THE RHETORIC OF STRENGTH IN WRITING STUDIES AND AMERICAN CULTURE

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Abstract: This project aims to uncover, explore, and complicate a definition of the concept of strength as it occurs in writing studies and in American culture. To begin, I examine semiotics and rhetorical structures of strength, using Barthes, Eco, Pierce, and Rickert as a basis for analyzing a theory of strength. Chapter two traces the development of the philosophies of the Human Potential Movement and their influence on expressivist writing practices. This chapter also traces various and competing histories of composition in order to uncover a better understanding of the chronology of composition and how competing philosophies are woven together throughout. The final chapter examines rubrics and assessment practices, dissecting and analyzing these rubrics to reveal a definition of "strong writing" as it reflects and effects potential and actual assessment practices. The first case study analyzes strength and fitness manuals from the late 19th century and early 20th century to establish a basis for physical strength through identity both local and widespread and the importance of these concepts to a post-Civil War America. The second case study compares Franklin Roosevelt's speeches as a presidential candidate and as the President with the visual rhetoric of the first issue of Captain America Comics to offer insight into how the idea of strength evolved into a priority of national defense. The conclusion examines these ideas in context to understand how the idea of strength has functioned and continues to function in culture and in rhetoric.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

CHAPTER I

SEMIOTICS AND STRENGTH

I want to start with a simple thought experiment:

In the unmeasured moments following The Big Bang, all matter in the universe—what would become the whole of existence, the planets vast in number and filled with multitudes of species, the sum total of our experiences, and those worlds well beyond the cosmic boundaries of our solar system, to all the galaxies littering the night sky and skies we will never see, what we call "everything"—was supercondensed into a space the size of a large marble.

Now, an entirely different cosmological perspective has emerged, one in which our universe, and perhaps an infinite number of other universes scattered across a multidimensional plane, is expanding. Questions arise which may keep one up at all hours: expanding into what? Into the same space which once held a marble?

I do not intend to write about the Big Bang Theory, nor will I be writing about any cosmological questions of nature[1]. This thought exercise is meant to scramble preconceived notions about simple, assumed ideas. Similarly, to understand the rhetoric of strength, it is important to reconsider our assumptions about what strength is, how it functions, and how we interact with strength. In this first section, I wish to do exactly that.

In this project, I intend to examine this rhetorical idea of "strength" in the context of American culture, writing theory, and writing praxis. I want to complicate an idea with a hidden complexity, an idea in a complicit, and sometimes invisible relationship to American culture and American ideology. Strength, as I will show in the chapters to follow, is not just the ability to lift a given weight. It is and has been a part of who we are as a people for more than a century—and it pervades to the present day. I intended to address the questions: how is meaning made in a vastly complicated equation of words, rhetorical context, time, geography, intent, etc.? How does strength mean? Most importantly: how does the idea of strength affect our idea of writing, writing education, and writing evaluation? How does "strength" and "strong writing" affect our work in the composition classroom? This project aims to at least approach an answer to these ideas by tracing the use and symbolization of strength throughout American history and within a specific set of artifacts.

This ideological construct appears, often, in an all-too-obvious manner: has there ever been a State of the Union address without the phrase "strength of a nation"? Beyond those clear and distinct calls for strength, I am more interested in the ways in which strength slithers into our ideology: how often do we hear the phrase "strong writing" or "she's a strong writer"? Yet these titles are rarely—if ever—defined at all. I intend to interrogate that lack. If we are to judge and to evaluate writing and writers

[1] This is a rather common thought experiment, so much so that there is an entire section of the website reddit.com devoted to it. Fortunately, according to *A User's Guide to the Universe: Surviving the Perils of Black Holes, Time Paradoxes, and Quantum Uncertainty by* Dr. Dave Goldberg and Dr. Jeff Blomquist, the answer is, essentially, there is no "edge" to the universe (which, again, should shake up previous notions about the nature of the universe) and that, while it does not appear that we are expanding into a container of sorts, this is a subject that is being studied carefully to more fully understand the universe on a cosmological scale (165-198).

with these kinds of monikers, then what strong writing is and is not must be defined, analyzed, and understood. The legacy of American ideology in the last century builds an evolving conception of strength, one that informs and accounts for our common understanding of what strong writing is. This legacy, as I will show, is anything but common.

The story of strength is a quest to parse out the multitude of meanings: the dark alleys of implication, the bold horizon of ramifications, and the strange connections between the optic nerve and the electric edge of one of billions of dendrites in the brain. At the heart of this story is one basic question: what is the meaning of strength? The surrounding chapters involve the role of strength as a rhetorical product of American culture, of American history, and in pedagogical practice. Here, however, I aim to uncover the layers of meaning for strength and its variations (i.e., strong). I come at this analysis from the point of view of an American with a vested interest in strength and as a writing teacher and as a researcher interested in meaning. In that regard, the overarching theme of this study holds true. I do not intend to discuss strength as a universal principle (for now). Instead, I intend to dive into the analytical meaning of strength; using a combination of semiotics and rhetoric, I trace the idea of strength through fitness manuals at the turn of the century, through pre- and post-war rhetoric, through psychology, comics, and finally, through the written word. This meaning will be further chipped away at, rotated, shoved, pulled apart, and unglued.

I want explore the relativistic nature of strength. That is, strength and its variations exist not as objects but as qualities in relation to other objects. A semiotic and analytical breakdown of this concept should yield rather interesting results as they are not constants, but variables. The exploration of variables and variable meaning lay at the heart of theory. The platonic notion of truth clearly turns into an irrelevant quest from this perspective—and yet I still crave this adventure. A path of discovery may still reveal some small glance into at least a greater understanding of meaning and deciphering variability. The calculus of ideas, approached from a carefully considered analysis of meaning, may yet offer some answers—even if no one answer exists.

An illustration of relativity: if a man weighing 100 pounds picks up a barbell weighing 100 pounds, that 1:1 body weight to strength ratio might be considered strong. If a 200-pound man picks up that same weight, it may not be considered an act of strength. If a 200-pound man picks up a 100-pound weight after weeks of training, then that action may be considered an act of strength. Certain kinds of weightlifting movements are considered to be "strongman" lifts while others are not—even though many look similar or still involve heavy weights.

Considerations of the relative relationship of strength occur within the movements themselves: if two men of equal size both deadlift 500 pounds—a feat impressive to most people—but one pulls the bar from the ground at a constant, methodical pace while the other pulls with several short jerking motions, ratcheting the weight above his knees and grinding out the movement, one might be considered stronger than the other. The movement, build of the men, weight, and distance of the lift were all the same. But the perception will differ. Further, I chose the number 500 on purpose: a 500-pound deadlift may be considered phenomenal by most people. Even regular gym goers would see such a lift as extraordinary. For competitive powerlifters, however, a 500-pound deadlift is practically a starting point—the world record is more than twice that.

I argue that the defining characteristic of the idea of strength is a relational condition to an outside apparatus. This apparatus is not the apparatus of Althusser; although there may be conditions in which the ideological state apparatus or repressive state apparatus are one and the same of the outside apparatus, the relational condition of strength does not necessarily bear the same attributes. Instead, I use the term apparatus out of theoretical necessity: the term is an umbrella for the conditions, circumstances, and objects that may be necessary to understand a semiological underpinning of the notion of strength. In semiotics, the notion of the sign and referent is the most basic of relationships. This is obvious. But usually those relationships are a connection between object and idea. For strength, this relationship is ordinarily reversed. The semiological relationship of strength to referent is marked by an operational definition, that is, the referent named is one of process or action. As

such, some*thing* must be processed; some*thing* must be acted upon or with. In that regard, incorporating semiotics into a rhetoric approach will offer a philosophical direction relevant to writing studies.

To invoke strength requires an invocation to utilize strength in some way, shape, or form. What is "strength"? That is the question, but the question is flawed. The premise of the question asks for representation, and the underpinning of that premise is a representation without action or any relational aspects. In effect, it is theory without praxis. "Strength" may call to mind muscle-bound strongmen. Simply picturing a man or woman with visible musculature positions that person as frozen in time and in action. By "action," I don't mean to imply something akin to a Hollywood film; rather, I mean action as related to "activity" and, thus, "active." The simplest of movements qualify as action. An action is being taken by someone as he or she bends an elbow or raises a toe. In this regard, the strength referent to static, atemporal muscled figures denies the actions necessary to create that muscle.

One possible solution, assuming one exists, is to detach strength from action. But how is that possible? In fact, it may not be possible.

One of the many possible translations of *dynami*, or strength, from Greek and Latin, is that of dynamic. Dynamism, at its root, is defined as changing action. To consider strength as changing action is to consider strength as within the movement of time, not a frozen moment. While other objects may suffer from a semiological perspective that is locked with a strict, unmoving temporal construct, strength is, by definition, action. What action or actions are involved is nonspecific; indeed, strength as dynamic change may be in reaction rather than action. In this case, the relationship of strength to a semiological referent is considerably unstable and marked by constant change. As a constant, the predictability of meaning is impossible for strength. When paired with

circumstance, the circumstance defines meaning. As a semiotic concept, then, pinning down a singular definition of strength is, to say the least, challenging.

The idea of strength, as a term that is more conceptual than concrete, rests outside of and in between the notions of sign and signifier. The relationship of the idea of strength to a situation involving strength positions the traditional semiotic equation as completely reversed: the signified indicates the sign and signifier. What is perceived is filtered through judgment and understanding to be labeled as strength. The aim of this first chapter, then, is to break down the various meanings—and the aim of the project is to break apart the construction of those meanings—and in that regard, I take here a semiological approach to strength. To do so, I want to start with the definition posited by Umberto Eco, in his text *A Theory of Semiotics*: a sign is "a communicative device taking place between two human beings intentionally aiming to communicate or express something" (15) but, more than that, "*everything* that, on the grounds of a previously established social convention, can be taken as *something standing for something else*" (16). As a starting point, Eco offers a fairly wide definition, one that could almost be characterized by a subjective/objective or concrete/abstract binary construction. In fact, that is exactly why I wish to start with Eco: his goals for semiotics are overarching and wide-ranging.

Thus far, however, strength is merely a symbol, and a symbol without a relationship. It is an idea which floats, rather than docks. Strength, here, is perhaps better communicated as "being strong" in some way, as the addition of a verb offers a relationship based on state. Without that verb, strength might as well be relegated to platonic ideals rather than semiotic signs. Alone, it is an idea without referent. And to some extent, this floating signification does have some bearing on this project: the idea of strength is attached to artifacts, be they physical or intellectual. In part, this two-part relationship regards strength as a kind of modification more than a sign; this will not always be the case. And, as I will show, "modification" is only a surface-level understanding; the marrying of strength to an artifact changes both the artifact and the idea of strength in profound ways.

Early in *A Theory of Semiotics*, Eco states "[the] aim of this book is to explore the theoretical possibility and the social function of a unified approach to every phenomenon of signification and/or communication" (3). Like so many other semioticians, Eco aims to encode an entire system of signs; however, a unified theory of signs invariably develops into something arhetorical and devoid of cultural or historical evolution. As such, I intend to incorporate some of his definitions into this project, but not his systemic views. Later in this introduction, I will critique and analyze the unified approach in greater detail. Eco attempts to include every potential incarnation of the sign, including those that need not even be brought on consciously: "two types of so called 'signs' that seem to escape a communicational definition: they are (a) physical events coming from a natural source and (b) human behavior not intentionally emitted by its senders" (16-17). Eco's definitions are included here to buttress the many incarnations of strength I will examine. This broad-stroke approach punctuates the many forms and contexts of rhetoric I will be utilizing throughout this project.

