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THE ANNIE PREY JORGENSEN PAPERS: NINETEENTH-CENTURY WRITING INSTRUCTION AND WOMEN'S RHETORIC ON THE PLAINS

by

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A DISSERTATION

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THE ANNIE PREY JORGENSEN PAPERS:

NINETEENTH-CENTURY WRITING INSTRUCTION

AND WOMEN'S RHETORIC ON THE PLAINS

Renée McGill, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2010

Advisers: Deborah Minter and Joy Ritchie

This dissertation examines the college and professional writing of Annie Prey Jorgensen, who attended the University of Nebraska during the 1890s as both an undergraduate and graduate student. Annie's collection of papers, housed in Archives and Special Collections at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, offers composition and rhetoric significant insights about women college students' rhetorical practices at the end of the nineteenth century. Specifically, Annie uses personal experience and narrative techniques to deploy a feminist rhetorical strategy that allows her to inscribe gendered experience into academic writing. Annie's collection offers a cross-section of writing from three sites of inquiry—the papers she wrote as an undergraduate student, the master's thesis she wrote as a graduate student, and a published essay she wrote as a teacher at Thrall Academy in South Dakota. Close readings and critical analysis of Annie's papers at these sites of inquiry allow me to consider the rhetorical strategies that Annie employed at diverse moments during her student life and teaching career. I locate my research and methodology in archival documents, including campus newspapers, yearbooks, curriculum reports, university bulletins, and Annie's writing to draw conclusions about women students'

understandings of their own identity and the availability of occasions for writing about gendered experiences within the academic curriculum. I situate Annie's papers within broad patterns of nineteenth-century writing instruction and the more specific context of the University of Nebraska's English curriculum during the 1890s. This study also merges nineteenth-century writing pedagogy with women's rhetorical theory. The dissertation thereby participates in a feminist project of recovery which underscores the connection between writing instruction that theorizes gendered experience and women students' development of rhetorical agency.

To my parents, for your unwavering support

To my husband, Patrick, for your encouragement, patience, and love

To my daughters, Emma, Abby, Kate, and Bridget, for reminding me daily about what is most important in life and for loving books even more than your mom and dad

And to my teachers, Debbie Minter and Joy Ritchie, for the guidance which helped sustain this work over the course of many years

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One
Exploring Issues of Relevance and Experience……..1-28

Chapter Two
Setting the Scene: Nineteenth-Century Writing Instruction…….29-63
at the University of Nebraska

Chapter Three
Annie Prey's Student Writing: Gendered Experience and Academic Writing……....64-93

Chapter Four
Toward a Feminist Rhetorical Strategy: Exploring "Certain Differences"……94-121

Chapter Five
Literacy Practices on the Plains……122-145

Notes and Works Cited……..146-151

CHAPTER ONE

Exploring Issues of Relevance and Experience

"The writer is a master weaver, rewriting before writing by making connections between pieces of information, observations, ideas, theories, memories, fears, hopes that when connected create a new meaning."

--Donald Murray, *The Craft of Revision*

Early Connections

In 1989, I was a junior in college, working my way through the required courses and focus areas for my English major. At the end of that academic year, I registered for an optional independent study in order to write a senior thesis that would be the culminating project of my English studies. Before leaving campus for the summer, I remember meeting with my British Literature instructor, Professor Evans, to enlist him as my thesis advisor and to begin the work of putting together a reading list for the independent study. In our meeting, I expressed an interest in reading more works by women, as they were far and few between on the various syllabi for courses I had already taken.

At this early stage in academe, my interest in women writers stemmed mainly from a recognition that women seemed under-represented in the curriculum. I was not aware, for example, of Mary Belenky and her colleagues' work in psychology and education, published just a few years earlier, which sought to give voice to the experiences of women in order to account for differences between women's and men's ways of learning, knowing, and valuing. Nor did I have an understanding of the recovery efforts going on in the emerging field of women's rhetoric during the 1980s, where scholars sought not only to make available and accessible women's writing but also to

recognize and theorize the strategies women used as active participants in rhetorical history. I had, however, read and enjoyed novels by George Eliot and Virginia Woolf in my Victorian Literature and Modern British Literature courses; Eliot and Woolf, therefore, became the focus for my independent study. My interest in women's voices began with a literary focus, yet my senior thesis would ultimately explore the connections between Woolf and Eliot's theoretical principles of writing as articulated in their essays and then enacted in their fiction.

In the summer of 2001, I began my PhD program at the University of Nebraska after eight years of teaching high school English. During that year Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald published *Available Means*: *An Anthology of Women's Rhetoric(s)*. In the introduction to *Available Means*, Ritchie and Ronald describe teaching the history of rhetoric in the 1980s and their experience of anticipating a question from students that was similar to the one I had asked of my British Literature professor during the 80s: "'Where are the women?'" (xv). In the spring of 2002, pregnant with my third daughter, I enrolled in Dr. Ritchie's graduate course, "Rhetoric of Women Writers." I remember Dr. Ritchie recalling, on the first day of class, her past students' inquiry about the absence of women in rhetorical history, and I connected her prior students' yearning to hear the voices of women rhetors to my own desire to focus on women writers during my undergraduate studies in the 80s. In many ways, the impetus for my current work on the papers of Annie Prey Jorgensen, a student at the University of Nebraska during the late nineteenth century, begins with some basic questions which, though more narrow in focus, echo those of Ritchie's students and my own from two decades ago. How did

nineteenth-century women experience writing instruction? What strategies did they employ? How did they use writing both personally and publicly? What is the evidence? Where are their voices to be found?

The research and writing of two composition and rhetoric scholars in particular have helped me create a framework for the above questions about women students and nineteenth-century writing instruction. In her essay, "The Platteville Papers: Inscribing Frontier Ideology and Culture in a Nineteenth-Century Writing Assignment," Kathryn Fitzgerald examines forty-four papers written in 1898 by seniors at Platteville Normal School in southwestern Wisconsin to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Wisconsin's statehood. One of Fitzgerald's most striking findings is that although "twenty-five of the forty-four writers are women, not one paper focuses on women's lives" (293). She describes an "omission of women's roles and voices in these papers," concluding that the papers reveal "little evidence of women's presence in the community" (295-6). Because of this omission, Fitzgerald calls for more research that helps make clear women students' understandings of their own identity, the availability of occasions for inscribing female experience, and the role genre and school assignments play in constraining, even silencing, women's personal voices (296).

In *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875-1925*, John Brereton underscores the omission that Fitzgerald recognizes when he writes that "we still do not know enough about the connections between college course work and the public and private examples of female rhetoric" (20). Based on materials collected for his documentary history of composition studies, Brereton asserts that between 1875-1925

"there were hundreds of women teaching composition and thousands of women students learning to write in college. But not surprisingly, the most widely circulated documents of the time . . . do not reveal very many distinct signs of a specifically feminist rhetoric, or even a feminist slant on writing" (20). Brereton's statement suggests that the influx of women students enrolling at colleges and universities throughout the country at the turn of the century would inevitably have had an impact on writing instruction and the work that students produced during their college instruction. Yet he acknowledges the lack of evidence among "widely circulated documents" for establishing a tangible connection between the presence of college women students and the development of a "feminist rhetoric" or "feminist slant on writing." Fitzgerald calls for more research that sheds light on the connections between writing instruction and women students' understandings of their identity, and Brereton recognizes the need for research into different kinds of documents that could help us understand the influence that college women may have had on writing instruction. Where these scholars call for more and different research, I see an opening and an opportunity for Annie's collection of papers to offer the field of composition and rhetoric significant insights about women college students' rhetorical practices at the turn of the century.

To build a case for the relevance of Annie's writing for composition and rhetoric studies, I examine the need for our discipline to study documents that are *less* "widely circulated" in order to gain a more complete, and undoubtedly more complex, understanding of the connections between writing instruction and female identity. Next, I consider reasons for researching the writing of women who were not widely published

but rather who worked more locally to affect change. Finally, I take into account how we might view writing from experience as a feminist rhetorical practice, one which—in Annie's case—helped her achieve what Carol Mattingly calls "rhetorical acumen" both at college and during her years as a teacher in South Dakota. Before building a case for the relevance of Annie's work, however, I think it is important at this point to offer a brief biographical sketch of Annie's life and to consider the kinds of writing experiences she encountered in college and as an educator.

Researching the Archive: From the University of Nebraska to Thrall Academy

Annie Prey Jorgensen was born Anne Elizabeth Prey in Roca, Nebraska in 1873. Annie began college at the University of Nebraska in 1892 and earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1896.[1] During these years many pieces of Annie's work, including short stories, poetry, and essays, were published in campus newspapers and journals. Annie continued her studies at Nebraska as a graduate student and received her Master of Arts in English in 1898.[2] From 1899-1903 she served as the head of the English Department at York College where she met Theodore Jorgensen. Annie and Theodore married in 1902 in Lincoln. They had five children (the third and fourth were twins) between the years 1905 and 1913. In addition to growing a family, the Jorgensens moved around considerably during these years, as biographical notes indicate that the children were born in Connecticut, Nebraska, Kansas, and Iowa. In 1915 Annie and Theodore moved their family to Sorum, South Dakota where they took charge of a boarding school named Thrall Academy.

The Congregational Society had established Thrall Academy at a temporary site just two years before the Jorgensens arrived in South Dakota. In September of 1915, the school opened at its new location in Sorum with the Jorgensens. Theodore Jorgensen had been educated at Columbia University and attended a theological seminary in New York; he was to be both principal for the school and pastor of the Congregational church. One source describes him as the only minister of any denomination in this area, which was at least eighty-five miles from the nearest railroad. At a committee meeting during the summer of 1916, it was voted that the academy pay for help in the Jorgensen home so that Annie Jorgensen could teach in the school. And during the 1919 school year, Annie also became manager and editor of the *Sorum Journal*. Thrall Academy had a dormitory for boarders, and records indicate that the school graduated nine seniors in the spring of 1917.

Although the school served an important need for educating young people in this area, the Board of Trustees had a tough time finding the money to keep it running. The school operated out of donations from area churches and tuition, which was $2.50 a week for boarding students. At one point a Dr. Warner was given the task of writing articles about the academy for the Congregationalist papers, which may have been one means of soliciting money to keep the school open. By August of 1921, the Board of Trustees was no longer able to guarantee financial support for the school and it closed. On September 10, 1921, six years after the Jorgensens first moved to Sorum, Thrall Academy was sold at an auction.[3] The Jorgensens left Sorum in 1923 and then returned again in 1928 after

Sorum High School was established. Annie taught at the high school from that time until her death in 1937.

The papers collected in UNL's archive contain a range of Annie's writing from different stages of her life. The forty-seven folders consist of dozens of student papers written for several different college courses; student notebooks; articles, clippings, and manuscripts of stories published in campus newspapers and journals as well as at least two national publications; an essay published in a missionary journal during the early years of her teaching in South Dakota; a collection of poetry; and correspondence from family and acquaintances. Archives and Special Collections at UNL also has a copy of Annie's master's thesis, titled "Certain Differences as to Methods and Results Where Men and Women Writers Have Characterized Women" (1902). Annie's collection offers a cross section of writing from three sites of inquiry that are important to my study of her work—her undergraduate student writing for college courses, her graduate writing for the master's thesis, and her professional writing while teaching at Thrall Academy. Dividing Annie's work into these categories allows me to consider the kinds of rhetorical strategies she employed at different moments during her student life and professional career. These sites of inquiry also help me to draw some conclusions about the ways Annie employs narrative writing and personal experience in order to negotiate various roles (such as student, writer, teacher, and mother) and address diverse audiences (including teachers, peers, publications, and churches).

Methodology and Cultural Representations: Documents of a Different Kind

When I first began to research Annie's collection for an English Studies graduate course, my interest was piqued because her folders contained so many examples of her student writing. Here seemed to be documents of a different kind, written from a different perspective. To me, they offered alternative evidence from which to draw conclusions about writing instruction—evidence that differed from the more "widely circulated documents" that Brereton alludes to in his documentary history and that broad histories of rhetoric and writing instruction, such as those of James Berlin and Robert Connors, rely on. Berlin published two histories of writing instruction in the 1980s. In the first book, *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges*, Berlin develops his theory of the "noetic fields" from which competing versions of nineteenth-century rhetoric evolved. In brief, Berlin defines a noetic field as "a closed system defining what can, and cannot, be known; the nature of the knower; the nature of the relationship between the knower, the known, and the audience; and the nature of language" (2). In other words, every rhetoric is based on certain assumptions about reality, the writer (or speaker), the audience, and language. Berlin outlines three distinct rhetorical systems that he sees emerging during the nineteenth century: classical rhetoric, psychological-epistemological rhetoric (eventually evolving into what many scholars today call current-traditional rhetoric), and romantic rhetoric (3-12). Berlin draws conclusions based on his research into and examination of the major treatises on rhetoric by eighteenth and nineteenth-century scholars and rhetoricians as well as the many textbooks that were published between 1870 and the end of the century (58). Berlin's

descriptions and categories have been influential in shaping subsequent historical accounts of writing instruction.

Written over a decade after Berlin published his histories, Robert Connors' *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy* offers a reading of nineteenth-century rhetoric that both builds on and deviates from Berlin's account. Connors designates the nineteenth century as a critical period in the history of *composition-based*, rather than *speech-based*, rhetoric. He uses the term "composition-rhetoric" to describe the "form of rhetorical theory and practice devoted to written discourse" and stresses that "composition-rhetoric after 1800 was the first rhetoric to place writing centrally in rhetorical work" (6). He examines closely what he calls the "shaping tools" (69) of writing instruction from which composition-rhetoric emerged—textbooks such as readers, handbooks, drill books, and exercise books. He also considers the influence of discourse taxonomies on writing, analyzing modes of discourse, invention, and writing assignments. Furthermore, like Brereton, Connors acknowledges the impact that greater numbers of women students and instructors had on rhetoric during this century. He traces how women's entry into educational settings changed the agonistic character of rhetoric (37-54). When I try to situate Annie's papers within the frameworks outlined by these and other scholars of nineteenth-century writing instruction, I find that her work raises two key questions. Might her work add a new layer to our understanding of nineteenth-century women's experience of and impact on writing instruction? And, what can we further learn about women and writing during the

nineteenth century when we examine *the product* of those shaping tools that scholars such as Berlin, Brereton, and Connors describe—the student writing itself?

Over the past two decades, several composition and rhetoric scholars have engaged in the process of recovering and examining different kinds of documents in order to add layers of complexity to the field's broad portraits of rhetorical history. As a discipline, composition and rhetoric benefits from these projects because they help make our understanding of both the history of writing instruction and women's rhetorical practices more intricate, nuanced, and multi-faceted. For example, in her essay "Controlling Voices: The Legacy of English A at Radcliffe College 1883-1917," JoAnn Campbell examines late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century student themes from Radcliffe College in order to look at the effect of teacher comments and response on female students. She focuses on the essays of three women in particular and describes how their themes and drafts expressed a desire for personal connections to subject matter. However, she finds that most instructional comments were limited to grammar and mechanics, reflecting a more distanced pedagogy which neither affirmed nor valued the women's ideas and experiences (479). After examining what she calls a lack of intimacy during Radcliffe's early years, Campbell then turns to current pedagogical practices to questions how instructors' stances toward or away from intimacy affect students. Campbell follows a similar research pattern in "'A Real Vexation': Student Writing in Mount Holyoke's Culture of Service. 1837-1865." Based on her "examination of hundreds of themes from Mount Holyoke, Vassar, Smith, Wellesley, Radcliffe, Harvard, and Amherst" (768), Campbell concludes that "the first generation of women to attend

US colleges negotiated two worlds with competing demands: a social world that expected women to be of service to family and community, and an academic world that valued individual intellectual performance over all else" (768). When Campbell looks specifically to the themes written by students at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary between 1837 and 1920, she finds that Mount Holyoke's curriculum was "designed to moderate these two extremes" (768). Throughout this essay, Campbell develops important insights about student authority, the role of invention in female students' writing processes, the construction of the reader during the writing process, and the gendering of rhetoric in the public sphere. She then connects Mount Holyoke students' desire that academic work be linked to a purpose with service learning programs that link voluntary community service with academic study (785-6). Through her focus on college women's student writing, Campbell locates her research in the kinds of documents that help us ask questions and draw conclusions about female students' understandings of their own identity and the rhetorical practices they enacted as college students.

In addition to Campbell, scholars such as Katherine Adams, Susan Kates, David Gold, Nan Johnson, and Jacqueline Jones Royster have researched, recovered and examined documents that make more complex our understanding of local writing and rhetorical training and that establish important connections between rhetorical instruction and cultural expectations. Adams, Kates, and Gold take an approach similar to Campbell's in that they look to colleges and academic institutions for evidence of how women used their college experience to collaborate, establish writing groups, create connections, and find a community of support. Adams considers the variety of training

and support groups that colleges provided at the turn of the century for women interested in journalism or a career as a writer. Kates considers the pedagogy of three educators who taught at institutions serving groups of students typically excluded from higher education because of their gender, race, and class: white women, African Americans, and working class men and women. She examines closely the texts, books, and journal articles that these instructors authored as well as the curriculum they implemented. In addition, Kates consults "a wide variety of archival materials that include student papers, college mission statements, correspondence from students and teachers, and newspaper articles about these educators and their respective institution" (xii) in order to draw conclusions about the "activist rhetoric instruction" (1-2) she sees emerging through these various sites of inquiry. And Gold looks to a specific institution, Texas Women's University, a public, vocational women's college that began through the political efforts of Texas clubwomen (266), to consider how the students' immersion into literary culture and rhetorical training influenced their academic achievement and expanded their life opportunities (277-9).

While Adams, Kates, and Gold examine a variety of documents including composition and grammar texts, rhetorical treatises, journal articles, student writing, and student publications, Nan Johnson looks to other types of documents for evidence of how women attained writing and rhetorical instruction outside of more traditional academic institutions. In *Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life, 1886-1910*, Johnson asserts that while it is important to search for women missing from the "map of rhetorical history," it is equally important to figure out "what cultural circumstances would have

given license for the blatant erasure of women's rhetorical lives" (10). To understand the erasure of women's rhetorical lives, Johnson undertakes an examination of conduct manuals, elocution manuals, self-improvement literature, encyclopedias, and rhetoric handbooks—the popular parlor rhetorics that spawned after the Civil War and comprised the home study, or self-improvement, curriculum of postbellum America (10-11). She finds that parlor rhetorics construct a version of "true womanhood that equated silence with feminine virtue and enthusiastic vocality in women as true womanhood's opposite" (48). Because this representation of womanhood is so prevalent in the rhetorics Johnson examined, she concludes that the "wise and thoughtful woman" as opposed to the "loud and talkative woman" achieved the power of an ideological trope (48-9), one that characterized women's role as the "moral orator" behind the "public orator" reserved for men (75). This representation gave politically active female orators such as Willard, Stanton, Anthony, and Livermore a culturally acceptable way to represent themselves as having first a "healthy moral influence over domestic life" (118) and then a public life that was an extension of that domestic life. Johnson suggests that "capitalizing on rather than resisting the cultural norms about women's roles" helped these women create "a subtle refutation to the cultural arguments that public rhetorical activity by women contradicted their natures as wives and mothers" (144). Johnson finds this rhetorical tactic problematic, however, because these women were "venerated in the public mind" not because they were great *orators* but because they were represented as great *women* (114). Ultimately, Johnson concludes that "the idea that women co-opted the podium as feminine territory . . . undermines rather than ensures the inclusion of women in the

history of American public speaking" (148). In other words, this domesticated image of the female orator was effective for nineteenth-century audiences with "deeply felt, cultural reservations about women's access to public rhetorical space and power" (145). However, constructions of female orators as maids and mothers would not have staying power in the twentieth century with an emerging canon that sought to preserve and inscribe the image of the orator as a "statesman" and limit rhetorical space to governmental chambers, courts, and political platforms (152-170).

Jacqueline Jones Royster's research on African American women offers a contrasting perspective to Nan Johnson's view that nineteenth-century women's strategies for establishing rhetorical authority eventually limited their effectiveness over time. Through her study of African American women's acquisition of literacy and use of the essay as a rhetorical tool and forum for social action, Royster argues that both eighteenth and nineteenth-century African American women created long-lasting legacies for twentieth-century women, such as Alice Walker, to draw from. In *Traces of A Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women*, Royster begins with Walker's essay writing (rather than her fiction writing) and suggests that the essay is a "distinctive expressive form" (22) reflecting a rich heritage of women who were able to "assume positions in their texts as interpreters and theorizers of experience, not solely as people who render experience for aesthetic purposes in multivocal ways" (22). Royster develops a theory of literacy as sociopolitical action and uses the term rhetorical competence to describe how African American women were able to acquire and use written, as well as spoken, language for persuasive purposes and to prompt social action.

Royster researches available evidence in the historical record from as early as 1619 to establish a critical space where scholarship and imagination meet (93). In this space Royster describes the foundation for nineteenth and twentieth-century African American women's authority. She demonstrates how ancestral connections and ancestral voices from pre-colonial times and tribal experiences influenced the rhetorical lives of later African women once they were captured and brought to North America. She analyzes how nineteenth-century African American women in particular, such as Maria Stewart, "came to voice" through essay writing in order to participate in public discourse (166). During the 1830s, Stewart was able to create an ethos—"a dynamic speaking and writing self" (168)—at a time when women, and African American women even more so, were denied access to politics and public discourse. Stewart claimed an authority based on the urgency of the situation created by slavery and on following God's desire for her life (168-9). Whereas Johnson considers why and how white nineteenth-century women rhetors were excluded from the history of American public speakers during much of the twentieth century, Royster makes the point that despite the erasure of African women and African American women from public discourse, traces of women's authority have managed to create lasting impressions and legacies for future generations.

The research methodology of Campbell, Adams, Kates, and Gold has greatly influenced my thinking about Annie's papers. These scholars have helped me see the potential that archives hold as a site of inquiry where researchers may examine lesser known documents in order to gather information and draw conclusions about the experiences of individuals and groups of people under-represented in broader histories of

composition and rhetoric and writing instruction. Likewise, the work of both Johnson and Royster reinforces the idea that Ritchie and Ronald articulate in their introduction to *Available Means: An Anthology of Women's Rhetoric(s)*—the act of invention begins in a different place for women because they could not take speaking or writing for granted, as male rhetors of the past could (xvii). Women first needed to find a way "to speak in the context of being silenced and rendered invisible as persons" (xvii). Johnson's depiction of the way white women rhetors such as Willard, Stanton, and Anthony capitalized on cultural representations of women as noble maids and wise mothers in order to gain access to public podiums reflects what Ritchie and Ronald describe as the feminist rhetorical practice of "accommodation and subversion" (xxiv)—a strategy whereby women accommodate prevailing gender stereotypes in an effort to subvert restrictive gender roles and the limitations that accompanied them. Finally, important for my understanding of African American women's literacy is Royster's view of imagination as a "critical skill" (83) that offers pathways to understanding the lives, experiences, and presence of women typically erased from the historical record.

Like the student writing that Campbell, Adams, Kates, and Gold analyze, Annie's papers offer us a glimpse into the experience of women students at an important moment in composition and rhetoric history when women were gaining access to higher education in greater numbers; however, Annie's archive is unique in that her papers offer evidence of one woman's writing for different courses and diverse audiences over a number of years and even decades, as an undergraduate student, graduate student, and professional educator. Because of this diversity, I am able to consider the kinds of rhetorical

strategies that Annie employs as a woman, college student, and teacher as she accommodates and subverts gender roles and stereotypes. Like Johnson, I am interested in understanding how women capitalized on cultural representations to get work done and to accomplish goals that were important to them. Similar to Royster, at times I employ imagination as a critical skill to help fill in some of the gaps in the archival records, to do a kind of reconstructive work with her papers. Annie's folders fill just one box in the University of Nebraska's archives, yet they contain some important and unique papers that have the potential to help us think about writing instruction and women's rhetoric in new ways. Overall, I believe Annie's work provides valuable evidence from which to draw conclusions about how women negotiated their personal worlds with their academic life. In Annie's case, the persuasive writing she did *after* college is a reflection of the strategies she used *during* college to integrate her lived and personal experience with her academic writing.

A Case for the Ordinary: "The Inner Circle" of Family and Teaching

> *Dear Miss Pray:*
>
> *If I remember rightly you used to write some very clever children's stories. Perhaps after my day you wrote stories of other kinds, too, but I do not know as to that. In my connection with this magazine it has occurred to me that perhaps the publishers might be able to use some of your work in that line. They need some good children's stories, and of course I should be glad to give the University girls any advantage I may be able. Please send some of your work, if you should care to have us use it, and if we can make any use of it we will make you an offer for such of it as might be needed.* *Very sincerely,*
>
> *Willa Cather*

As the above letter from July of 1896 indicates, Annie Prey and Willa Cather were contemporaries at the University of Nebraska during the mid 1890s. Cather sent the request for Annie to send her some children's stories while working with the *Home*

Monthly Magazine in Pittsburgh. Cather's readiness to lend support to "the University girls" suggests that Cather was familiar with Annie's work and that an active literary network existed among students and alumni during Annie's college years. Upon leaving the university, Annie became a teacher rather than a journalist or writer. Clearly her chosen career path would take her down a less public road than that of Cather or other women who were entering careers in journalism, publishing, and writing during the early years of the twentieth century in far greater numbers than ever before (Adams 26-7). Yet Annie's work is remarkable for this very reason. Her writing encourages us to consider the role of literacy in the lives of women whose influence was local and limited, but whose rhetorical lives nonetheless reflect the active use of writing to fulfill private and public goals.

