Tversky and Kahneman categorized the intuitive system as “fast, parallel, automatic, effortless, associative, implicit (not available to introspection), and often emotionally charged; ... governed by habit and therefore difficult to control or modify,” while the reasoning system was “slow, serial, effortful, more likely to be consciously monitored and deliberately controlled; they are also relatively flexible and potentially ruled governed” (Kahneman, 2003, p. 2). The intuitive system maps onto the unconscious, the reasoning system onto conscious thought.

Cognitive psychologist Gary Klein looked at experts in different fields (firefighters, chess masters, military officers), and saw that experience can make intuitive thinking more powerful and accurate. Typically, it took ten years of experience to become an expert. The experts would recognize patterns in a situation and then reacted with an appropriate action script. For highly-experienced decision makers, the course of action seems so obvious to them that they don't even count it as making a decision. Klein calls this recognition-primed decision. Some of the experts even attributed their correct actions to ESP, but when the event was examined in detail, it became clear that they were basing their actions on recognizing the situation as fitting a pattern (Klein, 2003).

Research led me to more research. I loved the unexpected twists—*if you thought, money could make you happy then you were wrong; after the poverty level, money has little effect on happiness*—and the twist keep coming—*but wait, the relative wealth of your neighbors might*

*influence your happiness*. Finally a class in Advanced Cognitive Psychology gave me a formal grounding in cognitive psychology, a requirement for CCT.

Schema plays an important role in cognitive psychology. A schema defines a person's expectations for a certain situation. In America, you would expect a kitchen to have a refrigerator. When I toured China in 1986, refrigerators were not a common household item in some areas while eating fresh-caught eel was. In marriage, you find that your loved ones family have different schemas. My in-laws think fruit salad qualifies as a dessert, whereas my family would put fruit *salad* in the appetizer, salad, or poor-substitute-for-a-dessert categories.

The more I learned about cognitive psychology, the more flawed psychology schemata I had to adjust. Memory was something that I thought I knew about. There was short-term memory and long-term memory. I always imagined short-term memory to be like a doctor's waiting room or the part of the city hall record room where the public is allowed. Information comes in, and if all goes well, gets filed away properly, but if too crowded, the information is lost, like in the doctor's waiting room, where if the wait is too long, some people leave in disgust or die or get treated together as a unit. I imagined long-term memory as an idiosyncratic filing system with folders and boxes and rows and rows of metal shelving units, definitely not like a library where the indexing scheme is clear.

The concept of short-term memory is but a small part of Baddeley's theory of working memory. Baddeley introduced the theory in the 1970s and refined it over time. Working memory was no longer one simple system but multiple interacting systems. According to Baddeley's theory, the conscious mind consists of a central executive and buffers where information is stored temporarily for processing. The concept of short-term memory could be applied to the buffers, but holding information for storage in long-term memory, is but part of what they do.

The central executive decides what to pay attention to and what to ignore. This is crucial for reaching a goal because you don't want to be distracted all the time (Matlin, 2005).

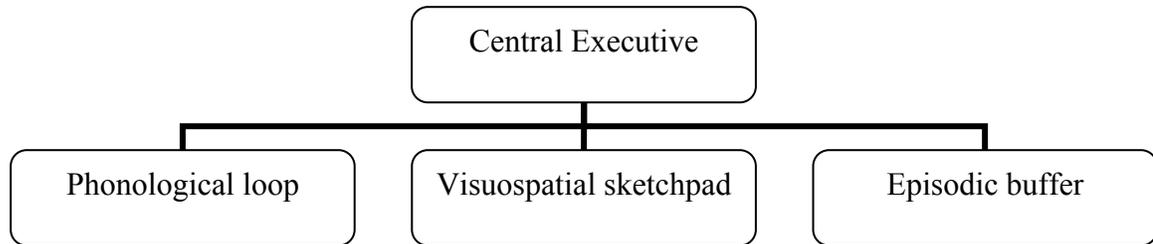


Figure 5. Baddeley's working memory model

The phonological loop is the basis for the heuristic that humans can hold seven items in their mind, plus or minus two. Since these buffers hold a limited number of chunks (*chunks* being the scientific term), when more chunks come in than can be stored, some get thrown away. I imagine these buffers to look like ice cube trays.

To deal with the limited storage some tasks become automated, that is they move out of conscious processing and into unconscious processing. For example, when you first learn to drive it's all you can do to keep the car in the proper lane and stop when you are supposed to. With some experience, you can daydream, even have no conscious memory of driving a stretch of highway. Your working memory has been freed to do other things since driving requires little conscious thought as most of it has become automatic. When you try to add too many things – reading, putting on makeup, talking on the cell phone – you run the risk of not having the working memory capacity to deal with driving when something unexpected comes up. Slam! Crash!

When you become an expert, your skills rely on having more of the work being done by the unconscious. The Dreyfus model of skill acquisition consists of five levels: novice, advanced

beginner, competent, proficiency, and expert. The first three levels process information relying heavily on rules. The expert performs intuitively in a very different way from the other levels. When faced with a different type of problem, the expert will revert to the use of analysis to solve the problem (Edwards, 2001).

A beginning driver is at the first level. An experienced driver is at the expert level. Being an expert is not without its problems as anyone who has driven in a country where they drive on the opposite side of the road will attest. When I drove in Australia, I had to be constantly alert to prevent myself from automatically doing the wrong thing. Every time I went to signal with my blinker, I turned on the wipers instead. Driving on the left (not right) side of the road on city streets in the midst of traffic had my gut screaming at me, get to the other side of the road! are you trying to kill us! My conscious mind was on overload trying to keep up with the changes and stopping my unconscious from doing the wrong thing.

When not in an abnormal situation, the expert is able to store more information in working memory because information gets chunked in more complex ways. Studies of chess players show that they are better able to memorize the placement of pieces on a chess board because they chunk the pieces into patterns (Reisberg, 2005).

Long-term memory is not part of conscious awareness. Memories from it can enter consciousness but it lies outside the consciousness boundaries. As I understand it, long-term memory is like an overgrown jungle. It's hard to find what's in it unless there is well-traveled path to the information. Recently accessed information is primed for retrieval and can be accessed quicker. When we traverse to an area of memory that we haven't been to in a while, other uncommon memories will be exposed to our conscious mind. It's like when you hear a

song from high school and you remember the crappy gymnasium you were in, the pimple that you were sure everyone was staring at, and the taste of spiked punch.

I want to thank Dr. Carol Smith for the chunks of cognitive psychology that are now in my brain. I am better prepared to research the unconscious with them there.

## ***The Unconscious in Cognitive Psychology***

Experts are not in agreement as to what the unconscious is and how it operates. Neuroscientists are still exploring the brain and making incredible discoveries all the time. There is also a converging of work related to the unconscious from cognitive psychologists, social psychologists, and other experts as their studies reveal new and fascinating ways that our minds operate.

Timothy Wilson, a psychology professor, uses the phrase *adaptive unconscious* to differentiate the unconscious that he is talking about from other notions of the unconscious and to highlight how the unconscious is an evolutionary adaptation. Some of its aspects, such as being fast and sensitive to negative information, are crucial for survival. In his book, *Strangers to Ourselves*, Wilson compared consciousness with the adaptive unconscious as shown in the table below (Wilson, 2002).

<b>Adaptive unconscious</b>	<b>Consciousness</b>
Multiple systems	Single system
On-line pattern detection	After-the-fact check and balance
Automatic (fast, unintentional, uncontrollable, effortless)	Controlled (slow, intentional, controllable, effortful)
Rigid	Flexible
Precocious	Slower to develop
Sensitive to negative information	Sensitive to positive information
Concerned with the here and now	Taking the long view
(Wilson, 2002, p. 49)	

Wilson suggests that there is a common human tendency to confabulate, to explain away the effects of the unconscious with a reasonable explanation. Studies of brain-impaired subjects make the self deceptions clear.

There is an intriguing similarity between split-brain patients, people suffering from organic amnesia, and people acting out post-hypnotic suggestions. In each, case, people generate stories to explain their behavior and circumstances, with no realization that their explanations are works of fiction ... (Wilson, 2002, p. 96-97)

John F. Kihlstrom, a cognitive psychologist, looked at how the unconscious affected cognition, and argues that the unconscious affects perception, memory, thinking, and learning. He used the term *cognitive unconscious* to describe the unconscious effects on cognition (Kihlstrom, 1987).

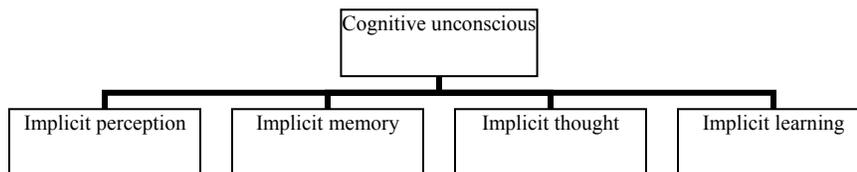


Figure 6. Kihlstrom's cognitive unconscious (Kihlstrom, 1987).

With implicit perception, a stimulus that you might not be consciously aware of can affect you. Researchers at Columbia University monitored the reactions of seventeen participants, none with an anxiety disorder, when the image of a fearful face was flashed for 33 milliseconds and then replaced by a neutral face. The short display meant that none of the participants reported being consciously aware of seeing the fearful face, but using an fMRI, the researchers were able to see increased activity within the participants' brains, specifically the input end of amygdala, along with regions in the cortex that are involved with attention and vision. The amount of activity varied according to the participant's level of anxiety. Participants with higher levels of anxiety showed more brain activity. When the fearful face was displayed

long enough for the participants to be consciously aware of it, a different part of the brain showed increased activity, suggesting that conscious and unconscious processing occurs in different regions in the brain (Etkin et al., 2004).

When we attend to something consciously, the amount of data that can be processed is constrained by cognitive capacity. When we focus on a certain aspect, we tune out other aspects. Participants in one study failed to see a person in a gorilla suit walk into the middle of a basketball game and pound its chest because they were focused on what the player in the white shirt was doing (Simons & Chabris, 1999).

However, some unattended inputs can get immediate attention. For example, people are usually sensitive to their name being spoken even if they weren't paying attention to what else was being said. The unconscious can attend to more data, notices that your name is mentioned, and gets your conscious mind to focus its attention on that group. Words related to strong interests also capture your attention (Matlin, 2005).

Implicit memory is illustrated by an experiment of the Swiss psychologist Claparède that was performed on a patient with Korsakoff's syndrome, a disease which left her with source amnesia. The patient was unable to remember new things though she could recall incidents from her past before her illness. The doctor, in what seems to be a clear violation of the Hippocratic Oath, shook hands with the patient with a pin secreted in his palm. The patient was upset for a while but she quickly forgot the incident. When the doctor tried to shake hands with her again, she declined saying that people sometimes hide pins in their hands. She had no conscious recollection of the event but unconsciously she knew shaking hands with him was dangerous. (Bornstein, Leone, & Galley, 1987)

For even normal people, mood affects what they will remember. If sad or depressed, people will remember more negative events. If happy, more positive events are remembered. Intense emotion can cause events to be remembered more clearly for a longer time or can cause details and non-emotional information to be lost (Eich & Schooler, 2000).

Implicit thought is associated with those aha! moment, those experiences of sudden insight, those moments when the solution to a difficult problem suddenly comes to you.

An insight might not be as sudden as it seems. Durso et al graphed how participants solved puzzle problems and were able to see that participants began to focus on relationships that were crucial to the solution before being aware of the importance of the relationships or what the solution was (Durso, Rea, & Dayton, 1994).

Cognitive psychologists Ap Dijksterhuis and Loran Nordgren proposed the unconscious thought theory (UTT), which they use to compare the usefulness of unconscious against conscious thought.

They did numerous studies where they varied the complexity of the problem (the number of variables participants had to considered) and the mode of thought

(immediate reaction, after conscious deliberation, after unconscious deliberation). Their research suggests that

unconscious thought was better for complex problems while conscious thought is better for simple problems, as shown in figure 7. According to their theory, since unconscious thought is not limited by complexity, its quality remains constant. The quality of conscious thought is superior to unconscious thought for a small number of variables but degrades as complexity increases (Dijksterhuis & Nordgren, 2006).

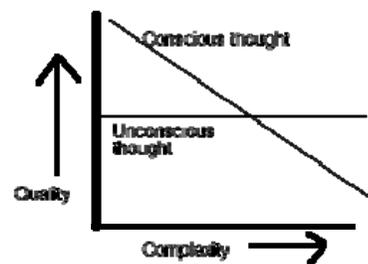


Figure 7. Unconscious Thought Theory (adapted from Dijksterhuis & Nordgren, 2006).

Dijksterhuis ran several studies concerning roommate selection. Participants were given descriptions of three roommates with twelve features for each. The features were based on the same dimensions for each roommate. The participants were divided into three groups. One group had to give an answer immediately, the second were given two minutes to consciously decide, and the third group was distracted for two minutes and then had to give their decision. The best decisions, selecting the roommate with the most positive characteristics, were made by the third group who were distracted. To test if the participants were actually thinking unconsciously, Dijksterhuis varied the amount of time the third group was distracted. The longer they were distracted, the better they performed, which seems to indicate unconscious thinking is going on (Dijksterhuis & Nordgren, 2006).

Since roommate selection can be an idiosyncratic decision, Dijksterhuis controlled for this by having the participants weight the attributes used in the features, therefore the best decision would be based on each participant's weighted values of the characteristics. The results were the same; unconscious thinkers performed the best (Dijksterhuis & Nordgren, 2006).

Dijksterhuis looked at how much confidence participants had in their decisions and how it correlated with the quality of their decisions. He and Zeger van Olden conducted a study where participants had to choose a poster either after several minutes of conscious thought, several minutes of unconscious thought, or immediately. The participants would then rate how confident they were in the decision. The participants who used conscious thought were far and away the most confident in their decision. When the researchers checked back with the participants a few weeks later to see how satisfied they were with their poster after living with it for a while, the participants who used unconscious thought were the most satisfied with their selection. There was a relationship between the confidence in their decision and their later satisfaction for the

unconscious thinkers and for immediate reactions. However, there was no relationship between the confidence in their decision and their later satisfaction for conscious thinkers. They all were strongly confident that they were right. (Dijksterhuis & van Olden, 2006) The chart, see figure 8, illustrates this relationship between confidence and satisfaction for conscious and unconscious thought.