Strength, now, may be included as a sign, but a still-unnamed sign all the same. In this developed definition of signs, strength still has the attachment to action, an unnamed yet required external attributed force necessary to "be." Derrida, however, affirms this possibility in his work *Signature, Event, Context*: "The absence of the referent is a possibility rather easily admitted today. This possibility is not only an empirical eventuality. It constructs the mark; and the eventual presence of the referent at the moment when it is designated changes nothing about the structure of a mark which implies that it can do without the referent" (318). Further, he outlines some of the ways in which this would be possible:

> A statement whose object is not impossible but only possible might very well be proffered and understood without its real object (its referent) being present, whether for the person who produces the statement, or for the one who receives it…Not that it is always thus; but the structure of possibility of this statement includes the capability of being formed and of functioning either as an empty reference, or cut off from its referent. Without this possibility,

> which is also the general, generalizable, and generalizing iteration of every mark, there would be no statements. (318-319)

Derrida goes into account for the simple possibility that no referent exists (319); in either case, Derrida calls for what is possible. In that regard, there is a tinge of uncertainty in his theory of signs. Not unlike the Magic Bullet Theory, he must account for the possibility, even if that possibility is unlikely. For semiotics, though, there exists the very real possibility of objects or signs without signification, and when the aim of semiotics is to create a total system of signs, anomalies are both necessary to account for and necessary to explain. Already, I have shown the difficulty of accounting for the expression of an idea in a system of signs; Derrida's explanation of the sign without referent does, at least, offer one entry point for strength to be discussed as a sign without a concrete referent. Roland Barthes, however, offers an alternative perspective in *Elements of Semiology*:

> To rediscover a non-signifying object, one would have to imagine a utensil absolutely improvised and with no similarity to an existing model...a hypothesis which is virtually impossible to verify in any society. This universal semantization of the usages is crucial: it expresses the fact that there is no reality except when it is intelligible, and should eventually lead to the merging of sociology and socio-logic…the sign-function therefore has (probably) an anthropological value, since it is the very unit where the relations of the technical and significant are woven together. (41-42)

Barthes's discussion relates to physical objects; as a result, he complicates the work of Derrida and Eco, but only to a certain extent. His larger point does elucidate the notion that nothing is without referent; there will always be a slew of electrical impulses jumping the gap between perception and interpretation. Still, I am far more interested in these possibilities because the end result is dependent on a rhetorical approach of signs, one based on audience, speaker, and context. This is one of the

foundational principles of rhetoric, and one of the means by which I intend to create a matrix of semiotics, rhetoric, history, and incarnations of strength.

However, Eco and Derrida may be, perhaps, too broad here, too all-encompassing, at least for this project. After all, the aim of semioticians is to construct an entire system of signs, not simply to account for a single sign in all its forms and approaches. Still, I could not approach the analysis of a single sign without a system in place to anchor to, as Eco argues:

> A signification system is an autonomous semiotic construct that has an abstract mode of existence independent of any possible communicative act it makes possible. On the contrary (except for stimulation processes) *every act of communication to or between human beings* – or any other intelligent biological or mechanical apparatus—*presupposes a signification system as a necessary condition. (9)*

Eco separates the system of signs and the uses of signs for communication. The system itself lays the foundation for communication to take place; much of what I explore in this project relies on a presupposed system in place that may or may not involve a system of communication; much of the theoretical work in the final chapter involves strength at a conceptual level as a kind of judgment. Earlier chapters directly involve communication in the form of text or speech. Still others, particularly the first case study, involve communication from the 19th century—communication that was fashioned for a direct mail exchange; this one-way conversation evokes an entirely different rhetorical exchange based on the mode of communication and the time passed. In this way, the collision of semiotics and the rhetorical value of kairos detaches meaning from constancy and reallocates meaning in a way dependent on temporal and geographic context.

If the idea of strength is one based outside of a constant—that is, an idea resting in the flux of time, geography, and the relationship to the personal—then the expression of strength is similarly based outside of a constant. Variability in expression complicates the base definition of strength and the

basic idea of what strength is at its core. The platonic notion of strength, therefore, cannot exist; such an idea breaks down quickly under scrutiny. Strength of character and muscular strength are built in much the same way: reaction to a situation. That situation, in turn, causes a momentary failure in the given form of strength and the reactive element causes a rebuilding. In this way, strength is a recursive notion, cycling between external forces and internal reactions. Again, the idea of strength is that of something in between, a floating point. If this variability applies to the sign of strength, does that then affect the system of signs as a whole? Is the system of semiotics one big house of cards, ready to collapse with the slightest whisper? Following the path of Eco, these questions are not quite so simple:

> the semiotician should always question both his object and his categories in order to decide whether he is dealing with the abstract theory of the pure competence of an ideal sign-producer (a competence which can be posited in an axiomatic and highly formalized way) or whether he is concerned with a social phenomenon subject to changes and restructuring, resembling a network of intertwined partial and transitory competences rather than a crystal-like and unchanging model. (28-29)

Eco points to something beyond strict semiotics; his contention here is that there is a certain unreliability in the reception of communication and while semioticians may focus on theory or practice, Eco hints at the notion of semiological reception. Semiotics, as a field, is concerned with interpretation, with understanding: the gap between sign and referent. But I argue that Eco, at least here, is referencing the idea of reception more than just understanding—and reception lay within the area of rhetoric. Further, his description of a "social phenomenon subject to changes and restructuring, resembling a network of intertwined partial and transitory competences" is reminiscent of the definition of kairos. Separating reception from understanding may, at first, seem almost like splitting hairs: after all, how much do they actually differ? But understanding relates to

comprehensibility and definition; reception involves usage—and a host of other variables in the process of usage. Eco does account for this:

> the semiotic approach is ruled by a sort of *indeterminacy principle*: in so far as signifying and communicating are social functions that determine both social organization and social evolution, to 'speak' about 'speaking,' to signify signification or to communicate about communication cannot but influence the universe of speaking, signifying, and communicating. (29)

While Barthes, in *Elements of Semiology*, expands on this line of thought, noting "…in most semiological languages, the sign is really and truly 'arbitrary' since it is founded in artificial fashion by a unilateral decision; these in fact are fabricated languages, 'logo techniques.' The user follows these languages, draws messages (or 'speech') from them but has no part in their elaboration" (31). Both approaches account for the impossibility of knowing the precise interpretation by the receiving party. While Eco takes some direction from physics[2] and reveals the influence that metacognition of language has on language itself, Barthes adopts a postmodern position that the sign may contain any meaning. I would not go so far as to say that the sign is meaningless; instead, the sign and referent relationship has evolved to something ever more malleable. For strength, then, the referent has changed over time, and is changing still.

Eco and Barthes are, as I have previously stated, good starting points. But, as I have also said, their definitions of sign are, largely, inadequate for the purposes of this project. Terrence Hawkes, citing C.S. Pierce, offers a more elaborate definition of the sign itself: "A sign or *representamen* is 'something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity' (qtd. in Collected Papers, Vol 2, para. 228): it is 'anything which determines something else (its *interpretant*) to refer to

[2] Namely, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle; however, Eco's description is reminiscent of Schrodinger's cat, in which a cat is placed in a box that, upon opening, has a 50/50 chance of releasing a gas that will kill the cat. The thought experiment is meant to illustrate the fact that the perception of the viewer has an effect on physics.

an object to which itself refers (its *object*)'" (ibid, Vol 2 para. 303). Pierce's definition seems similar, with minor yet important distinctions: the idea of "capacity" offers a spectrum of fulfillment of meaning, while the notion of respect belies a sense of directedness offered by other semioticians. Similarly, Pierce's inclusion of the deterministic qualities of the sign tugs at philosophical questions of free will and choice in the production of meaning at the level of the sign.

For rhetoric, then, these questions may be better framed as intent, but the result is the same—intent is relevant, directive, and should be accounted for as an interpretive agent. In that regard, it may be that intent should be perceived both from the recipient and from the presenter, as I.A. Richards argues:

> What matters most in all such exercises is that the learner should be made to watch the consequences of his decisions, and see that what a word means (that is, here, what the *thing* is that he is talking about) depends upon the purpose in hand. It is no use expounding to him the difference between accidental, or contingent, and necessary, or essential, properties unless he sees that what is essential for one purpose is inessential for another and why. (99)

Richards would argue that the relative meaning of an idea depends upon intent as much as any other factor. This would certainly complicate the implications of free will and interpretations of the sign; further, I would argue that Richard's assertion of intent is overvalued and, consequently, he undervalues other, more relevant semiotic elements.

But the real difference between Pierce and other semioticians is the interconnectedness of his systematic breakdown of the sign and the related aspects of the sign:

> A sign thus stands for something (its *object*); it stands for something to somebody (its *interpretant*); and finally it stands for something to somebody in some respect (this respect is called its *ground*). These terms, *representation, object, interpretant,* and *ground* can thus be seen to refer to the means by which the sign signifies; the relationship between them determines the precise nature of the process of *semiosis*." (103)

This scientific process of semiosis, as Pierce puts it, reveals a complex interplay of intention, objective acts or objects, and context. Pierce's notion of semiosis smacks of a biological process, the evolution of meaning. This interplay does not end with the singular conception of what a sign is or is not; Pierce goes on to analyze the *kinds* of signs possible: "The 'triadic relations of comparison' or logical possibilities based on the kind of *sign*. These are the *qualisign*, a 'quality' which acts as a sign once it is embodied; the *sinsign*, an actual thing or event which acts simply and singly…as a sign" (103-104). Pierce's qualifications cement a means to at least begin to attribute strength, as a sign, into a specific category. As a *qualisign*, strength could be explained far easier and with more substance than before, especially in terms like "strong writing." That said, the circumstances leading to the *qualisign* would need to be defined and outlined; in other words, the *sinsign* would lead to a *qualisign* which would lead to a more definite sign of strength. Circumstances are only part of the total view of a sign of strength; circumstances could still be far too relative to contain a reliable sense of meaning.

I intend to address how Pierce incorporates context with grounding; but first, a momentary digression: I would be remiss if I did not address the binary circumstances present in the goals of semiotics. All at once, there is a pull in two opposite directions: one, of a linguistic platonic ideal, something to draw upon throughout time and geography as a direct correlative to meaning. The other definition is malleable, relative to time, geography, and context (particularly rhetorical context). This binary construct has been at the forefront of rhetorical thought since ancient Greece; I, too, am pulled between the desire to create and maintain a consistent, constant definition of strength and the relative nature of meaning, especially in a postmodern age. For the purposes of this project, I assume that strength is a *qualisign*, and intend to interrogate those particular moments (*sinsign*) in recent history in which this *qualisign* is used.

Pierce points toward a compromise between the problems of an ever-changing relativity in the face of a desire to create a constant referent. While he leans heavily toward a relative, contextual sign, he

aims to at least offer the possibility of constancy. For the purposes of my project, the solution lay in his means to connect referents to an anchored performance:

> 'triadic relations of performance' involving actual entities in the real world, based on the kind of *ground*. These are the *icon*, something which functions as a sign by means of features of itself which resemble its object; the *index*, something which functions as a sign by virtue of some sort of factual or causal connection with its object; and the *symbol*, something which functions as a sign because of some 'rule' of conventional or habitual association between itself and its object. (104)

These elements—the ground, icon, index, and symbol—all serve underlying functions; that is, to anchor the sign to a specific performance. This performance, then, would be relative in nature but subject to the constancy of these other elements. What Pierce offers, in sum, is the means to anchor analysis to specific moments in time and specific places of rhetorical power. These elements of semiology reinforce and invigorate my arguments concerning a more analytical definition of strength.

Strength and Power and the Ambient

Strength is often related to or equated with power. While there is a sense in which strength can be exerted in the form of physical power or force, this connection is fraught with ideological implications. Regardless, the notion of strength as a form of dominance, be it physical, political, psychological, or otherwise, should be explored and interrogated. Again, this notion of strength is impossible to understand without a relational element to another concept; here, weakness. For power structures to be in place, one element must have more power than another: in essence, strong versus weak. This binary will have enormous implications in the final chapter. Here, strong "wins out" over weakness in a power struggle. This notion of strength divides rather than defines. Henry Spencer, and later, Charles Darwin's "Survival of the Fittest" is often falsely equated with the idea of "survival of the strongest." Despite the false equivalence, the popular use of the phrase reinforces this notion of

strength as a means of dominance. Those who are weak, then, die off. This superlative-oriented situation theoretically results in an impossible situation: global dominance by only those left—those who already dominated. Again, this is a popular interpretation of the phrase and does not explicate the scientific definition. Culturally, strength is equated to power structures and specifically, those with power and those without power as lacking strength. While much of my argument involves the distant past, we, as a nation and a culture, have not evolved as much as we may think. Didier Bigo argues that the

> …interpretations of the attacks [on 9/11] were framed by a military spirit in search of a target against which reciprocal violence would be justified…[launching] immediately a territorial war against Afghanistan was a way to show the strength of the country and to restore the image of power, playing also with the feeling of taking revenge and of deterring a new attack. It was not a discussion about emergency powers, about the necessity of a Roman dictature, about a reframing of the constitution. It was about mobilising energies. (114)

Bigo's interpretation of the response of September 11, 2001, a response that led to the War in Iraq, mirrors the rhetorical responses of WWII as I outline in case study two. The cultivation of national strength as a defensive measure (even when used in an offensive manner) has its roots long before this new millennia. But this *sinsign* involves a different ground in the performance of strength, and thus the *qualsign* operates differently to produce a referent. One need only to think back to the immediate mass response from entertainers and production companies to define a different understanding of national trauma and a response involving strength after 9/11.