Annie's husband, Theodore, describes well the sphere of influence within which Annie worked. Not long after her death in 1937, Theodore wrote this description of Annie in a letter to their oldest son: "I need not spend time in writing you about what a wonderful woman your mother was. You are old enough now to appreciate her sterling worth. And you know how much she was like Browning's 'My Star'. She sparkled to us in the inner circle at home and not to the strange world." While the "inner circles" of the home and the school have historically been women's primary sphere of influence, it is also the location least documented by historians. There is much to be gained, however, by paying attention to the writing lives of virtually unknown women who nevertheless used writing in purposeful ways throughout their lives. In *The Extraordinary Work of Ordinary Writing: Annie Ray's Diary*, Jane Sinor encourages scholars to read "ordinary"

writing differently than one would read literary texts, to "read all writing for what it is—a collection of decisions, a text that reveals the writer's negotiation between making and unmaking" (209). It is this idea of trying to understand writing as a collection of decisions that individuals make within diverse contexts and rhetorical situations that interests me. Professional writers, diary writers, and student writers all in some ways experience a process of self-representation that involves negotiating the boundaries between identity and cultural expectations.

Personal Experience, Narrative Writing, and Embodied Rhetoric: Rhetorical Strategy or *Feminist* Rhetorical Strategy?

My six year old daughter, Kate, recently finished reading a book from one of the popular *American Girl* series. Near the end of the book, the main character, Josefina, overcomes her fear of acting in front of an audience in order to play the role of Mary for her church's Christmas nativity pageant. After Kate read the last few pages of the book to me, I asked her what she liked about it. Her response was immediate: "Josefina is a lot like me. She had to gather her strength in order to be Mary, just like I had to gather my strength to ride the Skyfari." Unlike Josefina, Kate is not afraid of an audience; in fact, she loves to be the center of attention. However, she is afraid of heights. Not too long ago our city's zoo opened a chairlift that spans a large cross-section of the zoo, carrying riders from the butterfly pavilion all the way to the opposite side of the zoo where the elephants reside. On our most recent trip to the zoo, Kate announced repeatedly that she would not be going on the Skyfari. Once we got there, however, she had a change of heart. A chance to see the elephants without having to navigate the zoo's winding paths and many hills must have been too good to pass up. She was able to "gather her

strength" and—sitting along side her grandma—overcome her fear of heights and enjoy the ride.

When Kate compares herself to the character Josefina, I see her using what Mary Catherine Bateson calls "peripheral vision" in order to give meaning to her experiences and to arrive at a particular insight. Bateson defines *insight* as "the depth of understanding that comes by setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by letting them speak to one another" (14). As a metaphor for learning, peripheral vision captures the process of making connections from all sides—from our own experiences as well as those of others—in order to create a cohesive vision and working version of reality. To arrive at her "just like me" moment, Kate takes Josefina's experience of overcoming stage fright and places it next to her own encounter with conquering fear. Bateson writes that "the process of spiraling through memory to weave connection out of incident is basic to learning" (11). Her work in diverse cultures as an anthropologist, writer, and mother has led to her belief that individuals "'compose'" their lives through a "weave of continuity and creativity" (87). Bateson compares this process to the "endless practice and the recombining of previously learned components" that improvisatory artists, such as jazz musicians, enact when they create performances that are new and original as well as practiced and rehearsed (87). Kate's connection, then, is an act of creativity and improvisation, one which will be a basis for comparison in the future as she continues to weave together diverse experiences in order to derive meaning from and make sense of the world around her.

Bateson's metaphors of peripheral vision and improvisation are instructive for viewing learning as an adaptive process that arrives at meaning by combining and recombining old and new experiences. When I first began working with Annie's papers, I was struck by the narrative voice that emerged in her writing. In many of her college essays, she uses personal experiences, such as childhood memories of playhouses and learning to sew dresses, in order to make connections between her female idenity and the academic work she was asked to complete for her college courses. Even in the most restrictive of writing assignments, such as the critique of a classmate's theme, Annie adds a sentence or two of humor or sarcasm; it is as though she cannot resist finding an opportunity to both insert and assert her authoritative voice. As Annie works her way through the University of Nebraska's English curriculum, she adapts to the requirements of college writing by recombining moments from her past with the curricular expectations of her present academic experience. In this way, she employs the peripheral vision and improvisation that Bateson describes.

Maxine Greene's ideas about the role of the imagination are equally as important as Bateson's metaphors for understanding a model of learning that views reality as "interpreted experience" (22). Greene writes that "Imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible . . . of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities" and to grasp these alternatives as human possibilities (3-4). This view of the imagination is critical to Greene's philosophy of education. She suggests that educators need to design curricula which help students (and teachers) to see their givens as contingencies—to become aware of the ways they

construct their realities. Curricula should be about creating "situations in which the young will move from the habitual and the ordinary and consciously undertake a search" (24). Reaching toward something new, beginning a quest or search, leaving the habitual and comfortable behind—these are all ways that Greene describes learning. In short, learning is becoming different. And we become different by consciously trying to break through the patterns and constructions that seem like givens, using words to explain and make real what Virginia Woolf calls the "shocks" (71-73) we encounter from time to time as we move through life.

Narrative writing based on personal experience is a powerful rhetorical tool for engaging the imagination and helping students understand reality as interpreted experience, as constructions that help us make sense of the intersections between our perceptions and culture, our values and desires. Fraught with a complicated history in which scholars both deride and encourage its use in educational settings, narrative writing has been the subject of commentary from Aristotle right up to the turn of the twenty-first century, when *College English* published two issues devoted primarily to personal narrative. The first issue, published in 2001, has a "Special Focus" section called *Personal Writing* guest edited by Jane Hindman; the second, published in 2003, is designated as a "Special Issue" and titled *The Personal in Academic Writing*. It is also guest edited by Jane Hindman. In the 2001 issue, Candace Spigelman defends the personal narrative in her essay "Argument and Evidence in the Case of the Personal." Spigelman provides a useful definition of personal narrative that has been helpful for my analysis of Annie's papers. She defines personal narrative as "the ways in which writers

make sense of their lives by organizing their experience into first-person stories . . . their telling is purposeful; they are intended to serve ends beyond pure expression of opinion or cathartic confession" (66). Furthermore, their effect is to move audiences "from a particular to an implied generalization/universalization to another particular" (75). And finally, quoting Linda Brodkey, Spigelman asserts that we study stories and narratives not necessarily to determine whether they are true or false, but rather "'to learn about the terms on which others make sense of their lives'" (75). This final idea echoes Greene's suggestion that the imagination is what creates empathy and "permits" individuals to understand the terms upon which others construct their vision of the world.

The ideas of Bateson, Greene, and Spigelman are critical to my own construction of a framework through which I am able to question, examine, and draw conclusions about Annie's use of personal experience as a rhetorical tool at different moments during her college years and professional career. One question, however, remains before I move on. At various times during my work with Annie's papers and my reading of scholarship dealing with narrative and experience as sites of inquiry, I've questioned whether a writer's use of personal experience is a rhetorical strategy similar to other strategies, such as writer's use of analogy or irony to make a point, or whether something more unique is going on that designates the use of one's experience as a *feminist* rhetorical strategy. Here Jane Hindman's ideas about "embodied rhetoric" have proved essential to clarifying my own understanding about the relationship between feminist agency and personal experience.

In her essay "Writing an Important Body of Scholarship," Hindman critiques academic discourse, which she suggests is a "masculinist" practice (98), and she draws attention to composition and rhetoric's complicity in promoting a disembodied rhetoric that downplays attention to the self and promotes the construction of "an authority that appears to be removed from its material sources" (100). Academic discourse is masculinist in the way that "it is represented and taught as if it were coherent, method(olog)ical, articulate, consistent, democratic (or at least impartial and consensual), and, most importantly, rational" (98). In other words, Hindman rejects the authority of a discourse that represents itself as disconnected from the situatedness of the person doing the writing. Ultimately, Hindman argues for an *embodied academic rhetoric* that "requires gestures to the material practices of the professional group and to the quotidian circumstances of the individual writer" (103). As an alternative rhetoric, embodied rhetoric calls upon the authority of personal, individual autobiography as it also recognizes and exposes "the authority of professional expertise . . . as a pose" (110).

What is the connection, then, between the kind of embodied rhetoric that Hindman describes in regards to professional academic discourse and my own inclination to view the use of personal and gendered experience as a feminist rhetorical strategy? As Hindman suggests, writers who deploy the standard conventions of academic discourse derive their authority by constructing a masculine rhetorical subject that downplays or even makes invisible the self doing the writing. By contrast, writers who deploy embodied rhetoric establish their authority by drawing attention to the self doing the writing, making visible and complex the interplay between identity, perspective,

location, and the knowledge-making process. Writing from personal experience is the kind of embodied rhetoric that Hindman describes—a form with attributes and techniques that foreground the writer's material, lived, and "quotidian" circumstances. Personal experience is a rhetorical strategy that consciously reveals and attempts to situate the writer's standpoint and location. And, deploying one's experience—whether in narrative writing, argumentation, critique, or persuasion—has the potential to call attention to the ways we construct our versions of reality, thereby opening up the possibility for resisting and revising cultural stereotypes. In their study of pre-service teachers moving from the academy into the schools as professionals educators, Ritchie and Wilson describe the writing and telling of stories as an "interpretive act" (similar to Greene's view of reality as "interpreted experience"), one which becomes a powerful tool for rethinking untheorized teaching practices, for resisting cultural scripts, and for revising pedagogy (171).

Embodied rhetoric, then, encourages writers to theorize the ways they gain knowledge, arrive at truth, and make sense of reality. Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore contend in their introduction to *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy* that while feminists disagree on many theoretical and political issues, they do agree on the rejection of the masculine subject in history as the foundation to truth and knowledge (7). As Shari Stenberg writes in "Embodied Classrooms, Embodied Knowledges: Re-Thinking the Mind/Body Split," there are "material consequences of living in particular bodies" (48). Pedagogy that makes room for writers to explore and question those consequences offers students a kind of agency denied them through curriculum and teaching practices that de-

emphasize the writer's presence. Our bodies and our material life circumstances are filters through which we acquire knowledge and achieve understanding. Writing that uses personal experience has the potential to gesture toward the ways living in "particular bodies" (with diverse attributes such as gender, color, disability, sexual identity, and age) destabilizes cultural scripts, exposes cultural assumptions, and creates opportunities for new understandings about identity. Going back to Brereton's assertion that the most widely circulated documents from the nineteenth century do not reveal "a specifically feminist rhetoric," I contend that Annie's writing helps us understand how female students seized opportunities to deploy experience as a feminist rhetorical strategy and thereby negotiate their personal worlds with their academic lives, and in Annie's case, with her professional life after college as well. In her undergraduate papers, master's thesis, and professional writing, Annie continually draws the reader's attention to how personal and gendered experiences influence her understanding and construction of knowledge. During her master's thesis in particular, Annie establishes her authority not by downplaying the self doing the writing; rather, she emphasizes her standpoint as a woman and makes connections between her identity and the ways she and other women write, read, and interpret fiction.

New Meanings: Recovery, Recuperation, and Rhetorical Theory

The guiding premise for my work with Annie's papers is that Annie achieves what Carol Mattingly calls "rhetorical acumen" at key moments during her writing life through her ability to weave personal experience into academic and public rhetoric. Mattingly asks an important question for scholars interested in women's rhetoric: "How

can we possibly judge women's rhetoric according to masculine standards?" Her response is twofold. She insists first that "we cannot do so fairly" and secondly that "we must appreciate their different concerns and needs to understand women's methods for delivering convincing arguments" (107). My hope is that Mattingly's desire for scholarship to appreciate the different place from which women's rhetoric emerges will resonate throughout the remaining chapters of this work. Annie's blending of personal, academic, and public rhetoric is a feminist rhetorical strategy that is located in her experiences as a female college student, a teacher at a struggling prairie school, and a mother to five children. Annie's papers are of consequence to scholars because they offer evidence of how women experienced writing instruction at a major Midwestern, co-educational, land grant university at a moment when female students were gaining access to higher education in greater numbers. As well, Annie's papers situate her as a rhetorical agent after college, one who continued to employ strategies similar to those she developed in her undergraduate and graduate writing in order to advocate for her work as an educator.

I see my work with Annie's papers developing within the key components of women's rhetorical history that Karlyn Kohrs Campbell outlines in "Consciousness Raising: Linking Theory, Criticism, and Practice." Campbell describes research into women's rhetoric as evolving through three stages, including the recovery of women's writing, the recuperation of that writing through criticism, and the development of alternative rhetorical theory based on women's writing. This first chapter and chapter two of my dissertation participate in the process of recovery as described by Campbell.

While this chapter establishes the relevance of Annie's writing for composition and rhetoric scholarship, chapter two situates that writing within broad patterns of nineteenth-century writing instruction and the more specific context of the University of Nebraska's writing program at the turn of the century. In chapters three and four, I engage in a critical examination and discussion of Annie's work, including her writing as an undergraduate and then as a graduate student. My analysis considers how Annie's rhetorical strategies combine personal and public rhetoric as I take into account connections between gender, identity, and authority. Finally, in chapter five, I look at the implications of Annie's writing on the development of women's rhetorical theory. I examine specifically the published essay she wrote to raise money for her South Dakota boarding school and the traces of her participation in a letter writing campaign. I consider how she continued to use experience as a site of knowledge, to foreground the self doing the writing, and to write with a sense of authority and agency. This chapter also analyzes Annie's ability to engage in literacy practices that connect personal and public action with Hindman's ideas about composition and rhetoric's professional discursive practices and autobiographical authority. Throughout the remaining chapters, I use the multiple lenses of feminist rhetorical theory, nineteenth-century writing instruction history, and personal narrative theory to situate Annie's work in diverse contexts, and at times I also make visible connections between her writing and my own experiences as a graduate student, English teacher, and mother.

CHAPTER TWO

Setting the Scene:
Nineteenth-Century Writing Instruction at the University of Nebraska

"This introduction offers *a* history, not *the* history, of rhetorical theory by women. A history is not just facts and events but always an interpretation, always a way of seeing facts and events."

--Jane Donawerth, *Rhetorical Theory by Women Before 1900*

When I first read Annie's papers, I was struck by the variety of work in her folders and impressed with the quality of writing. I was also curious about the brief instructor comments on some of her papers that praised, critiqued, and encouraged her work. For example, at the end of an essay called "My Vacation's Acquaintances" in which Annie describes the "few friends" and "many curious characters" with whom she worked during summer vacation, the instructor wrote the following comment: "Good, like all of your themes. What you write has a 'sympathetic' quality very rare in college work." Though brief, the instructor's praise and familiarity with Annie's writing style sparked my interest. For me, Annie's papers raised many questions, some about her as a person, others about her as a female student pursuing higher education just as women were beginning to enter colleges in greater numbers, and still others about the writing instruction that set the stage for the papers and themes I was reading. What was it like to pursue a college education as a young woman in a co-educational environment? Was she supported? What kinds of opportunities did she have to develop her interests and talents? Did she get along well with instructors? Did she like the writing assignments she was given, or did she write them simply to fulfill the requirements? Did she feel restricted by the assignments or empowered to write about experiences important to her?

To better understand Annie's work, my goal for this chapter is to create a context for the papers, themes, and thesis I analyze in chapters three and four. To determine how both Annie's work and the University of Nebraska's English department figure into the larger landscape of nineteenth-century writing pedagogy, I consider the degree to which writing instruction at Nebraska both corresponds with and departs from general patterns of nineteenth-century composition and rhetoric as described by James Berlin, Nan Johnson, and Robert Connors. In addition to the work of these scholars, Anne L. Johnson's master's thesis, "The Student Writer at The University of Nebraska: 1871-1911" (1972), has proved invaluable to my research and understanding of writing instruction at Nebraska during Annie's time as a student. Johnson researched and wrote her thesis as a graduate student at UNL under the supervision of Bernice Slote—poet, Cather scholar, and University of Nebraska professor from 1946-1980. Johnson's work is an important scholarly resource that offers a detailed and thorough analysis of the pertinent historical background, the development of the English curriculum, and the extra-curricular activities that afforded students additional experiences with writing, oratory, and debate. In the appendices, Johnson provides copies of several archival documents, making accessible firsthand accounts of writing instruction and the developing English curriculum at Nebraska. The categories most important to creating a context for my analysis of Annie's work include the following: 1) the University of Nebraska's transition from a classical curriculum to an elective system, 2) the influence of current-traditional rhetoric and the belletristic tradition on nineteenth-century writing instruction, 3) the emphasis that the University of Nebraska's English department placed

on practical instruction over textbook recitation and theory, 4) the impact of the student-teacher relationship on writing instruction, and 5) the importance of oratory, literary societies, and debate at the University of Nebraska during Annie's college years. Ultimately, through this reconstructive work and my subsequent analysis of Annie's papers, I argue that the University of Nebraska's curriculum and instructors, as well as its extra-curricular activities, allowed women students unique opportunities to write about gendered experiences and employ personal narrative as a feminist rhetorical strategy.

The Curriculum Shift: From a Classical Course of Studies to an Elective System

The University of Nebraska opened in 1871 as a result of the 1862 Morrill Act, which granted each state 30,000 acres to be used for higher education (Knoll; "Transcript of Morrill Act"). From 1871 to 1902, the University experienced several transitional phases which moved it from a classical curriculum to an elective system. The first major revision of the curriculum occurred a decade after the university's opening, during the years 1880-81. Howard Caldwell, professor of history at Nebraska from 1883-1922 (A. Johnson 174) describes in *Education in Nebraska* (1902) the "the old college type" of curriculum which dominated the university's early years. It included instruction in Latin, Greek, and mathematics, and Caldwell writes that "practically all instruction was based on text-books. There was really only one method in class—the recitation. . . . Original investigations, with theses, by students were entirely unknown" (85). The purpose of higher education was primarily "to fit men for scholarship and theology" (85); a secondary purpose was to prepare men for the professions of law and politics. The emphasis on a classical curriculum would not last long, however. Lucius A. Sherman,

professor of English and English Literature at Nebraska and head of the department for forty-seven years (A. Johnson 58), describes the change in instructional methods during the 1870s. In an essay titled "The Making of the University" that he wrote in 1894 for the quarter-centennial edition of the *Sombrero*, Nebraska's yearbook, Sherman writes that although "it was hardly to be expected that better methods would be used than the old colleges of the country knew . . . some of the men called to the early work were broad in culture and progressive in spirit" (22). He portrays the seventies as "years in which the influence of foreign scholarship had come to be strongly felt" (22) and explains how, in the decades after the Civil War, "there had been a sort of stampede of young American graduates towards the German universities; and these men, now returning . . . were very generally outrivaling home candidates for college chairs" (22). Additionally, Harvard was transitioning into an elective system modeled after German universities, and many of the country's colleges were following its lead. Indeed, several professors whose influence was felt most heavily during the 1880-81 curriculum revision had important connections to Harvard and German universities. These included the chair of English and history, George E. Woodbury, who graduated from Harvard in 1877; Harrington Emerson, who was from Munich, Germany; George E. Howard, a graduate of Nebraska in 1876 who had recently returned from two years' study abroad in Germany; and George E. Church, who had also recently spent a year in Europe (Caldwell, *Education* 87). Bernice Slote, in her discussion of Willa Cather's years at the University of Nebraska, also makes note of the influx of ideas from "the East and Europe," describing the

university's culture as "an immigration of ideas as mixed as the nations and languages of those who came for the black soil" (8).

The years 1880-81 were an important juncture for the university which led the way for further specialization and new ways of thinking about the purpose of education. Sherman describes the first major curriculum shift as occurring at the moment when "the University of Nebraska entered upon the second decade of its service to the State" ("Making" 25). The phrase "service to the State" underscores Sherman's belief that education must to some extent live up to the Federal Government's expectation as stated in the Morrill Act, that public lands would be donated in order that they "may provide colleges for the benefit of agriculture and the Mechanic arts" ("Transcript of Morrill Act"). However, the university must strike a balance between preparing students to assume their place in the workforce and positioning them to become independent thinkers and lifelong learners. Put another way, the university must meet the agricultural and economic needs of the state *and* foster an environment that invites students to think independently. Ultimately, education should serve a much broader purpose than transmitting a discrete body of knowledge and replacing one generation of scholars trained for the pulpit or the bar with the next. Sherman felt strongly that Nebraska was meeting this challenge. The University's academic culture was an amalgam of ideas transported from Harvard and Europe; these ideas displaced the old college curriculum with not only an elective system but also a grand vision of new possibilities for higher education. Sherman portrays the spirit of this vision when he writes that "Higher education was fast becoming something more than passing examinations in certain

routine subjects. It had begun to mean thinking for one's self, finding out facts and principles in one's own way. It was to be, in short, the proper and normal beginning of a life-long intellectual activity" ("Making" 22). Sherman would go on to write frequently of the university's responsibility to create opportunities for students to think for themselves. In fact, in 1930, after nearly fifty years as an educator, Sherman emphasizes that "analysis for the sake of anlyzing [sic], study for the sake of study, and knowledge for the sake of knowing, are a perversion of privilege, and foster weakness of personality instead of might" ("What is Education" 35). At the University of Nebraska, the years following the curriculum revision of 1880-81 would bring further departmental specialization, increased numbers of electives being offered to students, and scientific laboratory instruction that encouraged student experiments and investigations as well as independent thought. These changes reflect the thinking of instructors, professors, and department chairs who believed that the primary basis for higher education was to provide a foundation from which students could lead a life marked by the pursuit of intellectual activity.

With the curriculum shift, professors began to gear their instruction toward their students' interests. Furthermore, preparing students for work—for a career and a profession—became as important as preparing students for scholarship and theology. All courses of study were viewed as valuable and equal in importance (Caldwell 86). During the 1880s, Harvard's George Woodbury arrived in Lincoln as an instructor in Rhetoric and English Literature and brought with him what Sherman describes as "the new method of personal investigation and of student lectures" ("Making" 22). This decade is

characterized by teaching aimed at getting students to think for themselves, to participate in original investigations, and even to receive "inspiration to go away for further study" (25). The university began to take seriously students' interests, learning, and desires to prepare for careers after college.

The changes occurring at Nebraska during the 1880s were consistent with the trends in higher education that James Berlin describes in his important study, *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges*. Berlin explains that after the Civil War higher education "became transformed, moving increasingly toward a commitment to serving all citizens of society—not just an aristocratic elite—and toward an encouragement of learning and free inquiry" (58). The German university became the model for colleges concerned with meeting the demands of a growing economy. Berlin writes that "men of affairs" rather than "clergymen" began to occupy positions of importance in colleges, "arguing for an education that prepared students for work in this life, not for reward in the next" (58-9). In addition to the curriculum changes occurring at Harvard, Berlin points specifically to schools "in the West" where states provided colleges and universities with public funds "to serve the agricultural and commercial interests of their growing populations" (59). The University of Nebraska, as a land grant university heavily influenced by Harvard and European universities, falls into this category and can thus be viewed as both promoting and reflecting higher education's shift from a classical course of studies to an elective system. However, Berlin portrays this movement as having a significant—and negative—impact on the teaching of rhetoric and writing instruction in American colleges. With the establishment of an elective

system, by the mid 1890s rhetoric—which had always enjoyed a central and prominent place in the classical course of study—became reduced to a required course of study for freshman. Berlin finds that instructors and students alike began to view the course as a place where students entering a university or college with substandard writing skills would receive practice and instruction in writing to help them meet the demands of their future courses of study (58-62). In short, rhetoric and composition became a service course to other departments rather than a discipline in its own right.

Berlin's portrayal of the landscape of higher education, and his description of the changing nature of composition and rhetoric's relationship to the nineteenth-century curriculum as it shifted from classical studies to an elective system, are crucial to my understanding of Annie's work and to the ways I contextualize her writing. In the end, my hope is that Annie's papers will demonstrate that the required writing courses at the University of Nebraska, along with a campus culture that encouraged active and public engagement in the literacy practices of writing, oratory, and debate, offered students greater opportunities to gain rhetorical acumen and experience rhetoric and composition in more meaningful ways than perhaps Berlin portrays. In the meantime, however, I want to explore Berlin's description of "the narrowing of the province of composition to exposition" (64) and how other scholars, such as Nan Johnson, view the effects of this narrowing on writing instruction and student work. Because many of Annie's papers reflect expository, descriptive, and narrative techniques, I feel that it is important to try to get at some of the underlying principles of writing instruction that may have grounded the pedagogy of Annie's instructors. Berlin's analysis of how exposition became a focus for

many nineteenth-century theorists and earned a central role in the writing curricula of many nineteenth-century colleges is a useful place to begin.

Current-Traditional Rhetoric, Exposition, and the Belletristic Tradition

In *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges*, Berlin describes how the transition in American colleges from a classical course of study to an elective system encouraged a scientific view of rhetoric that emphasized exposition and the technical features of writing over a humanistic view of rhetoric whose goal was to arrive at truth and meaning (58-64). With the elective system, students began to choose particular classes for their courses of studies, but most colleges and universities maintained that rhetoric and writing instruction were essential to any course of study; therefore, rhetoric and composition continued on in various forms as required coursework, usually during the freshman and sophomore years. Berlin points to Harvard as "the most extreme in its elective system, reducing required courses to freshmen in 1894, and decreasing even these to a year of freshman rhetoric in 1897" (59). As rhetoric became a required course within an elective system, Berlin finds that rhetoric shifted away from its classical and Aristotelian concern for finding truth and discovering the available means of persuasion (5) and toward the more scientific and mechanistic goal of observing and recording reality—what many scholars today call current-traditional rhetoric.