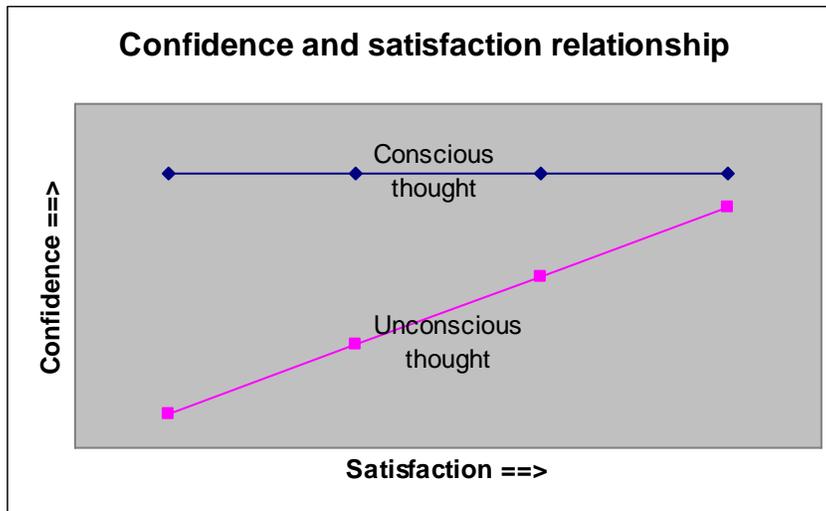


Figure 8. Relationship found in Dijksterhuis' study comparing relationship between confidence and satisfaction for conscious and unconscious thinkers

The final component of Kihlstrom's cognitive unconscious is implicit learning. When we learn things without being aware that we even know them, this is implicit learning. For example, which sounds better: "the small black dog" or "the black small dog?" What rule governs the order of the adjectives? It might be hard to articulate why one order of the adjective is preferable to the other, because the choice has moved out of conscious memory into an unconscious automatic task.

## ***Emotional Unconscious***

Emotion is not a single thing. I didn't see consistent use of the words, affect, emotion, mood, and feeling, in the psychology literature. One article defined feeling as an unconscious emotion; another article defined it as a conscious emotion. In *Cognition and Emotion*, Gordon Bower defined the words, affect, emotion, and mood, as follows: affect is the more general term; emotion is like a reaction in that the cause is usually identifiable, also it's an intense experience of short duration of which the person is usually aware; a mood is less intense than an emotion and lasts longer (Bower & Forgas, 2000).

Peter Lang, a psychophysicologist at the NIMH Center for the Study for Emotion and Attention, proposed a multiple system theory of emotion, consisting of three components: covert physiological response, behavioral response, and verbal/cognitive. The first two components can happen without conscious awareness of them. The covert physiological responses are the body sensations. These are the kind of things that lie detectors would be based on. Changes in breathing, pulse, sweating. Writing clichés abound trying to capture these sensations: butterflies in your stomach, heart in your throat, pulse racing, skin crawling. Behavioral responses are things such as avoidance/ approaching, flight/fight. Only when you get to verbal/cognitive is conscious awareness a requirement. Lang argues that the most intense experience is when all three components are active (Kihlstrom, Mulvaney, Tobias, & Tobis, 2000).

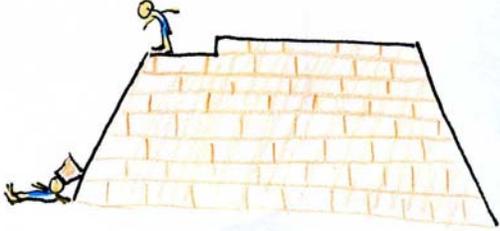
Researching judgment, I came across a study by the neuroscientists Bechara and Damasio, which used gambling to compare the decision making of people with brain injuries to the prefrontal region but whose intelligence and memory were intact, with a control group of normal people (Bechara & Damasio, 1997). The normal people showed an emotional response, a skin conductance response which is a sort of microsweating that accompanies changes in

emotion, and changed their behavior before they were consciously aware of the patterns. This is an example of implicit learning. This study showed me scientific proof that emotions and intuition play an important role in decision making. It changed my behavior. I starting paying more attention to how I was feeling, what my gut was telling me.

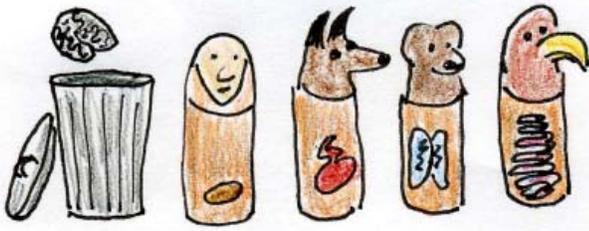
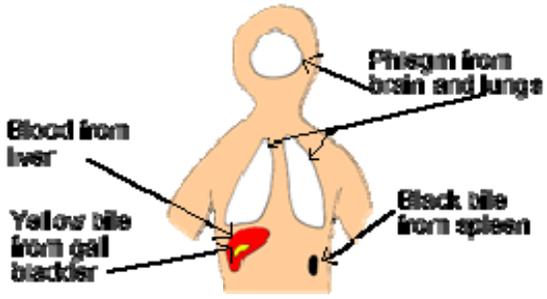
### **Brain Research Timeline**

This timeline is courtesy of my unconscious and follows the history of research on brain functionality. I originally intended to do a timeline of theories of the unconscious but found limited agreement on the part of experts as to when someone was talking about the unconscious or something else.

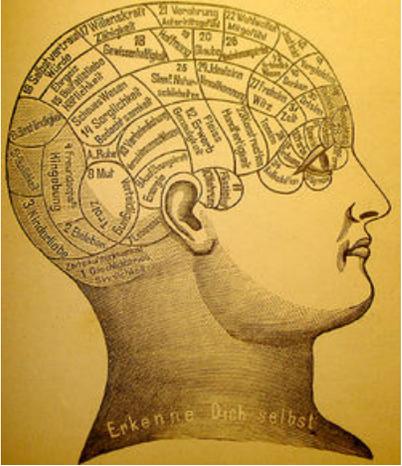
My conscious mind has come up with reasons why this timeline is included at the end of this section but I suspect these reasons are inaccurate. I hope that your unconscious will come up with better reasons.

Date	Event	
3000 BC	 <p data-bbox="345 1499 932 1556">Figure 9. Building pyramids may have been the source of many smashed skulls <sup>3</sup></p>	<p data-bbox="967 1226 1511 1514">Imhetop, who achieved demigod status after his death, documented the effects of “smashed skulls” on 43 patients. He noted that injuries to “marrow of the skull” (the brain wasn’t considered an organ then) affected parts of the body far removed from the head, such as paralysis to the opposite side of the body.</p>

<sup>3</sup> Unreliable sources say that two construction workers died and many refused to work on the building of the Luxor Hotel in Los Vegas, which is now the world’s largest pyramid. According to these unreliable sources, the entire city is cursed until the proper capstone is placed atop the pyramid.

Date	Event	
1555 BC	 <p data-bbox="402 577 885 609">Figure 10. Brain trash and organs for afterlife</p>	<p data-bbox="966 235 1529 741">An embalming manual recommended using a hook to remove the brain by pulling it out through the nose. Since the brain is a useless body part, it should be discarded. The liver, stomach, lung, and intestines should be stored in jars for use in the afterlife. The heart must be kept with the body since it will be weighed by Anubis, the god of mummification, to determine if the heart is heavy with guilt by comparing it to a feather. If heavier than the feather, the body is fed to Amut the Devourer, a creature that is part lion, crocodile, and hippopotamus.</p>
400 BC	 <p data-bbox="438 1066 852 1098">Figure 11. Source of the four humours</p>	<p data-bbox="966 802 1513 909">Hippocrates (of Hippocratic Oath fame) announced that the brain is the controlling organ for the body.</p> <p data-bbox="966 949 1502 1056">Health depends on the balance of the four humours (blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm) within the body.</p>
350 BC	 <p data-bbox="349 1581 938 1644">Figure 12. My drawing of Aristotle's radiator brain and hot heart</p>	<p data-bbox="966 1333 1490 1440">Aristotle believed the brain to be the second most important organ, acting as a radiator to cool the passions of the heart.</p>
275 AD	<p data-bbox="344 1663 1513 1732">Erastratus believed that tiny spirits are able to travel through the hollow nerves to and from the brain and its larger hollow cavities, the ventricles.</p>	
175 AD	<p data-bbox="344 1740 1513 1877">Galen believed every organ was created with a purpose and was determined to believe only what he could see with his eyes. From looking at sheep brains, he determined that the human brain had a rete mirabile (miraculous net). He believed the brain a cold moist organ formed of sperm. (Findlen, 2001)</p>	

Date	Event	
400 AD	According to scholarly Christians, the hollow ventricles were the abode of the rational soul.	
1000 AD	Thanks to Crusades and their invading armies, Europeans rediscovered the knowledge of Galen and others in translations of translations of copies of earlier works.	
1300 AD	Human dissection becomes popular, even used in cases of suspected murder. Leonardo da Vinci took drawing of the brain to a new level with his realistic drawings replacing the cartoonish ones.	
1543 AD	Vesalius discovered that errors in Galen's work could be attributed to his dissecting other species than humans.	
1649 AD	 <p data-bbox="344 1104 927 1224">Figure 13. Drawing from Descartes book, <i>De Homine</i>, showing the movement of animal spirits from the pineal gland to the arm to cause motion (Cosenza, 2002).</p>	<p data-bbox="966 724 1520 974">According to Descartes, the pineal gland regulates the flow of animal spirits into the nerves; the pituitary gland wasn't part of the brain but acted as a drain for removing waste (phlegm) from the brain; and all animals, except humans, are merely machines with no thoughts or feelings.</p>
1664 AD	Willis published <i>Anatomy of the Brain</i> , followed by <i>Cerebral Pathology</i> , where he introduced terminology still in use today, such as neurology, lobe, hemisphere, and corpus striatum. He determined hysteria did not have a physical cause of an actual wandering womb, since he found it in men as well as in infertile women. He thought since people rubbed their temples while trying to remember something, that memories must be stored in the front of the brain.	
1770 AD	The power of electricity was discovered. People went wild with experiment. One showman zapped a row of 400 monks holding hands and knocked them all off their feet.	

Date	Event	
1800 AD	 <p data-bbox="410 716 878 743">Figure 14. A 19th century Phrenology chart</p>	<p data-bbox="967 407 1511 621">Franz Joseph Gall believed that the skull was an exact mold for the brain and that the measurements of the skull could determine strengths and weaknesses of the brain. Although he didn't use the term, phrenology grew out of his work.</p>
(Finger, 2000)		

My unconscious told me to stop at 1664 AD but another part wouldn't let me stop until after phrenology. When Willis back in the 1600s tried to make the connection between rubbing the temples and remembering, I was struck by how little acupuncture is integrated into Western medicine. It seemed to highlight that Galen's looking for the purpose of each part of the body while not considering the entire system, is causing a type of blindness.

The timeline showed me other errors that were made repeatedly over time.

Important information got ignored. For instance, in 3000 BC Imhetop knew damage to the brain (AKA marrow of the skull) could cause major problems yet close to 1500 years later, they weren't bothering to save the brain for the afterlife. Of course, this would only be a significant error if the brain is actually needed for an afterlife.

People got carried away with the theories. For instance, phrenology created a marketing buzz that made scientists not critically reexamine their "discoveries."

Important information can get lost for centuries. For example, Galen's work and DaVinci's and probably others which haven't been found.

Religion seemed to interfere with scientific discoveries. Who wants to mess with the place of the immortal soul?

### ***Conscious Conclusion***

Since some of the material (maybe most) that I included in this chapter is based on the prompting of my unconscious, my conscious mind would like to take this opportunity to explain the value of this material. It may or may not be right.

Looking at sections, My History of Psychology and the Timelines, a common theme running through them is increasing knowledge and a lot of ignorance. This suggests to me that the reader be very cautious of any material included in this paper. The author has shown that she is capable of some whopping lapses of judgment and learned men (no women in my timeline) and scientists have shown that they can be blind to certain evidence and wonderful insights can be lost to a few generations to be rediscovered again.

Numerous studies were included in this chapter. I love reading research studies. They read like mini mysteries to me. I admire the people whose studies I cited. They had to come up with a theory to test, figure out how to eliminate other factors that might confound the result, set up the environment in which to run the test, repeat the entire test until they have enough subjects to be able to come up with something statistically significant. Studying the unconscious offers new challenges since participants can't tell you what they aren't consciously aware.

Kihlstrom (2004) shows some of subtleties necessary in design of studies, when he clarifies the methods to be used for different type of problems, "Unobtrusive methods are used to assess attitudes, beliefs, and values of which people are aware, that they may be unwilling to reveal to the investigator. By contrast, implicit methods are used to assess attitudes, beliefs, and values of which people are unaware." (p. 1)

Looking at their research, I am struck by how powerful the unconscious is, how easy it is to overlook it, and how hard it is to give up the confidence that conscious thinking gives for the projected improved quality of unconscious thinking. I also believe that the limitations of my working memory have caused me to exclude important things. My conscious mind reels at the thought of trying to assess how best to combine conscious and unconscious thinking. Obviously, this is too complex for it to handle. Perhaps my unconscious has figured it out.

In the next two chapters, I will examine how the unconscious affects the writing process and readers, and look at ways expert writers chunk information.

## CHAPTER 3

### DIET, WRITING, AND EXERCISE

*"I love being a writer. What I can't stand is the paperwork."*

*-- Peter De Vries*

Diet, writing, and exercise have three things in common: (1) I want to do them; (2) I don't do them, at least not as often as I want; and (3) logic, the weapon of the conscious mind, seems useless against whatever is stopping me. In this chapter, I turn to the expert knowledge of neuroscientists, tennis pros, writers, Weight Watchers, cognitive psychologists, and others for ways to use the power of my unconscious to fight my invisible illogical foe.