Thomas Rickert's *Ambient Rhetoric* may, at first, appear to be an unlikely path to walk alongside the response to a national trauma. After all, the mobilization of military force following 9/11 looks to favor an active response to Rickert's approach, one of passivity. However, the characterization of an active/passive binary doesn't capture the essence of ambient rhetoric—it simply "is." Rickert, in a

two-part definition, details ambience as "…the active role that the material and informational environment takes in human development, dwelling, and culture, or to put this differently, it dissolves the assumed separation between what is (privileged) human doing and what is passively material" (3) while it "…invites us to understand the complex give-and-take we have with our material surroundings…but this brings us back to include background intelligibility, that in which and from which we dwell" (5). Rickert's definition involves both active and passive elements, but the result is a kind of surrounding field of persuasion, one built on invisible interaction and pervading our lives. Rhetoric, then, disappears like oxygen and is just essential to life. Further, he argues for what he calls an "ambient age":

> an ambient age calls us to rethink much of our rhetorical theory and practice, indeed, calls us to understand rhetoric as ambient. Rhetoric can no longer remain centered on its theoretical commonplaces, such as rhetor/subject, audience, language, image, technique, situation, and the appeals accomplishing persuasive work, at least as they are predominately understood and deployed. Rather, it must diffuse outward to include the material environment, things (including the technological), our own embodiment, and a complex understanding of ecological relationality as participating in rhetorical practices and their theorization (3).

Rickert's premise is that rhetoric extends beyond typical, traditional persuasive acts into the world as a constant presence. Earlier in this chapter, I noted my own difficulty in navigating the long-fought debate between sophistic rhetoric and platonic ideals in the postmodern era. Rickert's "ambient age", I believe, surpasses postmodernist thought and offers a more integrated approach to art and language than other proposed paradigms[3]. Rickert's notion of ambience has roots in the work of I.A. Richards, who offers a means to connect ambience to the *qualisign*, though not in so many words:

[3] For instance, remodernism, an infusion of spirituality into postmodernism. See http://www.stuckism.com/remod.html for the Remodernist manifesto.

> The reason for cultivating reflection upon the process of abstracting is that only so we can improve discrimination between what is essential and what is accidental in nature.
>
> The floundering of the protocols show how frequently people do not know what they are talking about: in this sense, that they cannot *separate the properties which determine the thing they are talking about* from other properties which may or may not belong to it *without* its being thereby any less itself. (98)

Richards, unlike Rickert, here focuses on the process of abstracting a thing, be it an idea, an object, or a sign. Where Rickert writes of ambience as a whole, Richards is more focused on a narrower scope of thought. While Rickert develops a paradigm, Richards develops a mode of thinking within that paradigm (despite the anomaly of time). Strength, as a persuasive act, positions us within an ambient age; the essential properties of strength intersect and pervade throughout this age. Simultaneously, Richards does recognize the failings in his focus, in his attempt to craft a system toward understanding expression:

> We should recognize that definition is always *partial*. If we disregard all but a restricted purpose…we can overlook this and set ourselves very rigorous standards of precision. But a general theory of interpretation, which takes strict logical statement as only one mode of discourse, will remember our inevitable partiality, and point out that no expression whatever is entirely and in all respects equivalent to any other. (101)

This partiality gets at the core of the conflict between abstracted, relative meaning and a solid definition of a specific sign. Richards notes that generalities will always fall short while being plagued by bias, or what we might consider to be the gap between intent and interpretation. In this vein, determining the influence of a larger historical and rhetorical context—those factors outside the interaction between agent and recipient—may counteract this partiality.

Later, in *The Meaning of Meaning*, written with C.K. Ogden, the two would write that "[it] is not always new words that are needed, but a means of controlling them as symbols, a means of readily discovering to what in the world on any occasion they are used to refer, and this is what an adequate theory of definition should provide" (19); further, "[though] definition be symbol-substitution, definitions have usually, for grammatical reasons, to be stated in a form which makes them appear to be about things" (111). Crafting a definition from a sign, then, is different than crafting a definition *of* a sign. Any theory of definition, though, must include the sign and referent in order to explicate the symbol-substitution outlined by Ogden and Richards. In allowing for the interaction of definition with sign/symbol, then, Ogden and Richards's theory of definition can interact with Rickert's ambient rhetoric in order to produce clarified meaning. Ogden and Richards continue:

> To make a statement is to symbolize a reference…[however] much we try, we cannot go beyond reference in the way of knowledge. True reference is reference to a set of referents as they hang together. False reference is reference to them as being in some other arrangement than that in which they actually hang together. The advance in knowledge is the increase in our power of referring to referents as they actually hang together. This is all we can do. (82)

In this way, referents can be manipulated and augmented for rhetorical effect. Taken further—even beyond superlatives—the meaning of strength becomes decidedly augmented when invoking the adverbial form "strongly." Adverbs, by their nature, serve to augment a word to become a descriptor, usually to reinforce meaning. In that regard, they may be considered a means to augment a word to a relativistic position, imposing a degreed separation of distinction dependent on the distance between the original meaning and the adverbial form. This distance is variable and reliant on the intended intensity of the descriptor necessary to convey appropriate meaning. Curiously, in the case of strength and strong, "strongly" acts as a variable for a variable. The ramifications for this are exponential and murky. In one sense, meaning should be narrowed in scope and focused: acting "strongly" should entail a greater intensity as a referent. Intensification of a referent does not,

however, further cement that neurological connection between sign and signifier and signified. I argue that the meaning—and the referent—are singular in nature. That is, for example, the difference between warm and warmer. Although the two ideas should exist in a continuum, they also exist in relation to one another. Therefore, there is no scale of the idea of warmth, necessarily, but only individuated notions of thermogenic relativity. In much the same way, science has shown that the idea of cold is merely the absence of heat. Again, no scale exists to measure the idea of cold or the idea of "hot"; rather, the relationships between these concepts divide the measured intensity of vibrating air molecules exposed to radiation to what we perceive as a warm spring day—but not a hot spring day.

In much the same way, "strongly" is a measured intensity compared only to an alternative intensity. Considering the bulk of this chapter has been spent revealing the relativistic nature of "strong" as an idea, the notion of a compounded relativistic term is, in a word, loaded. The implications of a doubly relativistic term are like aiming for a bull's-eye while blindfolded: the gun may fire but it's a wonder if you hit anything. And yet we do: the navigation of meaning when using these kinds of squared variables is nothing shy of a linguistic miracle.

To define strength may well be an impossible task if precision and detail are to be accounted for alongside the variable nature of the term. A definition, then, must account for such variability. In this project, I wish to explore the nature and meaning of strength through multiple incarnations; as such, I begin by offering one possible definition of the term knowing full well that such a definition will certainly change: strength both acts and represents action or the potential of action; strength is a considered reaction to external stimuli in which that reaction may or not involve actual action. To have strength requires the necessary means to acquire strength, though such means are themselves variable and changeable. This definition is meant to be abstract and all-encompassing; the proceeding chapters will examine various executions of this definition so that some conclusion can be made about the idea of strength and its place in writing studies. I have separated this dissertation into two

primary sections: the first three chapters are, primarily, philosophical treatises on the nature of composition. The final two chapters are case studies, tracing the nature of strength through rhetoric and objects to provide a more complete understanding not only of the idea of strength, but also of the historical circumstances which have influenced the idea of strength. In doing so, I wish to account for the permutations of strength which I believe have had the greatest impact on what we think of when we think of "strong writing." Strength manuals and comics were particularly widespread and revered in the early and mid-twentieth century, respectively. Although there is not one given historical period or genre, I believe that because the idea of "strong writing" is so ubiquitous, a widespread approach will more accurately inform an analysis of this idea. In this way, this dissertation is not about a single period of time or a single genre; instead, it is about a single idea.

In the second chapter, I intend to accomplish three intertwined goals: one, to expand upon Berlin's insufficiently detailed characterization of the 1970s and expressivism by connecting and pinning down its real roots in contemporary self-psychology; two, to challenge the strict periodization of composition so often posited by composition historians and theorists; and finally, three, to again attempt to decode uses of strength in texts so clearly obsessed with cultivating strength in writing and in personality. To do so, I call upon several textbooks from the late 1950s to 1980, the generation of composition usually associated with expressivism. In addition, I will correlate these textbooks with critiques of textbooks and expressivist composition as well as contemporary texts on self-psychology. Later, I will trace this history forward, to new rumblings of neo-expressivism and expressionism. It is my intent to shake up the current conceptions of expressivism, the perceptions of textbook practices, and the kinds of writing called for during the late 1950s through 1980. In doing so, I reveal contemporary connections to strength metaphors found in self-psychology books, tracing a path from the national metaphors of strength in the previous chapters to what is to come in current writing theory.

In the third chapter, I return to the roots of this project and ask several, pointed questions: How does the idea of strength intersect with writing assessment? How do writing instructors quantify "strong writing"? Can we—and should we—teach students to write "strong essays"? Assessment is a key issue in current composition studies; the idea of "strength" is an idea that is prevalent in American culture, but because it is ubiquitous, this idea largely goes unnoticed. There are an enormous number of grading methodologies and these methodologies differ from instructor to instructor and from institution to institution. Too often, there is rampant railing against the use of a rubric, with instructors professing, "I know what a B paper looks like," while forgetting that a student does not. In my own courses, I often add, subtract, restructure, or generally overhaul my course rubrics to reflect changes in my own pedagogy, the context of Oklahoma State University, and the essays I teach. Still, one of my own ratings is and continues to be "strong." It is not the highest rating ("excellent"), but it does indicate a judgment on aspects of writing. I want to explore that judgment as it appears throughout assessment practices and understand how others judge student writing. I want to know, finally, exactly, what strong writing is.

In the first case study, I analyze fitness and health manuals from 1890 to the late 1930s. These books and pamphlets were the first of their kind, spearheading the age of physical culture in America and aiding in rebuilding the nation following the Civil War. This era began in the late nineteenth century, starting during the Gilded Age, (1880-1900) and culminating during the Progressive Era (1890-1920). The Gilded Age is most famous for the creation of a modern industrial economy and upper class prosperity, of manufacturing and urbanization. The Progressive Era, as a reaction to The Gilded Age, was a period marked by social activism and political reform, by prohibition and suffrage. The Progressive Era called on science to propose grand solutions to grand problems. It's also the age of eugenics. Strongmen and weightlifting represent a culmination of these social and political ideologies. These sports embodied a literal interpretation of "survival of the fittest" from Social Darwinism and a metaphorical inception of eugenics' flawed understanding of the optimal expression

of physical capacities. This chapter examines several texts on physical culture from this era in order to uncover what "strength" means, approaching each as an object of both rhetorical analysis and genre analysis. Each author conceptualizes the idea of strength in a unique manner; some weave strength into an overall pattern of health while others divorce strength and muscular power from health and vitality. These experts then marketed strength to an audience that was either unwilling or unable to locate it at a national scale, but the idea and expression of "strength" could be found at the level of the individual and based on variables such as health or class. The pursuit of physical strength became a middle class movement and would remain as such for decades. Metaphorical, intrinsic strength would only change when the Great War approached, when strength evolved from an individualistic notion to a nationalistic ideal.