Current-traditional rhetoric, as represented in textbooks published during the last decades of the nineteenth century by rhetoricians such as Adams Sherman Hill, Barrett Wendell, and John Franklin Genung, is based on the eighteenth-century theories of

Scottish Common Sense Realism as articulated by George Campbell, Hugh Blair, and Richard Whately. Berlin writes that in Common Sense Realism, "reality is discovered through observation, in the use of the senses and the faculties" (7). He continues, specifying that when "using language to communicate, furthermore, the speaker or writer (both are important) attempts to appeal to the faculties of the auditor, to reproduce through language the original experience in the observer. Hence, the importance of being specific and vivid" (7). Current-traditional rhetoric promotes a view of the composing process in which "rhetoric's sole appeal is to the understanding and reason, with its highest manifestation to be found in exposition and argument" (63). Exposition, with narration and description following close behind, becomes the "central concern of writing classes" (63). As Berlin sees it, a disconcerting result of the elective system—of a scientific approach to both the curriculum and writing instruction—is the fracture of classical rhetorical education: persuasion moves to oratory and speech departments, appeals to the imagination and emotion move to the newly offered literature courses of English departments, and rhetoric is left as a course which focuses on teaching the student "to report, not interpret, what is inductively discovered" (63). The composition instructor is to teach that "the writer's job is to concentrate on the experience itself, the source of meaning, and the language that best translates the experience" (64). At its worst, "Freshman English becomes a course in technical writing" (63). Rhetoric's province, then, is to report knowledge rather than to produce knowledge; to observe and record reality rather than to shape reality. Teaching writing becomes a process of teaching students to translate meaning rather than to create meaning.

Nan Johnson's study, *Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric in America*, confirms Berlin's assessment that near the end of the nineteenth century exposition as a genre becomes a primary focus for both nineteenth-century theorists and the writing instruction going on in college classrooms throughout the country. Berlin views this shift as a reductive process which "severely restricts the composing process" (63) and negatively impacts the place of rhetorical instruction in the curriculum. Johnson, on the other hand, offers a different reading. She suggests that nineteenth-century rhetoricians' theoretical discussions of exposition, narration, description, and argument actually widen the formal scope of prose genres to include a broad range of subjects and popular writing forms. By extending the role and function of nonliterary forms of writing, nineteenth-century rhetoricians both justify and secure the systematic study and practice of rhetoric in American colleges (199-200). Johnson sees this broadening of rhetoric as reflective of the nineteenth-century point of view that "the advance of culture and the stability of society relied on the attainment of mental and moral development by each individual" (245). Moreover, an individual achieves mental and moral development through "the systematic study of natural principles and standards of taste" (245-6). By examining the popular textbooks of the time and the rhetorical theories from which they were derived, Johnson assesses nineteenth-century rhetoricians' methodical treatment of what they considered the fundamental rhetorical principles of writing and belletristic standards of taste. Her work adds an additional layer of detail to Berlin's analysis. Johnson's study helps to underscore the opportunities rather than the limitations that a merger between

rhetorical instruction and the belletristic tradition may have provided for college students such as Annie.

Johnson offers a synthesis of nineteenth-century rhetoricians' beliefs about the basic principles of effective writing and communication. These principles relied on a "theoretical synthesis of Blair's belletristic approach to style and formal genres with Campbell and Whately's explanations of rhetorical invention and arrangement" (173). Three beliefs in particular connect with the kind of work Annie produced as a student at the University of Nebraska. These beliefs overlap and are integral to each other, but for the purposes of discussion they can be distinguished in the following manner. First, the classical canons of *invention, arrangement*, and *style* are the fundamental rhetorical principles upon which composition and oratory rely (173). Secondly, nineteenth-century rhetoricians used different *modes* of writing to develop and organize content (invention and arrangement); these modes include description, narration, explanation, and argument (173-4). Thirdly, rhetoricians considered how writers could employ belletristic principles (style) to appeal to the reader's "sense of natural order and associative logic" and the reader's understanding, imagination, and faculty of taste (191).

First, let's consider *invention* and *arrangement*. For the canon of *invention*, Johnson finds that nineteenth-century rhetoricians defined each mode of content development as a "technique" governed by particular rules of use. For example, as part of invention, narration "is defined as a technique that presents a succession of events or an account of unfolding or changing circumstances," and the main goal "is to establish a clear purpose or relationship between the events and to place the events or circumstances

before the reader in an order that creates a sense of events being witnessed or experienced" (178). For the canon of *arrangement*, the writer is encouraged to adapt basic formats, such as a three-part scheme or a six-part scheme, to the goals of each mode (184). Nineteenth-century rhetoricians' treatment of invention and arrangement proceeds from an epistemological assumption that the proper divisions of a written composition (an argument, as well as a narrative, descriptive piece, or exposition) facilitates and appeals to the reader's understanding and emotions (183-4). Johnson explains that nineteenth-century rhetoricians affirmed and promoted the three-part scheme of introduction, development, and conclusion because they believed that "any composition that strives for order and wholeness must utilize some type of beginning-middle-end structure. By outlining this structure, the writer conforms to the general dictates of natural logic and also facilitates the different types of associative links that argumentative, descriptive, narrative, and expository development promote" (185). Thus, the writer's goal is to arrange a composition in such a way that it will resemble and employ a kind of *a priori* natural logic that a reader's mind will be able to identify, grasp, and utilize in order to understand the writer's meaning.

For *style*, the goal is once again to "appeal to the reader's sense of natural order and associative logic" (191). Johnson writes that "perspicuity, energy, elegance, correct diction, and figurative language represent those forms of expression that anticipate the associative dynamics of the mind" (191). Johnson's reading of nineteenth-century rhetorical theory finds that discussions of style repeatedly focused "attention to how style affects the mind" (191). Perspicuity is characterized by precise language use. Johnson

observes that "clarity" and "clearness" are words used often to describe this principle. Perspicuity is "a necessary condition for 'the full and effective transfer of thought.' In order to achieve this 'transfer,' the writer never presents the reader with a word or construction that requires undue scrutiny or that creates confusion regarding what meaning is intended" (192). Johnson quotes A.S. Hill in his popular text, *The Principles of Rhetoric* (1895), who writes "'It is not enough to use language that *may* be understood; he [the writer] should use language that *must* be understood. . . . He should remember that, as far as attention is called to the medium of communication, so far it is withdrawn from the ideas communicated'" (193). This concept that the goal of writing is to transfer the writer's thought ("ideas") and impressions as clearly as possible holds particular significance for my analysis of Annie's work. As I will discuss in the next section, precise writing that reflects clear thinking was an important principle during the 1890s at The University of Nebraska.

The concept of a "natural logic" in the mind of the writer that corresponds to that of the reader is a critical precept for the teaching of style as well as invention and arrangement. However, nineteenth-century rhetoricians theorized style through belletristic principles rather than rhetorical strategies. Both Berlin and Johnson emphasize nineteenth-century rhetoricians' reliance on Hugh Blair's belletristic theories about style. Blair stresses that the best way to teach students to write is through exposure to and practice with the stylistic principles found in *literary* works. If a student learns to appreciate and imitate literature, he or she will master the principles necessary to produce a text. Berlin writes that "Reading, in other words, inevitably leads to efficient

writing"(8). Therefore, nineteenth-century rhetoricians such as Hill and John Franklin Genung discussed the techniques of well-known writers and provided a variety of literary examples in their texts to illustrate the principles of style (Berlin 8-9; Johnson 191-199). Style becomes an important vehicle for teaching clear writing that transfers the writer's logical, ordered, and aesthetic ideas to a reader. Furthermore, writers such as Anthony Trollope, Thomas Macaulay, Sir Walter Scott, Ruskin, Chaucer, Henry James, Charles Dickens, William Shakespeare, and John Milton become literary models for the production of nonliterary and literary texts alike (Johnson 193; 199-205). Johnson describes nineteenth century rhetoricians' definition of composition as including the nonliterary prose genres of argument, description, narration, and exposition—"compositions in which proof of a proposition, representation of an object, narration of a plot, or definition of an idea or object correspond to the formal subject of the discourse" (199). The application of belletristic principles of style to nonliterary forms of prose and the use of literature to teach argumentation, description, narration, and exposition constitute an important characteristic of nineteenth-century writing theory, one that was an integral part of writing instruction at the University of Nebraska.

Practical Instruction and "the art of exact expression"

By focusing on current-traditional rhetoric, the importance of the nonliterary forms of prose for nineteenth-century rhetoricians (exposition, narration, description, argument), and the significance of belletristic principles in nineteenth-century theory, I have selected those ideas from the work of Berlin and Johnson that connect most closely to the essays and themes available in Annie's folders. As discussed earlier, both Berlin

and Johnson synthesize nineteenth-century theories of rhetoric and composition by examining popular textbooks, handbooks, treatises, articles, and university catalogues. One of the textbook writers that Johnson frequently cites is John Franklin Genung. During the mid 1890s, Genung's *Practical Elements of Rhetoric* (1886) is repeatedly listed in the University of Nebraska's *Bulletin* as the text for the introductory "Rhetoric and English Composition" course. In the 1894 *Bulletin*, the description for "Rhetoric and English Composition" is as follows: "Genung's Practical Elements of Rhetoric. Lectures, practice in themes" (15). The next course in the sequence, the "Advanced Course of Rhetoric," emphasizes style and using models for study: "Study of the best Stylists and Models. Practice in the formation of a correct style" (15). These descriptions are one way to confirm the principles of writing instruction that Johnson and Berlin present in their work, yet they have limitations. While we can reasonably assume that Genung's theories and descriptions about the modes of discourse and belletristic principles of style held sway with instructors at Nebraska and that his text offered students a foundation for further study, my own experience as a teacher leads me to question the degree to which classroom practices actually reflect textbook instruction. Put another way, what happens in the classroom does not always coincide with the textbook used; in fact, at times, one's teaching methodology may be downright contradictory to those promoted by a textbook. One of the challenges with trying to understand the principles upon which writing was taught while Annie attended college is getting at what actually went on in the classroom. How was instructional time spent? What was the interaction between student and teacher

like? Where do we find tangible evidence of classroom practices? Is it even possible to recreate the historical conditions of past writing instruction?

Recent scholarship and publications based on archival methodology demonstrate that archives are rich with materials that can help researchers get at some of the complexities of classroom practice that almost always accompany teaching—past and present. Nebraska's archives point to a significant disjuncture that is not altogether uncommon in teaching: differences between textbook theory and an instructor's pedagogy. Although many scholars of composition and rhetoric history use textbook analysis as a primary source for understanding pedagogy, archival evidence suggests that by the end of the nineteenth century, instructors at the University of Nebraska were relying less on textbooks for writing instruction and more on lectures and increased interaction between instructors and students. As early as April of 1871, before the University of Nebraska even opened its doors to its first students during the following fall, lecture as an alternate instructional method to textbooks was being considered. S. H. Carpenter, professor of logic, rhetoric, and English literature at the University of Wisconsin, describes his pedagogy in a letter to Orasmus C. Dake, the first professor of English at the University of Nebraska. Carpenter writes:

> Now to the matter of business you wrote upon—Our Belles Lettres course, proper, begins with the Junior year with Rhetoric 1st term. . . . As to methods: My method in all my studies is to combine Lectures with the use of the text book—making the recitation a sort of running commentary upon the subject presented in the text book. I find I secure far better results in this way than by a closer adhesion to the letter of the book. Besides this course leads the pupil to more independent thought, as well as keeps the professor from falling into ruts . . . (A. Johnson 116).[4]

From this letter, it appears that Dake had written a prior letter to Carpenter, asking about the teaching of rhetoric and composition at Wisconsin. Carpenter's response indicates that lectures rather than "the letter of the book" offer students more opportunities for "independent thought" and, importantly, they provide the professor with more occasions for interaction with course content and students, keeping him "from falling into ruts." Although Sherman's history of the University of Nebraska's first decade describes instructional methods that rely almost exclusively on recitation, the correspondence between Dake and Carpenter indicates that more progressive ideas about instruction were at least in theoretical circulation during the University's first years.

Lecture gained prominence as an instructional method throughout the 1880s and 90s. Several documents written by University of Nebraska professors of English after the curriculum shift of 1881 offer important evidence of the department's movement away from textbooks. In 1884, Lucius Sherman wrote a report that was part of the Chancellor's Biennial Report. Sherman's report outlines the courses offered in both English literature and rhetoric and composition. He writes:

> In the important study of rhetoric and English composition, which is yet attached to the department of English Language and Literature, new and, as it is believed, improved methods are in operation. This year the student, after being shown by precept and model how he should write, is set the task of producing something which shall exemplify the methods and standards indicated. Text-book work is not discarded, but the study is conducted with reference to practical skill rather than theoretical rules and directions—as an art rather than a science; and in a class numbering about fifty, good results are already realized. (A. Johnson 124)

Sherman's report highlights several features at Nebraska that both reflect and depart from historical representations of nineteenth-century rhetoric and composition. Instruction based on "precept and model" reflects a nineteenth-century pedagogy as described by

both Berlin and Johnson that emphasized fundamental principles of writing and used models as examples of those principles for students to imitate. The emphasis on "practical skill" would seem indicative of the kind of technical writing that Berlin describes in many colleges across the country during this time, yet Sherman's description of writing "as an art rather than a science" complicates the portrait that emerges. There is more to writing and the teaching of writing than a scientific approach allows. It is plausible that "practical skill" refers to giving students experience with the practice of writing and written discourse rather than asking them to memorize "theoretical rules and directions" for recitation. "Practical" becomes an indicator for a pedagogy concerned with getting students to think for themselves rather than recite the principles and rules of theorists. In this sense, *practical* is not necessarily synonymous with *technical*. Rather, it may be more closely related to twentieth and twenty-first century educators' use of the word "authentic" in relation to educational assessment.

An important and highly detailed report submitted to the University of Nebraska Board of Regents in 1890 by Ebenezer W. Hunt, Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory, illustrates further the move away from textbook instruction and toward practices intended to give students opportunities to use language in more meaningful ways. Hunt writes:

> During the year I have given all my instruction by lectures and have discarded the use of text-books. The text-books deal with what I may call "formal rhetoric", which has to do principally with the form of composition. It rests on the proposition that there is such a thing as excellence in language apart from the thought that it expresses. Such an idea put to practice, naturally leads to the formation of weak, stilted, artificial, unidiomatic style. I teach that language is valueless except as a medium for expressing thought; and that the language that expresses the thought to be conveyed in the clearest and most forcible manner, is

> the best language. There is no text-book published that adopts this theory in full, and so I have been obliged to give instruction by lectures. (1)

With its emphasis on using language to express one's thoughts in the clearest manner possible, Hunt's report would seem to confirm Berlin's depiction of nineteenth-century writing instruction as being more concerned with helping students use language to *translate* rather than *shape* an experience. However, it is important to remember that Hunt (and countless other nineteenth-century instructors) had as their point of departure textbook teaching and recitation as the dominant form of instruction. In this light, one way of reading Hunt's notion of language as "valueless except as a medium for expressing thought" is that he provided students with opportunities to actually experiment with *multiple* forms of language use than prior teaching methods had allowed. Avant-garde? No. Progressive? Possibly. Hunt recognizes and articulates the limitations of classifying writing into the various modes of discourse. Textbooks teach "the form of composition," and this notion of "formal rhetoric" leads to a "weak, stilted, artificial, unidiomatic style." It is more practical (or authentic) to have students use language to practice expressing their thoughts rather than memorize rules that describe the principles of various forms and modes. Hunt suggests that some types of language use are better than others at conveying thought "in the clearest and most forcible manner"; therefore, it is the work of the teacher to give students opportunities to develop clarity and employ forceful writing strategies. Hunt describes the results from using lectures as "gratifying," noting that "The students have learned more, have been forced to think more for themselves, have become greater adepts in using the language than would have been possible with mere text-book instruction" (1). Again we see a professor attaching

importance to getting students to think for themselves. Further in the report, Hunt describes asking students in Sophomore Rhetoric to rewrite portions of Hooker's *Ecclesiastical History* in an effort to work on "the art of exact expression" (2). This phrase, so close in meaning to Johnson's synthesis of nineteenth-century theories on style and perspicuity, reflects Professor Sherman's 1884 description of writing as "an art rather than a science." In 1890 when Hunt submitted his report to the Board of Regents, "the Department of English was a two-man department" (A. Johnson 66). Professor Sherman taught literature and Professor Hunt taught rhetoric. Both men's reference to writing as an "art" underscores the department's commitment to having students use language to convey meaning rather than read textbooks and memorize rules.

The 1890s was a decade of substantial growth for the University in general and the English department in particular. Instructional methods continued to change to meet the needs of more students. In 1902, Professor Sherman wrote a report for Howard Caldwell's *Education in Nebraska* that describes not only the growth of his department but also some important changes in the teaching of writing that developed at the close of the nineteenth century. Caldwell had solicited reports from the heads of those departments in which "the methods used . . . varied more widely from those in common use—the orthodox methods—than in others" (Caldwell 105). This statement suggests that Caldwell actively sought reports from department chairs whose instructors were using more innovative teaching methods than those in "common use" at the time. Sherman's reports on "English Literature" and "English" (105-110) are the first included under Caldwell's section titled "The University at Work" (105). In the "English" report,

Sherman describes the department's continued commitment to lecture over textbook instruction: "In order to discourage memorizing, little, if any, dependence is placed upon text-books" (134). However, instructors were beginning to recognize and acknowledge the limitations of lecture and instead emphasize the importance of student-teacher interaction. Sherman finds that both "Text-books and lectures have in many instances signally failed . . . It often comes to pass that principles are memorized rather than understood as to their application. Often, indeed, principles are to the students only means whereby to pass an examination rather than aids in the actual work of writing" (107). A more promising aid for the *actual work of writing* is the instructor. Sherman writes that "In the management of students in English composition nothing perhaps is more profitable than the direct contact between students and teacher" (107). Sherman stresses that "Principles not understood when set forth by lecture can be made clear by private consultation" (107), particularly when "the body of students is not large" (107). By 1902, however, Sherman's is "a department containing several hundred students . . . with a teaching force altogether inadequate in number" (107). Despite this challenge, Sherman insists that because "actual writing is more valuable than much theory, we have undertaken, so far as we can, to provide for careful attention on the part of the faculty to each piece of composition submitted by students" (107). We repeatedly see Sherman making the important distinction between "actual writing" and "theory" that Hunt articulates a decade earlier. To meet the challenges of a large student body, Sherman describes the use of assistant readers, fellows, and "a number of scholars" who "work together in close understanding; the main point in criticism being at all times upon the

question of how well the student has accomplished the particular task which he was set to perform. This arrangement is not ideal, but brings about in general very gratifying results" (107). In terms of methodology, Sherman's report stresses the use of lecture over textbook, a desire to increase student-teacher interaction despite the challenges posed by rising enrollment, and the department's concern with giving students opportunities to write and receive instructor feedback rather than read and recite theory. Nowhere is Sherman's perspective on the importance of the instructor over a textbook more clear (and entertaining to read) than in the final paragraph of his report, when he declares that "What is gained from the words of an instructor has greater influence by many times than that taken from the cold, dead words of a writer on style or rhetoric" (109).

Student-Teacher Relationships and a Community of Scholarship

In *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy*, Robert Connors argues that the kind of student-teacher interaction which we see Sherman valuing and describing in his 1902 report was actually gaining momentum in colleges throughout the country near the end of the nineteenth century. Connors' chapter on "Gender Influences" traces the impact of co-education on nineteenth-century rhetoric and composition. He finds that the presence of women alongside men in the classroom changed the student-teacher relationship from agonistic and "adversarial to developmental and personalized" (44). Women's entrance into colleges during the second half of the nineteenth century "changed the most basic rhetorical rules of engagement, and from cold, distanced, demanding lecture-recitation teaching and agonistic competition, rhetoric after 1900 became at its most typical a personalized editorial relationship, critical but not usually

antagonistic" (44). Herbert Bates, who came to the University of Nebraska to teach English in 1891, developed the kind of "personalized editorial relationship" with his students that Connors describes. Bates taught at Nebraska for five years, and these years correspond exactly with Annie's year as a second prep in the University's Latin School and her subsequent four years of undergraduate work.[5] One year out of Harvard when he came to Nebraska, Bates was a poet and short story writer. Cather scholar Bernice Slote describes him as "a popular and influential teacher. It was Bates who most helped Willa Cather in early publication and serious writing" (9). Slote notes that Bates had a high regard for his students in general and "came to believe that western universities were the equal of the ivied eastern schools, especially in the vigor and accomplishment of their students" (9).

Herbert Bates left the University of Nebraska in 1896, and two articles in the Dec. 24th, 1896 *Hesperian* provide information about his work as a writing teacher and the kinds of student-teacher relationships he developed during his tenure at Nebraska. The first piece is a character sketch on Bates that Annie wrote for "The Bates Program," an evening sponsored by the Union Literary Society that included readings and musical numbers dedicated to the poet and scholar who had left a significant mark on the English department. The second article is a review of the program and includes a final tribute to Herbert Bates. Both pieces stress a common trait that Bates possessed—that of *sympathy*.

In her character sketch, Annie describes the transition in composition instruction from Professor Hunt to Herbert Bates:

> If you had been a second prep six years ago you would have handed in your essays to Prof. Hunt, the bear who claimed for his dens rooms twenty-seven and twenty-nine. But in November you would have seen a notice upon the bulletin board in a strange scrawl:
>
> Second preparatory students will call at the chapel at four o-clock on Friday and receive corrected themes.
>
> HERBERT BATES (Prey, "Herbert Bates" 8-9)

Annie goes on to describe the "giggles" and "suppressed titters" that greeted Bates that Friday afternoon when she and her classmates first met him. Accustomed to Professor Hunt, whom Annie describes as "the bear" and, later in the sketch, as "a man of authority," Annie and her classmates are caught off guard by Bates. His accent, which they considered "affected," was something they would "mock for days afterwards" (9). Annie writes that in the beginning, the "new English instructor did not take with the second preps" (9), and she describes his nervousness in some detail, remarking that "his feet twirled around the legs of his chair, while his arms wandered over his desk and his head kept feeble time to his words" (9). However, in time, first impressions gave way to a more thorough understanding and appreciation of his personality and teaching style. When responding to student themes, Bates possessed "a directness as direct as our own but of a keener finer kind" (9). Annie continues, writing that "Those who have no themes with his scribbling on them can not understand how sincerly and sharpely [sic] he was accustomed to give his opinion. Yet his criticisms were hardly ever discouraging" (9). In the end, it is his "sympathy" which impress her most. She writes that beneath the nervousness and directness "lay something that spoke only after long acquaintance. At every touch his inner self rang perfectly true. Not one bit of vanity, not one tinge of flattery only sincere devotion to the realities of thought and feeling. . . . In affairs of

human feeling and sympathy there is no one I ever knew who was beyond him" (9). Annie's sketch, read aloud at his farewell reception and reprinted in the *Hesperian*, offered listeners and readers a warm and affectionate portrayal of Bates. While Bates is credited with encouraging Cather's early writing and submitting her short story "Peter" for publication (Slote 9; Stout 34), it is clear from Annie's sketch that his engagement with student writing was widespread and well received. The *Hesperian*'s review of "The Bates Program" confirms Annie's portrayal. The (anonymous) writer of this article states that the program "was a small tribute to the man who has been the inspiration to some of the best literary work done in the University. He understood and remarked always, the *best* in our work, and no stronger incentive to genuine and original work has ever been ours, than his sympathetic appreciation" ("The Bates Program" 12). Like Annie, this writer notes that as a responder to student writing, Bates not only encouraged but inspired his students toward "genuine and original work." And the final reference to Bates' "sympathetic appreciation" resonates with Annie's admiration for Bates' grasp of "human feeling and sympathy." And it is interesting to note that Annie and "The Bates Program" review employ the very same term that Annie's instructor used to praise her essay on summer acquaintances ("what you write has a 'sympathetic' quality rarely found in college writing"). Annie's sketch of Bates, her passing reference to Professor Hunt ("the bear" and "man of authority"), and "The Bates Program" review reflect Connors' general representation of the changing nature of student-teacher relationships from antagonistic to more personal relationships.

Bernice Slote describes Nebraska during the 1890s as "a little Renaissance world—almost a real community of scholars" (9). Where does a student like Annie, who would go on to marry, have five children, and teach in a small rural school (and not pursue the more public avenues of journalism, publishing, and fiction writing), fit into a Renaissance-like community of scholars, and what impact might this experience have had on a young female student's writing? While Annie's character sketch of Bates suggests that she and other students developed personal relationships with Bates in particular, traces of Annie's participation in a wider community of scholars also exist in a variety of locations. Her archive folders contain several clippings of poetry and short stories published in the campus newspaper, *The Hesperian*. Equally as interesting as these poems and stories are references in *The Hesperian* to Annie's presence at and participation in English club meetings and the Union Society. *The Hesperian* regularly provided information regarding the meetings of the literary societies, debating clubs, and other campus groups such as the English club.

The English club had an active presence on the campus and a lively following. This report of the club's activities from the Nov. 26th, 1896 issue of *The Hesperian* is typical:

> The English club met with Mr. Alexander last Saturday evening. A story was read by Miss Walker and a sketch by Miss Prey. Mr. Lehmer was induced to read a poem—his "first offence" in that direction as he expressed it. Miss Smoyer and Keene Abbott gave recitations. The attendance, as usual, was large. ("Locals" 7)

As in this report, Annie is cited on several occasions in the *Hesperian* as having read a sketch or story to the group. At times, more detailed club notices describe singing, descriptions of a short story reader's delivery, discussions prompted by stories,

departures and additions of members, and the date and meeting place for the next gathering.