The first section, Schema, examines what a fiction writer looks like and how your schema may be affecting you. The second section, Writing Classes, looks at the value of writing classes, how they affect motivation, and what teaching a class may do for you. In the third section, Brain and Exercise, writing is examined from a neurological perspective, including generic predispositions and the Goldilocks theory of flow. The fourth section, Writing Phases, examines the phases of the writing process. The fifth section, Opportunity, Motivation, and Skill, incorporates the wisdom of Weight Watchers into ways to increase motivation. The sixth section, Unsuspected Influences, uncovers the benefits of mindless writing. In the seventh section, Research Limitations, I synthesize current psychological research that seemed useless for helping me write into one handy quiz: Writing Nature or Writer Nutured? You can determine if these research studies predicted that you will be a writer. And in the last section, Nuggets, twelve suggestions to improve your writing process are listed.

## **Schema**

Most people grow up never seeing a fiction writer at work. I always assumed that writing would be just like reading. Ideas would flow through my head and I would type them onto paper. The summer before I turned twelve, I decided to become a writer. I sat on the swing in my backyard with the intention of writing a novel about Santa Claus and his sled being kidnapped and his rescue by a brother/sister pair. I chose the Santa Claus motif for financial reasons and the mystery out of love of the genre. However, I couldn't figure out who would kidnap Santa Claus, how he could be kidnapped, why he would be kidnapped, and even if I could figure out all that, I was still stuck with how two children would be able to discover his whereabouts, get there, and defeat some really nasty villains to rescue Santa. Confronted with what I saw as proof that I was incapable of becoming a writer, I gave up my dream and decided to become a visual artist.

Given the title of this paper, it shouldn't come as a shock that I came back to my dream of writing, and from my illustrations in chapter two, you have already deduced I didn't become a visual artist either. After years of taking art classes, when I decided to commit myself to it, I asked Clare Walker Leslie, the teacher of a weekend workshop on nature drawing, for advice about becoming an artist. She told me you have to draw because you love doing it. I knew immediately I didn't love it. I never drew unless I was taking a class. Even then I always arrived late and left early. According to Timothy Wilson (2002), your unconscious creates a definition of who you are through observations of your behavior. My behavior was saying art lover, perhaps art collector, but not artist.

I love creating, or at least, the idea of creating, and was not willing to give up the dream of being some sort of artist. I took a beginner's writing class at Cambridge Adult Ed even though I didn't think I had any ability. As an exercise, the teacher Michael Koran had us each say a

word. He ooh'ed and ah'ed at every word. "That's a great word! Feel the power in that word!" He told me I was talented, so did another student. Who was I to argue with them? yet I still had major reservations. From that point until now, I never missed a writing class except for dire causes and always arrived early. The same holds true for my CCT classes.

What does a fiction writer look like? According to Virginia Woolf (1957, p. 128), "only a person who sits with a pen in his hand in front of a sheet of paper."

My schema for what a writer is was defective. The writer Rebecca McClanahan (2001) in her essay, "Why We Don't Write Our Hearts Out," lists common misconceptions people have about writers, including that writing gets done without writing. The process of writing is too internal to be of interest to anyone else. Typing or handwriting is usually as physical as it gets, though movies do tend to show writers crumpling pieces of paper and tossing them. In the movie, *Something's Gotta Give*, Diane Keaton did the most typing that I've ever seen in a movie though while she typed she was transfixed with emotion: pounding the keys in anger, bawling, laughing hysterically. She was never shown reading what she wrote, or, heavens forbid, revising.

My friends and family treat my writing as an escapist activity for me, something that takes time away from them. When I am deeply thinking about my writing, my husband assumes I'm not doing anything. Perhaps my lack of respect for my writing process is conveyed to them who treat it with the same disdain, or maybe I'm projecting onto them.

The more I learn about fiction writing, the less external reward there seems to be. Few writers make enough money to be full time writers. It's not going to make me popular. According to William Saroyan (2005, p. 183) in *A Writer's Declaration*, "Pretty women swarm around everybody but writers. Plain, intelligent women *somewhat* swarm around writers." Published writers talk about how anticlimactic the release of their book was. There are problems

with agents, with promoting their work, with books hardly selling. Conglomerates are buying book publishers. Technology allows publishers to track exactly how many books get sold making it harder for even midlist writers to sell another book. According to the writer Calvin Trillin (1966, p. 1), “As part of my research for *An Anthology of Authors’ Atrocity Stories About Publishers*, I conducted a study (employing my usual controls) that showed the average shelf life of a trade book to be somewhere between milk and yoghurt.” Despite this, I feel as if my commitment is deepening. I can’t say why I want to be a writer. The idea of holding a book in my hand and saying, “I wrote this,” sounds deeply satisfying to me but that’s probably just a reason my conscious mind made up. I feel a desire deep in my core that I don’t want to examine too closely, because either I don’t need to or I fear examination might ruin it.

### ***Writing classes***

A writing class renewed my interest in writing. I enjoy taking classes and a writing class seems like an obvious step for success: learn from an expert, get constructive feedback on your work, meet other people at the same level and possibly develop a support group. Your unconscious, however, might have different ideas, especially about your motivation.

Psychologists Ericsson and colleagues reviewed the literature on expert performance (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993). They found that deliberate practice is the key to expert performance. A person must be motivated to practice and get immediate informative feedback on their performance. Practice alone wasn’t linked to improvement. It was getting feedback that allowed people to improve. Research showed that tutoring yielded better results than a traditional class. Through extended practice tasks become automatic as they move into the unconscious where they can be performed quickly, without awareness, thus freeing up working memory for other purposes. Feedback can prevent bad habits from being formed.

However, taking classes might decrease your motivation. In a study, children rewarded with a certificate for drawing with a pen were less likely to draw than students who hadn't been rewarded (Lepper et al, 1973). The extrinsic reward is interpreted by the unconscious as a sign that the behavior is only being done because of the reward, and the behavior is discounted because of it (Wilson, 2002). The unconscious might also think that you are incapable of judging what is good, that you need a teacher's guidance to determine your output's worth.

Feedback can also motivate you to do what pleases your instructor. C. Michael Curtis, a senior editor for *The Atlantic Monthly*, said that he could tell what graduate program writers had attended based on reading their stories. The only exception he cited was the Iowa Writing Program because their faculty kept changing.

I have friends in long-distance MFA programs for creative writing. They have told me that there are a number of students who have MFAs from multiple programs, who require the structure of the programs to keep them writing. Several writing teachers have counseled against my getting an MFA, but my last teacher told me that I would need to get one if I wanted to be serious as a writer. I suspect the MFA would only allow me to become a creative writing professor sooner.

Extrinsic rewards are not always bad for motivation. "Children shown videos of other children enjoying their work not only enjoy their work more, but seem to escape the negative effects of extrinsic rewards: rewards make them perform even better" (Flaherty, 2004, p. 55). Being among other writers who are motivated can increase my motivations. Going to the 2006 Newburyport Literary Festival was an inspirational event for me. It opened up new ways of thinking about stories that I had been stuck on. It also gave me the idea that led to this paper, that

literary short stories are really two stories: one for the reader's conscious mind and another for the reader's unconscious mind.

Some writing teachers have told me that they believe teaching writing improved their writing. Maybe it increases your confidence in your opinion since most students will treat you as if you are an expert. Or it could be that coming up with rules that beginning writers need allows you to consciously measure your writing against those rules, and according to UTT, your conscious mind is much more confident in its decisions – right or wrong. It could be that being a writing teacher means that you spend more time reading and writing which could make you a better writer. This would make a great research study, any one?

### ***Brain and Exercise***

Good news: Forty winners of the MacArthur award were found to sleep more than the average person (Shekerjian, 1990). A study on expertise found that experts sleep more than the average person also (Ericsson et al., 1993).

Bad news: A study showed aerobic exercise is associated with creativity (Blanchette, Ramocki, O'del, & Casey, 2005). In the study, creativity was measured using the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (a standardized test to measure creativity sounds like an oxymoron).

The neuroscientist Arne Dietrich (2007) developed the transient hypofrontality hypothesis because he was a runner. He noticed that as he ran, it seemed as if layers of consciousness were being peeled away, starting with the most sophisticated cognitive and emotional functions, abilities that are ascribed to the prefrontal cortex. He hypothesized that altered states of consciousness, such as meditation, hypnosis, drunkenness, runner's high, are actually reduced levels of consciousness. In his opinion, the prefrontal cortex, since it can

comprehend very sophisticated dangers, is the source of stress and anxiety and can get turned off temporarily by these activities.

Dietrich (2007) also hypothesizes that the state of flow, described by Csikszentmihalyi (1996) as “an almost automatic, effortless, yet highly focused state of consciousness” (p. 110), is also an altered state of consciousness, a reduced level of consciousness.

According to Dietrich (2007), neurological evidence strongly suggests that there are two distinct information processing systems, an explicit system and an implicit system. He likens them to the distinction made between conscious and unconscious in psychology. The explicit system is associated with increased cognitive flexibility. He proposed that the more efficient implicit system with its skill-based knowledge, supported by the basal ganglia, takes over during these moments of flow.

In order to maintain flow, the task must be within the skill level of the implicit system. If the task requires a skill that is not already automatic, the explicit system must be enlisted to help out. Performance will decrease and could lead to frustration and anxiety. Tasks that are easy for the implicit system, allow the explicit system to resume processing again, which could lead to boredom or daydreaming (Dietrich, 2007). I think of this as the Goldilocks theory of flow: too hard you get frustrated, too easy you get bored, only when it’s just right can you have flow.

I wondered if there could be a genetic predisposition for flow.

According to the neurologist Alice Flaherty (2004), the regions of the brain crucial to writing are the temporal lobes and the limbic system. The temporal lobes are necessary for understanding meaning, not just word meaning but *meaning* in its philosophical sense. Hypergraphia, the driving compulsion to write, can be produced by changes to the temporal lobe. In an interview on NPR, Thom Jones, author of several published short story collections, said

that after his first epileptic seizure he had an overwhelming urge to write. The limbic system is linked with emotions and motivation. Flaherty argues that is also connected to aspects of feeling inspired, though this feeling does not always coincide with producing great work (Flaherty, 2004).

If one doesn't have hypergraphia, how does one get the drive to write?

Flaherty (2004) suggests that at some point in time, there might be a pill that will help you to write. (I wonder if random drug tests will be run on writers to deny Pulitzers to those found guilty of doping.) Flaherty has hypergraphia and I found it annoying to read about how she wrote all the time, including when her twin babies were sleeping on her two knees (my annoyance is most likely attributable to envy). But even hypergraphia is no guarantee of success; it can cause a person to repeatedly write the same phrase over and over again. I came to think hypergraphia might be like perfect pitch for musicians, nice to have but not essential. However, unlike perfect pitch, hypergraphia often came with the downside of suicidal tendencies. And since I don't have it, it better not be necessary!

Perhaps many writers self medicate with alcohol to get themselves into a state of flow. The alcohol or drugs could peel off layers of consciousness (at times too many layers), turning the explicit system off and letting the implicit system have control.

Psychologist, author, and writing teacher Robert Boice (1994) warns against hypermania in writing. While hypermania can produce a lot of writing in a short amount of time, the writing is not as well thought out and a backlash effect can happen where a person will not write for a long period. He suggests that hypermania acts like alcohol to lower a person's resistance. Waiting until a deadline to get the writing done means that extrinsic motivation is driving you. According to Boice, typically we overestimate what we can produce in a short amount of time

and underestimate what we can produce if we work on something for a short amount of time for an extended period. This equates to if you look at what you produce after one timed writing session, you would see nothing much was produced, but after a month of these session, you would see that a significant amount was produced.

I have seen this happen to me. When I take an intense writing workshop, I marvel how much I produce for the class but when the workshop is over, I am exhausted and spent. I begin to suspect that I need the writing workshop in order to produce.

Ericsson and colleagues cited research about the effects of mental fatigue on performance (Ericsson et al., 1993). While mental fatigue didn't seem to directly affect performance, the studies had to be cut short because participants experience so much discomfort that they developed an aversion to the activity. Overtraining has also been shown to cause burnout in diverse fields as music and sports. The best results were found when practice began slowly and gradually increased.

Since the conscious mind is associated with flexibility, this made me think the unconscious mind might not be happy about choice. Research has shown choice to be demotivating. In a study, students were more likely to write an essay for extra credit if given a list of six, rather than thirty, essay topics. With more choices, the participants felt more responsibility, more frustration with the process, and were more unhappy with their final choices (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000).

For a fiction writer, there are no limits to choices. Nothing has to be true. All can be invented. You can write from multiple points of view, be omniscient, change gender, live in the past or the future, live in another universe, change species.

The writers Pamela Painter and Nancy Zafirs advocate exercises to get started writing. At the 2006 Newburyport Literary Festival, David Crouse talked about how he would give himself constraints: this story has to happen all on one day, this story has to take place in an elevator going between the second and eleventh floors.

Perhaps when too many choices are available, the explicit system is harder to suppress and a writer is not likely to experience flow until there are fewer choices. The way I limit choices is by adding something else that must be true to a story. Give a character a hobby, an illness, a pet, a dream, or a secret. Integrating this element makes the character more particular, more defined, more real.

Could self-esteem be a problem? Flaherty (2004) notes that there exists strong evidence that creative productive people have high self-esteem, even to the point of arrogance, yet Dunning, Johnson, Ehrlinger & Kruger's study (2003) showed that top performers rated themselves as average, while poor performers overestimated their abilities. The top performers were aware of ways that they could be improved while poor performers couldn't see how they could improve. On the TV show, *60 Minutes*, I heard Pavarotti say that he was never completely satisfied with a performance he'd given.

Flaherty (2004) notes that while increasing motivation can help if the problem is procrastination, there may be a stage fright aspect to writing. "In simple movements, stronger motivation is usually better, but in complicated tasks, such as writing, if the motivation is too strong, the adrenaline that usually helps movements cause the performer to freeze." She quotes Dante, "It seemed to me that I had undertaken too lofty a theme for my powers, so much so that I was afraid to enter upon it, and so I remained for several days desiring to write and afraid to begin." Dante did get past it.

I find that when I have a really good start to a story, I'm afraid to add to it because I am afraid that I will ruin it. This makes no logical sense since I'll still have the original draft, writing badly doesn't make it disappear.

Flaherty (2004) notes that rigidity, which has some features in common with frontal lobe malfunctions, can make the sufferer use the same failing approach over and over. Janet Burroway (Butler, 2005, p. 1) quotes the playwright Maria Irene Fornes in the introduction to Robert Olen Butler's book on writing: "You must always change your process! Because there are two of you, one who wants to write and one who doesn't. The one who wants to write has to keep fooling the one who doesn't."