The second case study analyzes the first issue of *Captain America Comics* as well as the speeches of President Franklin Roosevelt using visual rhetorical theory and political rhetorical analysis to examine and to uncover a definition of strength in the era of the Great War. Against a backdrop of espionage, war, and science, these artifacts offer a new definition of the idea of strength, one grounded not in nationalism but rather in the protection of a nation; the idea of strength, here, was far more powerful than strength as an act. The comic book predates the United States' entry into World War II by mere months; as an American hero without a war involving America, Captain America set out to defend the nation's interests at any cost. Captain America, as the quintessential Marvel Comics character, represents the paramount of human development and the resurgence in nationalistic strength prior to America's involvement in World War II. Typically, Captain America is positioned as a symbol of truth, justice, and the American Way (for better or worse). Although these readings capture the obvious nature of Captain America, they often do so when a storyline forces the character to question the values he symbolizes. These analyses fall short of a more complex question about the nature of the character and his origins. Instead, the text is about a kind of nationalistic strength, and that strength manifests itself throughout the comic book. But this is not about the stars and stripes on

Captain America's shield; rather, this nationalism is about protecting America from within. It is my intent to reveal these visual connections and trace their significance to larger, political notions of strength relevant to the historical context of the era by analyzing the first story of Captain America, a brief but exciting origin tale found in *Captain America Comics #1*. Always fighting the good fight from within, this definition of strength equates to Roosevelt's "unity of purpose" found in the four freedoms, in the arsenal of democracy, and always held in safety and security, not just the four-color muscles under stars and stripes.

Originally, the structure of this project was chronological and that arrangement was serendipitous rather than on purpose. Manuals from physical culture marked a kind of shift in the Reconstruction era of American history; WWII offered a reaction to that shift. That reaction brought America out of its individualistic needs and into a state of nationalism. In the decades to follow, that wholeness became separate again. The emphasis on the self returned, and internal strength at a national level had been replaced. So too, in writing studies, there was a reflected shift in what was emphasized. Finally, writing assessment in the present day is marked by a conflict between universal principles and localized development. The artifacts themselves drove me to discover other artifacts which became a part of the overall structure of the project[4]. I did not intend nor seek to discover artifacts from four consecutive eras of American history nor do I think that arrangement would yield a rhetorically-savvy project. But that linear notion did not afford a truly cohesive picture of how a definition of strength developed for writing studies. As a result, I have gathered those chapters on writing studies together in order to illustrate the development of "strong writing" as an evaluative notion and judgment. Following these chapters, I have then included two case studies in which the rhetoric of strength has been employed; in these cases, "strength," as an idea, has shaped and been

[4] In fact, many other options that were considered, but ultimately dropped because of how forced they became in the overall structure of this project: peace studies in the Civil Rights movement, science in the Cold War, a return to nationalism in the 1980s, visual rhetoricity in digital marketing, and many others.

shaped by surrounding historical circumstances which, in turn have had a profound effect on writing studies.

Certain interesting juxtapositions have arisen. From exercise manuals to comics and speeches, then to self-psychology books and expressivist textbooks, the genres represented here are diverse and far-reaching. In part, because I have let the research guide me without agenda, the artifacts themselves forge thematic connections I could not have anticipated. In each chapter, I touch on generic elements which stand as persuasive acts in and of themselves; these elements do find some common ground given that many of the genres here are meant to be instructional. As a representation of strength, though, I find that each artifact contributes to a growing distillation of what strength is; the rhetorical definition of strength has become less and less evident over time. Again, this was a natural development of the research process. I could not have anticipated it, nor did I wish for such a result.

In addition, through this tracing of history, I have found that the common conception of strength—that of strength as a masculine attribute—is not always the case. With the exception of the third chapter, I have striven to detail places in which women were included in these various pursuits of strength. As I will show, there are distinct places in which women are included and when they are excluded. Although it is not my intent to write a gender studies dissertation, as a result of historic and contemporary male dominance in a capitalist patriarchy, I find it is important to acknowledge the cultural relationship of strength to masculinity but also to challenge the distance of strength from feminism. Strength, as a word, an idea, and an action, is a gender-neutral term, but one caught up in masculine connotations. In each chapter, I will make every effort to trace the presence and active inclusion of women or to approach these artifacts in a gender-neutral manner. Although this may be perceived to be a limitation in my study, I will expend any effort to compensate for it.

In sum, this project is meant to comply with one of Richard's purposes of rhetoric: "[rhetoric] should be a study of misunderstanding and its remedies" (106). I aim to analyze and understand a

rhetorically-motivated definition of strength as it exists in American culture: how we express strength, how we understand strength, and what effects these expressions and understandings have on writing.

CHAPTER II

INSIDE OUT: SELF-PSYCHOLOGY, STRENGTH, AND EXPRESSIVISM IN THE 1970S

Expressivist writing and expressivism, as a philosophy, have often been derided as a means to "bleed on paper" with emotions, to explore one's feelings, and to write only for one's self. These labels can be interpreted as selfish and self-serving, thus prompting a recurring derision of the movement. In this chapter, I will offer a new, more accurate definition of expressivism, one grounded in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s and based out of the self-psychology movements of this era. Expressivism has roots more related to social epistemics and political action than have been previously considered. As I define it, expressivism does explore the self, but the self within an actionable human ecology; writing functions as a means to understand one's emotion reaction so as to spur physical action.

Furthermore, in order to understand "strong writing" and how strong writing is considered in the current composition classroom, it is necessary to understand how the movement towards personal psychological strength translates into social action in the composition classroom in the 1960s and 1970s. Empowering students to make rhetorical

choices in their writing, reflective practices, and writing for a purpose (which may be political, social, or simply just actionable) have their roots not only in expressivism, but in the personal psychology movements of this era.

James Berlin, in his book *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*, traced the twentieth century of composition and the movements within. Here, Berlin traces the early tributaries of expressionism to Charles Osgood and the early romantics (where naturalism and even transcendentalism could be associated to a movement so often linked with emotional output) only to then weld a connection between expressivist writing and to psychology's effect on education: "...the sources of expressionism are far from a nineteenth-century mandarin romanticism. The origin of this rhetoric can instead be found in the postwar, Freudian-inspired, expressionistic notions of childhood education that the progressives attempted to propagate" (73). In addition, Berlin noted a more direct connection to Freud: "[expressionistic] rhetoric was further encouraged by a popularized Freudianism" (74). Later, Berlin forges a connection between relativistic notions of contextual and temporal situations and the expressivist movement in American education. He tempers his extended connection with the contemporary thought of the role of writing not as an impetus for *belles lettres* or social action, but as art:

> The aim of education for both aesthetic expressionists and Freudians became individual transformations—not for social change—as the key to both social and personal well-being. And for both groups art became the agency that brought about the transformation. Thus, an unlikely union of patrician romanticism, aesthetic expressionism, and a domesticated Freudianism brought about in American schools and colleges a view of writing as art that encouraged an expressionistic rhetoric and a new emphasis on the value of creativity in the classroom. (74)

Berlin notes a conglomeration of forces bringing about change in composition studies[5]: Freud, *belles lettres*, social change—he points to a shift in culture which, in turn, shifted composition. Such a transformation is worth exploring in more detail than Berlin's larger project allowed. After all, Berlin was less concerned with expressivism as he was with lessening the influence of cognitive and current traditional rhetorics[6]. While Berlin acknowledged the influence of the Human Potential movement on expressivist pedagogies, a closer analysis of the chief architects of the movement will reveal a more detailed sense of the history of composition as it relates to scholars who were called expressivists.

Peter Elbow, in his work *In Defense of Private Writing*, responds to Berlin in noting that

> there is a remarkably widespread view these days—a view growing out of a strong version of a social constructionist or cultural studies position—that the very concept of private writing is a mistake. According to this view, because everything that anyone writes is deeply constructed by ideas or discourses outside the mind of the writer, heavily influenced by culture or ideology, it follows that this writing is not really private at all and is not really different in kind from the regular writing intended for the eyes of others. (140)

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[5] In terms of composition pedagogical studies, Berlin, in his work "Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories" traces the school of "creative expression" (expressivism) to Plato, citing "A striking corollary of this view is that ultimate truth can be discovered by the individual, but cannot be communicated. Truth can be learned but not taught. The purpose of rhetoric then becomes not the transmission of truth, but the correction of error, the removal of that which obstructs the personal apprehension of the truth. And the method is dialectic, the interaction of two interlocutors of good will intent on arriving at knowledge" (771). In this regard, it is no wonder that Berlin has reservations regarding expressivism (at least on a pedagogical level), as there is a stark inability to relay "Truth" via communication, or writing.

[6] Moreover, Berlin has been involved with recovery projects with aims similar to this chapter: his work "Richard Whately and Current-Traditional Rhetoric" aims to reinvigorate interest in the history of composition theories using Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric* and its impact on composition instruction and theory in the 19th century and beyond.

Elbow paints a notably different picture of expressionist writing; the rhetorical position to put so-called "private" writing in a public place runs counter to common critiques of expressivism. Further, it calls into question a conception of "private" or "public" writing, since most writing done in the composition classroom is not viewed by a general populace, but in the safe space of the classroom itself. Elbow's critique of Berlin's characterization of expressivism would be echoedby Byron Hawk, who states "Berlin reduces expressivism to an isolated self" (200). Bronwyn T. Williams, writing on his mentor Donald Murray, would further regale the qualified merits of expressivist writing[7]. Both Hawk and Williams are provocateurs of "Neo-Expressivism," a revival of expressivism using the tools of the new millennium.

The work of Sherrie L. Gradin in the 1990s aimed to simultaneously rethink the philosophy of expressivism in a more elaborate light while expanding and extending its reach to the idea of "social expressivism," a theory in which the aims of Berlin's[8] social epistemics could live in harmony—thrive, in fact—in conjunction with expressivist philosophies. Gradin, defining the problem of perception with expressivism, writes, "[the] recent denigration of the expressivist theories of composition is often based on misconceptions of expressivist theory and practice as well as incomplete knowledge of the tradition from which they arise; and…that social-expressivist rhetorics are already at work in the field, but…they need to be more fully articulated

[7] See Williams's *Dancing with Don: Or, Waltzing With 'Expressivism'*

[8] It should be noted that Berlin has indicated a willingness to reorganize, reformulate, and reconceive the composition canon. In a review for William Covino's book, The Art of Wondering, Berlin labeled it "one of the most original and challenging treatments of the history of rhetoric in print" (183) and argued that the book is "an effort to refashion the rhetorical tradition in a way that situates a rhetoric of multiple perspectives and uninhibited play in a rich variety of historical texts…[making] a powerful case for a rereading of the rhetorical canon and a reconception of the received rhetorical traditions. It further locates, in unexpected places, speculation that points to the possibilities of a reconceived modern rhetoric and rhetorical pedagogy. Thus, despite its occasional flaws and false turns, it is a book we cannot now do without, and one that I cannot recommend too highly" (185).

and enacted" (xiv). More than noting "misconceptions" or misperceptions, Gradin hints at the idea that expressivism, in all its misunderstandings, has never left us. It has, in fact, been an undercurrent to our work all along. Expressivism offers an emotional, pathological impact to evidenced ideas and reason. For Gradin, then, those aspects should be channeled into what she labels "social expressivism":

> Social expressivism blurs the categorical lines between social theories and theories of individualism. Social-expressivism stresses the need for teachers to focus on writing for discovery, writing to discover self and voice, and development of power and authority of one's own writing. But it also focuses on those things that social-epistemicism is being praised for: position of the self within the world and writing for change. (xv)

Gradin points to the impetus of crafting understandable and unbroken timelines in composition. To categorize and compartmentalize the history of composition is to offer a clear window of what has come before; such a view is tempting. It is far easier than the jumbled and layered mosaic of what has actually occurred. Social expressivism does exactly that. But Gradin has magnified something already present in expressivism. She says as much when defining the problem in how expressivist rhetorics are discussed:

> Expressivist rhetorics are often simplified and reduced to appear far more ineffectual and anti-social than they actually are. This simplification has been easily accomplished and the current rigid taxonomies so uncritically accepted for at least two reasons: (1) expressivist rhetorics have not yet been satisfactorily placed within an intellectual tradition, and (2) a strict categorization or taxonomy of rhetorical theories allows social epistemic proponents to deny the ways in which expressivism enriches social theories and pedagogies—the ways in which expressivism is already "social." (xviii-xix)

Overall, Gradin's project aims to answer these two problems. While Gradin takes a theory-based approach to correct these problems, I take an historical approach in order to come at these problems at a different angle in order to more fully account for the development of expressivism and, thus, to offer a more complete understanding of how it has developed both during its nadir and in the years after.