One particularly important meeting occurred on Dec. 20th, 1895. *The Hesperian* describes it in this way:

> Mrs. H. H. Wilson, president of the federation of women's clubs of Lincoln, entertained the English club of the State University at her home, corner of Sixteenth and Q streets, on Saturday evening. Stories were read by Miss Amy Bruner and Miss Annie Prey. Miss Broady gave a very pleasing sketch; Mr. Dunroy read a poem in his impressive manner, and Mr. Bates reviewed in a scholarly and unique fashion the work of the new poet, Francis Thompson. The stories by Miss Prey and Miss Brunner were of unusual merit, and were thoroughly enjoyed. After paying their respects to the dainty refreshments served by Mrs. Wilson and her little daughter, the club adjourned, voting this the pleasantest meeting of the year. (3)

The description for this meeting also includes a list of the individuals present; among others, Louise Pound and the wife of Herbert Bates were in attendance in addition to the participants mentioned in the above excerpt. This account of the English club is significant for several reasons. First, it is hosted by the president of Lincoln's federation of women's clubs, thereby establishing an important link between the work of the university and the Lincoln community. Next, it illustrates well the community of scholarship that we might imagine going on in Lincoln at this time. Students as well as professors and their spouses gather to read poetry, stories, sketches, and reviews. The domestic setting for this particular meeting is unmistakable; references to the location of Mrs. Wilson's home and the "refreshments" served by Mrs. Wilson "and her little daughter" suggest personal and congenial relationships among club members that extend beyond the classroom. Even the accolades for Annie's and Amy Bruner's stories imply that club members created a supportive and encouraging environment for participants.

Because the University of Nebraska was a co-educational institution from its first days, it is difficult to determine if the presence of active women on campus, in the classroom, and at club and society meetings created the kinds of supportive relationships and communities that thrived during Annie's years as a student. The existence of these relationships and a corresponding community of scholarship is, however, unmistakable, and I argue that it is highly possible that this kind of "sympathetic" environment encouraged the literary practices we see Annie employing in her student work and even later in her professional writing.

Oratory, Literary Societies, and Debate: On the Rise During a Time of Decline

Connors asserts that an important effect of displacing the notion of rhetoric as public and agonistic competition with a more privatized, developmental emphasis on composition led to a decline in oratorical training as well as literary and debating societies. Connors describes a critical change in literary and debating societies during the last three decades of the century:

> We can note after 1870, for instance, the decline of general interest in college debate; at school after school one sees the gradual breakdown of the older literary and debating societies. At least part of the reason for this decline was the public nature of the debate clubs. Women could not easily be kept out of them, and to debate with women was unnatural, demoralizing, demeaning to the men whose private enclaves the club halls had been. (50)

Similarly, Connors finds oratory—which was traditionally an integral aspect of rhetorical training—losing ground in colleges, remarking that "while the oral and elocutionary strands of rhetoric were shrinking or becoming stylized, the composition strand was rapidly gaining strength" (59). The portrait that emerges from Connors' research on gender influences is one that posits a cause-effect relationship between co-education and

the changing nature of the student-teacher relationship as well as the decline of oratory, literary societies, and debating clubs. While Annie's descriptions of Herbert Bates support the former assertion about student-teacher relationships, the latter claim about oratory and the literary and debating societies is more difficult to substantiate at Nebraska. Connors' use of descriptions such as "gradual breakdown" and "shrinking" indicate the ways women *limited* the traditional domain and character of rhetorical training. Connors provides ample evidence from university and college archives across the country to support his theory; his research is important for helping us understand the degree to which students and faculty at the University of Nebraska developed different trends and experienced different cultural attitudes about co-education.

At Nebraska, oratorical training, literary societies, and debating clubs were not on the decline between the years 1870-1900. Rather, to varying degrees, they were thriving and integral aspects of the English curriculum and campus life well into the 1900s. The 1890s in particular were a critical decade for their advancement, though budgetary constraints during the 1880s put the future of oratory at risk. In the following excerpt from Professor Hunt's 1890 report to the Board of Regents, he laments the loss of oratory instruction during the 1880s.

> It is to be extremely regretted that owing to lack of funds consequent upon the action of the last legislature, all instruction in oratory has been withdrawn. The work of this department has grown so much that all the time of one instructor is taken up with instruction in English. . . . The value of oratorical training as an adjunct to general culture is recognized by every one, while the increased efficiency that it gives the student in meeting the emergencies of life will not be denied. It is to be hoped that the Board will soon be able to reestablish work in this desired branch of study. (3)

However, when Herbert Bates joined the faculty shortly thereafter in 1891, Professor Hunt was able to teach a class in oratory, and oratorical training remained an important part of the English curriculum well into the 1900s. In her thesis, Anne Johnson compiles a sampling of oratory courses which includes the following: in 1895, "English 13 – Study of orations"; in 1899, "English Language 11a – Construction of the oration"; and in 1906, "Rhetoric 19 – Public Address" (41). The 1906 course description says that the course dealt with "Practice in writing and rewriting for definite audiences" and indicates that the course had sufficiently evolved to include special training in different types of orations, including "the committee report, the deliberative oration, and the occasional address—the eulogy and the commemorative and the platform address" (41). Furthermore, oratory contests were an important part of students' extra-curricular experience as well. The *Hesperian* regularly announced upcoming oratory contests and reported on their results. The 1892 *Sombrero* yearbook includes a lively description of the Palladian Society's history (the Palladian Society was one of three literary societies at the time). In 1884, two Palladian alumni from the class of '83, C.C. Chase and Dan H. Wheeler, hosted an oratory contest which was held annually for over a decade to follow. These contests were not limited to male students' participation. In this excerpt from the 1892 Palladian history, the writer emphasizes women students' success at the Chase and Wheeler contest: "It is a pleasure to record the fact that two young ladies, Miss Minnie De Pue and Miss Eugenia Getner, bore off the first and second prizes respectively in this leap-year of grace, 1892" ("History" 102). What we see, then, in the early 1890s is the *inclusion* of

women in the oratorical contests; and in the late 1890s and early 1900s we find the *expansion* of oratory within the curriculum.[6]

The literary societies and debating clubs were integral to university life as well. At Nebraska, women students participated from the first days in literary societies, when "The Faculty, on petition by the students, in 1871, for leave to form a literary society open *to both boys and girls*, gave its consent on condition that the society should adjourn at 9:30 pm" (Caldwell, "The Literary Societies" 32, my emphasis). Literary society meetings included recitations, declamations, essays, debates, musical numbers, and miscellaneous business. Most likely, many of the essay readings were themes that students had written for required coursework. During the 1880s, debating clubs were formed within the literary societies to offer more organized practice for this activity. In 1881, The Palladian Boys Debating Club was organized and in 1884 the Palladian Girls Debating Club was organized (A. Johnson 75-77). Anne Johnson comments on the popularity of the debating clubs by noting that for the published membership list of the 1886 Palladian Girls Debating Club, "twenty-two girls were on that roster for a year when the university had only twenty-two graduating seniors" (77). Again, we see women participants increasing rather than limiting the popularity of this campus activity.

During the 1890s, the literary societies began to lose their prominence to a widening elective system. Writing in 1894 for the quarter-centennial issue of the *Sombrero*, Professor Caldwell summarizes the growth of the literary societies from the earliest days and the challenges they faced in the mid-1890s:

> For the first ten years or more of the University's life the literary societies furnished practically all the literary culture that the student received. At the

> present time the class-room offers instruction in public speaking, in debating, in essay writing, in oratory. Formerly all this work had to be done, if done at all, in the societies. This changed condition has lessened relatively the importance of the societies as formerly organized, and weakened the interest of the students in them. Yet they have still a real work to perform, and it is now the function of the society leaders to find that work and to keep the societies in harmony with the changed conditions. ("The Literary Societies" 34)

According to Caldwell, literary societies decreased in importance because an expanding curriculum and elective system offered instruction in the kinds of activities that once dominated the society's agenda and programs, not because women's participation changed the nature of their meetings.

As literary societies began to lose ground on campus during the 1890s, debate—which began as a result of the societies—gained momentum and popularity. In 1892 Herbert Bates established a University Debating Club open to all students (A. Johnson 99). Campus and community interest were intense. The *Hesperian* as well as the Lincoln newspapers regularly announced and reported on the debates, which by the mid 1890s had become intercollegiate. By 1901, the University Debating Board (functioning like an athletic board) was established, and Professor Miller Moore Fogg joined the faculty and implemented a debating "system" into the curriculum (A. Johnson 99-103). The University Catalogue for 1903-04 indicates a division in the English department into "the department of English language and literature" and "the department of rhetoric" (A. Johnson 19). By 1906, debate held a place of prominence as an extra-curricular activity but also within the curriculum. Anne Johnson makes particular note of the expansion and "specialization of courses particularly in the area of argumentation and debate," and she concludes that "debate developed into unprecedented importance during the first decade

of the twentieth century" (141). Clearly, in terms of oratory and debate, something different was going on at the University of Nebraska during the turn of the century than at other universities and colleges. Women did not pose a threat to the popularity of oratory and debate; rather, they were active participants in these courses and extra-curricular activities and more likely helped to secure the place of oratory and debate on campus and in the curriculum well into the twentieth century.

Conclusions

What was the curricular, classroom, and campus culture like when Annie was a student at the University of Nebraska? The evidence I have gathered into this chapter attempts to offer a kind of textured background, or three-dimensional portrait, of the University during the 1890s. Like many universities and colleges in the United States, Nebraska experienced dramatic curriculum shifts during the final decades of the nineteenth century that reflected trends established by Harvard and German universities. An elective system replaced the classical course of study, and rhetorical training evolved in varying degrees as a required course but also within the new literature, oratory, and debate electives. As we look at Annie's themes and writing pieces in the following chapters, we will see the structure of many of them fitting neatly into the modes of writing that nineteenth-century rhetoricians theorized and promoted in their textbooks and treatises. From the reports of Lucius Sherman and Ebenezer Hunt we can be reasonably confident that the English department's writing instruction stressed belletristic principles aimed at teaching students "the art of exact thinking." At the same time, these reports also emphasize a new and progressive interest in pedagogy that enabled students

to think for themselves and not be the repository for the "cold, dead words of a writer on style or rhetoric." The fervor with which the two men most responsible for writing instruction during the 1870s and 1880s derided textbook instruction is remarkable. As student enrollment grew during the 1890s and Herbert Bates joined the faculty, Annie's character sketch from this period demonstrates just how influential an instructor's pedagogy and comments can be for students. Again the Hunt and Sherman reports indicate that the department valued and tried to increase interaction between students and instructors. This interaction took place in the classroom and off campus as Annie's publications in the *Hesperian* and her participation in the English club's community of scholars emphasize. Furthermore, the popularity and importance of oratory and debate, and women's participation in these courses and extra-curricular contests during a period when they were on the decline at many universities, suggest a unique campus climate that viewed argumentation, debate, and oratorical training as integral aspects of rhetorical education and the college experience.

Finally, into this mosaic of writing theory, nineteenth-century pedagogy, university histories, curriculum reports, *Hesperian* articles, and character sketches enters the voice of Annie Prey. As a student during the 1890s, she is uniquely situated within a cultural context that will potentially value her experiences, encourage her goals, promote narrative writing, and affirm her identity as a female college student and active participant in campus life.

CHAPTER THREE

Annie Prey's Student Writing: Gendered Experience and Academic Writing

"I have also been increasingly convinced of something many others know well—that the more one goes into a subject, the more difficult it is to make flat and unequivocal statements; that truth is not only deep but complex, and almost never complete. In the end, it is only a close, personal reading of the works themselves that will bring a reader near to the writer's reality."

--Bernice Slote, preface to *April Twilights (1903): Poems by Willa Cather*

At the heart of this dissertation, my goal is to accomplish what Bernice Slote describes in the above passage—to recognize the complexity and partiality of my project while striving to come as near as possible to Annie's reality through a close and personal reading of her work. My analysis of Annie's papers across the first of three sites of inquiry—her undergraduate work—has several purposes. First, I discuss the availability of occasions for women students at the University of Nebraska to write about female experience by demonstrating how Annie integrates personal and gendered experiences into her writing assignments; secondly, I explore how Annie both contests and reproduces cultural norms and expectations in her student papers; and thirdly, I consider the unique interplay between writer, audience, gender, and genre by looking specifically at Annie's ability to inscribe female experience into the genre of "criticism."

Personal Experience and "Rhetorical Acumen"

As discussed in chapter two, throughout her undergraduate years, Annie was situated within a university culture and curriculum that valued both independent thought and the interaction between student and instructor. Additionally, the Sherman and Hunt reports suggest that narrative techniques and personal experience were important principles in Nebraska's writing and rhetoric curriculum. As a student immersed in

Nebraska's curriculum and extra-curricular culture, Annie's student papers exhibit what Carol Mattingly refers to as "rhetorical acumen," a phrase I mention in chapter one and which offers a helpful way to think about the ethos Annie establishes as a writer. In "Telling Evidence: Rethinking What Counts in Rhetoric," Mattingly writes that with "additional time to delve deeply into extant texts of nineteenth-century culture, and the dedicated efforts to create a fair and accurate understanding of nineteenth-century women's rhetorical patterns, we can construct a more comprehensive and authentic tradition" (104). Mattingly asserts that we can "learn to appreciate the many women who were rhetorically effective" (104) by examining "evidence not typically considered in determining *rhetorical acumen*" (105, my emphasis). When I examine Annie's papers, a collection which I believe offers scholars a unique glimpse into nineteenth-century culture and writing instruction, the main question I bring to them is how did Annie gain rhetorical acumen? How did she maintain a sense of self and identity in writing *and* meet the expectations of academic writing? What strategies did she use to write effectively and with authority while constructing essays and arguments?

A common strategy I see Annie applying across genres and to varying degrees during her undergraduate years (and as a graduate student and teacher in South Dakota) reflects Hindman's notion of "embodied rhetoric." By grounding her work in personal experience and—as many of her college essays will demonstrate—*gendered* experience, Annie wrote with authority and gained the rhetorical acumen necessary to construct effective arguments. What I call Annie's "turn to the personal" is an important writerly move. Before moving into my analysis of the undergraduate papers, I would like to

consider how two poems that Annie wrote during very different periods of her life reflect the importance of using experience to locate oneself within the act of interpretation.

Two Poems and an Epic: Turning Toward the Personal

In the introduction to *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*, editors Gesa Kirsch and Liz Rohan discuss the role of serendipity in the research narratives included in their collection, drawing attention to how several contributing scholars describe a process of "being attentive to unexpected leads or chance encounters that can enrich a research project as well as change its direction and scope" (2). I located Annie's poem, "The Passing of Scyld," during one such chance encounter. I was in the archives scrolling through the University of Nebraska's 1896 issues of *The Hesperian* (on microfilm), when I came across her poem about Scyld. I made a copy of the poem and brought it home with me, but it was not until I read the poem more closely weeks later that I realized there were some important connections between "The Passing of Scyld" and "Vista," a poem I had copied from the Jorgensen files a couple years earlier and used in an essay I wrote for my comprehensive exam portfolio. Both poems follow.

THE PASSING OF SCYLD
Scyld, son of the sea,
Cradled and rocked to rest
On her drowsy mother breast,
    Lonely thy craft came in;
    Lonely thy sail had been;
    So should thy going be.

Pale under thy crown,
Lulled by the dizzy reel
Of the wave beneath the keel,
    Strange that you wished a grave
    Rocked by the changing wave
    Out on the sea alone.

None could thy coming trace;
None knew thy home or kin
Thou that the tide swept in;
Thou by the sea wind blown
Out to the wide unknown,--
There is thy resting place.

Scyld, son of the sea,
Cradled and hushed to rest,
On her drowsy mother breast,--
Lonely my craft came in,
Lonely my life has been,
How shall my going be?

--ANNIE PREY

(from *The Hesperian*, Oct. 15th, 1896)

VISTA

Out through the iron portals
Crusted deep with the red rust
Of long time's slow decay
I look across a valley, grey with mist,
And see the perpetual hills
Of my eternal destiny.

How shall I leave this safe, this cool retreat.
How shall I close the door behind,
And say good bye.
How shall I reach those hills so far away.
How can I bear to go?
God knows, not I.

"Annie's last poem, read at her funeral service, Sorum High School Building, Sunday, March 21 [1937]."

Initially, when I read the poems side by side, I was struck by their concluding lines. In the Scyld poem, Annie turns from her contemplation of Scyld's passing to consider her own life's passing, wondering "How shall my going be?" And in "Vista," Annie again considers her own death but in a slightly different way. Theodore included "Vista" in the obituary (which actually reads more like a eulogy) that he wrote after her

death and that was read at her funeral service; Theodore writes that Annie "seemed to have a feeling beforehand that her day was at hand, and she gave expression, in a little poem, to a feeling of awe and wonderment." Possibly aware that she is on the threshold of leaving this life, Annie wonders "How can I bear to go? / God knows, not I." Written forty years later, the poem "Vista" seems to take up where "The Passing of Scyld" left off, with Annie questioning not how her passing will be but rather how to accept that her passing must be.

There is more to these two poems, however, than the connection between their endings. When Annie moves from reflecting on Scyld's passing to considering her own death at the end of the "The Passing of Scyld," she performs a turn toward the personal that resembles a strategy she uses in many of her undergraduate student essays. Scyld's story opens the epic poem *Beowulf*, and, like most epics, *Beowulf* possesses the mythical quality of being far removed from the reader or listener's experience in both time and space even as it addresses universal themes that connect with the reader, such as death, journey, and heroism. According to Danish legend, Scyld was a warrior king who founded the Danish ruling house. The Beowulf poet makes reference to Scyld's arrival on Danish soil as a small child who had been set upon the ocean by an unknown people and carried by waves to the land of the Danes, seemingly from nowhere. Before his death Scyld instructed the Danes to send him back to the ocean after his passing; the Danes did so, placing him in a craft loaded with weapons and treasure. In this translation by Seamus Heaney, the Beowulf poet writes:

> I never heard before of a ship so well furbished
> with battle tackle, bladed weapons

> and coats of mail. The massed treasure
> was loaded on top of him: it would travel far
> on out into the ocean's sway.
> They decked his body no less bountifully
> with offerings than those first ones did
> who cast him away when he was a child
> and launched him alone out over the waves.
> And they set a gold standard up
> high above his head and let him drift
> to wind and tide, bewailing him
> and mourning their loss. (Heaney 5)

"The Passing of Scyld" was published in the *Hesperian* during Annie's final year as an undergraduate at Nebraska, and it is highly plausible that Annie would have been familiar with *Beowulf* and the story of Scyld through Nebraska's English curriculum. Heaney writes that in general, "For generations of undergraduates, academic study of the poem was . . . a matter of construing the meaning, getting a grip on the grammar and vocabulary of Anglo-Saxon, and being able to recognize, translate, and comment upon random extracts which were presented in the examinations" (x). At Nebraska, instructors used *Beowulf* to study Anglo-Saxon as a language and precursor to Middle English and to introduce students to a literary study of themes and heroism. In his 1884 report to the Chancellor, Sherman writes that "In the sophomore year Anglo-Saxon is studied, up to the middle of the second term, in the prose of AElfric and AElfred, and in Caedmon and Beowulf" (A. Johnson 123). And in his "English Literature" report for Caldwell's *Education in Nebraska*, Sherman notes that "Of the Beowulf the first 2,000 lines of the poem are generally gone over in course, with special reference to the spirit of the Scandinavian race in its heroic age . . . it is seldom a student is found who does not clearly apprehend this elementary literature of the emotions, and find himself prepared to

analyze the more complex spiritual phenomena of later times" (105). In "The Passing of Scyld," Annie makes clear through her reflection on death at least one aspect of how she understood and was able to "apprehend" the literary "emotions" of *Beowulf.* Forty years later, in "Vista," we see a reconfiguration of the ocean imagery from "Scyld" as it is applied to the prairie and used for yet another reflection on death. Annie looks "across a valley, grey with mist" and describes a prairie landscape whose grasslands and "perpetual hills" might have seemed and felt as rolling as "the ocean's sway" that carried the child Scyld, alone, to the land of the Danes, returning him to an unknown place after death.

The thematic connections between *Beowulf,* "The Passing of Scyld," and "Vista" make visible Annie's use of the kind of "peripheral vision" that Bateson describes as integral to achieving insight through learning. Remember that in chapter one Bateson defines insight as "setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by letting them speak to one another" (14). As an undergraduate student, Annie turns the unfamiliar seascape setting of *Beowulf* into a reflection on her own death, making personal an epic quite removed in time and space from her experiences as a female, Midwestern college student. At the end of her life, she imagines once again the landscape of death and afterlife, composing a final reflection on her own passing across a misty, grey valley to "those hills so far away." What evidence, then, do we have of Annie applying a similar style of peripheral vision to her persuasive writing? How does her turn to the personal impact her academic writing? More specifically, how does she develop and deploy a rhetorical strategy located in her experiences and identity as a young woman in order to construct credible and forceful arguments?

Gendered Experience and the Cultural Narrative of Progress

During her first semester of college in 1892, Annie wrote a narrative that demonstrates her readiness to incorporate the personal and gendered experiences of her childhood into an essay about the cultural notion of progress. The narrative illustrates the way she negotiates her lived experiences with the expectations of academic writing, and the essay, along with others like it, is also evidence that Nebraska's curriculum allowed women students multiple opportunities to write about female experience. The narrative is titled "The Evolution of a Playhouse" and reflects Annie's understanding of the social value of *order* as well as the cultural notion of *progress.* Annie opens the essay with an immediate reference to progress and the assertion that a child leaves old ways and moves toward "newer and better ways" as she grows older. Annie uses her girlhood experiences with playhouses to illustrate "the law of progress." The introduction follows:

> In a child's world, as in a man's world, the law of progress is obeyed. It seems indeed that a child leaves old ways for newer and better ways more readily than a man. A woman will do her work as her mother taught her, a man will know no other way than the way his father had, but a child, having no prejudices, welcomes any change and is delighted with anything new. At least this was true in my own childhood. I outgrew rag babies when I outgrew my cradle. I tired of a new doll before the color was worn off her cheeks or the wax rubbed off her nose. In my sixth year I scorned such games as "Ring around a Rosy" and "Here we go round the mulberry bush." In my playhouses I can trace from the very first a steady growth.

The narrative proceeds, through the next ten paragraphs, to trace and develop the "steady growth" that Annie and her sister experience as their playhouses evolve from simple houses, "a corner of the kitchen partitioned off by laying chairs where we imagined the walls to be," to more complex, outdoor playhouses that could be expanded when the girls "discovered that the house needed enlarging and refurnishing." Annie describes with

great detail how she and her sister experimented with making dishes first from paper and then, when they discovered that paper dishes blew away too easily outdoors, from clay. She describes this process as "The first step towards progress" and is careful throughout the essay to make connections for the reader between growth, the increasing complexity of her and her sister's play, and progress. The following paragraph (which is placed two paragraphs before the conclusion) demonstrates Annie's careful use of detail to create a picture in the reader's mind, her use of transitions to connect with and develop her theme of progress, and her use of foreshadowing to hint at the theme of childhood's passing that she will develop in her conclusion.

> One of the prettiest playhouses coming *at this stage of progress* was one that we made one autumn afternoon in the woods. The house was laid out on the grass with crooked sticks and old fence rails. A large hollow tree stump made a very good fireplace and was all the better because it was festooned with a wild ivy vine, whose leaves had been turned red and yellow by an early frost. . . . Although our only furniture was several pieces of logs for seats and a board set on four stakes for a table, and although we had nothing for dinner but wild grapes sweetened by the frost, a few plums of the variety that never gets ripe, and some walnuts that were still green, we managed to be happy. We could laugh even if our lips were puckered with the plums and our teeth stained blue with the grapes. We were not vain enough to care because our hands were colored by the walnut hulls and our clothes full of burrs known to us by the suggestive names of "Devil's pitchforks" and "Beggar's lice." And so it was with a feeling of regret that we left our play house when the sun went down, and trudged home with heavy feet carrying with us what we could of our decorations. (my emphasis)

As Annie moves through the details and descriptions of this autumn playhouse, she concludes with the "feeling of regret" she and her sister experience at dusk as they carry remnants of the day's play home with them. Through this pastoral move, Annie uses the season of autumn and nature's final flourish of color to reflect the happy days of childhood but also to indicate their passing as well. The narrative goes on to describe one

last playhouse in the woods that was built "in the shallows of a small stream" with walls made of small stones and a table of flat rock; the house was eventually "demolished by water," by the stream's ripples. It is at this point that Annie describes in the final two paragraphs a change from imaginary playhouses to the reality of "real" housework. She explains this transition in the following excerpt:

> The truth was forced inot [sic] our minds that our playhouses, real as we might imagine them, were after all only playthings. We began to wish to try real cooking and cleaning. We still had play dinners but now we begged leave to cook them on the kitchen stove and serve them on the kitchen table in real dishes. It was no fun now to get dinners unless we could boil the potatoes in a tin can and fry the meat in the tin can cover. We even tried to bake our own biscuits but these were such dismal failures that we concluded to borrow our bread.
>
> This was the last stage of our playhouse for in some mysterious way we had learned to cook and to sweep. Knowing these things we were considered no longer children and our time for playhouses was over.