## ***Writing Phases***

Experts have divided the writing process into phases. The table below shows how different experts have named the phases. The first three phases are called different things by the experts but correspond to the same thing. The naming emphasizes an aspect of the phase that the expert is trying to highlight. Hjortshoj has added two more phases to the common three phases (Hjortshoj, 2001).

<b>Expert</b>	<b>Phase I</b>	<b>Phase II</b>	<b>Phase III</b>		
Keith Hjortshoj	prewriting	composing	revising	editing	releasing
Donald Murray	prewriting	writing	rewriting		
	prevision	vision	revision		
Flower & Hayes	planning	translating	reviewing		

*Prewriting* sounds to me as if you aren't ready to write and sounds inactive. This phase could include research and other activities which are necessary to produce good writing.

*Prevision* seems to capture more of the flavor that you are searching for the vision that will be central to the writing. Murray (2003), Boice (1994), and Robert Olen Butler (2006) recommend

the importance of waiting until you are ready before beginning to write. I am still struggling to understand when it's time to write and when it's not, especially since Boice also says that you should begin before you feel ready. He does acknowledge that these two pieces of advice are contradictory.

Looking at this first phase through the lens of UTT, it might be using unconscious thought to build the connections among different elements. Conscious thought may be too limited for this phase. Unfortunately, unconscious thought will signal that it's ready in less direct means than conscious thought and with less confidence as well. Robert Olen Butler (2005, p.13) describes the culmination of this phase: "Please get out of the habit of saying that you've got an idea for a short story. Art does not come from ideas. Art does not come from the mind. Art comes from the place where you dream; it comes from the white hot center of you."

*Composing, writing, vision, and translating* capture aspects of the next phase. *Composing* and *writing* capture the sense that something is being created and written. *Vision* captures the sense that this is not something that you know but something that appears to you, that you see as you are writing. *Translating* captures the sense that this vision needs to be translated into words. Sometimes when a scene unfolds inside my mind, it becomes like the problem of writing memoir. How do you describe this scene that just happened? How do you convey the emotions that you saw? What details are important and which should be left out?

The more tasks that have been automatic, the less working memory is required for these tasks which means that an experienced writer can do more processing in this stage.

When I was first writing, I found Natalie Goldberg's book, *Writing Down the Bones* (1984), inspirational. The book boils down to the two principles: (1) freewrite and (2) write often. While the latter, write often, is a useful principle, I found that as I became a more

advanced writer, freewriting didn't seem to be as valuable. The neurologist Alice Flaherty (2004) suggests that while freewriting might produce more writing, the overall quality of the writing decreases. She notes that few scientific studies have shown that brainstorming increases the quality of the best idea. It does seem plausible that freewriting may be a good way to warm up to writing but I still feel a resistance to doing it during my fiction writing time. Perhaps freewriting is most important for beginners. Since beginners don't have the automatic tasks of the experts, freewriting allows them to achieve flow. I heard experts say that when they are stuck for what to write that they freewrite.

*Reviewing* captures the sense that you need to read what you just wrote to have an informed opinion of it. It also implies a distance and objectivity. *Revision* and *revising* show that you must be open to replacing your former vision with a totally new vision. *Rewriting* place the emphasis on the writing, not the telling someone about it.

John Gardner in *The Art of Fiction* (1991, p. 69) captures the writing phase in his description

He writes by feel, intuitively, imagining the scene vividly and copying down its most significant details, keeping the fictional dream alive, sometimes writing in thoughtless white heat of "inspiration," drawing on his unconscious, trusting his instincts, hoping that when he looks back at it later, in cool objectivity, the scene will work.

and the revising phase

He begins to brood over what he's written, reading it over and over, patiently, endlessly, letting his mind wander ... Reading in this strange way lines he has known by heart for weeks, he discovers odd tics his unconscious has set up for him, perhaps curiously accidental repetitions of imagery... the writer assumes that accidents in his writing may have significance.

Hjortshoj's editing phase is a syntactical check of the work (Hjortshoj, 2001). His separation of this from the revising phase shows how different the purposes of these two stages

are. Too often beginning writers confuse line edits, focus on the sentence level, with revision, focus on the entire piece. It also implies that syntactical checks can be postponed until after the real work of writing is done, until just before the work is sent out into the world in the release phase.

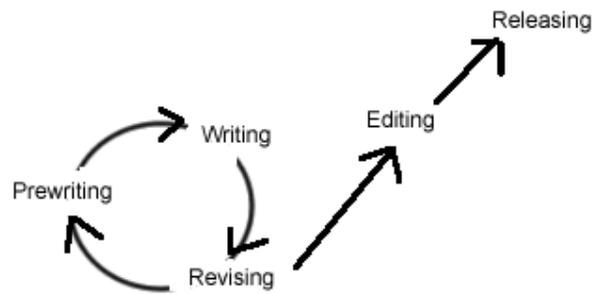


Figure 15. Hjortshoj's phases (Hjortshoj, 2001)

Editing each sentence, making each sentence perfect as you go along can make it harder to throw away these gems for the good of the overall piece. The advice attributed to William Faulkner, “In writing you must kill your darlings,” refers to getting rid of those lovely pieces of writing that don’t fit the rest of the piece.

The spiral through the first three phases can take place over a long time or over a short time. You can think, write a few words, read them, change them, or you can write an entire sentence/paragraph/story/chapter/novel before reading and revising.

Hjortshoj’s last phase, releasing, warrants attention. I find sending out stories emotionally exhausting and procrastinate on this. Hjortshoj (2001) suggests that writing blocks often happen in the transition from one phase to the next. If you don’t write, you can’t write anything bad. If you don’t look at your writing with a critical eye, you won’t find any faults with it. If you don’t release your piece, it can’t get rejected. The Lillian Hellman quote, “Nothing you write, if you hope to be good, will ever come out as you first hoped,” captures the pain of writing. To be good you must give up that initial dream of what the work would be, and replace it with the reality of what you can produce.

Hjortshoj (2001) suggests that writing blocks happen more often with more complex pieces of writing. Few freshmen or sophomores came to his writing center because of blocks. It was the upper classmen, graduate students, and PhD candidates that were getting blocked. He hypothesized that the lower classmen could get by without having to do extensive revisions. They are given a format for their essays which allows them to follow a set of rules to complete them. When the five-paragraph essay or similar format proves too limited for a project, they can get into trouble.

With my own writing, I see a progression in length. At first, I could write only very short stories. As I gained experience, my stories became longer. Right now my stories are in the twenty/thirty page range and one seems suspiciously like it wants to become a novel. As they grow longer, I am finding it harder to complete them. Ron Carlson recommended that I finish ten more stories before I tackling a novel, and I have at least four stories with strong starts waiting for me to complete them. Recently I came across an interview with Ron Carlson on the web, his words seemed to talk directly to where I am in my work now.

Finish your work. The road to hell is paved with unfinished manuscripts; there isn't a person without a partial draft somewhere. If you quit because the charm is off, the cart has crept before the horse in that you've brought in the editor before the genius was finished. What you learn from finishing things is how not to drown (Carlson, 2002).

The cycle through the phases allows the unconscious to build up expertise on a storyworld and a set of characters. Writers talk about how at a certain point in writing a novel that the characters take over. I hypothesize that unconscious thought and learning given time can develop complex schemata for the characters so the writer knows without conscious thought how characters will react, thus allowing the writer to stay in flow while writing. Many writers say that

starting a new novel is as hard as starting the first novel. Eudora Welty states this more eloquently than I.

The most trustworthy lesson I've learned from work so far is the simple one that the writing of each story is sure to open up a different prospect and pose a new problem, and that no past story beats recognizably on a new one or gives any promise of help, even if the writing mind had room for help and the wish that it would come. Help offered from outside the frame of the story would be itself an intrusion (Welty, 1909, p. 107).

With each cycle through the first three phases the writer gets to know the characters better. The first time through the writer knows little about them. In the writing phase, the writer lays down clues to who these people are. In the revising phase, the writer tries to figure out which clues are important, what behavior to eliminate as inconsistent with the “real” characters. Since UTT works best when the conscious mind is distracted, the prewriting phase could be partly a distraction to keep the conscious mind from interfering. It could be that prewriting primes different areas of the brain so new data becomes available in the writing and revising phases.

The importance of building up schemata for your characters can also explain why writing a biography of your character can inform your writing even if you never use any of the information from the biography. The more real they seem to you, the less conscious thinking is required to write about them. To quote Ron Carlson, “I always write from my own experiences, whether I've had them or not.”

### ***Opportunity, motivation, and skill***

In critical thinking class, I learned that in order to solve a problem three key components needed to be met: (1) Recognize there is a problem, (2) Have the motivation to solve the problem, and (3) Have the skills to solve the problem. Sometime in the 1980s, working in

corporate America, I learned that I wasn't allowed to say I had a problem; I had to say I had an *opportunity*. While the last component stays the same, the first two could be replaced with (1) Recognize there is an opportunity, and (2) Have the motivation to seize the opportunity. In the figure 16, only the overlap of all three circles is where the problem gets solved or the opportunity gets seized.

I can see I have an opportunity to be a fiction writer. The more I know about fiction writing and personally know published authors, the smaller the monetary opportunity appears.

There are jaw-dropping success stories out there like J. K.

Rowling who made Forbes 2007 list of wealthiest people (Forbes, 2007), and is, as *TIME* puts it, “wealthier than the

Queen of England” (TIME, 2003). And since I do buy lottery tickets when the jackpot grows massive, I acknowledge there is a small chance that I could be monetarily successful or at least my heirs might be though J. K. Rowling's success seems beyond me. But more realistically, I know writers more talented than me who can't afford to quit their day jobs. My aim is towards what Doris Betts described, “Writing is a hard way to make a living but a great way to make a life.” I want a writing life. I want to enjoy writing as much as I do reading. I want to hang out with people who think writing is important.

The second component seems harder for me to achieve – the motivation. I know what kind of motivation I want – intrinsic motivation. Research by Amabile and colleagues (Amabile, 1985; Amabile, Hennessey, & Grossman, 1986) suggests that writing for the pure pleasure of it (intrinsic motivation) results in more creative output than writing for reward (extrinsic motivation). Flow may be its own reward.



Figure 16. Three components of problem solving/opportunity seizing

Book after book on writing stresses the importance of a daily writing habit (Boice, 1994; Butler, 2005; DeMarco-Barrett, 2004; Dufresne, 2003; See, 2002), and cognitive psychology backs this up: experts spend a lot of time in deliberate practice for an extended period of time (Ericsson & Charness, 1994). This advice, like the advice to eat less and exercise more to lose weight, is easier said than done.

C. Everett Koop said the best exercise equipment that you could buy was a dog because a dog provides motivation. Can I train my dog to growl at me if I try to get up before my writing time has ended?

The first time I sat through Weight Watcher's meetings, I realized how applicable their advice about motivation was to my writing process. "If you go off your diet, don't beat yourself up or continue eating those cookies. Next meal, eat according to your plan." If I'm not writing as often as I think I should be, I shouldn't chastise myself—I should just write. "Have the right foods in the house" translated to set up an environment that facilitates writing.

Weight Watchers stressed gradual consistent weight loss, developing the kind of habits you can do for the rest of your life. And I kept doing them, that is, until I let a few slip, and then a few more, and then I began replacing good habits with bad.

Following the advice in chapter one of Robert Boice's book, *How Writers Journey to Comfort and Fluency* (1994), I established a daily writing habit for a while. After a few weeks, I felt like a real writer for the first time. Publishing six stories, having two stories anthologized didn't make me feel like a writer, but the daily habit did. My experience agreed with the cliché, *fake it until you make it*. There is evidence that the more you do a behavior, the less effort is required to do it, sometimes to the point of requiring no conscious effort. Repeated behavior can promote a new self definition (Wilson, 2002).

Much of Boice's advice is counterintuitive. He recommends setting a time limit for the daily writing sessions and being strict about keeping to it. This didn't make sense to me. The first time I read this advice, my mind sort of skipped over it, thinking I must have read it incorrectly. Why would I want to stop writing when my problem was that I wasn't writing enough? But I found, that stopping gave me more confidence. I was ending at a point where I was successful, not like before when I would end when I was drained or had wallowed long enough in my inability to think of nothing to say. I hypothesize that my unconscious notes this pattern and began to believe that I liked writing and that I was good at it. The short daily writing sessions also allow for unconscious thinking to happen between writing sessions, and up the odds that I would be able to maintain flow.

Hemingway is reputed to have said, "I always stopped when I knew what was going to happen next. That way I could be sure of going on the next day." Interrupting the writing could also take advantage of the Zeigarnik effect, where people remember interrupted tasks better than completed tasks. I hypothesize that stopping in the middle of a sentence may cause your unconscious to do more thinking about your fictional piece than stopping at the completion of a scene or chapter.

Another Boice (1994) recommendation is to check your body for tension every 5 to 10 minutes, and get rid of the tension. When your body is tense, your unconscious may associate tension with writing and assume you don't like to write.

Despite the success, one day I didn't write and another followed it and soon I had stopped my routine. I still don't know why I did that. The same way it was not a conscious decision to abandon my healthy diet. Eighteen months after reaching my goal weight, I was back at Weight Watchers with even more weight to lose. I was shocked to see how Weight Watchers had

changed. This time they didn't ask me what my goal weight was when I signed up. They had learned that this can be discouraging to people faced with a large number. Instead, they automatically set up a goal of 10% of your current weight. If you weight 300 pounds, your goal is to lose 30 pounds—a damn sight less daunting than 100+ pounds. Once you lose 10% of your weight, the accomplishment is celebrated and a new goal of 10% of your new weight. Each goal becomes progressively smaller.

One of the daunting things about writing is the goal isn't clear. I never know how many drafts it will take to find an ending for a story or how many pages it will be. A novel seems completely daunting to me. It takes years to finish one and many writers speak about throwing away their first novel. Many writers recommend smaller goals, like 1500 words a day or 30 minutes writing.

Having options was something that Weight Watchers had added during my absence. Their original plan was given the jaunty title Flex Plan. With it, you keep track of the points of the food you ate (based on calories, fiber, and fat content) and you can eat anything up to a certain number of points. In the new plan, the Core Plan, you could eat as much as you wanted as long as the food fit into a category, which I remember as cardboard, twigs, and bland, but since I never used that plan—it did not include chocolate—I could be completely off base.