In this chapter, I intend to accomplish three intertwined goals: one, to expand upon the various historical interpretations of expressivism by connecting and pinning down its real roots in contemporary self-psychology; two, to challenge the strict periodization of composition so often posited by composition historians and theorists; and finally, three, to again attempt to decode uses of strength in texts so clearly obsessed with cultivating strength in writing and in personality. To do so, I will call upon several textbooks from the late 1950s to 1980, the generation of composition usually associated with expressivism. In addition, I will correlate these textbooks with critiques of textbooks and expressivist composition as well as contemporary texts on self-psychology. These texts on self-psychology represent a national phenomenon, one that extended far beyond the bounds of the walls of therapists' offices. This is an era which saw enormous bestsellers associated with the Human Potential Movement: Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Richard Bach's *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, Victor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, Thomas Anthony Harris's *I'm Okay, You're Okay*, M. Scott Peck's *The Road Less Traveled*, and Ram Dass's *Be Here Now*[9], amongst many others. These texts invaded national thought as much as early fitness manuals took over the realm of the physical in the early part of the 20th century. These ubiquitous self-psychology texts focus on psychological and social

[9] Although each of these books has been labeled a bestseller, finding exact sales numbers are rather difficult. Still, according to an interview with The Guardian, Robert Pirsig states that his book has sold at least five million copies. Victor Frankl's New York Times obituary pegs *Man's Search for Meaning* at ten million copies. Dr. Thomas Harris, on his own website, claims that *I'm Okay, You're Okay* has sold fifteen million copies. While sales numbers were not readily available for the other books, many have claimed print runs into the millions. These books mentioned here are merely the tip of the peak of the bestselling self-psychology genre in this era alone.

empowerment and correlate to the notion of strength as a means to action; as a part of writing studies, psychological strength mirrors the potential of action actualized into the words on the page.

In a post-World War II America, the nation found itself between the tension of a culture shaken up by the horrors of war and the reemergence of an interrupted culture. GIs, returning from the front in Europe, found themselves at home in a country where their roles had changed while they were away. Further, this era is marked by rapid change in not only culture, but in technology. Mass media in the form of television arose alongside the Space Race; music and literature shifted rapidly in style and form from the postwar modernism begun in the 1950s, as noted by Halliwell: "Folk and jazz were older forms undergoing transitions after the war, while rock 'n roll was a new trend that emerged out of rhythm and blues, a strain of black music (called 'race music' in the 1940s) which later became the sound of the 1950s" (121). Halliwell continues noting these changes, writing that "[popular] music in the 1950s might have been the epitome of a 'mass culture' of consumption…[but] musicians and performers were never far away from the politicized discourses about region, race, sexuality, and class" (121). The Korean War ended as the early days of Vietnam began. The assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and President John F. Kennedy shook the nation. In a single generation, the communal culture of the fifties shifted to a highly individualistic movement, as noted by McConnell:

> the original impetus for chance came from students who were increasingly discontent with the moral and social norms governing the lives of their parents' generation. These mainly white, middle-class university students began to question the goals set forth for them, including attaining an advanced degree, procuring steady, well-paid employment, and pursuing the American dream of a house and family in the suburbs. (11)

Robert Putnam, in *Bowling Alone*, chronicles this particular shift from community to individualism through the lens of social capital in a postwar America. In short, this is a fractured America, one searching for a new identity. It is no wonder that seminal texts in self-psychology[10] emerged.

A New Center of Self

Berlin contends that Freudian psychotherapy is a major component of expressivist pedagogy and composition philosophy. While Freud, as the father of psychology, does begin an intellectual lineage, I argue that his influence should not be considered as a primary factor in this movement and that the major figures in the Human Potential Movement have had a greater influence and impact on the expressivist movement. According to Berlin, expressivists were

> interested in emphasizing writing as discovery—specifically, discovery of the self. In keeping with this commitment, they also called upon M.H. Abram's discussion of romantic expressionistic theories of poetry in his *The Mirror and the Lamp*, doing so to underscore the organic, creative features of composing. From this perspective writing is seen as art, an art that arises from within the writer. Rohman and Wlecke further relied on the "self-actualizing" psychology of Rollo May, Abraham Maslow, and Carl Rogers, seeing writing as an act that authenticates and affirms the self (147).

Berlin, calling on Rohman and Wlecke and their seminal piece on expressivist philosophy, *Pre-Writing: The Construction and Application of Models for Concept Formation in Writing*, were notably interested in non-Freudian approaches. In calling upon Rohman and Wlecke's study,

[10] I use this term purposefully; these texts are, for the most part, written for an audience with some education in psychology. Many of the texts written by Maslow and Rogers and others were specifically for other psychologists; later, perhaps in an attempt to market to a larger audience, the "self-help" genre took over; these books, as a genre, are markedly different from self-psychology in purpose, tone, and content.

Berlin alludes to the influence of this new wave of self-psychology to composition. I mean to expand on this observation to solidify these philosophical connections.

Before doing so, though, it is worth noting that Feminist philosophies have only been recently acknowledged as influential in expressivism. Going back as far as the early 1900s Jane Addams, in her work *Democracy and Social Ethics*, writes

> [we] know at last, that we can only discover truth by a rational and democratic interest in life, and to give truth complete social expression is the endeavor upon which we are entering. Thus the identification with the common lot that is the essential idea of Democracy becomes the source and expression of social ethics. It is though we thirsted at the great wells of human experience, because we know that a daintier or less potent draught would not carry us to the end of the journey, going forward as we must in the heat and jostle of the crowd. (qtd. in Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Addams marks the connection between personal identification and social expression decades before other composition scholars; in fact, her connection is so vibrant that it results in a feedback loop—a dialectical relationship with the self—resulting in more social expression as a greater understanding of the self, and more understanding of the self with more social expression. In that regard, Simone de Beauvoir notes in the introduction of the *The Second Sex*:

> But if I wish to define myself, I must first of all say: 'I am a woman'; on this truth must be based all further discussion. A man never begins by presenting himself as an individual of a certain sex; it goes without saying that he is a man. The terms masculine and feminine are used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers. In actuality the relation of the two sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of man to

> designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity.

That self-definition drives expressivism. De Beauvoir writes from an unequal perspective, noting that women previously (and contemporaneously to her) have been defined by man as the opposite of man, the Other to Man. Previous psychoanalytic authors (Freud, Lacan, etc.) characterized women by a lack; De Beauvoir eschews that notion completely so as to assert female identity irrespective of male input or male perception. This grounding idea in her work sets the stage for expressivist writing as it pertains not only to active identity formation, but the active enacting of that identity into a mode of everyday expression. For de Beauvoir, then, identity *is* social action. This notion feeds into the tenets of expressivist thought in the 1960s and 1970s as well as various branches of modern psychology attempting to distance themselves from psychoanalysis.

In the following section, I will draw upon the major writers and thinkers of the self-psychology movement, or what is often (and perhaps more aptly named) referred to as the Human Potential Movement. This era in human thought is commonly marked by an emphasis on personal and social development into the apex of possibility. Decades later, we can cynically look back and scoff that we did not quite make it. Still, the texts utilized in this chapter had a profound impact on human thought; many sold millions of copies, are still in print, and are referred to in the hallowed halls of psychological movements. At the forefront of this movement was the psychologist Carl Rogers.

Rogers, one of the most prolific and well-respected leaders of the Human Potential Movement, was vastly influential beyond the psychology community. The Rogerian argumentation form developed out of his writings and case studies; as an argumentation style, it reflected perfectly the attitudes and cultural movements of the era. Rather than concentrating on winning or solidly affirming a claim, it centered on understanding, acceptance, and the creation of shared values. As

an argumentative approach, Rogerian constructions focused on rhetorical stasis within a kairotic moment; in this way, compromise would be truly eschewed and understanding could be reached. And that focus reveals something not about the nature of psychology, but the nature of argument. Both are merely outcomes of the human condition, a reaction to stimuli. The kind of reaction, however, underlines the nature of the stimulus. In effect: Rogerian argumentation concerns mutual understanding just as classical argumentation underscores logic and a provable truth. This logical progression within classical argumentation offers a vehicle for current traditionalism and its emphasis on syntax, a kind of order. Later, analyses of argumentation using the work of Stephen Toulmin would reveal the metacognitive aspects of argument more than the argument itself and it would serve as a mirror to cognitivism. Rogerian argumentation, though, responds to the expressivist movements of the 1960s and 1970s—a movement characterized by self-awareness and self-evolution. Expressivist writing, focused on emotional communication and self-expression, requires an audience willing to listen, understand, and respond in the name of mutual understanding and respect.

More than that, however, these texts, both of the self-psychology movement and in the expressivist movement, call for a different kind of approach when it comes to expression, be it either as a person or in one's writing. The needs of these movements have not been connected, despite the fact that even on a local level, there is much overlap.

In order to fully connect and collaborate the Human Potential Movement with the expressivists, I have drawn upon several self-psychology texts and examined them for metaphors of strength and the kinds of writing they emphasize. In this section, I analyze major self-psychology texts in order to draw out their major foci.

Theologian Paul Tillich's work *The Courage to Be* was an important text to many involved in the Human Potential Movement[11]. Published in 1952, the content of Tillich's book did not stray far from the title. Tillich, in a post-World War II America, writes on vitality and courage using a model that combined a classical education (with its use of Greek and the culture of ancient Greece) and modernism-influenced psychological training, particularly the idea that the world, and humanity, can be understood in a systematic manner with the scientific method. Such a combination can be seen as troubling, even paradoxical; after all, Greek philosophy and culture are not always entirely compatible with a modernistic approach. In part, combination of theology and Greek philosophy may be due to his training as a theologian; his persepective offers insight into the rhetorical values of spiritualism in a post-War environment. Still, like other writers of the era, Tillich's focus on classical Greek culture would have appealed to his intended audience; the audience reading the works of Tillich and others would have viewed such a return to classical curricula as favorable, even trustworthy.

Tillich's writing on the unity of values for a person recalls the many derivations of strength that began this dissertation. While it may seem unnecessary at first to return to the Greek root words and their implications, Tillich complicates these ideas precisely because of their origins and their continued use in culture and in language. In much the same way, I began this project with an immediate complication of the rhetoric of strength precisely to unsettle what was previously considered a stable idea. For Tillich, this rhetorical analysis pervades throughout his work; while it is not a semiological deconstruction, his technique bears repeating as a means to uncover a

[11] It should be noted here that Tillich's work was meant to be a Christian text, though it can easily be regarded as a work of secular personal philosophy in self-improvement. The work is largely a mixture of contemporary existentialism and psychology. I note the undercurrent of spirituality only because it aids in triangulating an understanding of his writings. I have excluded what is considered to be one of, if not the first text in the Human Potential Movement, Victor Frankl's *Man's Search For Meaning* precisely because of its overwhelming emphasis on spirituality rather than psychology.

greater reification of these ideas in their conceptual forms and their ultimate ramifications. Tillich, writing on this aforementioned unity, notes:

> This unity was presupposed in the Greek word *arête*. It can be translated by virtue, but only if the moralistic connotations of "virtue" are removed. The Greek term combines strength and value, the power of being and the fulfillment of meaning. The *arête* is the bearer of high values, and the ultimate test of *arête* is his readiness to sacrifice himself for them. His courage expresses his intentionality as much as his vitality. It is spiritually formed vitality which makes him *arête*. Behind this terminology stands the judgment of the ancient world that courage is noble. (83)

Tillich traces out the various permutations of *arête* largely to come to an understanding of the inner workings of courage without the notion of morality. Such an idea is tantamount to sacrilege given the moralistic underpinnings of courage; in all actuality, the morality of courage is a relative notion precisely because courage involves an action required to invoke a reaction. Tillich does hint at this idea when he notes that "courage expresses his intentionality," although this passage is about as overt as he gets. But, more importantly, Tillich labels strength as it equates to power, something that I have noted is exceptionally problematic, if not predictable in a text centered on personal growth and development. Still, his characterization of strength as a part of courage lends itself to relativistic notions of what strength entails. As a relative idea, it would fit within a larger relative pattern. A variable in an equation filled with other variables.

And this is not an isolated incident; in fact, Tillich starts this kind of linguistic analysis as early as his preface. In doing so, he does build ethos as learned man, something perhaps necessary in a burgeoning genre, similar to the ethos-building taking place in early strongman texts. Tillich calls upon not only translations and their implications here, but also examines these ideas within historical context:

> The Greek word for courage, andreia (manliness) and the Latin word fortinudo (strength) indicate the military connotation of courage. As long as the aristocracy was the group which carried arms the aristocratic and the military connotations of courage merged. When the aristocratic tradition disintegrated and courage could not be defined as the universal knowledge of what is good and evil, wisdom and courage converged and true courage became distinguished from the soldier's courage. (5)

Here, strength dissipates as an act with militaristic connections. Strangely, although Tillich calls upon the idea of strength throughout his book, he briefly abnegates the idea for a new definition of courage, one that lay outside historical trends. Wisdom is key, not strength. The realization of courage, and, further, the greater version of one's self, required a route outside old definitions. That change in approach matters more than the elements involved in that change.