Annie's conclusion is swift, almost as quick and concise as the move from childhood to adulthood. The transition she makes is, in some ways, fascinating for me as a writing teacher to read. She describes the truth of childhood's passing as being "forced" into her and her sister's minds yet does not attribute the process to any active agent other than the "mysterious way" to which she refers in the final paragraph. Equally as interesting is the fact that this forced truth becomes in the very next sentence the desire or "wish" of her and her sister. Reading this piece from my (postmodern) vantage point, I want to ask her to explore that tension more, to resist presenting such a tidy and unified position. Yet I also feel as though the piece is extremely successful, particularly when I view it as an example of the cultural notion of progress and a reflection on the theme of childhood's passing. Just as important, I enjoyed reading it very much. The narrative is full of energy, detail, examples, and descriptions; it proceeds chronologically as it traces the

theme of growth and progress through the various stages of imaginary play. The piece captures vivid moments and recreates them for the reader, presenting each example as part of a greater whole and thereby accomplishing a feeling in the reader (me) that these events occurred and were significant. The moral she presents even reflects my own experience with daughters whose imaginary playhouses, household roles, and daily chores are changing as they enter pre-teen years.

Both my desire to "problematize" Annie's subject position and my appreciation of this piece remind me of Thomas Newkirk's description of and warning against a kind of "developmental insensitivity that seeks to impose a middle-aged 'subjectivity' upon relatively young writers" (82). Based on his own experience researching archives and reading theory in relation to his and other instructors' classroom practices, Newkirk offers the following warning:

> I am frequently stunned by the goals some writing teachers set for their courses—for students to 'interrogate their subject position,' to understand how discourse 'writes' them. I think that it took me most of my undergraduate education to even begin to think in these self-critical terms. By contrast it seems simplistic to claim a place for observation, description, and dialogue. The very fact that 'naïve' is often the supreme term of rebuke suggests that acting young can be dangerous. (83)

Newkirk claims a place in pedagogy for observation, description, and dialogue, what he calls his "defense of pleasure" in writing. In his examination of postmodern theorists' critique of expressivist pedagogy, Newkirk considers the efficacy of viewing expressivists by "their capacity to enable students to write with commitment and pleasure, and indirectly to foster values we view as ethical" rather than by the "'truth of the stories'" that their students write (87). Furthermore, Newkirk writes that "it is

possible to argue that expressivism, with its emphasis on self-direction and personal uniqueness, can contribute to the exalted sense of agency that characterizes true revolutionaries" (89). In other words, Newkirk suggests that what matters most in a writing classroom may not necessarily be prompting students to recognize the ways they are culturally situated and socially constructed; what matters most may first be getting students to realize that writing is an endeavor to which they may commit themselves with passion and pleasure, and it is this kind of commitment that may eventually contribute to a student writer's sense of "self-direction" and agency.

In his 1902 report on "English" for Caldwell's *Education in Nebraska*, Sherman offers some similar insights about the challenges of getting students to write with commitment and to experience the kind of "agency" that Newkirk describes. In the following excerpt, Sherman describes his experience with beginning student writers who lack confidence:

> The obstacle that stands most in the way of the beginner in English composition is a lack of confidence in his ability to do anything deserving of credit. If this lack of confidence be not to some extent overcome, the student looks upon each exercise as a hopeless task. His exercises are perfunctorily done, often constructed of thought admittedly of no purpose, the writer's only object being to illustrate some rule of rhetoric . . . (108)

Sherman recognizes that a primary concern for writing instructors is to help students overcome what he perceives as a lack of confidence that prevents them from fully investing themselves in their writing. Without confidence, writing is "perfunctorily done"—completed quickly and without much thought in order to fulfill a requirement. To help beginning writers gain confidence, Sherman describes a pedagogy which emphasizes the use of personal experience for subject matter:

> The first year student, however, is usually safe as to his impressions. What he has seen with his eyes or in imagination he is ready and willing to tell. The result may lack in completeness, may be crude in art and finish, but the student feels that he has done something which he need not retract nor apologize for when he becomes older and wiser. (108)

The above excerpt resembles Newkirk's pedagogy and assessment of beginning writers in several ways. First Sherman claims an important place for observation and description in writing pedagogy—what the student writer "has seen with his eyes . . . he is ready and willing to tell." Next, the most important aspect of writing at this stage is not the finished product but rather the student's feeling of having invested him or herself in the writing itself, in "something which he need not retract nor apologize for when he becomes older and wiser." Confidence is a key element in the writing process, and it is the job of the writing instructor to tap into and develop this confidence. Finally, Sherman's reference to students becoming "older and wiser" reflects Newkirk's suggestion that instructors recognize where students are developmentally and resist imposing postmodern self-critical terms on beginning writers. Sherman seems to understand that if a student returns to a piece of writing later in life and from a different perspective, he may recognize its "lack in completeness" yet still be satisfied with its content.

In the 1902 "English" report, Sherman also explains how his ideas about beginning writers translate into the curriculum. He writes that for the first year student,

> The main problems considered are artistic description of places and of persons, the means of marking the passage of time or the occurrence of events, and the ways by which mood and character are indicated. Each of these is divided into various aspects, and themes intended to illustrate these are written and criticised (sic). It is usual to sum up the work of the course by the production of a good character sketch or short story." (108)

Without stretching my imagination too much, I can see how Annie might produce "The Evolution of a Playhouse" within a pedagogy that asked students to write from their own impressions and experiences and that gave students practice with different narrative techniques for description and marking "the passage of time." And, allowing myself to work my imagination a bit more, I wonder if years later, older and wiser after having watched her own children experience similar rights of passage with childhood play, Annie might have appreciated yet paused at the swiftness of the change she describes from imaginary playhouses to the realities and challenges of maintaining a real household.

Without any kind of author's note or description by Annie of her writing process, I cannot say what it was like for her to write this kind of piece, whether she felt constrained or liberated, frustrated or engaged, disinterested or challenged. But it seems to me that she was doing important work here. The assignment and instruction which prompted this writing piece gave Annie an opportunity to explore her experiences and memories and to link them with the universal theme of childhood's passing. While I cannot conclude that Annie gained a better understanding of how notions of childhood, growth, and progress manifested themselves in her own life, I believe I can assert that she made significant connections between her life experiences and universal themes that many writers over time have valued. Through her process of ordering and arranging memories, she tests "the law of progress" and the theme of childhood's passing against her own experiences and ultimately constructs her recollections as representative of the larger cultural narrative of progress at the expense of loss (in this case, childhood and

imagination). While her narrative does not rewrite the cultural script for the law of progress, it is nonetheless an important site for her to do the work of making meaning at the intersection of writing instruction, personal experience, and the cultural narrative of progress.

Student Writing as a Site for Contesting and Reproducing Culture

As Annie moves through her English studies at the University of Nebraska, not all of her narratives and themes will reflect the prevailing cultural norms and expectations in the way that "The Evolution of a Playhouse" does. In her study of student papers written for the Platteville Normal School in southwestern Wisconsin, Kathryn Fitzgerald describes a process whereby students both reproduce and contest cultural norms through academic writing. Fitzgerald writes:

> Writing done in a school setting is primarily the material product of institutional, political, and cultural negotiations, but it can be more than that. It can also be a process whereby the individual writer in relation to the cultural community contests, reproduces, and contributes to its hegemonic perceptions and representations. And more than that, it can be a means by which students explore, extend, and sometimes circumscribe their own communal identities. (274)

Many of Annie's student papers offer readers a glimpse into the kind of "cultural work" that both reproduces and contests what Fitzgerald calls hegemonic perceptions and representations. In "The Platteville Papers," Fitzgerald extends Jane Tompkins' use of the phrase "cultural work" in connection with popular literature to her analysis of the 1898 student papers. For my examination of Annie's work, I borrow Fitzgerald's use of the phrase "cultural work" as a lens for looking closely at two writing pieces that do the work of both reproducing and contesting culture.

Annie wrote the first piece, titled "A Glance at Labor" and dated December 19, 1892, during the same semester as "The Evolution of a Playhouse," yet "A Glance at Labor" is very different from the narrative on childhood playhouses. "A Glance at Labor" is an argumentative piece, written to examine labor issues through example and propose broad changes in attitude about the relationship between labor, opportunity, and happiness. Annie begins her essay with this introduction:

> I have heard it said that for a man to have perfect happiness is for him to have three things: something to do, something to hope for, and someone to love. Whether or not all of these will produce happiness or whether all are necessary to happiness, is not to be discussed, for some people can be happy where others would be miserable, and some will be miserable under any conditions. It is generally conceded, however, that a man cannot be really happy for any length of time without some kind of employment.

Annie goes on to argue that for many individuals employment leads to poor and wretched working conditions of which more fortunate people rarely take notice. She develops this idea first through the following historical example:

> The brighter side of the Middle Ages has been so often and so vividly described that we have almost come to think that all were knights and ladies then, and we lose sight of the fact that there must have been worried cooks and frightened serving maids before the grand dinners were over, and that there may have been pale starved sewing girls in order that the fine ladies might appear in stitched linen and ruffled silk. We forget the misery and poverty that caused the terrible "Black Death"; we forget the oppression and injustice that resulted in the bloody uprisings of the laboring men in England; and we remember only the splendor of Elizabeth's court and the Norman castles.

Annie discusses popular representations of the Middle Ages and contests the way these images ignore the realities of most people's lives during that time. Her writing forcefully leads the reader's attention away from knights and ladies and toward the starvation, misery, poverty, disease, oppression and injustice that existed to maintain the "grand

dinners" and "splendor of Elizabeth's court." When Annie turns to the topic of American history, she continues the work of contesting cultural representations, but she also perpetuates cultural stereotypes. In the following paragraph, Annie presents an analysis very similar in structure to her Middle Ages example; she begins with the cultural images of the colonial period and then describes how these images displace the realities of working people. She writes:

> Even in our own Country we have no clear knowledge of what the position of the laboring people has been or is now. We have the impression that colony life was a compound of knee breeches, powdered wigs, and old wine. We repeatedly forget that the colonists endured constant hardship and danger, that their children sometimes went hungry and that their wives were tortured by an ever present fear because of the savages living in a wilderness, which sometimes closed up even to the very door of their roughly built houses. The phrase "plantation life" conjures up before us gentlemanly masters and refined ladies, immense kitchens and rollicking slave merry-makings. It is only when it is brought forcibly to our notice that we cringe from the blows that fell upon the shoulders of the slaves or that we hear the cries of children sold from home, and the sobs of wives whose husbands have gone "down the Mississippi."

This passage is more complex than the Middle Ages example and asks us as readers to consider the kinds of alternative discourses that may and may not have been available to Annie. Annie describes a cultural "forgetting" of the hardships colonists and slaves endured throughout the history of "our own Country." Yet even as she contests this forgetting she participates in perpetuating stereotypes and reproducing the cultural forgetting of Native Americans, "the savages living in a wilderness." Annie does not mention the conditions under which they labored, erasing their participation in this land's history and relegating them to a fear-producing subject position that made the colonists' labor and lives more difficult. One possible way to read this passage is that discourse surrounding discrimination against African Americans and not necessarily Native

Americans was more readily available to Annie, prompting her to contest some cultural perceptions but not others.

Labor reform, including factory conditions, the length of the work day, and child labor, was an important and much debated political issue at the end of the nineteenth century. That Annie writes a lengthy essay on this issue demonstrates that students were grappling with important political questions in their writing courses. In her conclusion, Annie argues specifically for greater sympathy, encouragement, help, and education for laborers as people consider the "still unsettled labor question." Yet in this last paragraph she also makes a contradictory move similar to the one above about the colonists. As she begins her conclusion, Annie connects back to her introduction and writes again of the satisfaction that should but usually does not accompany work:

> We forget too that every person has some one thing that he can do better than anything else, and that unless each one finds that work, he must be not only unsatisfied but wasting his time. We know but cannot continually keep in our minds the fact that only one out of many of our acquaintances can afford, either from lack of money or lack of time, to do the work for which he is especially fitted. Many cannot educate themselves; some are held back by lack of self confidence and some never find their life work. Men work at cutting stone or driving nails when they are hungry for intellectual food. But they must live and they have no[t] the business ability to become rich in a year. . . . Girls do kitchen work, when if they had only been able to educate themselves, they would be successful teachers. Women wash and bake bread when they should be editing a paper or writing a book.

In this passage Annie holds the position that many workers subsist on manual labor in order to live and make ends meet when they would rather receive an education and find better, more satisfying work. When Annie brings to mind the workers who labor because they have so few choices in life, she implicitly reminds readers of a class structure that limits many individuals' access to opportunity. On the other hand, Annie privileges

intellectual work over manual labor and reinscribes a class division that affords status to individuals with access to education. And as she contests girls doing kitchen work, she reproduces the notion that teaching is culturally acceptable work for women outside the home. Annie will go on after college to teach for most of her adult life, so she may be drawing from her own aspirations here. In the last sentence, however, Annie considers more diverse professions for women when she suggests they could be editing and writing rather than washing and baking bread, thereby expanding women's opportunities beyond teaching into occupations such as journalism and professional writing.

With "A Glance at Labor," Annie provides examples from the Middle Ages, the colonial era, and her own understanding of the satisfaction of intellectual work in order to argue for labor reform. She rejects the popular images of splendor that create a misleading portrait of the Middle Ages and in this way participates in what we as twenty-first century readers may consider a kind of feminist work that seeks to make visible the lives of women and laborers whose stories have been erased from the cultural and historical record. However, Annie's perpetuation of other stereotypes demonstrates the complexity of the writing process itself and may even be an example of the challenges students face when examining cultural and historical moments more closely connected to themselves. In this way, experience places some limitations on interpretation.

A second piece which illustrates how Annie contests some cultural representations at the same time that she reproduces others is a satire called "The Benefits that Come to the Girl who does her own Sewing." This piece is not dated but it does include a formal outline and the instructor's comments and grade. Annie establishes in

her introduction the proposition that girls should sew their own clothes, a claim that she will undercut and disprove by her conclusion through the use of satire. She begins:

> It has only been lately that anyone has dared to support the idea that girls of moderate income may with perfect right delegate their dressmaking to anyone else. It has always seemed best to well balanced minds that every girl should not only learn how to make her own dresses, but should actually make them. Everybody is willing to admit that rich girls who have no necessity for working may hire dressmakers by the dozens if they see fit; but poor girls who work for their own living ought to see to their own sewing, they ought to do as their grandmothers did before them, spin and weave and sew.

Annie's opening immediately draws readers into issues of class and gender as she makes distinctions among poor girls, girls of moderate income, and rich girls. In this way, she reproduces a class structure that seems obvious and fitting "to well balanced minds," yet she will go on to make the activity of sewing one's own clothes, particularly for working class girls, seem absurd. She breaks down the steps for sewing into several tedious stages, ostensibly asserting that the process is beneficial to the imagination, for training hands and eyes, and even for improving one's faith and patience. The detailed account of the process is a satirical embellishment that, as the instructor notes on the paper itself, is "occasionally boiling over the rim of rhetorical restraint." Annie's satire is evident in the following paragraph:

> And sewing is really better to train a woman's faith than going to Sunday School. She takes tissue paper patterns that look very much as if they had been cut out by pupils in the institute for the weak-minded. And she cuts out her cloth by them, even sews it up, all the time upheld by a sublime faith that they are going to work. They hardly ever do work but she never finds this out till she tries the dress on, so this does not prevent, in any particular degree, the healthful exercise of her faculty for believing things. In fact at the end of a long day at dressmaking she is almost capable of believing everything, from predestination to universalism, it doesn't matter what, just so she gets to bed in time to get six hours sleep before another day of it.

As Annie compares sewing to faith, she does a kind of cultural work which attempts to dismantle the stereotypical notion that girls profit financially, mentally, and emotionally from sewing their own clothes. The analogy ultimately suggests that believing in the merits of sewing one's own clothes is as ridiculous as believing in the religious doctrines of predestination and universalism, principles presumably at odds with her Christian beliefs. However, as Annie contests the cultural myth of sewing one's clothes by hand, she also reinscribes cultural stereotypes of mental illness; to a reader such as myself coming to this material from a twenty-first century vantage point, her comment about paper patterns resembling work done by pupils in the "institute for the weak-minded" reinforces negative images of people living with mental illness or disabilities.

This piece concludes with a final satiric moment that draws the reader's attention once again to issues of class: "Girls may have other work that would pay them just as well as saving dressmakers fees, but they miss the exhilaration, the excitement, the pleasure, the training. Oh, they miss a good deal if they hire their dresses made!" Here Annie's final exaggeration of the exhilaration, excitement, pleasure and training that accompanies sewing one's own dresses once again undercuts the traditional belief that doing things by hand is good for a person. The satire leaves me with the understanding that the practical limits and restraints of time placed on working girls is far more real and pressing than the overstated "benefits that come to the girl who does her own sewing." But, like her instructor, I am also left with the feeling that perhaps this piece is "boiling over the rim of rhetorical restraint"—that her satire achieves its goal at the expense of

individuals living with mental illness and those with religious beliefs different than her own.

The three essays I have analyzed—Annie's satire on sewing, her essay on labor, and her narrative on childhood playhouses—are examples of how Annie used personal experience to successfully meet the requirements of academic writing. As in the poem about Scyld, in these writing pieces Annie makes a turn to the personal in order to write with confidence and authority. She inserts her own gendered experience with playhouses, intellectual work, and sewing into cultural, political, and historical scripts, thereby making meaning from the ways her memories and experiences intersect with issues such as progressivism, labor, religion, and class privilege. What Annie "has seen with her own eye," to borrow Sherman's phrase, she is able to incorporate into her writing as material evidence from which to advance a narrative, to draw conclusions, and even to experiment with satire as a genre. In all of these pieces, Annie draws attention to the self doing the writing, thereby employing the kind of embodied rhetoric that Hindman advocates for current academic scholarship. When I read Annie's papers for what they can reveal about nineteenth-century writing instruction, I find that much more is going on than simply a transcription process. The goal for these writing pieces does not seem to be to demonstrate an understanding of grammar, style, and patterns of arrangement. Rather, Annie tests cultural scripts against her own experiences, she experiments with language and tone, and she does what so many students today do in writing courses—she both contests and reproduces cultural representations as she constructs meaning through writing.

Audience and the Social Dimension of Student Writing: Developing Critical Judgment through the Junior Theme

In addition to offering evidence of one student constructing meaning through writing, Annie's papers also illustrate how audience played an important role in making meaning through the practice of criticism during the junior year. In his 1890 report to the Board of Regents, Professor Hunt offers the following description of writing instruction during a student's junior year:

> --Junior Themes. I have found it necessary in some way to stimulate students to write their best. They had fallen into the habit of handing in to the professor in charge of the required rhetorical work papers that were simply filled in with words in order to meet requirements, which did not do justice to their capacity. What was required for the sole purpose of developing a capacity to write, in this way, failed to accomplish the desired end. To meet this difficulty, the students in the Junior class are required to prepare essays to be read before the class with class criticism as well as with open criticism before the class by the professor in charge. As students are unwilling to appear before the class with a poor production, the effect has been magical. The quality of the essays read before the Junior class would do credit to any institution in the land. The class meets every Wednesday. The average attendance per term during the year has been 33. (2)

Hunt's description of junior themes emphasizes the importance of having students read their work aloud to peers in order to improve the quality of their work. Hunt recognizes that having students write for an audience beyond the instructor impacts what is produced. In this sense, audience becomes an integral part of the rhetorical situation; as students considered their peers while constructing arguments, they went beyond writing "papers that were simply filled in with words in order to meet requirements" and instead produced essays that "would do credit to any institution in the land." The Jorgensen papers include a folder titled "Criticism of the Junior Theme" which contains three of Annie's pieces of "criticism" as well as a longer argumentative essay (prefaced by a

detailed outline) called "The Newspaper Habit. Incessant Reading of Newspapers Unfavorable to Certain of the Best Interests of Many Americans." This folder helps us understand how Hunt's pedagogy may have played out in his classroom and that of other instructors. The critiques and the essay about newspaper reading demonstrate that writing was a social rather than isolated activity. The critiques offer a glimpse into how notions of audience impacted writing, genre, and the construction of knowledge; they also reveal how Annie is able to once again use her experiences as a young woman to position herself to write with authority and gain rhetorical acumen.

In the following critique, Annie locates herself first in relation to the genre itself and then moves into the critique of her classmate's work. The subsequent paragraphs are taken from a two-page critique that Annie wrote about the work of a classmate, Mr. Roberts. From Annie's critique, we learn that Mr. Roberts wrote an essay about the best methods for teaching vocabulary to children. Annie writes:

> It is queer how many mistakes we can find when we are looking for them. "And," as the Duchess of Wonderland was in the habit of saying, "The moral of that is" to look for mistakes where we want to find them and not to look for them where we don't want to find them. In criticising this theme I really wanted to find some mistakes, so I did find them.
>
> There were two words misspelled "Whose" and "loose." For the correct spelling of the first of these words I refer to [sic] Mr. Roberts to his own theme twelve lines farther on where he spells the word all right. And the other he can look up in "one of the best and latest English Dictionaries" that he speaks about. I am too lazy to tell him how to spell it myself. . . .
>
> But these mistakes I mention not because I think it will do Mr. Roberts any good; I just want to let him down easy – a little bit, and then another little bit.
>
> Now I am going in for the second little bit. He uses the word "wholesome" with the noun "opportunity." My only objection to this is that I cannot make out what a "wholesome opportunity" is. I know something about wholesome bread for I've had to swallow quantities of it; I know a good deal about wholesome advice because I've had to swallow quantities of that too. But wholesome opportunities are quite beyond me. . . .

These paragraphs critique grammar and style and are typical of the format Annie follows in the other two criticisms, analyzing first grammatical features and then the argument itself. What strikes me as provocative in this passage is how Annie manages to inflect what I would presume to be a routine and objective assignment with her personality, sarcasm, humor, and word play. She deflates the importance of the exercise itself by beginning with a reference to "the Duchess of Wonderland" (a character from *Alice in Wonderland*) by implying that the success of a composition or a critique may have more to do with a reader's desire to find mistakes in it or not. In this way, she positions herself both within and against the genre by commenting on the process of criticism before beginning the practice of criticism. In the subsequent paragraphs, she makes reference to herself being "too lazy" to consult the "best and latest English Dictionaries" and thereby offer a correction for the writer's misspellings; she mentions her desire to let the writer (whom she later refers to as "a friend") down easily through her critique; and she makes a play on the word "wholesome" to critique Mr. Roberts' use of it.

In the second half of the critique, when Annie moves into her analysis of the argument, she draws attention once again to the requirements of the genre when she writes that "Here too I found faults – when I was looking for them." The main fault with the argument was that she "had considerable difficulty in finding just what the theme was arguing for," but later concludes that the "central idea is that special training in vocabulary should be given, just after the common school training, by a careful study of good authors." On a side note, Annie's reference to Mr. Roberts' solution for vocabulary training through the study of good authors gives us an idea of the educational and literacy

issues that students considered and debated during their rhetorical studies. Furthermore, Annie's conclusion to the critique is noteworthy. She writes:

> "And now my story's done" except for the statement, made necessary by a possible misunderstanding of my own feelings in the matter, that I don't especially like to criticise [sic] a Junior Theme. But in the language of Josiah Allen's wife or the late Andrew Jackson, I don't quite remember which, "I seen my duty an' I done it."

She makes clear in this final paragraph her resistance to the assignment and that she completes it out of a sense of "duty." Annie's juxtaposition of Andrew Jackson with Josiah Allen's wife and her reference to "the language" of one or the other is significant. The reference demonstrates an awareness of the social dimension of language and the power of both standard usage *and* nonstandard dialect. Josiah Allen's wife (whose fictitious first name is Samantha) is a pseudonym for the nineteenth-century author and humorist, Marietta Holley. Holley was immensely popular during the last decades of the nineteenth century, so much so that the popular press referred to her as a "Female Mark Twain" (Winter 1). She wrote about topics such as suffrage and temperance, using a phonetic transcription of upstate New York's country dialect through Samantha Allen's speech. Holley combined this dialect with satire and humor to demonstrate the absurdities of not being an advocate of women's rights (2). Annie appears to be imitating Holley with her use of the two quotes "'And now my story's done'" and "'I seen my duty an' I done it.'" The fact that she attributes the closing quote to either Josiah Allen's wife with her country dialect or President Andrew Jackson puts them on equal footing in a way that undercuts the cultural and political power generally associated with standard usage. Her closing sentence could be read as ridiculing the entire exercise and emptying

it of its importance, or as simply adding humor in the way that Samantha Allen would to make more interesting (and fun to write) an assignment she'd rather not complete. In either case, Annie uses the female character of a popular female writer and humorist to help make clear where she stands in relation to the genre of critique itself.

A curious intertextuality emerges in a second piece of criticism from her junior year. In this critique, Annie responds to a classmate's theme on the topic of newspapers, which is similar to an argumentative essay Annie had written earlier in the semester titled "The Newspaper Habit: Incessant Reading of Newspapers Unfavorable to Certain of the Best Interests of Many Americans." After discussing the writer's grammar and technique for several paragraphs, Annie moves into her critique of the argument and makes an important distinction between her classmate Mr. Ferguson's views and her own. She writes:

> I judged the argument beforehand from the title and thought that perhaps I was to have an opportunity to readjust my views on the "Newspaper Habit." I had an uneasy presentiment—entirely unwarranted I know—that Mr. Ferguson was going to answer *a theme that was read in this class a little while ago*, and which seemed so perfectly convincing to me. But I am very glad to be able to congratulate the other writer; Mr. Ferguson has not spoiled the former arguments at all, partly perhaps because he does not take up quite the same proposition. The other writer wrote on the excessive reading of newspapers. Mr. Ferguson treats the subject of the influence of newspapers as a whole. The other writer advocated skimming off the cream and eating that with the oatmeal of every day life; Mr. Ferguson says stir it all up and gulp it down; there's cream there. You are sure to get it, I suppose, if you swallow the whole thing. But I prefer to have my cream pure and feed the watery blue mild to the pigs, especially when there's quarts and quarts of cream going to waste in the librarys [sic] and book stores.(my emphasis)

This excerpt makes clear that students read their work aloud for criticism by students and the instructor as described by Hunt in his 1890 report to the Board of Regents. In this case, Annie uses her own theme on newspapers as a basis for comparison and therefore as

a way into her critique of Mr. Ferguson's argument. In her theme, "The Newspaper Habit," Annie argues that there are too many newspapers with too much general information and advertising and not enough coverage of politics, history, and science—the "cream" that is being watered down by miscellaneous fluff. From Annie's analysis we learn that Mr. Ferguson argues the opposite, that newspapers thrive because they are useful; in fact, the more newspapers a farmer reads the more intelligent he must be. In response to this argument, Annie writes:

> And the statement comes that you can make a safe estimate of the intelligence of a farmer by considering the number of his newspapers. I agree with this perfectly; if a farmer takes a dozen papers you do not need to ask to find out that his wife does the milking and slops the pigs and sells butter and eggs to keep the table going. It is the man that takes one or two good papers and reads them intelligently, that has a box hedge around his backyard and a nicklemounted harness for his buggy team.