For me, the best writing plan seemed to be fixed period of times.

The new Weight Watchers had star stickers that they would put on your check-in booklet whenever they felt like you did something special. I got one for only gaining one pound when I skipped three weeks in a row. I got rewarded for not being as bad as I could be. This made sense to me. At the Bedford Library when you return a book late, the librarian will be excited that you brought the book back. At other libraries, I've gotten a glare for a mildly late book. These glares

make me not want to bring a book back when it's late, so I procrastinate and procrastinate where it could be years before I finally return the book.

I so enjoyed getting the sticker, I devised a small extrinsic reward to help motivate me. For each day I wrote, I put a sticker on my calendar. Not writing equated with no sticker and it became easier to sit down and write knowing there was an immediate consequence to my not doing it. If I skipped a few days, it helped me keep it in perspective. My estimation of how many days I skipped was shown to be much more than the actual number. Knowing that I am not “that bad” made it easier to return to writing.

Weight Watchers recommends that you keep a daily journal and keep track of what you eat. Writers have kept journals about their writing process. John Steinbeck published books of his journals including *Writing Days: The Journals of the Grapes of Wrath* (1990). Writing was a struggle for him. By keeping a journal, he was able to see that there was no connection between how well he thought he was writing and how well he wrote.

### ***Unsuspected Influences***

Brian Wansink, director of the Cornell University Food and Brand Lab, researched eating and found that we are often not aware of what affects how much we eat. The amount of food you consumed is influenced by things outside your awareness: the speed at which your tablemates eat, the quantity they consume, the size of your plate, the size of the serving bowls. If your unconscious sees four cookies on a plate, it knows there are more in a bag in the kitchen and won't feel as satisfied then if there were only four cookies in a package (Wansink, 2006). He wrote the only diet book that I am interested in buying because he gives suggestions for ways to outsmart your unconscious so that you eat less without feeling deprived. I want the same tricks for my writing.

I hypothesize that the same type of influences holds true for writing. What you write with, where you write, who you write with, all these things may affect your writing.

Psychologists Brewin and Lennard conducted a study comparing typewriting against longhand writing for describing an emotional experience (Brewin & Lennard, 1999). Eighty college students wrote about either a neutral event or a stressful event in one of the two modes. The students who wrote in longhand about the stressful event showed greater negative affect, greater disclosure, and greater perceived benefit than students who typed.

The writer Natalie Goldberg discusses in *Writing Down the Bones* (1986) how she determines whether she'll type or handwrite by the kind of piece she's writing. For stories, she uses the typewriter and for more emotional writing, she handwrites. She recommends writing with a fountain pen, less friction. Most writers that I know use fountain pens on a regular basis. Goldberg also cautions that the size of pad you write on will affect what you write. As an example, she cites William Carlos Williams, a doctor, who wrote on prescription pads and produced many "prescription-pad-sized poems" in his collected work. When I first started writing fiction seriously, I couldn't write at the computer because I had been doing computer programming for so long that I got what I called "code head" when I sat down to type — my mind would kind of blank out on emotional and imaginative ideas and become logical and calculating. Code head went away as I wrote more fiction. The computer no longer holds that association for me.

Technology allows for another mode of writing: dictation. Voice recognition software has advanced to the point where, for most people, it can recognize their normal speaking voice, enter text at three times the speed of typing (according to Dragon NaturallySpeaking 9 marketing

info), and the price is affordable, at just under a hundred dollars. I would love to see if this makes writing easier. At least it will make it different.

Where you write can be important too. There's a famous Virginia Woolf (1957, p. 4) quote: "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction." The writer Annie Dillard (1990) wrote how she gets distracted if she has a nice view so she covered her window with a drawing of what was outside the window. I seriously considered writing in a windowless place but the lack of natural light sounded oppressive. The marketing professors Joan Meyers-Levy and Rui (Juliet) Zhu published a paper that suggests ceiling height might influence people's decision (the higher the ceiling, the more abstract and freer; a lower ceiling, the more specific)(Meyers-Levy, 2007).

When writers read their work, someone in the audience usually asks when do they write, where do they write, how long do they write. Struggling writers want to know how other writers do it. The published writers usually write in the morning. At the 2004 AWP, Lorrie Moore and Jane Hamilton (an Oprah pick) told the audience that they don't write at real desks, they both write on doors that are held up by bookcases or short filing cabinets. I know writing on a door isn't why they were successful, but I am tempted to set up a door as my desk.

When I feel stuck, I often try writing in a different mode. If I can't write at the computer, I try handwriting. If that doesn't work, I try lying down, a different chair, another room, a different pen. The writer Ron Carlson has several typewriters set up in addition to his computer, so he has a set of writing places ready to go. He even has an old typewriter set up. My conscious mind tries to make sense of this. Is it the movement alone that's helping? Perhaps it's a form of procrastination. Maybe the rest allows the brain cells to calm down and let your mind travel a different path. Usually a different setting helps but sometimes I find myself in a game of musical

chairs with the music never stopping. Sometimes I will stay late at work and write there. My work office has the association that this is a place to ignore distraction and just work. It worked wonderfully for a while but lately it seems to not work as well.

When my husband's home while I'm writing there, I have trouble writing. It reminds me of a rule for having a service dog in your home—no other pets in the home. The service dog will see them not working and think to himself, hey! why do I have to work? My unconscious says the same thing as my husband gads about the house. It doesn't matter if he's doing some icky chore. He could at any second do something fun or interrupt me or who knows what!

Being at writing conferences, I noticed how much easier it was to write when other people were writing around you. I didn't even have to see them, just knowing they were in another room like mine somehow made it easier to write. Writers' rooms have sprung up in cities across the country. They are offices where writers go to write with other writers. Tim O'Brien writes at the Boston Writing Room. The idea of belonging to that Writing Room is so appealing to me but I can't justify the cost and the commute time (around two hours round trip). I'm trying to get one started near where I live. It would help me to reconfigure the schema of how a writer actually works.

I've been in writing groups and believe that the right group can be great for motivation while the wrong group can have disastrous effects. If the group contains people who are not writing, they can have a negative influence. They feed off your motivation and leave you with less. I've seen people become hypercritical of work that is brought in, probably unconsciously trying to sabotage other people so the group will be united in not writing. One member was blatant enough to exclaim, "Good!" when I and another producing writer didn't bring in any writing one week. I've seen groups that I'm envious of, where people were committed to their

writing and their group and ended up producing novels and book-length memoirs. Currently, I am in a three-person teacher-led group with Sibyl Johnstone.

Some writers listen to music as they write. I could see how the emotions from music could seep into your writing. I hypothesize that choosing the right music could make writing easier and the output richer.

## ***Research Limitations***

Research studies regarding creativity often use undergrads (AKA human lab rats) as subjects. Many looked only at school children. This means the level of expertise was quite low. When research studies dealt with experts, interviews was the typical method used. Since the effects of the unconscious are typically hidden, even assuming the subjects were trying to be truthful, the data would be suspect. For years tennis pros recommended that players roll their wrists over their racket when they hit a forehand, but Vic Brandon, who runs a tennis camp, videotaped the pros to see exactly what was happening. The video showed that the wrist is straight, not twisted, at the moment of contact. The pros were recommending what they believed was happening, but their recommendation would only make players worse and possibly injure them (Gladwell, 2005).

Few research studies looked at fiction writers only. They usually lumped them in with poets, technical writers, memoirists. Some studies used “creative writers” as their participants, which could mean poets only, or poets and fiction writers.

I would love to hook up a bunch of expert fiction writers to brain-monitoring equipment and see what their brains are up to when they do different activities. Do expert fiction writers read differently than novices? What areas of the brain are active for different stages of writing?

Does the activity change when they know what their story is about? However, I suspect that the increased knowledge will be of no use to me.

Reading cognitive psychology studies, many are aimed at predicting who will be a writer, artist, or “Creative.” When I read one of them, I would evaluate myself against their criteria. I boiled these studies down into a quiz and now you can too in my quiz, *Writing Nature or Writer Nutured?*

### Quiz: Writing Nature or Writer Nutured? <sup>4</sup>

Questions	How to calculate points	Your Score
a) Do you have a mood disorder?	25 points for bipolar (manic depression) 15 points for other mood disorders 10 points if a close relative has a mood disorder	
b) Did you have a happy childhood?	25 points for no.	
c) Did your parents respect learning?	25 points for yes.	
d) Did you have a parent who was intellectually curious or very creative?	25 points for yes	
e) Did your parents encourage creative activity?	25 points for yes	
f) Did you like school?	15 points for no	
g) Do you have a massive vocabulary?	3 points for yes 5 points if you assent 15 points if you possess a prodigious lexis -20 if you thought <i>lexis</i> meant a car	
h) Did you have imaginary companions?	Add 5 points for each imaginary companion up to 15 points	
i) Did people chastise you for daydreaming?	25 points for all the time 5 points for some of the time -10 points for never	
j) Do you enjoy pretense?	20 points for yes	
k) Are you smart enough?	25 points if your IQ is 120 or over -50 points if your IQ is 150 or over (you might write brilliantly, but no one will understand you)	

<sup>4</sup> WARNING: Potential side effects. Taking the quiz could lower your motivation to write, however taking the quiz probably reduces your motivation less than reading the actual articles themselves.

Questions	How to calculate points	Your Score
l) What's your place in the family?	5 points if not firstborn (more successful poets were firstborns while fiction writers were later born)	
m) What's your MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator)?	25 points for ENFP 15 points for INFJ, ISTJ, INTJ, or EITP 5 points if you are Intuitive and not Sensory	
n) What's your MBTI?	25 points for INFP	
o) How much do you read?	5 points for a lot 25 points for massive quantities	
Results: if you send me your score and a check for \$500, I will tell you that you are definitely a born writer. No check, then I have serious doubts about your abilities – clearly not enough imagination.	<b>Total score</b>	
Questions <i>a</i> through <i>g</i> are based on Kohanyi's theory that there are four factors that predict whether someone is going to be a creative writer (Kohányi & le, 2005). Questions <i>k</i> through <i>m</i> are based on Kaufman's analysis of creative writers (Kaufman, 2002). Questions <i>n</i> through <i>o</i> are based on Piirto's <i>Understanding Creativity</i> (Piirto, 2002).		

## **Nuggets**

Sleep more than the average person. Naps are good.

Develop a writing habit. Make sure to minimize discomfort by making the goal – time, word count, page count – attainable.

Remove tension from your body while writing. Take frequent breaks to stretch and walk around.

Set up different work stations around your house so you keep moving until you find a place where you can write.

Select your mode of writing – handwriting, typing, dictation – based on what you are trying to write and what feels right.

Keep a journal about your process to help you figure out what works for you, how you feel during the different phases.

Be kind to your writing self. Don't beat yourself up if you are not performing up to some expectation.

Keep your writing away from people who are unnecessarily harsh or who don't like the kind of writing you like.

Surround yourself with people who value writing whenever possible.

Find reader(s) whose opinion you respect and who are kind to read your writing.

When stuck, constrain your choices.

Give yourself small rewards for the minor accomplishments along the way, such as putting stickers on a calendar.

## CHAPTER 4

### EXPERT CHUNKS

*There are three rules for writing a novel. Unfortunately, no one knows what they are."*

*-- W. Somerset Maugham*

According to cognitive psychologists, experts divide data into more complex chunks than novices. Towards this purpose, I have divided this chapter into four chunks specific to fiction writing. Half the chunks are about reading.

Reading and writing are opposing complementary principles, like yin and yang. Reading would be the yin force because it is receptive, and writing the yang force because it is creative. Within the yin-yang symbol, yin and yang each occupy half of the circle, but within the yin half there is some yang and within the yang half there is some yin. It is said that the yin within the yang half is the most potent yin, as is the yang within the yin.

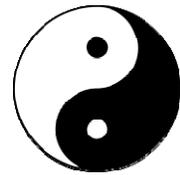


Figure 17. Yin-yang symbol

In the Readers Chunks section, I suggest that reading is a collaborative creative act between the reader and the text. Italo Calvino, the novelist, captured this sense when he said, "Reading means approaching something that is just coming into being." This is the yang within the yin.

In the Reading for Writing Chunks section, I suggest that writers need to read in order to develop their skills. Samuel Johnson is quoted as saying, "I never desire to converse with a man who has written more than he has read." Perhaps a writer who doesn't read is the equivalent to a talker who never listens.

The third section, *Short Story Structure Chunks*, is about craft. I review some of the ways experts have divided the short story into chunks throughout history, ending with *Fish Structure* which is the first structure which seems to have distinct conscious and unconscious layers.

The last section, *Nuggets*, gives suggestions for becoming an expert fiction writer. This list is by no means exhaustive and only contains the nuggets for which I've found scientific support.

### ***Reader Chunks***

To be a writer presumes the existence of readers. What do readers want?

They all want different things. They want to read something that they can understand but that will enlighten them in some way. While it lacks enough narrative for my tastes, my husband happily reads parts manuals from tool companies. Perhaps he is supplying a narrative as he reads, imagining how this widget will solve a problem. Perhaps he elaborates further: the customer rejoices at his brilliance; she starts to shed her clothes, remarks how his mind is only surpassed by his body as she backs into the whirring chainsaw held by his demented wife (I don't want to give him ideas).

Each reader brings a set of schemas that they will use when interpreting a book. The writer should give enough information to allow the reader to understand the environment and people of the story world. Too much information and the reader will feel talk down to or bored. Too little information, the reader will be confused, frustrated, or imagining a very different world than the one you hoped to create. This sounds akin to the Goldilocks theory of flow. Perhaps the best kind of reading is a state of flow.

These schemata are not just physical (a library has books and is quiet) but can be emotional as well. A notion of a family dinner can conjure radically different emotions for

different people. Stereotypes and biases are based on schemata. A writer relies on the reader's schemata to fill in information.

I admire Roxana Robinson's short stories but was unimpressed by her story, "Graduation," about a divorced woman going to her son's college graduation and feeling left out (Robinson, 1992). A writer friend (who I am sure is smarter than I am) called that story the best one in the collection. I realized that the main character in the story was similar to my friend, both divorced mothers of only sons. My friend brought more emotion and knowledge directly related to the story than I, a one-time married with no children, did. She probably struggles with the same problems as the character, and therefore, has more at stake when reading it.