What is interesting, though, is the means by which Tillich connects the linguistic characteristics of the Greek language with Greek culture. For Tillich, the two are inseparable, so it calls to question its application to a modern world. Here, Tillich calls upon standards set forth by Freud to some extent, but his judgment of the unchanging nature of humanity more closely resembles the archetypes of Jung. In part, Tillich finds himself in the world spun past the Industrial Revolution into an era of new science and new possibility. The rapid advancements in technology seen throughout World War II did not come to an abrupt halt in 1945; as a result, Tillich is steeped in science. As a psychologist embroiled in a profession plagued by the constant tension between hard and soft scientific disciplines (something Composition, as a field, would come to mirror[12]), Tillich would have felt a duty to scientific truth alongside his work in the Human Potential Movement. Tillich argues:

[12] For an examination of this mirror, see David Wallace's analysis of behaviorist proposals to distinguish positivist and empirical approaches to composition, *Reconsidering Behaviorist Composition Pedagogies: Positivism, Empiricism, and the Paradox of Postmodernism*

> Biological self-affirmation implies the acceptance of want, toil, insecurity, pain, possible destruction. Without this self-affirmation life could not be preserved or increased. The more vital strength a being has the more it is able to affirm itself in spite of the dangers announced by fear and anxiety. However, it would contradict their biological function if courage disregarded their warnings and prompted actions of a directly self-destructive character. (78)

Tillich's reliance on what he labels "biological self-affirmation" might be better labeled as, simply, "survival instinct." However, survival is a mechanistic approach to living; linear, and without art; Tillich would likely find the term unworthy, even crude. Rather, this biological self-affirmation encompasses not just survival, but the knowledge that no being, no matter how evolved, survives death. This is an understanding, and an active understanding, that all life must suffer and perish. This acceptance, for Tillich, insinuates that the idea of strength resides in the vital nature of human beings. In this regard, Tillich calls upon the vitality of strongmen from two generations prior[13], a potential for strength residing within any person. That idea of vitality, the energy of health, now directly relates to not only mental clarity, but to mental health. Without such health, the natural order would be violated.

Tillich, in his preface, discusses his overarching concept of courage, its definition, its use, and how to attain it. Calling upon the works of philosophers past, Tillich notes that "[Aquinas] realizes and discusses the duality and the meaning in Courage. Courage is strength of mind, capable of conquering whatever threatens the attainment of the highest good. It is unified with wisdom, the virtue which represents the unity of the four cardinal virtues (the other two being temperance and justice)" (7). While Tillich is discussing Thomas Aquinas's definition of

[13] The texts and advertisements of strongmen did not end in 1935; in fact, Tillich's work coincides with perhaps the most well-known strongman course of all time: the Charles Atlas guide.

courage, he does offer some small look into his own thought process. Tillich is alarmingly logical; ideas flow from one point to the next in linear, predictive process. There is a quadrant of virtues, a multiplication of ideas for someone concerned with human emotion; Tillich discusses each in a highly calculated way. But this is not the only instance of such geometric musings; later, Tillich, in his chapter "Courage and Transcendence," in a section labeled "The Power of Being," notes:

> That which from the point of view of the finite world appears as self-negation is from the point of view of ultimate being the most perfect self-affirmation, the most radical form of courage.
>
> In the strength of this courage the mystic conquers the anxiety of fate and death. Since being in time and space under the categories of finitude is ultimately unreal, the vicissitudes arising from it and the final nonbeing ending it are equally unreal. (158)

His point, for all its complexity, simply relies on the notion of self-sacrifice to conquer death. Christian imagery aside, this kind of courage (founded in strength) may focus on the end of life, but should be used in day-to-day life. In the end, Tillich's basic assumption is that identity and interaction with the world is an act of courage, an act of personal strength. Simply living, according to Tillich, requires enormous effort. Where Tillich would note that immense effort involved in simply getting out of bed, Abraham Maslow was concerned with employing the reaction to stimuli into an actualization of strength as action.

Few figures in modern psychology are as recognizable as Abraham Maslow. Unlike Paul Tillich, Maslow acknowledges the difficulty of human condition as a given and wrote about the needs to go beyond survival, to go beyond a passive approach to living. The struggles, Maslow would say, are simply a part of life. His concept of "self-actualization" has become a part of everyday speech and cultural consciousness. Therefore, his use of strength metaphors are relegated to both the

process of self-actualization and the end result of that idea. In keeping with that, he writes, in his work *Toward a Psychology of Being*, "We learn also about our own strengths and limits and extend them by overcoming difficulties, by straining ourselves to the utmost, by meeting challenge and hardship, even by failing. There can be great enjoyment in a great struggle and this can displace fear" (150). Maslow's paradox, here, is the action meant to cease; the strength of action here must eventually find its limit within a set of parameters. In that regard, he notes we are bound to fail. That failure, in turn, informs human experience in the process of living. Strength, though, is intrinsic to his argument.

Furthermore, in *The Further Reaches of Human Nature*, Maslow writes on creativity and the means by which a person loses himself to creative flow—or loses the creativity due to a personality block—in order to come to some conclusion about the personality traits necessary for creative output: "The creative attitude requires both courage and strength and most studies of creative people have reported one or another version of courage: stubbornness, independence, self-sufficiency, a kind of arrogance, strength of character, ego-strength, etc.: popularity becomes a minor consideration. Fear and weakness cast out creativeness or at least make it seem less likely" (64). Invoking the binary of strength and weakness, Maslow, like Tillich, equates courage and strength, but expands on that idea with weakness and fear. Maslow, however, expands on how strength forges connections to other personality traits in order to induce a creative state. The implications of his argument are vast: strength, as a qualified level of drive within a personality trait has a profound and direct correlation to creative output; psychology, then, implores us in the field of composition to reinforce strength in the minds and in the psyches of our students so as to prime their creative drives and self-images to craft better writing. Maslow argues for a direct correlation from mental health to education later in his work:

> Education can no longer be considered essentially or only a learning process; it is now also a character training, a person-training process...The past has become almost useless

> in some areas of life. People who depend too much upon the past have become almost useless in many professions. We need a new kind of human being who can divorce himself from his past, who feels strong and courageous and trusting enough to trust himself in the present situation, to handle the problem well in an improvising way, without previous preparation, if need be.
>
> All of this adds up to increased emphasis on psychological health and strength. It means an increased valuing of the ability to pay the fullest attention to the here-now situation, to be able to listen well, to be able to see well in the concrete, immediate moment before us. (95)

Despite the fact that Maslow has made a great leap in asserting these connections between mental health and education, he does make some troubling claims linking mental health to education to capitalism. While this connection and its implications may not have been on his mind, nevertheless it is interesting that Maslow has made claims similar to those such as Albert Treloar,[14] that strengthening the personality and the mind will aid those who use their minds for work. In the case of Maslow, he writes in the abstract while passively accepting that people happen to work and that his techniques and philosophy will aid in their daily lives—lives which, again, happen to include a working life. While Treloar and others like him were far more overt and directive in their approach to interacting with a capitalistic system, Maslow passively accepts its existence.

Indeed, Maslow is only tacitly concerned with economic systems; in all actuality, he is more interesting in understanding the relationship between the inner and outer world, between the self and the world the self encounters. Maslow's various passive premises focus on the personal, as

[14] Treloar, a strongman performer from the early 20th century, wrote at length on the connection of health and strength aiding in professional, middle class work. This will be discussed at length in the first case study.

opposed to Rickert's focus on materiality and environment, and allow for this concern of the inner life of a human being. He argues that

> the trend toward autonomy, taken by itself, leads us toward self-sufficiency, toward strength over against the world, toward fuller and fuller development of our own inner unique Self out of its own laws, its own inner dynamics, autochthonous laws of the psyche rather than of the environment. These psychic laws are different from, separate from, and even opposed to the laws of the nonpsychic worlds of the external reality. (157)

One interpretation of this passage could be that "strength over against the world" is a kind of dominance, a means to power. Taken as a whole, however, I find Maslow's motivation here as a move to anchor one's personality to an inner life regardless of environmental or conditional circumstance. It is this notion that correlates with a disregard for the perils of capitalism as a motivational aim for education; Maslow's self-actualized student would likely find him or herself deep in Camus's winter, only to feel the warmth of an invincible summer.

Maslow's notion of self-actualization resonates in that summer, that place within each human being from where autonomous strength and courage emanate. For Maslow, this is of the highest importance and changes across personality types. The kinds of independence and personal strength seen in those who are emotionally confident is not, at least according to Maslow, the same for those who lack such confidence (95). In order to create this shift towards an internal spring of autonomy and strength, Maslow highlights the ways in which transcendence can occur: moving past "weakness and dependency," to overcome childhood as an adult, to mature in strength and responsibility while asserting independence—these ideas are always within us, even those without strength" (263). On weakness in particular, Maslow notes "some individuals...are primarily weak, and…they primarily relate to all other human beings as the weak relate to the

strong, and that all mechanisms of adaptation, coping mechanisms, defense mechanisms, are the defenses of weakness against strength" (263). In short, Maslow writes that not everyone will become self-actualized as they are actively seeking out ways against such personal evolution. Maslow, then, allows for the possibility that a lack of personal development (or personal strength as it relates to personality) is a defense mechanism seen as necessary to relate to others at an equal level of development. These personal defense mechanisms, typically, ensure an arrested development in a person. This pattern will continue with Carl Rogers, with writing studies, and beyond.

Rogers's seminal work, *On Becoming A Person*, holds within it an enormous emphasis on personal growth using strength metaphors. I have selected only a few passages that highlight his reliance on strength as a kind of personal growth attribute, but the idea pervades his book. But when he does use it, he does so with rampant abandon. Consider this exercise Rogers used, based on his experience as a clinician:

> Another question the importance of which I have learned in my own experience is: can I be a strong person to be separate from the other? Can I be a strong respecter of my own feelings, my own needs, as well as his? Can I own and, if need be, express my own feelings as something belonging to me and separate from his feelings? Am I strong enough in my own separateness that I will not be down cast by his depression, frightened by his fear, nor engulfed by his dependency? Is my inner self hardy enough to realize that I am not destroyed by his anger, taken over by his need for dependence, enslaved by his love, but that I exist separate from him with feelings and rights of my own? When I can really feel the strength of being a separate person, then I can find that I can let myself go much more deeply and in understanding and accepting him because I am not fearful of losing myself. (54)

Strength, being strong, being hardy enough—multiple instances of these ideas are juxtaposed against contrasting ideas: destruction, being engulfed, dependency. These are to be expected given the book's purpose as a psychological tool and mechanism for growth. However, there are a multitude of cautions against separateness seeding this short passage. This kind of fear against being separated as it equates to weakness is not an isolated incident; it will be seen again and again in the textbook examples and, later, in rubrics.