The above excerpt illustrates Annie's method of contesting Mr. Ferguson's argument: she agrees with his argument that one can estimate a farmer's intelligence by the number of papers he reads, but she turns the argument around by explaining that the fewer papers a farmer reads the more intelligent he is. The farmer who reads less actually has time for his work, while the farmer who reads a dozen papers neglects his livelihood and leaves his wife to do what she can to make ends meet.

Annie's critiques of both Mr. Roberts and Mr. Ferguson are the result of a pedagogy which goes beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and rhetorical principles from instructor to student. They took place within a curriculum that viewed writing as a social act. Annie writes and reads aloud a theme about newspapers; Mr. Ferguson writes and reads aloud his theme about newspapers; and Annie writes a critique

about Mr. Ferguson's essay by first comparing it to her own work and then breaking down his argument. In addition, Annie's critiques have instructor comments on them—evidence that the instructor critiques the students' criticisms as well as their themes. One could imagine the standard "Criticism on Junior Theme" to be a formulaic assignment with little room for invention, creativity, or diversions. But Annie's papers demonstrate the possibility for a rich interplay and exchange of ideas—those read aloud in class and those responded to through writing. Even within the structure—and confines—of a standard critique, Annie employs the kind of embodied rhetoric that Hindman describes earlier in chapter one, using a feminist rhetorical strategy that positions her to write within and against a genre she does not care for. She draws on personal experience to argue her points—knowing what it's like to be the recipient of wholesome bread as well as wholesome advice but not wholesome opportunities. She plays with gender roles by imagining the wife who labors because of the newspaper-reading farmer's neglect. And finally, she exercises her own critical judgment by contesting the exercise in criticism itself.

Despite Annie's dislike of critiquing her peers' themes, her papers support the idea that writing instruction at the University of Nebraska included an important social dimension in which students wrote papers for an audience that went beyond the instructor and included their classmates. The junior year critiques, when examined along side the narratives, satires, and argumentative essays of other classes, reveal a course of rhetorical study that was more significant and productive than the passive transmission of grammatical structures and modes of discourse that broad overviews of our discipline

suggest were prevalent during this period. Although these features were important elements within the curriculum, Annie's actual writing pieces help us see that she produced a lot of interesting kinds of work. Annie's coursework, read within the context of the Hunt and Sherman reports and other curricular documents from the 1890s, make it possible for us to imagine, understand, and value how a course of study that emphasized narrative techniques, encouraged students to write from personal experience, and required students to read their work aloud to peers positioned Annie to continue to use and develop feminist rhetorical strategies as a graduate student and teacher.

CHAPTER FOUR

Toward a Feminist Rhetorical Strategy: Exploring "Certain Differences"

"But, lady, as women, what wisdom may be ours if not the philosophies of the kitchen? . . . And I often say, when observing these trivial details: had Aristotle prepared victuals, he would have written more."

--Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, from "La Respuesta" (1691)

After receiving her bachelor's degree, Annie continued her studies at Nebraska and earned a Master's degree in English. Her thesis is titled "Certain Differences as to Methods and Results Where Men and Women Writers Have Characterized Women," and on the title page Annie indicates that she submitted it to the "Faculty of the graduate school of the University of Nebraska" in June of 1902. Finding Annie's thesis was an exciting moment in my research process. The thesis was not housed in her archival box but rather, as a bound manuscript, stored with other theses dating back to the turn of the century. I had already read, analyzed, and written a paper about Annie's undergraduate writing when I realized that the University of Nebraska had a copy of Annie's thesis in storage. Locating Annie's thesis almost felt like a confirmation of the theories I had been developing about her rhetorical practices. The title alone—with its emphasis on women, men, and difference—prompted one of those, "You've got to be kidding me, is this for real?" reactions. The thesis was a piece of writing more substantial than anything I had yet analyzed, and it seemed to say with even more force and clarity that yes, this young woman who put playhouses, sewing, and other personal and gendered experiences to work in her academic writing was indeed foregrounding the ways personal experience shapes interpretation and constructs knowledge.

The thesis is a thirty-three page document. In this project, Annie analyzes a wide range of literary works by male and female authors to argue her central claim that men and women writers use different methods to develop their women characters. This work can be read as an extension of the rhetorical strategies she developed as an undergraduate; however, the thesis does have a different tone than her prior examples of argumentation in the way that she foregrounds difference, making explicit statements about how gender influences one's writing and reading practices. In the undergraduate papers, Annie deploys personal and gendered experience and narrative techniques to meet academic expectations, and this is encouraged—as we know from instructor documents—by Nebraska's curriculum. Now, as a graduate student, she is very straight forward about using gender as her lens for analysis. It is as though having opportunities to connect personal experience with academic writing as an undergraduate positioned her well to then analyze literature from the standpoint of a woman reader and woman writer. Furthermore, Annie wrote numerous short stories and poems as an undergraduate and continued to write creatively throughout her life. She was very familiar with methods of characterization from a woman writer's point of view.

As I read and analyzed Annie's thesis in preparation for dissertation writing, Annie became for me an important voice in a long line of women writers, rhetors, and scholars—past and present and in a variety of disciplines—who argue for the importance and validity of knowledge gained through experience. For example, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, a seventeenth-century Mexican nun and prolific writer, claims a particular kind of female wisdom that grows out of her

location as a woman living within a highly prescribed set of cultural expectations based on gender (Ritchie and Ronald 71). In the discipline of psychology, Annie's thesis, with its emphasis on difference, representation, and characterization, anticipates a way of foregrounding difference similar to the work of second-wave feminists Nancy Chodorow and Carol Gilligan. Gilligan published *In a Different Voice* (1982) almost a decade after the ground-breaking work of Nancy Chodorow, who Gilligan explains was "writing against the masculine bias of psychoanalytic theory" (8) in order to "replac[e] Freud's negative and derivative description of female psychology with a positive and direct account of her own" (8). Through *In a Different Voice*, Gilligan describes the parameters of her own research in response to the moral development theories of Freud, Piaget, and Kohlberg (19). She writes in her introduction that "the failure of women to fit existing models of human growth may point to a problem in the representation, a limitation in the conception of human condition, an omission of certain truths about life" (1). Many feminist scholars have critiqued the work of Gilligan and other second-wave feminists, giving rise to "perhaps the major theoretical debate of the 1990s, around 'essentialism'" (Nicholson 4). More recent feminist scholarship addresses the failure of "difference" or "gynocentric" feminism to theorize differences among women in terms of race, class, and sexuality (Nicholson 3-4). However, Gilligan articulates in an important way the kind of incongruities that prompted scholars and researchers to interrogate how conceptual models of moral development and representations of others may limit our perceptions, understandings, and even our disciplinary conclusions.

Poet and essayist Adrienne Rich describes the impact that one such incongruity had on her as a developing writer. In her essay, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" (1971), Rich examines a discrepancy between male writers' representations of women and her own experience as a woman writer. Rich explains the confusion that girls and women experience when they go "to poetry or fiction looking for *her* way of being in the world" (273). Rich continues, writing that "she comes up against something that negates everything she is about: she meets the image of Woman in books written by men" (273). At this point, Rich moves from third person to first person and describes what happened when she herself moved on to read women poets such as Sappho, Rossetti, and Dickinson: "But even in reading these women I was looking in them for the same things I had found in the poetry of men, because I wanted women poets to be the equals of men, and to be equal was still confused with sounding the same" (273). Unlike Rich, Annie very consciously puts the question of whether women's writing is equal to or as successful as men's writing in the background so that she can focus on describing how and why women writers sound different than men writers when they characterize women. Annie's choice to emphasize methods over results is an important move. It creates a critical space where she can draw on her identity as a woman to establish an authoritative voice, assume an argumentative stance, and provide evidence based on gendered experiences to back up her claims.

I situate Annie's thesis within a broad framework of women like Sor Juana, Chodorow, Gilligan, and Rich because Annie will articulate theories about voice, difference, representation, and truth that are similar to so many women scholars' central

concerns. Annie's project helps us understand that college women at the turn of the century were raising questions, thinking, discussing, and writing specifically about gender and identity issues, participating in the kinds of conversations that bear a resemblance to women rhetors of the past as well as particular movements in twentieth century feminist theory.

My goal for this chapter is to demonstrate how Annie continues—in this second site of inquiry—to use gendered experience as a lens for analysis. In the case of her master's thesis, Annie foregrounds her reading practices *as a woman* and deploys a feminist rhetoric that examines literature from the standpoint of difference. As the culminating project for her graduate program at the University of Nebraska, the thesis is likely the most autonomous and significant work of her academic studies. Because of this, my approach will be to do a close textual reading and rhetorical analysis of this project. Two questions guide this section. What writing choices did Annie make at the turn of the century that allow me to read her work, over a hundred years later, as a feminist project? And, once again, how does she draw on her gendered experiences to establish credibility, gain authority, and support her claims? Overall, I will argue that Annie's project is a *feminist* project because at the core of her thesis is an attempt to demonstrate alternative conceptions of truth and the human condition by using gender to draw attention to differences in female representation. Next, Annie's rhetorical strategies follow patterns similar to those from her undergraduate work. She once more uses knowledge gained through gendered experiences as a primary lens for interpretation. And finally, Annie reflects Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule's description of a

woman operating within the subject position of "constructed knowledge." Belenky et al. describe women with this perspective as integrating personal knowledge with learned knowledge from others in order to see that "All *knowledge is constructed*, and *the knower is an intimate part of the known*" (137). In her thesis, Annie will ultimately develop a theory that female authors write differently than male authors when writing about women because of what she calls their different "standpoint" (Prey 13). A male writer's representation of woman is connected to his external observations of women (13), and a female writer's representation of woman is intimately connected to her subjective experience of "woman's nature" (20). Furthermore, Annie uses established literary criteria—the learned knowledge of scientific analysis from her literature courses—to evaluate how men and women writers develop and represent their women characters differently.

My specific analysis will follow four parts. First, I consider the structure of Annie's project and the way she both opens and frames her argument using a scientific approach to literary criticism. This discussion will briefly take us back to Lucius A. Sherman and the influence that his *Analytics of Literature* (1893) most likely had on the curriculum at Nebraska. Secondly, I look at the very specific move she makes to focus on understanding methods rather than judging results as described above, and I take into account how this choice is connected to her understanding of truth and what she believes good characterization accomplishes. Thirdly, I consider Annie's strategies and evidence for supporting her position that men and women writers have different methods for characterizing women. Annie examines dozens of female characterizations to prove her

theory that there are discernable patterns demarcating the work of women from that of men; I will focus on those examples that have the most to say about the nature of women and the ways men and women represent women differently. And finally, I look back to Gilligan as a way to call attention to the compelling and feminist nature of Annie's project. As a woman completing the final phase of her formal academic training, Annie focuses her thesis on questions that are central to several aspects of the work that has been going on in feminist scholarship over the past forty years: how do women view and represent themselves differently, what are the results of this difference, and why does difference matter?

Annie's Introduction: It's the Difference that Matters

In terms of structure and development, Annie's thesis reflects conventions typical of academic writing. Overall, the central argument of the thesis is that men and women writers use different methods to characterize women; therefore, they achieve different kinds of results through characterization. Annie clearly states this claim in her title, and she develops, supports, and restates it at key moments throughout the manuscript. More specifically, the thesis contains a standard introductory section that is a page and a half long; it opens with the following discussion of classifying literature according to essential characteristics:

> In literature there are more or less broadly marked, heavy lines of demarcation, separating certain kinds from certain kinds. Every one understands, if he has read at all, the general distinctions that hedge about epic poetry; and everybody knows that there lives in a little pen, all by itself, a soiled thing that the public calls a French novel. Literary entities are classified as Botany specimens are, by likenesses or differences in essential characteristics. (1)

Comparing "literary entities" to "botany specimens," Annie immediately establishes a scientific approach to analyzing literature. This approach and its promotion by Lucius Sherman in his book *Analytics of Literature* deserve some attention before moving on.

In chapter two, I discussed Sherman's influence during the curriculum shifts in the 1880s that encouraged pedagogy emphasizing lecture over textbook instruction and that invited students to think for themselves. While Sherman acknowledges the failure of textbook instruction, he nonetheless wrote his own literature textbook, called *Analytics of Literature: A Manual for the Objective Study of English Prose and Poetry* (1893), which he used for instruction. Robert Knoll, in *Prairie University: A History of the University of Nebraska*, writes that Sherman and another professor, August Hjalmar Edgren in modern languages, "were both infected by the scientific virus and attempted to turn their literary studies into scientific inquiries. They tried to apply to letters the methods which were producing such brilliant results in the investigation of the physical world" (32). Knoll reports that Sherman taught students to identify elements of excellence and beauty in literary works because he "[assumed] that just as *elements* could be identified in chemistry, so they could be identified in literature" (32). Anne Johnson offers a detailed description of some of Sherman's exercises. For example, Johnson notes that the *Analytics* called for students to "compute the average sentence length of various authors," and she gives the following explanation of this process:

> On page 261 of the text is a chart which boggles the mind of this modern day student when I remember that no adding machines or computers were available to Dr. Sherman or his students; each entry in this chart gives the average number of words in a thousand consecutive sentences from Macaulay's History of England; these entries are listed in columns of ten and at the bottom of each column is given the average number of words in 10,000 sentences. (43)

Both Knoll and Johnson comment on Willa Cather's assessment of Sherman's instruction. Knoll writes that "Willa Cather thought it arid pedantry," (32) and Johnson asks "Is it any wonder Willa Cather poked fun at Sherman's 'classes in counting'?" (44). In his defense, Johnson reminds readers that Sherman wanted students to make their own judgments about an author or poet by getting "'next to' or 'inside' an author" (44) through the sentence and word counting, which is consistent with his earlier statements about getting students to think independently. I think the conflicting and contradictory messages we as twenty-first century readers experience in response to Sherman's reports, textbook instruction, and anecdotal student comments make visible the challenges inherent in trying to recreate the lived experience of classroom instruction. This complexity is made even more apparent to me through Annie's thesis. As you will soon see, even though Annie begins with the language of scientific analysis, she only uses this strategy a few times. For most of the project, she writes herself out of the scientific lens and into the one which foregrounds difference and gender.

Returning to Annie's introduction, she continues for just a few more sentences with the scientific approach. Annie uses the generally accepted principle by anyone who "has read at all" that literary works are classified into "certain kinds" according to "likeness or differences." After offering epic poetry and the soiled French novel as examples of literary classification, Annie narrows to the kind of literature she will analyze: "literature of characterization . . . whose chief interest is that it creates men and women for us—men and women often more vivid and alive than the people we have actually seen and heard and touched in the flesh" (1). Once she has identified her

specific category, Annie then outlines her central research question: "The question is this: Is there any line of demarcation lying between the work of women and that of men where the purpose of their writing is to characterize women?" (1). After stating her argument, Annie immediately acknowledges what could conceivably be the counter argument to her project:

> First, it is probable, simply as a matter of computing the chances by mathematics, that the best characterization will be made by men. Whatever have been the causes, men have done the bulk of the literature of characterization; so the chances are, even if other things were balanced, that the few exceptionally good writers in the region for investigation will be men. (2)

Annie recognizes that "things" are not "balanced." For reasons that she does not go into (such as historically fewer opportunities for women to receive formal education), men have produced most of the literature in her category for analysis; Annie acknowledges, therefore, that men will most likely have achieved better results than women. At this point, Annie makes an important rhetorical move to address the counter argument. She redirects the focus from the quality of characterization to the methods of characterization. She writes, "However it is not so much excellence of results as kind of results, not so much the choice of effective methods as the choice of particular kinds of methods, that is to be watched for" (2). While the structure of Annie's introduction seems to follow a standard inverted pyramid format, one that begins broadly and narrows to the main assertion, the content takes a feminist turn that redirects the reader's focus away from judging men as better than women at characterization and toward an examination of the ways men and women characterize women differently, a point upon which I will elaborate in the section titled "Difference and Truth."

Methodology: Literature, Science, and "Real Life"

After using the introduction to state her argument, pose the counter argument, and then articulate in more specific terms her central claim, Annie moves into the second section of her thesis, subtitled "Methods of Characterization." In this section she returns to using the science of classification to establish the literary criteria that will frame her argument and allow her to develop her examples. She views these criteria as universals, as "generally accepted principles" (2) held by writers and readers alike. She writes:

> When a writer undertakes to create a character for his readers, all his work must be based, if it is to succeed at all, on the broad principles that underlie our methods of judging character; that is, character drawing must tally with the common philosophy of character judging.
>
> In character judging there are a few and only a few methods. (2)

Annie divides these methods into two main categories: "physical peculiarities" (2) and a writer's "use of men's conscious actions to determine character" (5).

The principle of "physical peculiarities" includes two sub-divisions; the first is physical characteristics. Annie states that writers "will need sometimes to give physical characteristics for the sake of visualization . . . to fix the reader's attention" (4). However, she is wary of judging characters by their physical characteristics, a process she calls "unsafe" as well as "unfair and illogical" because this kind of judgment "rests for the most part on the superstitions and prejudices of those who follow it" (3). To explain her point, Annie writes: "For instance someone may know a woman with green eyes. He may see her open letters, she has no business to touch. Afterwards it would be natural – but unscientific – for him to wonder if some other woman with green eyes would not open letters, too" (3). Through this example, Annie is making an important

distinction between judgments based on prejudice and superstition and those grounded in logic and science. Here Annie is creating a framework for readers to begin thinking about the differences between natural assumptions and accurate judgments.

While physical characteristics is an unreliable—yet necessary (for visualization)—method of characterization, Annie writes that "there is a region of personal peculiarities that may be legitimately used to show character. Items of personal appearance which are the direct result of traits of character may be used with almost certain effects" (4). This method includes "[a] person's dress, when the person is responsible for it; the expression of the face due to muscular tension or relaxation . . . the carriage of the body; the habits of speaking and eating; all these and more, we use in everyday life with uniformly accurate results" (4). In this example, Annie refers to "everyday life" as the basis from which writers draw characters to produce "certain effects" and from which readers make accurate judgments about those characters. Again, this is another important rhetorical move that places one's personal experience with making judgments in everyday life as the key criterion for accurate characterization.

When Annie explains the second method of characterization, a writer's "use of men's conscious actions to determine character" (5), she makes clear yet again that experience is what determines accuracy. She explains that "men's conscious actions . . . are what we mainly depend on *in real life*" (5, my emphasis). We judge characters in literature the way we judge people in real life. A character's "conscious actions" include "all that a man says" (5) as well as "the relations of the person to environment, mainly perhaps his effect on people" (7).

To sum up, in the five pages that follow the introduction, Annie articulates her methodology by outlining the general and agreed-upon principles of characterization from that method which is least reliable—physical characteristics—to those methods that are most accurate and important—a character's words and actions. Annie takes a scientific approach to analyzing literature as she emphasizes classification, literary principles, categories, and sub-categories. Yet one's experience of making judgments in "everyday life" and "real life" will be the primary lens for analysis. Annie combines literary criticism with both a scientific and personal rhetoric that places experience at the heart of representation *and* interpretation. We as readers of this material a century later may consider and recognize the limits of Annie's emphasis on a construction of "truth" that relies on experience, but I think it is important to see her as participating in an alternative discourse, one that asks readers to consider how one's gender identity influences representation.

Difference and Truth

In the introduction and methodology sections of her project, Annie establishes the focus for her project and carefully outlines the principles that ground her methodology. However, not until the final paragraph of the section on methods of characterization, on page seven of the manuscript, does Annie articulate what she believes to be the ultimate purpose for literature of characterization. It is an important paragraph. Annie writes:

> When we have a clear mental image of the person, not always described out for us but in some way suggested; when we have taken in the significant details of his personality; when we have seen him move and act; when we have heard him talk; and finally when we have seen him change under the influance [sic] of joy or sorrow or years, softened by love or hardened by ill feelings; then we know him almost better than we know ourselves. And the author has

> accomplished something. If besides, he has opened our eyes to the truth of human life by giving us this one human life, he has done the next thing to actually creating a man for us. (7)

The writer of characterization's task is no small job. Annie skillfully handles the structure and content of this paragraph. She uses repetition of the "when" clause not only to review each principle of characterization that she has just discussed but also to build anticipation for her assertion about the result (the "then" that follows the "when") of all good characterization: the reader's felt sense that she knows the character "almost better than" herself. But Annie does not stop here. Her choice to focus on the different ways that men and women characterize women is not only a study in methods and results. It is also an attempt to demonstrate that men and women arrive at and represent *truth* in different ways. The "If besides" sentence delivers Annie's final position on the importance of characterization: to open the reader's "eyes to the truth of human life." Recall Gilligan's use of a similar phrase. When discussing the purpose of her project, Gilligan points to the ways problems in representation limit our understanding of "certain truths about life." Later in her thesis Annie will write that "One can hardly say that either side will give the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. But they will get at it from different directions" (14). Annie's work, like Gilligan's, focuses our attention on the connections between difference, representation, and truth.

Women Characters as Representations of Woman's Nature

As Annie uses a variety of authors and characters to develop her central claim about the differences between men and women writers, she examines some characters with much greater depth than others. In one paragraph she might briefly mention four or

five female characters as examples that illustrate her point, and at other times she will take two or three pages to develop an analysis of a single character. My discussion will focus on several of those examples in which she carries out her analysis with greater depth. It is Annie's discussions of Penelope, Becky Sharp, Lady Macbeth, Bessie Cottrell, and Hetty Sorrel where I find the most interesting and provocative arguments about how men and women writers represent women characters differently.

Penelope and the Case of Authorship

Annie uses Penelope to develop ideas about authorship, woman's nature, and truth. She begins her analysis of Penelope with the following assertion: "There is a theory advanced by some that The Odyssey was written by a woman. The theory is based on the way in which the character of Penelope is handled" (15). In a unique move, Annie destabilizes notions of authorship by proving first that Penelope *is* a truthful representation of woman's nature and then by using that assertion to question whether or not Homer was the writer of *The Odyssey*—as though a man could not have represented Penelope so accurately. Annie focuses on the critical moment of Penelope's character development, when she "hangs back and seems almost unnaturally hard to convince that Odysseus is really her husband" (15). Annie quotes Odysseus himself to present the problem of whether or not Penelope reacted as a woman would to his return. She writes that "[h]er husband, at least, informs her: 'No other woman in the world would harden her heart to stand thus aloof from her husband who after much and sore travel had come to her, in the twentieth year, to his own country'" (15). Is Odysseus right? Did Penelope act as "'no other woman in the world'" would have?

Annie writes that she had "done a little experimenting" and that "almost invariably men have explained her reluctance to receive her husband on the ground that he is so greatly changed as to leave her little to find in him like the old Odysseus that she knew" (15). Her experimenting involves posing two questions to people "in a class of literature" (15). She explains that "The account of Odysseus' return was given to them without Penelope's own explanation. They were asked to express their views on two points. What was the cause of Penelope's reluctance and would the average woman act as she did?" (15). Annie tells us that "Sixty-five percent of the young men explained her action from his appearance. Not quite thirty percent supposed that she feared treachery. . . . the others decided that she no longer feels the full force of her old love" (15). Annie then reveals that the results were nearly the opposite for the women: "Of the young women sixty percent said she was afraid of treachery, sixteen percent thought she might have lost her love for him, and the rest thought that the change in her husband prevented her recognizing him" (15). For the second question, would the average woman act as Penelope did, "none of the young women thought her action unnatural and twenty-two per cent of the young men did think it so" (16). Annie makes it clear that "Penelope's own explanation of her action was that she stood aloof because she feared deceit" (16). Annie draws two significant conclusions from the classroom interviews: "That her explanation tallies more nearly with the explanations given by young women, than with those given by young men proves at least that Penelope is true to her woman's nature. But it does not quite prove that the Odyssey was written by a woman" (16).

Annie's first conclusion, that Penelope is an accurate representation of "woman's nature" because her explanation corresponds to that of the young women in the literature class, helps us understand how Annie uses personal experience as the primary lens for judging character representation. Her second conclusion, that the experiment does not prove female authorship for *The Odyssey*, allows Annie to develop an alternative theory about how this epic poem came to reflect an accurate representation of woman's nature. Annie turns to "the hypothesis that the Odyssey was sung by minstrels" and offers readers the following theory:

> it would be natural that each singer should give his own interpretation to the song, and that in time the poem would come to be a polished thing reflecting the different minds through which it had passed, as folk-lore does. In that case the result would average very close to the truth. It does not seem unreasonable to me that the excellency of much of the ancient literature may be very largely due to this process. (16)

Annie gives credit not to Homer's mind and talents but to a process of interpretation and re-interpretation that eventually gets the representation of Penelope "very close to the truth." She describes authorship as a collaborative process rather than an isolated one and offers two other examples of literature that may have achieved accuracy in representing truth through such a process—the characters of the Old Testament and "at least some of Shakespeare's women" (17). For Shakespeare, she imagines that his "women were the result of a sort of game of battle – dore and shuttle cock between him and the theatre people" (17). "Theatre people" could refer to Shakespeare's audience, other playwrights, or the actors; in any case, Annie considers and envisions a layered and multi-vocal conception of authorship for great works of literature that represent "the truth of human life."