A writer uses the readers' schemas to flesh out the characters and environment by including enough details to activate a schema. If a character acts just like the reader expects based on their schema (for example, a computer programmer who is a bad dresser and socially awkward) or is a common stereotype (prostitute with heart of gold), the reader will see the character as a caricature. In a literary work, you could get away with a few minor characters being this way, but it would be hard to have a major character. Many writing teachers and literary writers stress the importance of characters over plot, which relates to research which suggests that reading fiction is correlated with greater social ability than reading nonfiction (Mar, Oatley, Hirsh, dela Paz, & Peterson, 2006). Correlation does not always mean causation. It could be that people who already have greater social ability have more interest in fiction. They get more pleasure out of the subtleties of characters; perhaps their more refined schemata about social interactions give them an enhanced reading. Or it could be that reading about characters, predicting how they will act and think, then getting feedback on your assumptions by the ending of the text, may increase your emotional intelligence.

My father-in-law belongs to two book groups and expressed exasperation when people were discussing what fictional characters were thinking. “They don’t even exist,” he said, rolling his eyes. I don’t feel that way about fictional characters. Jane Austen’s heroines feel as real to me as my father-in-law.

Keith Oatley, cognitive psychologist and novelist, argues that fiction better represents two forms of truth – coherence and personal truth – than nonfiction which deals with the empirical. While nonfiction is primarily concerned with facts, fiction allows for simulation and reflection. Oatley cites Gerrig who argues that a reader is more likely to believe something in fiction, than in nonfiction. With fiction, you have, as Coleridge called it, “that willing suspension of disbelief.” The reader builds a storyworld where those things are true for the duration of the storyworld (Oatley, 1999).

Iser considers a text to be literary when reading becomes active and creative, where the reader must use his imagination to work things out (Iser, 1974). Miall and Kuiken define three components for literariness: (1) the reader will recognize that the style, word choice, narrative variation stands out from ordinary language use; (2) the reader’s response will take the reader into an unfamiliar state; and (3) that response will modify personal meaning for the reader (Miall & Kuiken, 1999).

Using these as guidelines, whether a work is literary or not will depend upon who is reading it. An American reading a book by a British author may delight in the word choice while a Brit may consider the word choice hackneyed. If the reader has already read something similar in plot or tone, the work might be considered derivative or “done to death.” A young child might delight in having *Good Night, Moon* read over and over. For that child, it qualifies as literary.

The reader can respond in ways of which they are unaware. I read somewhere that reading Jane Austen was recommended as a treatment for shellshock during World War I; it helped integrate the men back into society. Bargh, Chen, and Burrows ran a study where they had the participants unscramble sentences and then timed them as they walked to an elevator. The participants thought the study was about speed of unscrambling but the participants who were primed with words related to the elderly, walked slower than those that weren't primed with these words. The participants had no knowledge that the words had an effect on how they were walking (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996).

Readers may not be consciously aware of where the emotional impact comes from in fiction. Nisbett and Wilson had 152 participants, all students in an introductory psychology class, read a section from John Updike's novel, *Rabbit Run*. A passage about the messiness of the baby's crib was omitted from the section for some of the participants. Participants in the group who had read the section with the crib passage responded almost unanimously (86%) that the crib passage had increased the impact of the section, however they rated the emotional impact of the section at the same level as the participants who hadn't read the passage (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977).

I've seen an evolution in my response to readers' comments on my writing. Initially, I was shocked when people praised my writing and dismayed when they criticized it. Next, I went through a spell where I tried to make all the changes readers suggested. Later I became more selective about which readers I listened to. Now, I pay attention to where the readers say they are having a problem but am far less likely to take their suggestions as for how to fix it.

I have never responded to criticism by saying, "I was just writing this for myself anyway," but have heard many beginning writers say that. I assume it's defensiveness on their

part, but it brings to mind an Edna Ferber quote, “Only amateurs say that they write for their own amusement. Writing is not an amusing occupation. It is a combination of ditch-digging, mountain-climbing, treadmill and childbirth. But amusing? Never.”

### ***Reading for Writing Chunks***

Many writing teachers have bemoaned students who want to be writers who don't want to read. Reading is seen as critical to becoming a writer, and that writers must read in a special critical manner. John Gardner (1999, p. 46) describes this type of reading as “the way a young architect looks at a building, or a medical student watches an operation, both devotedly, hoping to learn from a master, and critically alert for any possible mistake.” This type of reading sounds very conscious, unearthing rules to use in your own writing, but I wonder if more could be happening.

Chan did a study where the participants were shown a set of examples from an artificial grammar, and then asked to classify test strings. Even though the participants were unable to say how they were classifying the strings, they were able to classify correctly at a level above chance (60% - 70%). Who knows what classifications you can learn by just reading literary fiction?

Testing if reading more critically could result in better performance, Chan devised the study so that the next group of participants was asked to look for rules in the training phase. The overall accuracy of the string classifications remained unchanged, but the participants were more confident when making a correct classification. They no longer felt as though they were only guessing.

If this study on artificial grammars could be extended to fiction writing, the benefit to your craft of writing might come mainly from reading and only slightly from reading in a

writerly way. The true benefit from reading in a writerly way might be increased confidence that what you have written is correct because you have generated rules to check it against.

While in a short short story writing workshop with Pamela Painter, a gifted teacher, I was having trouble naming my characters. Pamela Painter had stressed the importance of selecting the right name for a character because a name brought with it many associations for the reader. She had also assigned the homework to analyze stories to find a solution for a problem that we were facing. I looked at seven stories in the anthology, *Flash Fiction*, and was shocked to discover that none of the characters were named in any of those stories. The writers differentiated between characters mainly through pronouns. With two characters of different sexes, he/she made it clear. If the point of view was first person, I/third-person pronoun made it clear. If these distinctions weren't enough, the writers used the title, occupation, or relationship of a person to make it clear – sergeant, doctor, sister. This writerly reading gave me the confidence to use unnamed characters, which was probably what my unconscious was trying to tell me to do in the first place.

There is a T.S Eliot quote, “Bad poets imitate; good poets steal.” I would argue that your conscious mind imitates techniques, but your unconscious mind owns them after having stolen them without your conscious mind necessarily seeing the theft.

Reading your own writing is important. Pamela Painter describes it as looking for clues. What your characters say, wear, eat, really anything they do gives you a clue as to who this character is. Look at what you've put in their environment and use it. If you gave them an old car, it may break down or fail to pass inspection. These clues can tell you what happens next in the storyline.

Cognitive psychologist Timothy Wilson argues that our definition of self is based upon observations of our behavior (Wilson, 2002). The same argument can be made for the characters in your fiction. The behavior that you've already written gives you insight into who these characters are and makes it easier to know what they will do in a situation, to extend the storyline, and to revise either by heightening what's already in there or removing what doesn't feel right.

Novelists talk about how hard it is to start a new novel, how they feel as if they are beginning again as writers. This could be because they are in a new storyworld with characters that they don't understand. The more you understand your characters the easier it to stay in flow.

## ***Structure Chunks***

In this section, I briefly review how the story structure has evolved over time as experts devised rules to help people write better. Writers who are unsure can compare their stories with these structures and consciously evaluate how well their writing adheres to that form. At the end of this section is a timeline that depicts the structures graphically.

In the 4th century BC, Aristotle wrote *The Poetics*, which set a standard by which drama was judged and is still being judged. He theorized that a tragedy should have a unity of action and divided it into three chunks: a beginning, a middle, and an ending (Aristotle, 1932). In 1993, *Writer's Digest* published a book by Nancy Kress, aimed at writers, titled *Beginnings, Middles, and Endings*, which shows that writers are still struggling with what goes into these chunks to make a good story/novel.

In 1863, Gustav Freytag wrote *Technique of the Drama*, in which he analyzed the structure of Greek and Shakespearean dramas, and divided a drama into five chunks: exposition/inciting moment, rising action, climax or turning point, falling action, and

denouement (Freytag, 1968). His analysis is often represented by an equilateral triangle. Most people are aware of a climax being a necessary part of drama, even if they can't verbalize this requirement, and will notice if their expectations are not met when reading a book, watching a movie, or even a TV show.

In several short story writing courses that I've taken, the teacher has drawn the arc of a short story which is a version of Freytag's Pyramid but with the climax occurring nearer to the end. Most of the action would occur before the climax and then the story should end soon after.

For a short story, Janet Burroway draws the diagram as an inverted checkmark since the story usually ends soon after the climax and the story should end at a higher level than it started (Burroway, 2003).

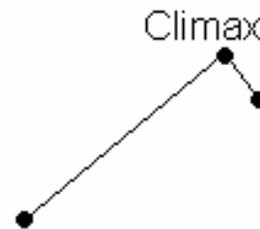


Figure 18. Janet Burroway's diagram of short story as inverted checkmark (Burroway, 2003).

Since memory is imperfect and biased towards remembering how an event ended rather than its duration (Redelmeier et al, 2003; Kahneman et al, 1993), and since people seem to weigh most heavily the peak and end when evaluating an experience (Fredrickson & Kahneman, 1993), the climax and the ending of the story have the largest impact on the reader's evaluation of a story. John Updike said, "The ending is where the reader discovers whether he has been reading the same story the writer thought he was writing."

The beginning and middle, of course, must be good enough that the reader will continue to read to get to the climax and ending.

James Joyce (1944) introduced the epiphany in 1944. As Joyce saw it, an epiphany is when something is seen in a light it has never been seen in before. In the *New Testament*, Epiphany is when the three wise men saw the baby Jesus for the first time. Since Jesus was born

on December 25<sup>th</sup> and the Epiphany is celebrated on January 6<sup>th</sup>, there is a sense of looking back on a major moment and seeing things in a new way. In fiction, an epiphany doesn't have to be a brilliant insight or a sappy Hallmark moment, it can be a realization that nothing is going to change, that things are worse than you thought.

Epiphanies occur so often in stories that readers have begun to expect them. Yogi Berra captured the essence of how some readers feel when he said about a restaurant, "Nobody goes there anymore, it's always too crowded" (2001, p. 108). Current New Yorker stories don't tend to end with insights. Instead they trail off after having given the reader enough to work it out on their own. These stories can be unsatisfying for many readers, and remind me of how some people can feel about abstract art.

Robert Olen Butler (2005) suggests that a story requires another moment as well, the moment when the reader discovers what the main character wants.

What I would suggest is that there are two epiphanies in any good work of fiction. Joyce's is the second, the one often called the climax or crisis of the story. The first epiphany comes very near the beginning, where sensual details accumulate around a moment in which the deepest yearning of the main character shines forth. (Butler, 2005, p.40)

Jesse Lee Kercheval proposes that there can be two separate conflicts in a story: one internal and one external (Kercheval, 1997). At the 2006 Newburyport Literary Festival, Pamela Painter and Nancy Zafris, two short story writers, elaborated on this concept, noting that a literary short story typically consists of two "stories." Pamela Painter divided a story into two parts: an outer story and an inner story. Nancy Zafris divided a story into two parts: the driving story and the "real" story. Though the labels differ, the concept seems to be the same. The "real" story and inner story correspond, as do the outer and driving story. Typically, the inner story is the emotional heart of the story.

Nancy Zafris, fiction editor of *The Kenyon Review*, drew a diagram of a fish to help explain the concepts of inner and outer stories. She has found it to be quite helpful as a tool to help writers see what their stories are lacking. The fish diagram wasn't her original concept. She heard about it from Sharon Dilworth, who got it from "some people at the University of Michigan."

The upper line of the fish corresponds to the outer story. Its shape is like the short-story arc, and points along it correspond to Freytag's chunks. The lower line of the fish corresponds to the inner story. It too follows an arc. A "water" line is drawn in the middle (though this makes no sense for a fish metaphor since fish aren't typically half in the water and half out of the water (perhaps a porpoise would be a better analogy). For

most of the story, the inner story is below the "water" line in that it isn't giving much attention but referred to in allusions and clues. After the climax, near the end of the story, the two lines cross and the inner

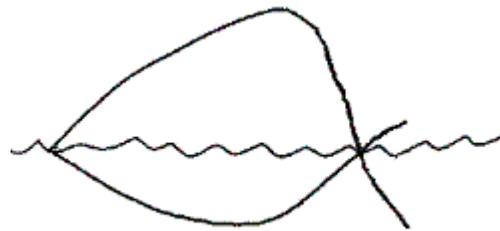


Figure 19. Fish diagram

story takes precedence over the outer story, shown in the diagram as ending above the water line. Sometimes, the story can end just as the two stories cross.

The outer/inner story seems to align with conscious versus unconscious thinking. The outer story drives the story. For example, "Thirty minutes before the kickoff, the TV blew. A thin wisp of smoke floated up from the back of the set and glided past the pictures on the mantel: dead dog, dead wife, estranged son." The outer story would be about the quest to get a new TV, the character driven by the desire to watch football. The inner story would be related to the estranged son or dead wife.

The inner story is told implicitly while the reader is concentrating on the outer story. Small bits of information are given to the reader who, at least at the beginning of the story, will not think them important. The outer story's prominence interferes with the reader's conscious thinking to keep track of the inner story. The adaptive unconscious is faster, able to keep track of more information, and better able to detect patterns than is conscious thought (Wilson, 2002). It can connect the small pieces of information in the story and communicate through emotional reactions.

Connections between the inner and outer stories are throughout the story. The frequency and number of connections increases as the story progresses as shown in the fish diagram with the connections between the inner and outer stories drawn with lines.

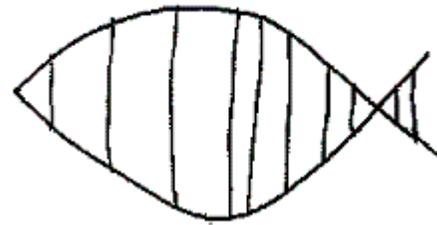


Figure 20. Connections between the two stories increase as the story progresses.

Having the “real” story submerged for a long time allows the reader to get to know the characters

before the emotional moment in the story. Telephone company commercials have had me crying with fifteen seconds as they manipulate my feelings. At the end, I feel resentful, abused. Having the inner story unfold slowly allows the reader to gradually experience the emotions and have the emotional response feel natural.