Given this emphasis on these kinds of values, it should be no wonder that Rogers looked wider, to a greater cause, one that fully-incorporated and actualized people would be responsible for. In the years following World War II, this was not an uncommon goal. But for Rogers, who saw individuals are parts of a whole, broken individuals would result in a broken whole. In a short, almost forgotten passage in *On Becoming a Person*, Rogers outlines the social implications for his work. He writes, in poetic form, that "[we] as a nation are slowly realizing our enormous strength, and the power and responsibility which go with that strength" (179). And, as a therapist in a nation transitioning from a united front in war to a new identity as a world power, Rogers identified America as an adolescent nation, half aware of its own potential—and the solid assurance of the hazy kind of knowledge needed to use that potential. Contrasted to others, such as Russia, ("We are deeply frightened by the strength of communism, the view of life different from our own."(179)), our reactions are impulsive and lacking in temperance. In sum, post-war America, according to Rogers, contains a muddled view of itself: "We have complex and contradictory feelings toward freedom and independence and self-determination of individuals and countries: we desired these and are proud of the past support we have given to such tendencies, and yet we are often frightened by what they may mean" (179). But Rogers was not a politician, nor a national leader. As a psychologist, he found that the solutions to these social implications lay not in social answers, but at the level of the individual:

> For the client, this optimal therapy would mean exploration of increasingly strange and unknown and dangerous feelings in himself, the exploration proving possible only because he is gradually realizing that he is accepted unconditionally. Thus he becomes acquainted with elements of his experience which had in the past been denied to awareness as too threatening, too damaging to the structure of the self. He finds himself experiencing these feelings fully, completely, in the relationship, so that for the moment he is his fear, or his anger, or his tenderness, or his strength. (185)

Unlike others, Rogers doesn't separate out positive emotions from negative emotions. He doesn't separate the ordinary from the extraordinary, nor the kinds of experience a client may have. In this regard, strength is one idea amongst a constant continuum of others, a trait lost amongst thousands upon thousands of other traits. In that sense, strength is not a focal point—but neither is anything else. Buried in a murky abyss of personality, strength is neither capitalized upon nor forgotten: it simply is a part of a human being. Expressivists would note this kind of equality of emotional content in their exercises, as I will show in the next section. Rogers continues:

> And as he lives these widely varied feelings, in all their degrees of intensity, he discovers that he has experienced himself, he is all these feelings. He finds his behavior changing in constructive fashion in accordance with his newly experienced self. He approaches the realization that he no longer needs to fear what experience may hold, but can welcome it freely as part of his changing and developing self. (185)

What Rogers describes here could be equally applicable to writing studies, particularly in expressivism. While Rogers is writing about the process of therapy, the movement from reflection to integration to execution mirrors the writing process in a profound way. In a sense, this change is an evolutionary step for a person; similarly, in the writing process or in the sense of critical thinking, students may find themselves at a threshold, a point of no return. In this regard,

Berlin was correct in his characterization of expressivism: his definition regaled "individual transformations…as the key to both social and personal well-being" using art, or in this case, writing, as a means to evolve (74). One of the primary differences between expressivism and social epistemics is Berlin's insistence on social change and action. In that regard, there is evidence to suggest that expressivists were focused on personal evolution rather than social change; I will explore that evidence later in this chapter. In the next section, I want to explore some of the textbooks that embody these concepts—in total or just a smattering of pieces. As the kinds of college writing began to change and evolve, so did the patients of Rogers, Maslow, and so many others. What comes next is a deciphering of what changed, how much change happened, and how it happened.

A New Kind of Writing for the Self

Thus far, I have traced the major lines of thought in the Human Potential Movement using three representative figures. Those figures were chosen in part due to their chronological positions in the era of the Human Potential Movement and because they have endured to the present day, but also because each represents one aspect of the sum total of the movement. Tillich, an early proponent of the era, stands on the border of spirituality and a call to higher purposes. Maslow, perhaps the most famous psychologist and thinker of that time, looks inward. Rogers, who would become a model for compositionists, mediates between inward and outward through dialogue and understanding. When I began to cull the theorists and writers for this research, these three stood out for a simple reason: their approaches directly mirrored my prior research into expressivism and expressivist textbooks. As leaders in this era, they are in privileged positions to expound upon major themes. Therefore, when authors of textbooks began to write new, expressivist textbooks, they would have had easy access to these major works to draw upon for inspiration.

In the following section, I will analyze passages from several textbooks published in the 1960s and 1970s, the era most often associated with expressivism. In doing so, I must paraphrase one of the questions I began this chapter with: why textbooks? At the most basic level, textbooks are a constant presence in composition classrooms, and that constant can be understood, analyzed, and measured across time and geography. But textbooks are more than that: James Zebroski argues that "Textbooks then are representations—of a variety of things, to be sure—from guiding epistemologies, concepts of process, teaching practices, even social relations. In this view, textbooks, as Valentin Volosinov might say, 'reflect and refract' the world or some portion of it" (232). While textbooks may be a constant presence, they are not a constant mirror. Therefore, I am able to draw some conclusions regarding the context in which textbooks appear. Zebroski continues:

> The textbook functions to send hidden and not so hidden messages to students, parents, and professors in other academic disciplines, and administrators across campus and up and down the academic hierarchy. Among other things, textbooks are ritual objects that magically assert that there is a subject matter here, and that it is serious enough to be embodied in a thick, hardback, expensive book put out by solid (not fly by night) publishers. There is knowledge in this academic specialty. It is weighty. It is of value. (234)

Here, Zebroski hints at a larger argument made later in his chapter; because textbooks have such weight and value, they are agents of change and of ideological function. Still, he is among those who do not give credence to the expressivist movement. And while some may have doubted the veracity of claims surrounding the "overtaking" of composition with expressivism, it is my intent to offer an altogether different solution: this overtaking that Zebroski writes about is characterized through the lens of periodization, and periodization has never really occurred. Therefore, the premise of the argument is inherently flawed. I aim to critique such an argument

while tracing the influence of the Human Potential Movement and self-psychology upon these books. Ultimately, I intend to forge a lineage between textbook development, writing instruction, and writing assessment, the last of which will be more fully explored in the final chapter.

It should be stated up front: these books represent a wide gamut of approaches. I selected them based on publication date; as I will note later, there is some contention about the expressivist approach in this era. That said, while most of these texts were first published in this era, others were not. This might seem like an obvious fact, but the point is that these books continued to be published throughout (and beyond) the expressivist era. This is the first crack in the argument of periodization in composition history. Harry H. Crosby and George F. Estey's textbook *College Writing: The Rhetorical Imperative*, published in 1965, is a clear candidate for a current traditionalist textbook—even the inside lining is a standard array of editing symbols. While the work largely focuses on rhetoric, there are serious glimpses into expressivist era to come:

> We detect in the New Breed of student a new desire. He is inquisitive. He wants to know more—more about what truth is and how it is verified. He wants to know how to go beyond the classroom and beyond his teacher; he wants to do his own studying. He cannot expect to learn everything in a classroom, but he deserves to be shown how he can learn what he does not know...in spite of his rejection of authority and in spite of his haircut and clothes, [the New Breed of student] often has a sense of convention, or he realizes that conventions can be the tools of revolution and protest. If he uses language in a conventional way, his message will be the more forcefully received. Shunning the bizarre and the vague, the really effective young writer masters manuscript techniques, grammar, spelling, and punctuation—and moves the world with his important ideas. (xiii)

If nothing else, Crosby and Estey's preface points to a contentious shift in American culture, if not composition. While the "breeding" they comment upon borders on total reprehensibility, they

do call upon the notion of independent thinkers contrasted with slavery to generic conventions. To some extent, there are hints of social epistemic thought. And as this is the preface of the book, it sets an unusual tone, one that aligns a classroom with correction, rather than non-directive instruction (an idea far beyond even 1965). Don A. Edwards's *Paths to Writing: Developing Prose Power* takes a similar current traditionalist approach, with one glaring exception:

> Have you considered that virtually none of your other subjects—except a writing course—can allow you the opportunity to evaluate experiences, reexamine your views, and formulate your beliefs? Here you'll have this chance on paper, an opportunity which conversation does not usually afford in quite the same valuable way. Today you have more openings than ever to say what you feel; in many situations your views are being listened to thoughtfully—and acted upon wisely. (4)

Again, this book takes a stringent approach with grammar, syntax, and traditional approaches to writing the paragraph, the paper, the research project, and the elements contained therein. But in the opening pages, Edwards takes a path drastically different from the exercises, prompts, and instructions within the book. This is a book with fifteen pages on capitalization instruction. The question must be: why the contrast? Is it simply because writing about one's life is an egalitarian topic? It may be argued that these kinds of rules are meant to impose order and rigid structure on ones life; following rules for the "correct" use of language enforces order in a time of cultural upheaval. At the same time, though, the ability to utilize such correct language and syntax might allow those taking social action to "play the game" and to have their action noticed by those in power. Further, the structure and order imposed on such an extended practice of capitalization will reappear later, in the final chapter, when rubrics value strength through organization and structure. Edwards's book was published over a decade after Crosby and Estey's; these authors acknowledge the change in attitude or need from students.

Eleanore C. Hibbs's text, *Writing: Fact and Imagination*, lay somewhere in the middle of the expressivist movement. Written in 1971, Hibbs capitalized on the expressivist movement and expanded on the work of Crosby and Estey, going beyond a mere mention of personal topics. At her most expressivist, in fact, she is centered in the idea of exploring personal encounters and emotional resonance:

> If the occasion is important enough and if the desire to be heard or to be read is strong enough, selecting a topic is no problem, because the topic is in the writer's mind, and it has no doubt kindled in him strong feelings. But what of the writer who has no strong reactions to subjects or issues, who sits immobilized when he must write, or who gropes when he must select a topic? Ideally, every writing situation should spring from a desire to reach a particular audience on a particular occasion. (10)

At first glance, Hibbs may seem to be overreaching—after all, events to incur strong feelings do not normally happen on a daily basis. However, I write this paragraph from a distance of the ending of the Iraq War best measured in days. For college students sitting in classrooms in the early 1970s, perhaps they had just as much, if not more, to write about in terms of strong feelings. In fact, Hibbs calls upon the use of a psychological technique, associative thinking, to generate these kinds of ideas; by free associating in the prewriting process, a writer may be able to push through writer's block (11). Indeed, this brief emphasis on free association is a direct link to psychotherapy practices of the day.

Of all the textbooks used in this project, two shine brightest as expressivist texts: *Practically Painless English* by Sally Foster Wallace and *Creating Compositions* by Harvey S. Weiner. Wallace's text is a hybrid textbook/handbook that "strives to convey some of the fun and excitement that working with language can offer; although the book takes a light-hearted approach, it's a serious attempt to involve students in the beauty, logic pizzazz, and joy of

English" (xi). A textbook designed for basic writers, its exercises live up to the expressivist mantle: personal topics, exercises focused on feelings, and introspection abound.

Weiner's *Creating Compositions*, a hybrid workbook/textbook, is perhaps the most expressivist textbook possible. There is no indication of the audience for this particular book beyond the college classroom, as evidenced by the major writing prompts. The kinds of writing called for, the kinds of students called upon, and the integration of the world at large—this textbook is supremely representative of expressivism. Although there are hints of the social epistemic approach, the books relies on reaction to a general sense of the world rather than an active participation in a democracy. From the preface:

> *Creating Compositions* affirms that if you live by feeling and looking and hearing and responding, then you can write. Your experiences—the countless moments of pleasure and sorrow and surprise that fill each day—make the best compositions. After you learn, through this book, to recreate your experiences in written words, then you can move easily into the world of abstract ideas where details other than those based upon experiences are often needed to support a written assignment. (xiii)

The connection to the texts of Rogers, Maslow, and Tillich (as well as others) is uncanny. Weiner calls for students to incorporate experience and emotion with writing with total reflection and reaction. Arguing for the full range of human emotions, Weiner notes that honest expression of these emotions and experiences will create a better paper, one grounded in concrete experiences rather than abstraction. His language is reminiscent of the actualization practices of Maslow, to fully incorporate a human being so as to spur growth. And this is not an isolated incident; Weiner makes good on his promise to incorporate those emotional moments and experiences from every day life in ways that writing makes clear throughout his textbook. In a section on applying vocabulary, his prompts include describing "a word to describe a gloomy

place," "a word to describe a room that bubbles with excitement," "a word that means peaceful," and "a word that shows lack of tension" (4). Chapter three introduces its topic "Street Scenes and Sandlots: Memories of Youth" by commenting, "The scars and joys of your younger days will be the substance of the theme explored in this chapter" (65). Topics offered included "the drug situation on the high school and college campuses" and "how a college date compares with a high school date" (141). These are the kinds of stereotypical ideas associated with expressivism; but I do not believe that is all expressivism is meant for. The expressivist movement is whittled down to writing about feelings and containing the scope of writing to the personal. Weiner's book is a direct counterargument to such a notion. Like other books of this era, there is a genuine concern with prose and its relationship to the world at large.