Objective and Subjective Representations of Women: Becky Sharp and Lady Macbeth

Annie writes that the main difference in the methods that men and women writers use to characterize women is that "Men writers will portray women objectively, account for their pecularities [sic] objectively; the women writers, subjectively" (17). Annie uses two female characters to explain the difference between an objective and subjective portrayal, Thackeray's Becky Sharp and Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth. First, Annie's explanation of an objective portrayal:

> As the best example I have found of the objective treatment, take Becky Sharp. She is thoroughly consistent, too consistent for a woman, almost. Thackery [sic] has in this case, I think taken all the effects he could find to express the worldly-minded yet keen-witted women. He has put them together and called it Becky Sharp. She is a failure, judged from the standpoint of womanhood. To the ordinary woman she is amusing, but too precise in her reactions to conditions. She is too uniform. . . . She is no real woman." (17)

Through this description of Becky Sharp—the "best example" of presumably the *worst* kind of "objective treatment"—Annie conveys that a character developed through an objective treatment is artificial and overly crafted, the kind of character that is just too overstated to be "real." Becky Sharp is "too consistent," "too precise," "too uniform" to be a plausible representation of a woman. Annie makes clear her distaste for Thackeray's exaggeration when she goes on to say that Becky is "a man's satire directed against a class of women, and women almost universally reject her as a personality" (17). Although Annie has stressed several times in her thesis that she will focus on methods and not on judging the success or failure of methods, it is clear that she believes Thackeray's portrayal to be so far removed from an accurate representation of a woman that she must judge Becky Sharp a complete failure. In short, Thackeray has been too

objective, too impersonal, and nothing about Becky Sharp speaks to Annie's experience of womanhood.

If the objective treatment tends toward an impersonal, predictable, unlikely and overstated representation of women, then it follows that a subjective treatment is one that is more personal, subtle, understated, and believable. Annie contrasts her indictment of Becky Sharp with a lengthy discussion of Lady Macbeth. The first half of this discussion helps us understand how Annie applies the term "subjective" to characterization. Although Annie theorizes that women writers portray women subjectively, she uses a male writer, Shakespeare, as the first example of the subjective treatment. This choice is not too surprising, however, given that Annie has previously included Shakespeare among writers such as Homer whose great works, she theorizes, may have arrived at truth over time through a process of collaboration. Annie writes that "Perhaps Shakespeare is the one man writer who gives us the subjective side of his women characters. . . .There are a score of his women that can be entered into subjectively by the majority of women" (18). This idea of women readers subjectively *entering into* a character is key, and just how much a woman reader is able to enter into a character varies by degree. The following statement shows Annie determining which characters women can relate to more than others: "Cleopatra, Desdemona, Cordelia, Juliet – these completely, Portia in the Merchant of Venice, not so well though she is admirably drawn. Ophelia is overshadowed by Hamlet. Hamlet's mother, however, is not hard to understand" (18). Annie's explanation of Hamlet's mother helps us see the main criteria for good subjective character drawing—understanding. Another way to think of this is as identification.

Annie herself further defines subjective when she writes "And of course above them all stands Lady Macbeth. No woman would have trouble in getting thoroughly absorbed in her character" (18). In other words, if women readers can understand and identify with a female character—get "absorbed" by the character and relate to her thought processes, actions, and reactions—then Annie theorizes that the writer has used a subjective method. And generally speaking, women writers (and Shakespeare) use the subjective method more than men writers.

Annie's description of Lady Macbeth at the opening of the play is a good example of why Annie believes women can understand and relate to Lady Macbeth. In the following passage, Annie uses her experiences and instincts as a woman, and what she knows of other women's lives and emotions, to demonstrate that Shakespeare has created a "normal woman" (19) for readers and theater audiences. She writes,

> Follow her [Lady Macbeth] through the play. In the beginning she stands as a woman not different, to the casual observer, from many other women who see the deficiencies in the make-up of their husband. She has been a mother and has lost her child. In these experiences of her womanhood she seems to have been normal, to have felt the full force of all the woman's instincts. And she loves her husband.
>
> But she is too keen-minded not to be conscious of things outside of her maternal and wifely instincts. She knows the state of the country; she has evidently talked the whole situation over with Macbeth and has speculated on the results of possible conditions. So far we are not at a loss to account for her acts. She is the normal woman. (19)

In two key areas, "maternal and wifely instincts," Lady Macbeth is like other women. In Lady Macbeth, Shakespeare has created an authentic and "normal" representation of a woman who mourns the loss of a child and who loves her husband at the same time that she understands his limitations and "deficiencies." Even in her "keen-minded"

knowledge of power and politics, the realm of activity that extends beyond the domestic sphere, "we are not at a loss to account for her acts." Shakespeare's subjective portrait of Lady Macbeth allows women readers to thoroughly understand her ambitious desire for Macbeth's success. Annie believes that he has created a fictional woman that real women can relate to given their own experiences as women.

Human Nature vs. Woman's Nature: Lady Macbeth, Bessie Cottrell, and Hetty Sorrel

Shakespeare's characterization of Lady Macbeth becomes more complex once she begins to contemplate murder, and so too does Annie's analysis of Shakespeare's methods. Although Annie sees Lady Macbeth as "the normal woman" at the beginning of the play, she—like so many readers of Macbeth over the centuries—considers whether Lady Macbeth renounces the trappings of gender when she "prays to be unsexed" (19) or asks to become masculine so that she may execute the murderous plot. Annie asserts that "She does not become masculine; Shakespeare does not make that mistake . . . But she does at certain points rise above sex limitations" (19). This idea of rising above sex limitations is critical to Annie's analysis of the play as well as my understanding of the important distinctions Annie draws between men's nature, women's nature, and human nature. Annie explains that Lady Macbeth "assumes" not a "special state of mind supposed to belong to men," but rather "a state of mind common to all human beings when they are in control of an enterprise containing within itself great risks and great possibilities" (19). In Annie's view there exists in humans ways of thinking and acting that transcend gender, and Shakespeare has managed to capture this state of being in his characterization of Lady Macbeth. Annie continues:

> I really do not know of another case like it in all fiction, where a writer has allowed the human nature of a woman to lead her through a crisis. I believe it is the unusual rather than the ambiguous nature of the characterization here that has led some critics into the error of making Lady Macbeth out so much worse than she really is, blaming her woman nature, which should have done better, with the sins her human nature was most responsible for. (19-20)

Annie is saying that critics who blame Lady Macbeth's "woman nature" for her sins judge her too harshly; they have fallen into an "error" of interpretation. Because Lady Macbeth acts out of her *human* nature rather than her *woman's* nature, Annie offers a reading that is more sympathetic than that of literary critics. Annie reiterates her sympathetic reading when she writes that "we almost forgive her, as we could not have done if Shakespeare had not made us realize that she sinned as a human being rather than as a woman" (20). Had Lady Macbeth sinned as a woman—had her moral crisis been precipitated or set in motion by failures in her "woman's instincts" or, more specifically, "her maternal and wifely instincts" (19), then perhaps Annie would be less sympathetic and more critical of her actions. But instead, Lady Macbeth is tempted by "the very elements that, with another turn of the wheel, might have formed a woman of great influence for good" (20).

Annie imagines what Shakespeare would say directly to his readers if he could: "Shakespeare seems almost to say to us: 'She is a woman, clearly, but never mind that. See how she is swayed by the forces that move all humanity!'" (20). Annie believes that Shakespeare's great achievement through Lady Macbeth is that we can all relate to her. To sum up, Annie reads Shakespeare's representation of Lady Macbeth as both exceptional and typical. Lady Macbeth is a unique example of a male writer using the subjective treatment to create a character that women can relate to precisely because she

acts like a woman. However, she is also a character that women *and* men can understand because she is influenced by the forces that tempt all humanity. In this sense, she is an archetypal example of "human nature" under duress.

What about a woman who sins not from her human nature, but from her woman's nature? Who has the advantage at this kind of portrayal, men or women? Annie discusses the work of nineteenth-century British novelist Mary Augusta Ward (Mrs. Humphry Ward) to analyze a woman writer's characterization of women. In terms of accuracy, if Thackeray's Becky Sharp is a male writer's failed representation of woman's nature, then Ward's Bessie Cottrell is a female writer's successful depiction of woman's nature. To explain the difference in results between the characterizations of women and men writers, Annie compares Ward's development of Bessie Cottrell to Shakespeare's portrayal of Lady Macbeth's crisis and fall. Annie writes:

> To contrast with Lady Macbeth, we have, in The Story of Bessie Cottrell, the study of a woman thief from the standpoint of a woman author. There is inferior art here to be sure but the point is that we have an altogether different conception of the process of mind that leads a woman into crime. The difference in conception seems too, clearly traceable to the difference in the sex of the writers" (22).

Through her analysis of Bessie Cottrell, Annie draws the reader's attention back to the main point of her thesis, that a writer's gender influences the way he or she draws characters. Describing Ward's work as "inferior art," she once again emphasizes the point that she does not select characters for discussion because of their literary merit but rather for what they can tell her about methods of characterization.

To prove that women writers represent female characters differently than men writers, Annie makes two main distinctions between Bessie Cottrell and Lady Macbeth.

The first point of contrast has to do with how aware each character is of her moral decline. Annie writes that "Bessie Cottrell is a thief as the result of her woman's nature though she is hardly conscious of this herself. Lady Macbeth spurs her husband on to murder, against the current of her instincts, and is fully aware that this is so" (22). The second difference is the degree to which a weakness in the character's "womanly" nature is responsible for her decline. Annie writes that "Lady Macbeth is the product of circumstances, working on one trait of character, her love for her husband and her ambition for him, to overpower temporarily her womanly tenderness and womanly instincts" (22). On the other hand, Bessie Cottrell "glides into crime easily and naturally, because an opportunity and many inherent aptitudes happen to come together" (22). Bessie Cottrell has a woman's nature that weakens over time, and it is the weaknesses of her woman's nature—the "many inherent aptitudes"—that ultimately account for her downfall. Annie sums up her argument in the following poignant contrast:

> Bessie Cottrell and Lady Macbeth are both, in a literary sense, convincing explanations of the fall of a woman's soul. But Lady Macbeth is a man's explanation, Bessie Cottrell is a woman's . . . we [women] do not explain a woman's fall as men do by supposing a great wave of temptation that breaks over the walls of her better nature, but by supposing a slower process of insidious water creeping in and undermining the foundations." (23)

Annie is saying that when it comes to moral decline, men writers call attention to a woman's circumstance and women writers emphasize the gradual erosion of the woman's moral nature.

To further develop this distinction between the "great wave of temptation" and "a slower process . . . undermining the foundations," Annie uses George Eliot's Hetty Sorrel to offer an important contrast between two characters. First Annie compares Hetty to

Browning's Mildred. She writes that "Mildred sinned through lack of tending and through ignorance. She had no mother and she was only fourteen. Browning almost makes us think that she has not sinned as far as her soul is concerned" (23). On the other hand, "Hetty Sorrel is less to be excused, a less pitiful sinner. We do not have the pangs for her that we have for Mildred. We have rather, the slow smothering growth of despair for her as she whirls, gently at first and then more and more turbulently, into the depths" (23-4). Again, Annie relies on her experience as a woman and female reader to account for her interpretation of and reaction to the characters of Mildred and Hetty. Drawing attention to women interpreting literature through their own experiences even more dramatacially, Annie contrasts Hetty Sorrel next with Lady Macbeth. She brings us directly into her reading and interpretation practices when she writes: "We women tell ourselves as we read, 'If I began, this is the road I should travel. I never could plan murder with the intensity of Lady Macbeth, but I could kill like Hetty Sorrel after such months of misery'" (24). The comparison between Lady Macbeth and Hetty is noteworthy. Despite Shakespeare's adept use of the subjective methods, when Lady Macbeth is placed next to Hetty, women readers identify more with Hetty's demise than Lady Macbeth's. Annie believes women could see themselves actually acting more like Hetty than Lady Macbeth. Even Shakespeare is like other men writers who "explain the sin by giving the environment rather than by laying emphasis on the weak points of character that makes it possible for the environment to take effect" (28). In the end, Annie finds that women writers hold women characters more responsible for their actions than men writers.

Representation, Responsibility and Moral Development

As Annie moves from one character analysis to the next, her argument gradually establishes that a key difference between men and women writers is in the degree to which each gender holds women characters responsible for their actions. The concept of responsibility is critical to her argument. Annie finds that because women writers use a subjective method to portray their women characters, these writers show more clearly and consciously the process of moral breakdown that occurs "in women who do wrong" (27). Women writers explain "the sin" because of "the weak points of character" rather than "the environment." Importantly, Annie identifies both a difference and an absence in the way men characterize women. Similarly, during her research and case study interviews during the 1970s, Carol Gilligan identifies both a difference and an absence concerning representations of women. Gilligan found that women's concerns about acting responsibly in relationships emerged during interviews as a central aspect of their moral development, and this aspect was different from—and (in Gilligan's view) no less important than—the detachment, separation, and "distance between self and others" (Gilligan 154) that prior and prevailing models of moral (and male) development had emphasized as healthy and typical. Gilligan asserts that Freud's "difficulty in fitting the logic of his theory to women's experience leads him in the end to set women apart" (24). And in her concluding chapter to *In a Different Voice*, Gilligan writes that in much of the psychological literature dealing with moral development, "though the truth of separation is recognized in most developmental texts, the reality of continuing connection is lost or relegated to the background where the figures of women appear" (155). Gilligan

continues, writing that "In this way, the emerging conception of adult development casts a familiar shadow on women's lives" (155). The imagery Gilligan uses to explain the failure of developmental psychology to account for women's lives is powerful. Women are "set . . . apart," "relegated to the background," living in "a familiar shadow."

As Annie nears the end of her project, she is careful *not* to identify the differences she highlights as a failure on the part of men writers. She writes: "I do not say that it is a mistake to give the environment so much emphasis. I do not say that it is a merit not to. But I do say that generally men do one and women do the other" (28). In her final paragraph, Annie will go even further and decline to make an overall judgment or evaluative statement about her findings. Here is the concluding sentence to her thesis: "I find in closing that I have a surreptitious inclination to point a moral; I would for but one consideration – that there seems to be no moral apparent" (33). Annie confines her project to literary characters, and while she uses experience to inform her analysis, she does not use her analysis to challenge existing representations of women "in real life" (5). More is at stake for Gilligan. In addition to her interviews, Gilligan—like Annie—analyzes dozens of literary characters to develop her argument about representations of women. In some cases, they have chosen the very same authors for study, such as Shakespeare and George Eliot. At the core of her project, Gilligan is fostering an "expansion in perspective" that could eventually "lead to a changed understanding of human development and a more generative view of human life" (174). Despite Annie's reluctance to cast the net of her ideas wider, she too participates in a project that expands perspective. She asked her classmates to contribute to her research, making them aware

of the ways they judged a character such as Penelope differently based on gender. She asked her contemporary readers to focus on gender with her and consider the different methods men and women writers used to arrive at truths about human nature. She demonstrates to me, a twenty-first century reader, that women academics at the close of the nineteenth century actively engaged gender to theorize writing methods, reading processes, and constructions of truth. Reading her work through the multiple lenses of writing history, narrative theory, and feminist rhetoric, I have to disagree with Annie and say that a moral—and a very compelling one at that—is apparent. Making visible connections between identity—whether gender, racial, or sexual—and the ways people see themselves and are seen by others, can make a big difference in understanding groups relegated to the "familiar shadow" where Gilligan found women residing during her research in the 70s. Annie's work with literature anticipates the kinds of questions that feminist theorists in education, psychology, and eventually rhetoric would begin to ask, discuss, examine, and debate during the second half of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER FIVE

Literacy Practices on the Plains

"The women emerge not just as subjects of research but also as potential listeners, observers, even co-researchers, whether silent or voiced, in the knowledge-making processes themselves. In contrast to their being the slates on which I write, I permit them to assume a presence. I think of them as real and not controlled by me. My job in analysis and interpretation is to account for their point of view and interests."

Jacqueline Jones Royster, *Traces of a Stream*

We know from biographical materials in the Jorgensen folders that after completing her undergraduate and graduate studies at Nebraska, Annie would spend the majority of her professional life, when not consumed with mothering five children, teaching. She was head of the English Department at York College in Nebraska from 1899-1903, married Theodore in 1902, and had five children between the years 1905-1913. A few key documents in Annie's papers allow me to draw some conclusions about the ways she continued to use personal experience as a feminist rhetorical strategy in this third site of inquiry—her personal and professional writing while teaching in South Dakota. These documents include "Young People of the Prairie," an essay Annie wrote in 1916 which was published in the journal *The American Missionary*, and a series of letters written about Annie after her death.

"Young People of the Prairie": Experience, Narration, and Persuasion

"Young People of the Prairie" is a narrative account of the Jorgensen family's arrival in South Dakota and the establishment of their school, Thrall Academy, under very trying circumstances during their first year. The Jorgensen folders contain two copies of the essay, a photo-copy of the essay as it appeared in *The American Missionary* and a typescript that is four and a half singe-spaced pages. In many ways, the essay is

reminiscent of the work she did at Nebraska. Primarily, Annie deploys personal and gendered experience using a familiar narrative structure. This essay, however, reaches an audience far beyond the classroom, and Annie's rhetorical strategies ultimately build toward an appeal for money. By once again grounding her work in personal experience, Annie demonstrates rhetorical acumen by writing a personal narrative for the purpose of persuasion. Quite simply, she needs to raise money for her school.

When the Jorgensens arrived in Sorum during the summer of 1915, they had plenty of work ahead of them to make the boarding school livable for themselves and their students. In "Young People of the Prairie," Annie describes their arrival in South Dakota and two months of renovations and preparations for the school year; she also offers a brief account of the first school year. The essay opens with this description of the family's first encounter with their new surroundings:

> When Mr. Jorgensen and I landed in this country about a year and a half ago, it was drizzling and the gumbo mud was slippery and sticky. He ran the Ford up to the front door of the girls' dormitory, a bare weather-beaten building, an old store whose front told of its humble origin, and turned the fore wheels in as far as he dared, so that his family might climb out on the steps and run in out of the rain. The family consisted of his wife and five children, a bucket of gold fish, no worse for their six-hundred-mile journey across country in a car, and a very small Scotch collie pup, who, alas, had spent the greater part of the trip in a state of car sickness beyond human powers of description. (534)

When I read this piece after having analyzed her previous work, its voice, narrative style, and descriptive elements feel very familiar. The description of the girls' dormitory reminds me of the way she described the childhood playhouses; the reference to the bucket of gold fish who were no worse for the journey and the carsick Scotch collie makes me think of the ways Annie inserted humor, satirical twists, and voice into her

college papers. The first four paragraphs are both a chronological account and spatial rendering of their initial impression of the two buildings that made up the dormitory and the schoolhouse. They enter the dormitory through the basement to see a kitchen with "mud all over the floor where it had rained in or been tracked in; no shades or curtains at the mud-spattered windows . . . No kitchen range, no lamps, no chairs, no laundry articles—not so much as a kitchen dipper" (534). Annie's repetition emphasizes the dormitory's barren state and the gravity of the situation that she and her young family have just entered. She continues, "Upstairs we went, and I must confess that the higher we went the lower my heart sank" (534). As for the school building, Annie states: "I could not see that it was any worse, but neither was it any better" (534). The next few paragraphs describe the family's attempt to stock the dormitory and school with the bare essentials necessary for living and teaching.

Not quite half way into the essay, the tone of the piece changes as Annie uses the narration to begin a strategic appeal for money. Annie describes how the local churches of South Dakota generously donated items to help get the school going. She writes: "We sent a request to the church at Onawa for a barrel of dishes—any dishes that we could set a table with. They sent us new dishes, enough to set tables for forty-eight people. The church at Sioux Falls wrote asking what they could do. We told them what we needed, and received a shipment of furniture and rugs and kitchen articles" (535). This description is an important contrast to the earlier catalogue of what the dormitory lacked when the family first arrived.

Of her own contributions, Annie describes the multiple jobs she filled in order to get the school up and running: "we had no cook, owing to the fact that the one we had hired at the munificent sum of five dollars a week backed out at the last minute. I can't say that I blamed her. . . . I assumed the duties of cook, matron, teacher, and preacher, as well as those which go with the care of five children, three gold fish, two kittens, a puppy, and two pigs" (535). Annie's various roles constitute the multiple identities that inform this essay. Her experiences as matron, teacher, preacher, and mother are central to the ethos she establishes and to the appeal she makes directly to potential future benefactors. Annie writes:

> If some one with means were to ask me what could be done for Thrall Academy that would most help to form the character of the students, I would say without a moment's hesitation: 'Send me a good, wholesome, motherly woman to be a second mother to all these students, away from home for the first time, often homesick and lonely, in need of advice and training, and helpless without some one to oversee their daily living.' (536)

Annie's dual role as mother and teacher to the students, as well as to her own children, places her in the position to unhesitatingly identify the school's greatest needs. Her experience grants her both the authority and credibility to begin crafting her appeals for assistance.

"Young People of the Prairie" is the narrative account of her family's first year at the school, but it is principally a powerful appeal for money. Ultimately, it is a persuasive text, and the piece demonstrates Annie's ability to weave together narration, description, humor, and persuasion. Near the end of the piece, Annie conveys a sense of urgency to the reader, pointing out that while the local churches of South Dakota got the school off the ground, churches from other parts of the country must support their efforts

if the school is to develop and succeed. Annie's understanding of her audience is critical. She is asking readers of *The American Missionary* to do as the local churches have done, to answer the school's plea for financial assistance. After nearly three pages of detailed description and narration, Annie moves into her final appeal for money. She writes:

> The things we must have within a year, if the work is not to be crippled and perhaps fail altogether, will cost ten thousand dollars. There is not one-tenth of that in sight, other than money which we must use for actual running expenses. The churches of South Dakota have awakened to their great responsibility and sent the money that helped us through last year. But the country is new and feels the heavy outlay that comes with the developing of schools and homes and churches. It rests with the larger body of Congregationalists to say whether we live or die. Death does not scare us particularly, for if we die some one else will hardly fail to see the need of the country and to find success where we have failed. We are needed here, and that is our main reason for desiring to remain. (537)

Her request for money to the larger body of Congregationalists rests on two key appeals, those of responsibility and need. Needs must be met, and it is the responsibility of the wider community to financially support the school. She ends the piece by writing, "I am not begging. Whoever heard a messenger of the Most High beg? This that I have written is just to let the people know." With this closing, I see her carefully taking into account her audience. To avoid the discomfort readers may feel when asked for money, she recasts her appeal as simply a narrative to explain the school's circumstances. In this sense, the essay reads like a testimonial. Additionally, Annie—like so many women rhetors before and after her—characterizes herself as "a messenger of the Most High" to establish her authority, to construct an ethos. In the end, Annie gives credit to her readers, generously assuming that once they know about the school's plight, they will surely act to help improve the situation. She provides nearly four pages of lengthy details

and description "to let the people know" so that they will recognize the school's needs and financially support Thrall Academy.

Unintentional Consequences: Narration, Persuasion, and . . . a Trust Fund?

May 6, 1920.

Mrs. Theo. Jorgensen,
Strool, S.D.,
My dear Mrs. Jorgensen:

At last I have executed the trust to help your children in their higher education. As stated before and as stipulated in the trust agreement, the money will be paid from time to time, as you request, after July 1st, 1923.

If you should deem it wise to divide the avails equally, the enclosed schedule shows how it can be done, with a balance of $45.76, to help the last girl, purchase her graduating dress.

Enc. Yours very truly,
F.G. Platt.

A series of letters written about Annie (rather than by her) offers us more information about her literacy practices after college. A file labeled "Correspondence" in the Jorgensen papers suggests not only that Annie wrote "Young People of the Prairie" for *The American Missionary* in order to solicit funds for their school, but also that she wrote letters directly to Congregational churches in New England for financial support. One such letter seems to have had an unintended effect. The "Correspondence" file contains several letters dated during the 1920s from a man named Frederick G. Platt who lived in New Britain, Connecticut. The letter reprinted above gives an overview of the conditions for a trust fund that Mr. Platt established for all five of the Jorgensen children's education. In a letter dated prior to the one above, February of 1920, Mr. Platt

writes, "In the first place, I dislike the idea of making provision for two of your children, only. It does not seem fair to me and I am sure your mother-heart would more heartily approve of some other plan by which all might expect to receive some help toward their higher education." It seems that initially there was an agreement between Mrs. Jorgensen and Mr. Platt for him to make educational "provision for two" of the children rather than the five, but at some point between February and May Mr. Platt was able to convince Mrs. Jorgensen to accept the terms of a trust fund for all five children. Why would a businessman from Connecticut take an interest in educating the five children of a teacher from South Dakota?