I hypothesize that a well-written short story conveys emotions according to Lang's multiple system of emotions (Kihlstrom et al., 2000). As the unconscious detects the emotional component of the inner story, the first component of the multiple system, the covert physiological responses, would cause small changes in the reader like microswearing or changes in breathing. The second component, behavioral responses, instead of being the reader's

response, this would be the behavior of the main character in the story (though I have been known to have to get up and walk around at a particularly tense moment in a book). The last component, the verbal/cognitive response, would come near the end of the story, when the inner story is being told explicitly to the reader. This would lead to the ending of a story to feel both surprising and inevitable. I hypothesize that the surprised feeling comes from conscious thinking finally catching onto what the adaptive unconscious was already aware. Something similar happens in decision making where in complex situations, a decision maker's adaptive unconscious may guide behavior before conscious knowledge does (Bechara & Damasio, 1997).

*Show, don't tell* is advice given to beginning writers. Carol Lynn Marrazzo in the essay, "Show and Tell: There's a Reason It's Called Storytelling," looked at where telling can be important in a story. Every example she gives in her essay, excerpts from stories by Lorrie Moore, James Joyce, Flannery O'Connor, and others, contained the word *felt* in it. The writers were telling the readers how the character felt (Marrazzo, 1995). Pamela Painter advised that telling becomes more important as the story develops, especially near the end of the story.

A great ending will feel both surprising and inevitable (Kercheval, 1997) and have emotional impact. The feeling of inevitable may be caused by the illusion of truth, where familiarity breeds credibility (Reisberg, 2006). The ending seems inevitable because information has been planted in the story so that when the reader gets to the ending, the prior connections make the reader feel as there was a basis for that ending. This could also be an effect of priming, where people will respond faster to an item if it was preceded by a similar item. The speed of their response makes them believe the ending to be "inevitable."

Hemingway's iceberg theory relates well to the inner/outer story concept:

If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly

enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. (Hemingway, 1932, p. 192)

Writers take advantage of the schemata that the readers already have to let them fill in information. Hemingway's iceberg equation of one-eighth being above water brought to mind this quote by Sigmund Freud: "The mind is like an iceberg, it floats with one-seventh of its bulk above water."

Cognitive psychologists Ap Dijksterhuis and Loren Nordgren suggest that stereotypes might bias conscious thinking more than unconscious thinking. In a study by Dijksterhuis and Bos, participants were asked to form an impression of a person from a text description. The description began with a stereotype ("you are now going to read information about Mr. Hamoudi, a Moroccan man") and was followed by details, some of which were congruent with the stereotype, others that were incongruent. Half the group was told to think consciously while forming the impression, the other half were distracted by another task before questioning. Conscious thinkers were more influenced by the stereotype, remember fewer details, and remember more of the details that conformed to the stereotype. The unconscious thinkers remembered more of the non-conforming details and a greater number of details in total (Dijksterhuis & Nordgren, 2006).

My first published short story, "Parrot Talk," (which follows) exemplifies the concept of the inner and outer story in a very condensed form. The story is 565 words long, but has distinct inner and outer stories. The outer story is about seeing vivid green birds in Connecticut and the search to find out if they are really parrots. The inner story is about the relationship between a husband and wife. A connection to the inner story isn't made until the last line of the second paragraph.

## Parrot Talk

by Kit Coyne Irwin

There's not much to tell, the squawks made me look up, and in the tree, are these gigantic nests, the size of sofas. An intricate mesh of sticks and whatnot woven around a tree limb. Like the second Little Pig's house -- his tree house; like a wooden cocoon. I jog around the tree, watching, waiting to see the bird that can build this nest. But it's the bird's shadow I see first as it flies over my head. Sizable, but not enormous. Twirled about, I see the bird perched high in the tree. A brilliant green. The size of a starling. A parrot? In Connecticut?

At dinner that night, I tell my husband about the parrot I saw while jogging. His words echo my earlier thoughts exactly, "A parrot? In Connecticut?" It's part of the synchronicity that exists between married people. The same synchronicity that allows me to hear his next words before he says them. "Don't be ridiculous!"

At a party that weekend, my husband tells my story of seeing the parrot. He makes the bird a flock and me a complete idiot.

I don't tell anyone else about the parrot. I change my jogging route. Can't give up jogging -- jogging reduces stress. But I still see the parrots (there's more than one now), flying overhead, perched in trees, eating at feeders. These birds don't chirp, peep, twitter, tweet, trill, warble, nor sing. For them, only loud calls of demand.

On Thursday, I don't drive my husband to the train station, I take him to see the parrots. Beneath the oak tree, under the nests, I park our car and say, "Let them shit on us." Our synchronicity is broken, I don't know what he will say.

In a sarcastic tone, he says, "The birds are pretty. I've seen them. Let's go." Not a novel response, but I surprise myself -- I parrot back his words. "The birds are pretty. I've seen them. Let's go." It annoys him, it would annoy me. Especially as I keep repeating everything he says, and when we get to the cut-that-out's and the I-mean-it's, I think he's going to hit me. I am disappointed when he just gets out of the car and heads towards the next train.

There used to be a time when we said, "I love you," back and forth, back and forth. Whose turn is it now? I run after him, and yell, "Wait up." He repeats, "Wait up."

But I know how to beat him at the parrot game. "I'm sorry. I love you."

Silence. I repeat myself and then say, "God damn it, I said I love you."

He repeats, "God damn it," until we reach the train station. Fine with me. Beside him, I chime in, "God damn it." I'm going to god-damn-it into New York City with him. Perhaps he senses that, because instead of getting on the train, he asks, "What do you want?"

I do not know how to answer that. You can't ask someone to love you, can you?

He says, "Let's find out what kind of goddamn birds those are."

The ornithologist from the local university tells us, they are indeed parrots, escaped from the zoo over fifteen years ago, seven of them, now there's over a thousand, amazing how they have adapted to a hostile environment, how they even flourish.

(Irwin, 1997)

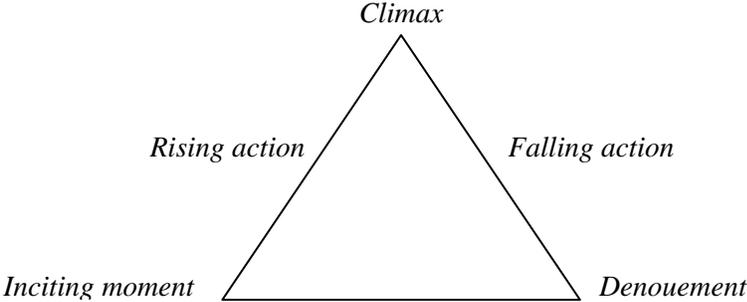
When I wrote “Parrot Talk,” I had never seen the fish diagram. I wrote the story while at the Kenyon Review’s Writers Workshop in Pamela Painter’s short short story class. The night before the last class, worn out by the week’s work, I based the story on an incident where a coworker who went out jogging at lunch and saw a bird she thought was a parrot. The conflict I originally wanted to put in the story was based on a know-it-all coworker who stated that it couldn’t be a parrot and then spewed a lot of parrot facts. When we finally found out that it was really a parrot (I learned about the parrots escaping from the zoo from a waitress in a diner) and told the know-it-all, he again spewed his list of parrot facts without admitting he was ever wrong. However, too much explanation was needed to get him in and there wasn’t enough at stake for the story to work, so I replaced the coworker with a husband and made up the rest. The funny thing is readers have told me that they think the parrot is made up and the husband is real (they thought I was divorced), when it’s the exact opposite.

I wrote this story before I knew about the concepts of inner and outer stories so conscious knowledge of these concepts aren’t necessary to write a publishable literary story, but it does help in analyzing a story that isn’t working. Realizing that the inner and outer stories don’t have to be about the same thing was very freeing for me. Pamela Painter said that she is always on the lookout for a good anecdote that she can use as an outer story and then pairs it with a more meaningful inner story.

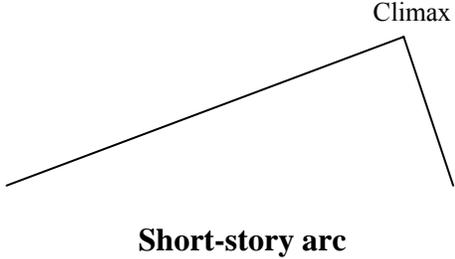
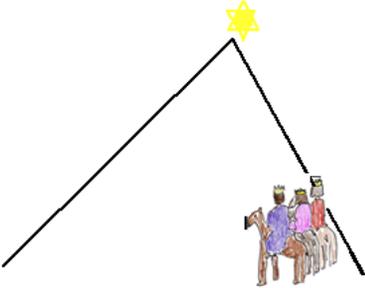
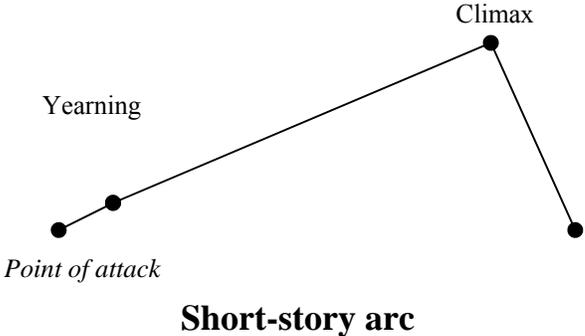
In her role of fiction editor for *The Kenyon Review*, Nancy Zafris reads thousands of stories each year. She noted that many of the stories don’t have separate inner and outer stories. If the inner story is about the death of one’s mother, the outer story is about the death of the mother. Both Nancy Zafris and Pamela Painter recommended that the inner and outer stories be about totally different things. This would enhance the surprise. If you think the story is about

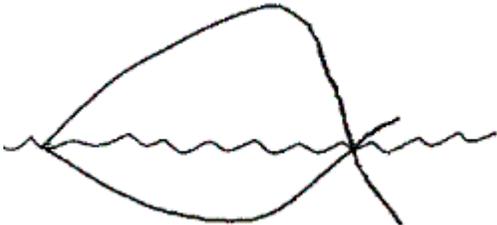
fixing the TV to watch a football game, it would be more surprising to have the “real” story be about coming to terms with the death of his wife. In a short story that became the prologue to Nancy Zafris’s novel, *The Metal Shredders* (2002), the outer story about a grandfather’s funeral would lead the reader to think the story is about death but instead the “real” story is about his wife leaving him. In Nancy Zafris’s story “Ada” (2002), the outer story is about skeet shooting and the inner story is about death of a husband.

### Story Structure Chunk Timeline

10/23/4004 BC <sup>5</sup>	 <p style="text-align: center;">● The Word</p>	God, as told to John, “In the beginning, there was the Word...” ( <i>John 1:1</i> )
~340 BC	 <p style="text-align: center;">● ——— ● ——— ● Beginning Middle End</p>	Aristotle theorized that a tragedy should have a unity of action and divided it into three chunks: a beginning, a middle, and an ending
1863 AD	 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Climax</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Rising action</i>      <i>Falling action</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Inciting moment</i>      <i>Denouement</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Freytag’s Pyramid</b></p>	Freytag divided a drama into five chunks: exposition/inciting moment, rising action, climax or turning point, falling action, and denouement

<sup>5</sup> Date as calculated by James Ussher in 1658 (Simanek, n.d.).

		<p>A derivation of Freytag's pyramid, the short story places the climax nearer the end of the story.</p>
<p>1932 AD</p>		<p>Hemingway's iceberg theory: if the writing is true enough, the writer may omit 7/8<sup>th</sup>'s of what he knows and the reader will feel as strongly if it were there.</p>
<p>1944 AD</p>		<p>Joyce added the concept of epiphany to the short story. Based on the Bible, the epiphany is when the three wise men find the baby Jesus in the manger, 11 days after He was born.</p>
<p>2005 AD</p>		<p>Butler added another point to the short story arc—the point where the main character's yearning is shown. He also differentiates between point of attack and inciting incident.</p>

		<p>In the Fish Diagram, the upper arc of the fish corresponds to the story arc. The lower arc corresponds to the “real story” arc, the emotional meaning of the story.</p>
--	--	--

## ***Nuggets***

Read.

Read books and stories that you would love to have written.

Read lots of other books and stories. Read poetry and philosophy. Read the newspaper.

Read the comics. Read the classics. Read new authors.

Read analytically to discover solutions to your writing problems.

Read analytically to see how a writer achieves an effect that you admire.

When you write, start with the plot and emotional story lines as separate. Discover the connections as you go along.

If what you write surprises you or gives you an epiphany then it will most likely do the same for your reader.

Read your own writing, looking for clues that you’ve already planted. These clues will reveal who your characters are and what will happen next.

If a character is first described with a stereotype, give details that show how the character differs from the stereotype.

## CHAPTER 5

### SELF CONSCIOUS REFLECTION

*"You must learn to distinguish between what is true and what is real."*

*-- Albert Einstein*

Reflection is encouraged in CCT and this is where the conscious mind excels. It has the flexibility to see things from different angles and is a major force in goal achievement. It says, "Ignore the nice weather outside, your paper is due May 17. Put down that phone, you don't need friends until after your paper is done. Eat those cookies. You can eat them and type. No need to eat something nutritious that would require cooking." Maybe my conscious mind isn't the smartest, but if you are reading this, it did accomplish its goal of finishing this paper.

In the Introduction, I declared that my goal was to lead a writing life, not finish this paper. Oops, guess I didn't have enough working memory to keep track of both goals. For two months I have abandoned my daily practice of fiction writing to work on this paper. On the plus side, I am writing, thinking about writing, reading about writing. But since what we read affects how we write, my fiction will sound like a scientific journal article. I will have a hard time naming characters and find myself referring to them as participants.

Looking back at writing the different chapters, I had the hardest time when I was writing about the writing process in chapter three. It wasn't the writing itself or the research, which I loved. It was because I became super sensitive to my own writing process, noticing every time I paused, noting anything that I did that didn't seem to match the process I was recommending. This internal critic seemed to talk in a supercilious manner. *I notice we aren't writing for a fixed length every day. Isn't that what your paper recommends? Why aren't we writing in the morning? Isn't that the best time?* The most annoying thing about it was that it was bringing up

valid points. I shut it up by saying that I was writing, I was making progress, so I must be doing it right.

I did notice weeks that I overworked I had trouble doing much the following week. There seemed to be a limit in how much I could produce that was well written and after that, my writing was sub par. Getting feedback on my work on a regular basis it was easy for me to see how much revision had helped. I was lucky that Carol Smith was an excellent advisor who spoke with respect, enthusiasm, and sensitivity about every draft I gave her, even when recommending major changes. Peter Taylor was an excellent reader who is always able to get to the white hot center of the project. I loved that I could count on him to always tell the truth.

I enjoyed writing the reading sections in chapter four. I became highly critical of what others were saying about my writing instead of being highly critical of my process. I saw that every one has a certain range of writing that they like and I would consider whether I cared if I wrote within that person's range. I was freed from the belief that if my writing didn't please someone, it meant there was something wrong with my writing. I hope this isn't a temporary phenomenon, but if it is, I can reread that chapter or do more research, until I direct some of the criticism outward.

It was easier to see my writing process on this project that it is when I'm writing fiction. I was never upset by feedback. I saw that usually what I'd written was only a piece of what I knew. I enjoyed watching certain sections fill out.

There were other sections that I thought would be important to the paper that turned out not to be. I appreciated that I needed to write them. Sometimes they were more for clarifying my ideas or related to another goal that I have. I was able to cut these sections with joy.

At a Vermont College writing conference, Doug Glover, a Canadian writer, speculated that it might be easier to learn technique by examining respected fiction that you don't like, than from a story/novel that you love. My fiction is more important to me than this paper was (sorry, dear reader). Caring less made it easier for me to see the process, to not get distracted by perfectionism, to not beat myself up for not knowing what to say as I went along. It made revising easy. Perhaps the quality of the writing in this paper is better than my fiction writing (may you lucked out, reader). I hope this revision process has been well absorbed by my unconscious and can be applied to my fiction.

Writing this paper may also improve my teaching. I've taught computer programming for years and have been puzzled by a phenomenon that I've seen. My students will be able to do a certain task but then after I explain it to them in more detail, they get derailed. What they once could easily do, they can no longer do. I suspect the additional knowledge moves the task into the conscious mind where they run out of working memory to process it. .

At one point in the writing of this paper, I grew concerned that teaching creative writing was unethical, that it would only ruin a student's motivation. But as I researched expertise more, I saw that the right kind of feedback is crucial for growth.

Now that the paper is done, it's time to set goals to obtain my writing life.

The first step is to read more fiction. Read fiction that I love so that it will inspire me, inform me, delight me.

The second step is to set a fixed schedule for writing fiction and keep to it. I'll put the stickers on the calendar in recognition of each day's achievement.

The third step is to develop more support for my writing. Find a reader who likes to read what I want to write. Find other writers and write among them.

As I implement these steps, my conscious mind will have to remind me that frustration is part of writing, that you need to struggle past the barren days, the days where you write rubbish, to get to the days when you experience flow.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amabile, T. M. (1985). Motivation and creativity: Effects of motivational orientation on creative writers. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 48, 393-397.
- Amabile, T. M., Hennessey, B. A., & Grossman, B. S. (1986). Social influences on creativity: The effects of contracted-for reward. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 50, 14-23.
- Aristotle (1932). *The Poetics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bargh, J. A., Chen, M., & Burrows, L. (1996). Automaticity of social behavior: Direct effects of trait construct and stereotype activation on action. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 71(2), 230-244.
- Bechara, A., & Damasio, H. (1997). Deciding advantageously before knowing the advantageous strategy. *Science*, 275(5304), 1293.
- Berra, Yogi (2001). *When You Come to a Fork in the Road, Take It! Inspiration and Wisdom from One of Baseball's Greatest Heroes*. New York: Hyperion.
- Blanchette, D. M., Ramocki, S. P., O'del, J. N., & Casey, M. S. (2005). Aerobic exercise and creative potential: Immediate and residual effects. *Creativity Research Journal*, 17(2), 257-264.
- Boice, Robert (1994). *How Writers Journey to Comfort and Fluency: A Psychological Approach*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Butler, Robert O.; edited, with an introduction by Burroway, Janet (2005). *From Where You Dream: The Process of Writing Fiction*. New York: Grove Press.

- Bornstein, R. F., Leone, D. R., & Galley, D. J. (1987). The generalizability of subliminal mere exposure effects: Influence of stimuli perceived without awareness on social behavior. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 53, 1070-1079.
- Bower, G. H., & Forgas, J. P. (2000). Affect, memory, and social cognition. In E. Eich, J. F. Kihlstrom, G. H. Bower, J. P. Forgas & P. M. Niedenthal (Eds.), *Cognition and emotion*. (pp. 87-168) Oxford University Press.
- Boxer, S. (2002). CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK; analysts reading between authors' lines. Retrieved 5/1, 2007, from *New York Times* web site:  
<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?sec=health&res=9F02E2DD1539F930A25750C0A9649C8B63>
- Brewin, C. R., & Lennard, H. (1999). Effects of mode of writing on emotional narratives. *Journal of traumatic stress*, 12(2), 355.
- Burroway, Janet (2003). *Writing Fiction: a guide to narrative craft*. New York: Longman.
- Carlson, Ron (2002). *How Not To Drown – An interview with Ron Carlson by Tom DeMarchi*. Retrieved May 13, 2007, from *Gulf Stream Literary Magazine* web site, published by Creative Writing Program at Florida International University. Web site:  
<http://w3.fiu.edu/gulfstrm/Carlson.htm>
- Cosenza, R. M. (2002). Spirits, brains and minds: The historical evolution of concepts on the mind. Retrieved 5/10, 2007, from [http://www.cerebromente.org.br/n16/history/mind-history\\_i.html](http://www.cerebromente.org.br/n16/history/mind-history_i.html)
- Day, J.C., & Newburger, E.C. (2002). The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings. (Current Population Reports, Special Studies, P23-210). Washington, DC: Commerce Dept., Economics and Statistics Administration, Census

Bureau. Retrieved May 12, 2007, from Census Bureau web site:

<http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p23-210.pdf>

DeMarco-Barrett, Barbara (2004). *Pen on Fire*. New York: Harcourt Books.

Dietrich, A. (2007). Who's afraid of a cognitive neuroscience of creativity? *Methods*, 42(1), 22-27.

Dillard, Annie (1990). *The Writing Life*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Dijksterhuis, A., & Nordgren, L. F. (2006). A theory of unconscious thought. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 1, 95-109.

Dijksterhuis, A., & van Olden, Z. (2006). On the benefits of thinking unconsciously:

Unconscious thought can increase post-choice satisfaction. *Journal of experimental social psychology*, 42(5), 627-631.

Dufresne, John (2003). *The Lie That Tells the Truth: a guide to writing fiction*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Durso, F. T., Rea, C. B., & Dayton, T. (1994). Graph-theoretic confirmation of restructuring during insight. *Psychological Science*, 5, 94-98.

Edwards, J. (2001). Learning and thinking in the workplace. In A. L. Costa (Ed.), *Developing minds: A resource book for teaching thinking* (3rd ed., pp. 25). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Eich, E., & Schooler, J. W. (2000). Cognition/emotion interactions. In E. Eich, J. F. Kihlstrom, G. H. Bower, J. P. Forgas & P. M. Niedenthal (Eds.), *Cognition and emotion*. (pp. 3-29)Oxford University Press.

Ericsson, K. A., & Charness, N. (1994). Expert performance. *American Psychologist*, 49, 725.

- Ericsson, K. A., Krampe, R. T., & Tesch-Römer, C. (1993). The role of deliberate practice in the acquisition of expert performance. *Psychological review*, *100*, 363-406.
- Etkin, A., Klemenhagen, K. C., Dudman, J. T., Rogan, M. T., Hen, R., Kandel, E. R., et al. (2004). Individual differences in trait anxiety predict the response of the basolateral amygdala to unconsciously processed fearful faces. *Neuron*, *44*, 1043-1055.
- Findlen, Paula (2001). A History of the Brain. Retrieved May 15, 2007, from Stanford University web site:  
<http://www.stanford.edu/class/history13/earlysciencelab/body/brainpages/brain.html>
- Finger, Stanley (2000). *Minds Behind the Brain*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Flaherty, A. W. (2004). *The midnight disease: The drive to write, writer's block, and the creative brain* (pp. 5-6). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Forbes (2007). The World's Billionaires. Retrieved May 15, 2007, from Forbes web site:  
[http://www.forbes.com/lists/2007/10/07billionaires\\_The-Worlds-Billionaires\\_Rank\\_print.html](http://www.forbes.com/lists/2007/10/07billionaires_The-Worlds-Billionaires_Rank_print.html)
- Fredrickson, B. L., & Kahneman, D. (1993). Duration neglect in retrospective evaluations of affective episodes. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, *65*, 1, p. 45-55.
- Freud, Sigmund (1965). *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. New York: Norton.
- Freytag, Gustav (1968). *Technique of the drama; an exposition of dramatic composition and art*. New York: B. Blom.
- Gardner, John (1991). *The Art of Fiction*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Gardner, John (1999). *On Becoming a Novelist*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Gladwell, Malcolm (2005). *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*. New York: Little, Brown and Co.

- Hemingway, Ernest (1932). *Death in the Afternoon*. New York: Scribners.
- Hjortshoj, Keith .(2001). *Understanding Writing Blocks*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Iser, Wolfgang (1974). *The Act of Reading: a Theory of Aesthetic Response*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Iyengar, Sheena; Lepper, Mark R. (2000). When Choice is Demotivating: Can One Desire Too Much of a Good Thing? *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*; 79, 6, p995-1006.
- James, Joyce (1944). *Stephen Hero*. New York: New Directions Press.
- Kahneman, D. (2003). A perspective on judgment and choice. *American Psychologist*, 58, 697-720.
- Kahneman, Daniel; Fredrickson, Barbara L.; Schreiber, Charles A.; Redelmeier, Donald A. (1993). When More Pain Is Preferred to Less: Adding a Better End. *Psychological Science*; 4, 6, p 401-405.
- Kaufman, J. C. (2002). Dissecting the golden goose: Components of studying creative writers. *Creativity Research Journal*, 14(1), 27-40.
- Kemp, Jeremy (2007). Standard Deviation Diagram, based on an original graph by Jeremy Kemp, in 2007-02-09. Retrieved May 15, 2007, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Standard\\_deviation\\_diagram.svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Standard_deviation_diagram.svg)
- Kercheval, J. L. (1997). *Building Fiction*. Cincinnati, OH: Story Press.
- Kihlstrom, J. F., Mulvaney, S., Tobias, B. A., & Tobis, I. P. (2000). The emotional unconscious. In E. Eich, J. F. Kihlstrom, G. H. Bower, J. P. Forgas & P. M. Niedenthal (Eds.), *Cognition and emotion*. (pp. 30-86)Oxford University Press.
- Klein, Gary (2003). *Intuition at Work*. New York: Currency/Doubleday.

- Kohányi, A., & Ie. (2005). Four factors that may predict the emergence of creative writing: A proposed model. *Creativity Research Journal*, 17(2/3), 195-205.
- Mar, R. A., Oatley, K., Hirsh, J., de la Paz, J., & Peterson, J. B. (2006). Bookworms versus nerds: Exposure to fiction versus non-fiction, divergent associations with social ability, and the simulation of fictional social worlds. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 40(5), 694-712.
- Marrazzo, C. (1995). Show and tell: There's a reason it's called storytelling. In P. Painter, & A. Bernays (Eds.), *What if?* (pp. 164-168). New York: Harper Collins.
- Matlin, Margaret W. (2005). *Cognition*. New York: J. Wiley & Sons.
- Meyers-Levy, J. (2007). U of M researchers find ceiling height can affect how a person thinks, feels, and acts. Retrieved May 1, 2007, from University of Minnesota web site:  
<http://www1.umn.edu/urelate/national/stories/ceilings.php>
- Miall, D. S., & Kuiken, D. (1999). What is literariness? three components of literary reading. *Discourse Processes*, 28(2), 121.
- Nisbett, R. E., & Wilson, T. D. (1977). Telling more than we can know: Verbal reports on mental processes. *Psychological review*, 84, 231-259.
- Oatley, K. (1999). Why fiction may be twice as true as fact: Fiction as cognitive and emotional simulation. *Review of General Psychology*, 3, 101-117.
- Piirto, Jane (2003). *Understanding Creativity*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.
- Redelmeier, Donald A; Katz, Joel; Kahneman, Daniel (2003). Memories of colonoscopy: a randomized trial. *Pain* (Elsevier Science Publishers B.V.), 104, 1/2, p187-195.
- Reisberg, Daniel (2006). *Cognition*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Robinson, Roxana (1992). *A Glimpse of Scarlet, and Other Stories*. New York: Perennial.

- Saroyan, William; edited by Justice, William E. (2005). A Writer's Declaration. *Essential Saroyan*. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books. 178-188.
- Schwartz, Barry (2004). *The Paradox of Choice: Why Less Is More*. New York: ECCO.
- See, Carolyn (2002). *Making a Literary Life*. New York: Random House.
- Shekerjian, Denise G. (1991). *Uncommon Genius*. New York: Penguin.
- Simanek, Donald (n.d.). *Bishop Ussher Dates The World: 4004 BC*. Retrieved February 23, 2007, from Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania web site:  
<http://www.lhup.edu/~dsimanek/usshe.htm>
- Simons, D. J., & Chabris, C. F. (1999). Gorillas in our midst: Sustained inattentive blindness for dynamic events. *Perception*, 28, 1059-1074.
- TIME (2003). *The Shy Sorceress* / *TIME*. Retrieved May 15, 2007, from *TIME* web site:  
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1101030623-458733,00.html>
- Smith, A. (2001). *Katherine Mansfield: A Literary Life*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Trillin, Calvin (1996). *The Columbia World of Quotations*. New York: Columbia University Press. Retrieved May 18, 2007, from web site: <http://www.bartleby.com/66/27/61527.html>
- Wansink, Brian (2006). *Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More Than We Think*. New York: Bantam Books
- Welty, Eudora (1909). *The Eye of the Story*.
- Wilson, Timothy D. (2002). *Strangers to Ourselves: Discovering the Adaptive Unconscious*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Woolf, Virginia (1948). The Leaning Tower. *The Moment, and Other Essays*. New York: Harcourt, Brace. 128-154.

Zafris, Nancy (2002). Ada. *The Journal*, 26, 2. Retrieved May 15, 2007, from the Ohio State

University web site:

[http://english.osu.edu/research/journals/thejournal/pastIssues/i26\\_2/ada.cfm](http://english.osu.edu/research/journals/thejournal/pastIssues/i26_2/ada.cfm)

Zafris, Nancy (2002). *The Metal Shredders*. New York: BlueHen Books.