A letter exchange from 1937, after the deaths of both Mr. Platt and Annie, answers the question in great detail. In March of 1937, Annie's husband Theodore wrote a letter to Mrs. F. G. Platt (Mary Schauffler Platt) to notify her of Annie's death. The archives do not have a copy of this letter, but Mrs. Platt refers to it in her reply, dated April of 1937. The following excerpt is from Mrs. Platt's April letter:

> My dear Mr. Jorgensen
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> Your letter of March 28th reached me yesterday & brought real sorrow to my heart, for Mrs. Jorgensen has seemed for years to be a truly personal friend, although we never met. *Her cheerfulness & humor & radiant personality shone out through the very first letter which she wrote to the ladies of First Church, New Britain. It was such an unusual letter, that I borrowed it & read it to Mr. Platt.* The consequences of that letter you well know. Mr. Platt had very little use for people who were not cheerful, *& he conceived a great admiration for the woman who could write such a letter*. I thank you most warmly for sending me the clipping with those beautiful poems, & for telling me about your five splendid children. I feel that Mr. Platt must be rejoicing on the other side that his big heart prompted him to make the investment that has helped in their development. (my emphasis)

Unfortunately, Annie's "unusual letter," most likely written in 1919 to the ladies of First Church, New Britain, is not preserved in her papers. The importance of this letter for her children's education cannot be overstated, as it began the series of events and letter exchanges that resulted in the establishment of the educational trust for her children to draw upon for college. What I think happened is that in her solicitation for funds for her school to the ladies of First Church, Annie most likely mentioned her own children and family life, as she did in "Young People of the Prairie." When Mrs. Platt brought the letter home to her husband, he—as she describes—"conceived a great admiration for the woman who could write such a letter" and decided that the children of such a woman needed provisions for their college education.

Annie and Theodore accepted the trust, but not without carefully considering the situation. Theodore describes their reaction to Mr. Platt's original 1920 proposal in a letter he wrote in reply to Mrs. Platt's April 1937 letter (quoted above) upon hearing the news of Annie's death. The archives contain a typed copy of this letter which indicates that it was "copied from an undated pencil first draft (with further ink revisions)." There is no date on the copy, but Theodore probably wrote the reply letter in 1937 shortly after receiving Mrs. Platt's letter. The following excerpts help us better understand the situation's complexity.

> Dear Mrs. Platt
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> . . . You mention how our so pleasant relationship began in your home. I must confess to you our reaction to the first mention if [sic] it from Mr. Platt. My wife was born and reared on a Neb farm and that she or any of hers should ever be on the receiving end of aid was unthinkable to her. I was born and raised in similar conditions in Denmark of a quite proud race, and fully shared her feeling. That we actually were quite poor, as preachers often are, did not alter the matter

> nor remove our inherited pride. So there were many a discussion in our little home and careful weighing of the matter before making our reply. . . .
>
> One other thing made it hard for us to decide. And this has kept us pretty quiet about the whole matter to our neighbors. If it were known that we had accepted personal aid for our own children while we were supposed to solicit help for the work of the school, it might put us in a bad light and it might be given an uncomplimentary name like diverting funds. *We therefore noted conscientiously to Mr. Platt that we would make out some how for ourselves and the need of the school was greater.* But Mr. Platt refused to see the point and answered with that most interesting document the contents of which has been such a blessing to us and, as I hope, will be a blessing to generations to come through the training for service it made possible in the children. (my emphasis)

What fascinates me about Frederick Platt's involvement with the Jorgensen family is not the issue of whether Annie and Theodore's acceptance of the trust was actually diverting funds from their school but rather the idea that Annie's initial letter to the women of First Church could be so unintentionally persuasive for the cause of her children's education.

The unsolicited consequence of Annie's writing demonstrates the potential literacy practices hold for personal as well as public action, for planned as well as unplanned results. The Platt correspondence adds to a growing body of scholarship about the ways women have historically been active agents, participants and decision-makers within their schools, families, and the larger community despite their erasure from more public records. The absence of Annie's letter to the ladies of First Church, New Britain, is indicative of the way that historical evidence of women's literacy and agency is sometimes visible only through remnants. The original document is missing from the archives, yet its influence is real and material nonetheless.

"Young People of the Prairie" and the Platt letters demonstrate how Annie used her literacy practices after college for personal correspondence and social action. These documents fit into a larger genre and history of women's writing about missionary

work—both American and overseas—which was published in journals supported by the Congregationalists such as *The American Missionary*, which later became the *The Missionary Herald at Home and Abroad*. In fact, mention of *The Missionary Herald* figures into several of the letters exchanged between Mrs. Platt and Mr. Jorgensen. On a postcard dated August of 1937, Mrs. Platt writes: "I am sending on the Miss'y Herald which you need not return." In another letter, Mrs. Platt mentions the missionary work of her own daughter as well as the youngest child of Annie and Theodore, Helen. Mrs. Platt writes in 1937 that her daughter was doing missionary work in India, from which she returned home because of the depression, and she also mentions, in a brief 1939 letter, that "It always pleases me to see Helen's name in the Miss'y Herald & I do hope she is enjoying her work." For me, one of the exciting possibilities about Annie's work is my developing understanding of how Annie's literacy practices on the plains—both personal and professional—merge with the larger context of women's public writing about missionary work. One research question that develops from this work is to what extent other women were using strategies similar to Annie's in order to advance missionary work. Using a phrase that Jacqueline Jones Royster apples to African American women's use of the essay for social action, I view Annie's use of the personal narrative as an example of "one type of literate action" (Royster 23), and my analysis of her work "is one mechanism for paying attention to both the generic form and the 'performance' of it" (23). Royster reminds us that writing from experience, telling stories, and using narrative techniques are acts of interpretation. She uses the phrase "the reporting of personal experience" (282), and this underscores for me the need to recognize how

writers deploy personal experience as evidence in purposeful ways. Annie was not just telling stories in "Young People of the Prairie." She was reporting those experiences and crafting a narrative performance that would become evidence of their need for money.

Personal Connections and Disciplinary Conclusions

My sixth-grade daughter, Emma, recently wrote a personal narrative about our family's summer vacation to Chicago for her language class. The narrative was five single-spaced pages, and in it she offers readers a chronological account of every stop we made, event we experienced, landmark we visited, and even most of the meals we enjoyed. In between, she also shared a few of the funny stories that inevitably happen during family vacations. When she received her rough draft back from the teacher, it was clear from the comments that the teacher was looking for something else—a different kind of writing than Emma had produced. She asked Emma to focus on just one or two of the memories from the trip. For the revision, Emma deleted most of the first draft and kept two of the funny stories in tact. She tried to connect the stories together by making the point that sometimes the best moments on a vacation are those that have nothing to do with sight-seeing but are rather the random and unexpected times when things don't go as planned. This version was about two pages long, double-spaced. I liked the revision as much as the first draft, but I knew Emma was disappointed with it when she showed it to me. "You like the first one better, don't you?" I asked. "Yep," she said.

In many ways, Emma's first version of the narrative reads like some of Annie's writing in terms of chronology and detail. I appreciated the first draft because it captured everything we did, from the Sears (Willis) Tower to the Art Institute, from the "L" ride to

the cab ride, from the restaurants to the dinners with local friends and relatives. Although the revision allowed Emma the opportunity to arrive at a significant insight through the telling of the two stories, I can't help but agree with Emma's gut reaction: something was lost rather than gained during the revision process. How would we ever remember everything we did if the only version documenting the trip was the revision? In an effort to fit the trip into the teacher's conception of a personal narrative, the writing became something else—something different from what Emma had in mind for it. Emma's experience is a good lesson in how the expectations of writer, reader, and genre can be at odds with one another. How we interpret a genre has the potential to shut down our understanding of a project's purpose, to close down multiple contexts for writing, and to narrow a writer's intended effect for a piece. Put another way, Emma's narrative is a reminder to me that I need to think carefully and critically about the expectations I both intentionally and unintentionally impose on the work I read. In the classroom or the archive, whether reading my own students' work or Annie's student work, I need to understand what Royster calls the scholar's (or the teacher's) "interpretive power" in shaping material (281).

In her work with African American women's writing, Royster writes that researchers and scholars need "to articulate their own ideological standpoints systematically . . . in recognition of how our viewpoints are implicated in scholarly presentation and representation." She reminds her readers that "we locate ourselves within the text as scholars, and thereby as people who have interpretive power" (281). The concept of "interpretive power" reminds me that when I enter into a text as scholar or

teacher, I offer one possible way of reading and seeing a work, and I recognize that my analysis is enlarged and limited by the frames—both personal and theoretical—through which I view a text. The concept is not far removed from what Annie was writing about in her master's thesis. Annie is not just open about the fact that her standpoint as a woman guides her interpretation of how men and women writers develop female characters differently; she embraces her location. It is the primary basis for her authority, her interpretive power.

In her article "Writing an Important Body of Scholarship: A Proposal for an Embodied Rhetoric of Professional Practice" Hindman makes a proposal similar to Royster's suggestion that scholars recognize the situatedness of their locations and articulate their ideological standpoints. As discussed in chapter one, Hindman deconstructs the "masculinist" (98) discursive practices that many composition and rhetoric scholars employ as they establish academic authority, or a professional ideology. She describes a series of discursive "gestures" that "invoke that always already constituted disciplinary realm of methodologies, subjects, territories, genres, structures, and stylistic conventions of our discipline and disavow the transient, material realm of professional practice(s) and corporeal producers of texts" (100). When applying these gestures to her own writing and discursive practices, Hindman acknowledges that she herself, by referring to a "'deficiency'" in the work of other scholars, has "deploy[ed] the ultimate academic (masculinist) gesture: pointing out a lack that my superior mastery will fill" (100). She writes further that by "exchanging positionality for certainty, contingent truth for professional ideology, we deny the rhetoricity of our own language," resulting in

a "discursive practice that co-opts the feminist project even as it appears to sponsor it" (101). In a sense, scholars who employ traditional academic methods of presenting and (mis)representing the ideas of others in order to find an opening for their own research to set the record straight (or at least leave a mark on the academic landscape) practice a kind of rhetoric that downplays how the context of their own personal and professional lives intersect with the claims they make and the conclusions they draw. Even when the goal of traditional academic discourse is toward a feminist project, a scholar's reliance on the discursive strategies of academic discourse may serve to undermine feminist goals.

Hindman suggests that scholars might consider deploying academic discourse more self-consciously, as a rhetorical strategy that reveals its discursive context even as it uses that context to gain authority. She writes that "the fact that here and now I am using traditional academic prose does not necessarily mean I accept it" (101); she moves on to both articulate theoretically and demonstrate textually through the personal gestures contained in "Writing an Important Body of Scholarship" (and in other articles) that "recognizing—indeed, *foregrounding*—the emergent, fleeting, and tacitly autobiographical authority of our discursive community could facilitate the professional exigencies of generating knowledge" (102). In other words, "we must recognize and self-consciously inscribe specifically the autobiographical composition of our authority as *professionals*. We must feature the rhetoricity of our discursive practice and demonstrate its contextualized knowledge claims" (103). In short, I believe Hindman asks us to recognize academic writing as a pose. And once this is acknowledged, she

asks us to consider the degree to which our academic writing should reflect, reveal, and gesture toward the situatedness of the self that is doing the writing.

Autobiographical Authority and Women's Rhetoric

What does it mean to be situated, to recognize the "autobiographical composition of our authority as professionals"? To begin to answer this question and apply it to my own circumstances and research, I draw briefly—once again—on the recently published collection of essays, *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*. In their introduction to the collection, editors Gesa Kirsch and Liz Rohan write that "how a researcher chooses a subject is a subject unto itself" (1). Last fall I was giving a presentation to a graduate class about the different phases of my research on Annie's papers. A student in the class asked how I originally found Annie's papers. My response was, well, fairly mundane. The process of locating the material was so unexciting that I wondered if it was worth mentioning. On the other hand, I can see now that it was the ordinariness of that initial connection to the material that has been my primary research lens all along. I told the student who asked the question, and the rest of the class, that I was looking through the on-line list of folder topics in UNL's archive, trying to come up with an idea for a seminar project. The brief description of Annie's papers caught my eye because she earned her bachelor's degree at UNL near the end of the nineteenth century (this time period has always interested me), she was a woman (I'm a woman), she was an English teacher (I'm an English teacher), she was a mother (I'm a mother), and the collection contained samples of her student writing (I've read lots of student writing over the years). No dusty box of papers in my parents' attic on the verge of being

thrown out, no hours of endless digging through an old church's disorganized file cabinets. It began with an on-line search from my home computer. At first glance Annie somehow seemed *similar* to me, maybe even *familiar*.

Although the process of finding Annie's work was relatively simple, the ways I connected with Annie's identity as teacher and mother, and how this has impacted my reading of her work, were and are more complex. A few weeks before I was to begin my first semester as a graduate student and teaching assistant at UNL, a few people (outside academia) had mentioned to me that perhaps I should wait until my two daughters, ages one and four (now the oldest two of four daughters), were both in elementary school before starting the program, when I might actually have "time" for such an endeavor. What I interpreted as their tacit disapproval of my decision to begin graduate school went straight to the core of my mother, teacher, and student identities. I remember feeling somewhat stunned by their comments. Plus, the assumptions wrapped into their remarks were many. For example, they assumed that one cannot both mother and do PhD work at the same time effectively, that a mother should be more present to her children than a father during the early childhood years, that life will be simpler and easier when children enter grade school, that both mothering and PhD work demand huge chunks of time free from the interruptions and obligations of the other, and—finally—that I would not have any more children. In short, they assumed that one endeavor—mothering—negates the possibilities of the other—an academic career. Because the tensions I experience from cultural notions and expectations of "mothering," along with those of research and teaching, are in that *always, already present* realm of my self and very existence, I

inevitably bring these experiences and a lens focused on gender, negotiation, and authority to my reading of Annie's work.

Annie experienced tension between her teacher and mother identities as well. This became most evident to me through Theodore's description of Annie's initial reluctance to accept the trust fund for her children's education. She wrote the letter to the Ladies of First Church as a teacher. But how could she not mention her own children given that her role as mother was entirely intertwined with those of matron and teacher? She accepted the trust fund as a mother. With a master's degree, she was more educated than most women at the time, and it seems reasonable for us to assume that she would have wanted the same opportunities with higher education for her children as she had experienced at the University of Nebraska. Indeed, all five of Annie's children attended college and graduated from the University of Nebraska.

Even before my work with Annie's papers, I was drawn toward texts and materials that shed some light on how various and diverse women have negotiated their professional and personal identities—how they've forged public identities and private selves within and against culturally prescribed notions of what women should do, how women should behave, even how women should look. The first paper I took to a conference early in my PhD program explored the strategies that a seventeenth-century English educator, Bathsua Makin, uses in a pamphlet that argues for female education and acts as an advertisement for Makin's school for girls. Living during a period of strong cultural prohibitions against women speaking or writing in public, Makin poses as a male writer in order to construct a *public* identity and create a *public* space where her

ideas would not be discounted on the basis of gender. This male pose is the first of many rhetorical strategies she employs in her defense of female education. Many of the projects and papers I've completed during my PhD program deal with the question of how women, past and present, construct complex rhetorical performances in order to gain authority. The impetus toward writing that gets at women's experiences with cultural notions of gender is strong for me. I cannot say for certain that I read Annie's work differently because of my own gendered experiences than another student or scholar may in the future. But I believe that my experiences with mothering and teaching—working in both very domestic and very professional spheres (and all the spaces in-between)—does grant me a kind of *autobiographical authority* that is of value when I explore a text that gains authority and develops credibility through personal experience.

How does Annie's work and the ways she infused her writing with personal experience and autobiographical authority fit into larger patterns of nineteenth-century writing instruction and women's rhetoric? In *Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric in North America*, Nan Johnson writes that "what is distinctive about recent scholarship on nineteenth-century rhetoric is its overall assessment of this era as that period most responsible for the theoretical impoverishment of the rhetoric of composition and the academic marginalization of rhetoric studies in modern English studies" (11). She warns scholars to assess with caution postures that focus "attention on a fixed notion of what rhetoric ought to be rather than on what an *individual tradition* actually entails" (12, my emphasis), and she is wary of scholarship that "indicts rather than explores the unique theoretical, philosophical, and cultural influences on various postclassical traditions"

(13). Annie's papers prompted me to consider both an individual *and* a tradition. Annie's writing—her voice, her satire, her use of gendered experiences—seemed more dynamic than the way broad histories of writing instruction were characterizing the instruction from this time period. My first reaction to Annie's papers was that something more was going on in them than just a transcription process based on the belletristic principles popularly labeled "current-traditional rhetoric" by twentieth century scholars. Ultimately, this initial observation led me to examine, explore, and account for the ways Annie deployed personal and gendered experience as a rhetorical strategy at three particular sites of literate action—her undergraduate studies, graduate work, and professional writing.

The first site of literate action, Annie's undergraduate studies, led me to examine documents such as *The Hesperian*, yearbooks, a master's thesis written in the 1970s, instructor documents, university bulletins and catalogues, and reports to the Board of Regents in order to stitch together a context for understanding Annie's frequent use of personal experience as a feminist rhetorical strategy in her student writing. Annie's participation in the English Club, the numerous publications of her poetry and short stories in *The Hesperian*, and her farewell sketch of and for Herbert Bates all suggest that she was an active participant in a lively community of scholars that encouraged a variety of literacy practices. Furthermore, the importance and longevity of oratory and the debating clubs at Nebraska, and women students' participation in these activities, add another noteworthy layer to the larger portrait of campus and academic life within which Annie lived and wrote.

As important as the campus culture and curriculum at Nebraska are for developing new understandings of nineteenth-century writing instruction at Midwestern universities and colleges, these findings seem incomplete without considering the narratives, critiques, and essays that students actually produced to meet academic expectations. The most significant pattern that I see emerging in Annie's student writing is her ability to deploy gendered experience to meet a variety of curricular objectives. She combines her personal knowledge of playhouses, sewing, and farming with her cultural, historical, and political understandings of topics such as progress, labor reform, and newspaper reading. She uses personal experience in a variety of genres, including narrative, satire, persuasion, and the critique. The dexterity with which she puts personal experience to work in her writing is significant. As mentioned in chapter one, Kathryn Fitzgerald reports in her analysis of student writing from Platteville Normal School in Wisconsin during the same time period that "not one paper focuses on women's lives" (293). At Nebraska, Annie draws on examples from her childhood as a girl and her life as a woman to support ideas, construct arguments, and defend a position. She had multiple opportunities in diverse contexts to inscribe her female identity and gendered experiences into her academic writing.

In her graduate work, Annie uses gender and personal experience as the primary lens for understanding literature. Because Annie's undergraduate English education offered students opportunities to develop their own authorial presence, she is able to write with a sense of agency and authority that blends the rhetoric of scientific literary analysis with a personal rhetoric that values experience as a source of knowledge. Annie employs

gender to theorize the writing methods of men and women writers as they develop their women characters. She foregrounds the reading and writing practices of men and women, and she suggests that because women have a different standpoint than men, they have distinctly different methods for characterizing women. Annie concludes, after analyzing dozens of writers and female characters, interviewing classmates, and using her own experience as a reader, that there are clear lines of demarcation between the methods of men and women writers. One of her most important findings is that women writers make their women characters responsible for their actions in the midst of a moral dilemma, while men writers emphasize the role of the environment—conditions outside the character herself—to represent a woman's moral development.

Although we have limited evidence of the rhetorical work Annie produced after her thesis, a few key documents written by and about her during her years as a teacher in South Dakota help us draw some conclusions about her writing practices after Nebraska. In "Young People of the Prairie," Annie values her personal experiences and uses them as part of a narrative strategy aimed at persuasion; her ultimate goal in sharing the testimony of the school's hardship is to gain financial support from readers. The correspondence that takes place between Mr. Jorgensen and Mrs. Platt after Annie's death helps us situate the kind of writing that she produced for "Young People of the Prairie" into the larger context of a letter writing campaign to the women's groups of various Congregational churches in New England. When Annie uses personal experience to establish the kind of autobiographical authority that scholars such as Jane Hindman and Jacqueline Royster describe, she deploys a feminist rhetorical strategy and writes

from and through multiple perspectives and identities—most significantly those of mother and teacher. Mr. Platt's response to her mother identity rather than her teacher identity draws attention to the ways our personal lives are implicated in our scholarly research and professional writing. Put a slightly different way, our personal lives inevitably shape the lenses through which we interpret, test, and represent our world. This idea applies to the way Annie narrated her experiences in South Dakota, the way I read and narrate her papers, and the way Mr. Platt read and responded to Annie's letter. In many instances, Annie strategically embraced her positionality, highlighting rather than downplaying the self doing the writing—her standpoint. I believe her work asks composition and rhetoric scholars to consider how such a move could offer us a different yet equally productive way of interacting with our own research subjects as well as our colleagues' research than the standard conventions of academic discourse allow.

Throughout these chapters, I have quoted heavily from Annie's papers, wanting very purposefully to make her voice a significant *presence* in my project. Inevitably I have chosen excerpts that lend support to my overall interpretation of her writing strategies, but my goal was also to try to capture and convey the person of Annie. From the first, I was struck by Annie's personality, by her vivid descriptions, funny stories, sarcastic statements, and strong arguments. I am not alone in this reaction. As discussed earlier, when Mrs. Platt wrote Theodore in April of 1937 and mentioned that she was the one to bring Annie's original letter to the Ladies of First Church to the attention of Mr. Platt, she remarked that "Mr. Platt had very little use for people who were not cheerful, & he conceived a great admiration for the woman who could write such a letter." In the

reply to Mrs. Platt's letter, when Theodore describes their deliberations over the offer of trust fund money, Theodore also writes, "I was pleased to see how perfectly you and Mr. Platt seemed *to get her personality from her letters*. She was always happy, always hopeful, never any fear or worry in her mind" (my emphasis). In my efforts to understand Annie's papers within the contexts of nineteenth-century writing instruction and women's rhetoric, I hope that I have not subordinated Annie's work to my analysis, but that I have given her voice enough room to offer readers a sense of her individuality, "to get her personality."

I am inclined to use a statement from Annie to bring my ideas to a close, but I believe Theodore's words about Annie have something to say about her and my project as well. The following excerpt is taken from the letter quoted earlier that Theodore wrote after Annie's death to their oldest son (addressed as "Teddy" in this letter), Teddy's wife Helene, and their daughter, Joanna. Theodore writes:

> And you have practically all risen to eminence and honor in her brief life time. She inspired you all to it and she expected it of you, took it for granted. Helen, the youngest, might have missed showing her mother that she too was among the great. But during the last half year of the mother's life she burst out like a meteor's flash in real poetry, worthy to live for ages. An eastern magazine is coming out with her Ivy Day poem in a current issue. I am sorry she didn't live long enough to hold that copy in her hand.
>
> You are sorry she didn't live to see Joanna grow up! But life's book must close somewhere, and seeing her last born honored thus may well be regarded as the climax. The success of the next generation must be in the next volume. Perhaps from a new vantage point she may still be watching us. Else what is heaven for as Browning says.
>
> Yours,
>
> Dad

To conclude, Annie's work offers *a new vantage point* from which to consider nineteenth-century writing instruction and women's rhetoric. Her collection of papers is

as unique as it is representative. The collection is evidence of one woman's writing process over a number of years, but the papers also allow us to see that young women found ways to validate their experiences, their interests, and their identity in academic settings at the turn of the century. Using Theodore's words to sum up Annie's contribution to rhetoric and composition is a sentimental choice, I know. In his conclusion to *The Performance of Self in Student Writing*, Newkirk suggests that it's time to reexamine our discipline's tendency to consider the word "sentimental" a "term of rebuke" (107), and I have to agree with him. Annie appreciated writing that aimed toward *sympathy*—that fostered and encouraged a sympathetic understanding between writer and reader. It's what she recognized about Herbert Bates as an instructor, it's what she enjoyed most about her favorite authors, it's what Mr. Platt appreciated about her, and I believe it is what she consciously and strategically worked toward in her own writing all along, from her undergraduate years as a student writing about playhouses through her South Dakota days as a mother raising five children and a teacher managing a prairie school.

Notes

[1] Biographical information is compiled from the "Biographical Materials" folder in Annie's collection. Among the biographical sketches are "Annie Time Line" and "Prey Family Information" documents put together by Joanna Prey Jorgensen Kaestner, Annie's granddaughter (the daughter of Annie's oldest son, Theodore).

[2] In *Prairie University: A History of the University of Nebraska*, Robert Knoll offers a brief biography of Annie's son, Theodore, who would go on to be a professor of physics with a long and distinguished career at the University of Nebraska. Knoll reports that Annie received a master's degree in both English *and* mathematics, and that her tutoring prepared Theodore for college (111).

[3] The information about Thrall Academy is compiled from two articles located in the vertical file on Thrall Academy in the State Archives of the South Dakota Historical Society. The most detailed article about the Academy's history is called "History of Thrall Academy," written by Jean Simon and published on May 11, 1983, presumably from a South Dakota newspaper, though the newspaper's name is not on the clipping. The second article is copied from a pamphlet called "Little People of the Prairie" by Miss Miriam L. Woodberry, published by The Congregational Home Missionary Society, New York (no date is included).

[4] In the appendices of her thesis, Anne L. Johnson provides reprints of several archive documents important to this study, including the Carpenter letter, Lucius Sherman's 1884 report, Ebenezer Hunt's 1890 report, and Sherman's 1902 report for Caldwell's *Education in Nebraska*. Archives and Special Collections at University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries also has a copy of Caldwell's *Education in Nebraska*.

[5] Biographical notes indicate that Annie completed high school and prep school in Lincoln. The 1892 *Sombrero* specifically lists Annie as a student in the University Latin School for the 1891-1892 school year and as a member of the class of "Ninety-Six." She is also listed among the class officers as "Treasurer" (78).

[6] Anne Johnson offers some important insights about the changing nature of the oratorical contests. She writes that "By the early 1890s the student newspapers were deploring the excessive showmanship of the oratorical contests; within five years after the expressed awareness that the vehicle for expression had become more important than the idea to be expressed, oratorical contests were of decidedly minor importance" (110). It is during this time that oratory seems to have gained status in the curriculum rather than as an extra-curricular activity.

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