Still, the primary concern and approach in this particular book centers on the self in a manner in keeping with the Human Potential Movement—in fact, the title of chapter five is "Education and Human Potential: On the Hunt for Facts" (149). Much of the textbook is devoted to actions, practices, and exercises with a direct lineage not just to composition texts, but also to psychology. Assignments range from basic exercises, such as writing sentences based on the needs of children or the needs of parents, to more complicated problems, such as what abstract concepts are most important (i.e., love, success, friendship, etc.), or significant events (197-198) to the far more uncomfortable: "Describe the relative you are most uncomfortable with" (208). Weiner even calls upon the free association exercise, similar to Hibbs: "React to some or all of the following: anger, pain, honest, hands, faces, rejection, generosity, love, death, perfection, fun" (208). Perhaps the most outlandish of exercises comes late in the book. In the section on writing "A Three Paragraph Paper," Weiner assigns the following:

> At home, spend one complete hour blindfolded (preferably when other people are around, so you won't hurt yourself trying to answer the telephone). No peeking! As soon as the hour is over, make notes about your experience. Then write a three-paragraph, well

> organized, powerful paper about what being blind was like for you. Your paper should communicate the experience clearly and should make your reader understand exactly how you felt; specific examples are essential. Please underline the topic sentence of each paragraph. (206)

This is not exactly the kind of assignment I or my colleagues would use, although it does contain elements useful to young writers: descriptive details, an emphasis on audience, organizational elements, etc. While the practice may seem odd, it does have grounding in composition more than anything else. By drastically altering a basic situation, a student will have to reconsider an ordinary situation with fresh eyes and have the opportunity to approach their writing with a (legally) altered perception. Unlike this practice, other exercises are based in psychological practices. Weiner, writing on finding a topic for an essay, assigns the following:

> Step 2. Role Playing. Select one member of the class to play the role of a father or mother and another to play the role of a son or daughter. Allow these "actors" to discuss one of the topics below. Each student assumes the assigned role, talks with the other family member, and reacts to the topic. After each scene students at their seats can write out three sentences expressing their reactions to the actions presented. (41)

This is not the only instance in Weiner's book in which a non-writing practice is assigned, but it is one of a handful of assignments which are fully and totally steeped in psychological practices. I end this section with this particular assignment on purpose; in the next section, I will trace composition history in this era using arguments, which suggests that the expressivist "era" did not exist. These textbooks show that expressivism was alive and well in the 1960s and onward—but also before that era, as well as after[15].

[15] For an alternative reading of expressivism and textbooks in this era, see James Thomas Zebroski's "Textbook Advertisements in the formation of Composition: 1969 – 1990."

The Road Taken; Or, I'm Okay, They're Not

Richard Ohmann in his book *English in America,* writes on changes in freshman English in the 60s and 70s and recalls that when courses in composition did change, that change was not so grand as an agreed-upon history might grant:

> [my] impression is that most colleges revised their freshman courses once or more in the late sixties, toward what teachers saw as freedom and relevance, and that this happened most intensely at universities, where the teaching assistants who staffed the courses were themselves the politically awakened and relevance-minded undergraduates of 1960-1965. (141)

Ohmann recalls a wave of graduate instructors, keen to find their voices and experiment with new practices. These instructors would likely be those who changed even more, especially in a politically charged era. Instructors should change their approaches and courses to the needs of their students, no matter the ear. Ohmann, relies, in part, on anecdote; however, his memories are not, in any way, outside standard accounts of this era. This changes:

> Courses have been built around engagement in current social conflicts, around media and youth culture, around explorations of self, around encounter techniques. But if in all this change there has emerged a clear line of progress, I've missed it. What do we teachers of English, taken as a professional group, "know" about how to teach writing that we didn't know in 1965? I have seen no wide agreement develop, comparable to the general

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Zebroski's claims center on the expressivist movement in composition history and his claims merit attention, despite, and perhaps because of, their audacity. According to Zebroski, it may be stated that an expressivist approach did captivate the field for some time; however, as his work points out, it was not the only approach.

> agreement of a few years ago that something needed changing. On the contrary, another subjective impression is that many teachers have given up their optimistic experiments of the late sixties and early seventies, and returned to more traditional—and humble—goals. Certainly there are a lot of post-1970 textbooks that could as easily have been written in 1960. (141)

Ohmann is operating within a fairly standard view of composition history: periodized and segmented, and his impressions of the changes in the sixties and seventies reflect that notion. Still, these impressions do bear a striking resemblance to social epistemic philosophy that would come years and years later. From certain point of view, Ohmann is correct: there are a number of post-1970s textbooks that could have been written much earlier, and for that matter, much later. And as I have endeavored to show, expressivism did not start in 1960 nor did it end in 1980. Ohmann is right, and his ideas can be taken even further: the notion of expressivism is not all new; at least, in part. The movement itself may not have been codified until much later, but according to Berlin, "[in] 1928, Richard Reeve's 'A Study in Dreams and Freshman Composition' recommended that students use their dreams as points of departure for writing personal experience essays. His application of psychoanalytical thought was innocent and simplistic, but it indicates the attempts being made to apply this mode of thought in the writing class" (78). His strict views on the periodization of composition overshadow a greater story: the waves of ideas overlap, push and pull, and have their origins not in big moments nor are their ends akin to water on a fire. Elements of expressivism began cropping up in textbooks before the sixties; they have continued to develop ever since.

One example of this is Terry Allen's account of her life and her pedagogical practice in her work *Writing to Create Ourselves; New Approaches for Teachers, Students, and Writers*. While the book is half memoir, half pedagogical instruction, it is supremely intent on an expressivist focus. In part, this is due to her audience of primarily Native Americans in impoverished areas. For

those children, it is no small wonder that she writes: "Our method is based on two suppositions: First, each child, each young person, is an individual. No class is a mass. Second, each person's experience, no matter how brief (as for a kindergartener) is of value to him and to the rest of us" (5). And while her experience lay primarily with secondary education, that experience speaks to the lineage of an expressivist education provided. In fact, while writing to new teachers, she argues that "[a] good teacher who can guide students into good writing is considered a kind of magician. In fact, you too can be a magician" (21). If strict periodization of compositional history were true, then she would perhaps describe herself as a facilitator to social action, or an usher of critical thought, or someone without a title in a post-process environment. But she aims for magic, something supernatural, something that doesn't fit in with the everyday. How does she find and create magic? Allen turns to a technique originating from psychology and from the 1960s; she calls it the "here and now" exercise:

> Here and Now are snatches of writing that impose no requirements from the rules of grammar. They can and should be sketchy—quickly caught impressions pinned or tacked to paper in the easiest way possible... "Here and Now" is a term frequently used by psychologists and teachers, and you may come across it in various contexts. What does it mean for our purposes? It means that we and our students capture a moment in time and the immediate environment of a given place to turn on the five senses and record everything. (30-31)

I include this particular exercise for a few reasons. Aside from the obvious connections to therapeutic practices, "Here and Now" immediately bears resemblance to Ram Dass's most famous work, *Be Here, Now*. Dass, a psychiatrist trained at Harvard, was born George Alpert and transformed his identity and life into a profoundly spiritual existence. Allen's referencing Dass's work appears to be a conscious act meant to invoke a connection. Lastly, Allen could have just as easily framed this exercise to reflect the far more traditional "Hemingway" writing exercise:

using the five senses to capture as many details as possible. Rather than doing so, and taking on a more spiritual, psychological angle, Allen carries with her this expressivist tradition into her pedagogical training regime.

Finally, I want to revisit one of Zebroski's major influences, Robert Connors's *Current-Traditional Rhetoric: Thirty Years of Writing with a Purpose*. Writing on the history of composition from 1950-1980, Connors uses the seven editions of *Writing with a Purpose*, a popular composition textbook. In his article, he uses that tracing of a single text to illustrate the kinds of ideas and trends occurring in the field of composition. His results are not entirely concrete, but they do provide many insights into the reaction of writers to the changing needs of students and instructors. Zebroski invokes this particular article as a basis for his own work, with mixed results. Connors argues for a kind of continuum of composition; he writes an account of a gradual evolution with give and take, not some strict stop-start sensibility. If anything, Connors's work points to a factor not always accounted for in histories of composition: the influence of capitalism via administration. While this factor is not the whole of the article, it is a recurring thread. Early on, Connors identifies a change in tone by the 1967 edition of *Writing With a Purpose*:

> [In the second new chapter] for the first time we see the concentration on visual observation and personal experience that was to become so influential by the early seventies. The 'touchy-feely method,' as it became known (rather cruelly) in teachers' lounges, never completely won over [Writing with a Purpose], but it did get progressively more noticeable as time went on. (213)

Connors doesn't make this point overt, but it does bear mentioning: *Writing With a Purpose* was perhaps the poster child for the current-traditional movement. The book was a paragon of current-traditionalism; therefore, any hint or speck of expressivism is entirely notable, let alone a

whole new chapter. Beyond that, however, Connors connects the addition of expressivist elements to the change in attitude and focus from the post-war era to the 1980s, especially when it came to college admissions:

> But with the end of the sixties, changes again began to be felt—and were felt first in the college admissions offices. For the first time, in 1971, colleges received fewer applications for admission than they had the year before. The post-WWII baby boom was ending, and with its ending came a new age of scarcity. Enrollments, which had shot up during the sixties, leveled off...The average freshmen of 1971 were less willing to work on command than their counterparts of 1966, and they had less patience with dry reading. On average, they were not quite as apt as the freshmen of 1968, but by 1971 they were not interested in tearing down the system either. They were, in other words, potential raw material once more, and the crisis was passing. C-T rhetoric had hung on through the radical years, and by 1972, the world was once again looking at traditional methods without a sneer. (214)

Connors, in tracing this particular text, offers a unique angle of the history of post-War composition, especially in the weaving of history, current-traditionalist methods and the influence of expressivism. In this singular focus, he lacks a wide view of the field. However, in his larger work, *Composition-Rhetoric*, he accounts for the whole of the field, noting "[the] history of research on writing and composition teaching from the 1940s through the present is a history of epistemological warfare, of progressive theoretical and empirical research struggling with entrenched traditional pedagogy. We who read the journals have tended to characterize the struggle as a war between good and evil, discovery and reaction" (102). That struggle Connors writes of is a direct relative of the war of perception, the battle of history. These conflicts are never really "won" or "lost"; it is, again as Connors characterizes it, a struggle. As I have shown in previous sections, elements, techniques, and exercises from current-traditionalism never left.

They simply were not the total focus for the whole of the field—no one thing ever was nor ever will be.

By the 1972 edition, the cycle was tapering off, this time in favor of hints of social awareness and action: "Less seems to be expected of the reader in terms of awareness of abstract issues or depth and breadth of reading, and much of the reading mentioned in the 'Sources of Material' chapter is non-literary. Observation and reportage—personally generated writing—are given even larger sections in this edition than in the previous one" (214). It seems that nothing completely changes, and nothing completely leaves. Composition simply evolves in a manner defying judgment, defying the gravity of a singular focus. It is not so much that we move forward; it is more important that we simply move[16].

Be Here, Later

In this final section, I want to begin by returning to Berlin momentarily. In his history of writing instruction in America, he summarizes the goals that Peter Elbow posited during the agreed-upon era of expressivism: the idea that "[writing] allows for the attainment of a new and better understanding of the self, a process that involves placing the self in a dialectical relationship with a variety of elements" (154). In his summarization and interpretation of the ideas of Elbow, Berlin notes that one of the goals of expressivist writing was to, "placing the self in a dialectical relationship with a variety of elements." Such language could just as easily apply to any of the major or minor movements within composition; simply reaching a greater understanding of one's own life and process does not merit a grounding in expressivism (though it does help). But a relationship with what, exactly? Berlin would characterize Elbow's ideas as the personal becomes the political (155). In that way, Elbow (and Berlin's characterization of Elbow) was correct, but unfinished in its examination and analysis. The reaction of cognitivists in the 1980s would

[16] e.g. Kathleen Welch's descriptions of Next Rhetoric in her book *Electric Rhetoric: Classical Rhetoric, Oralism, and a New Literacy*

involve further entrenchment into the self; the social constructivist and social expressivist movements in the 1990s, championed by Sherrie Gradin and others, would seem to be a conglomeration of expressivism and epistemics. One goal of writing across the curriculum was to put various subjects in conversation with each other in order to forge an understanding of writing outside the composition classroom, to make that connection and to strengthen it. But no single idea has taken hold of composition—only conglomerations of ideas and approaches.

Available answers to those numerous questions, then, lack total clarity. Perhaps, though, that is the greater lesson: for all the factors, variables, and outliers in the history of composition, we too often treat this history as a constant. The history of composition fluctuates and rolls, yaws and dips; the approaches we offer are as variegated as our students, our communities, and our culture. In this particular time and place, the rise of self-psychology texts developed from the Human Potential Movement impacted the field of composition in a tangible, profound way. Expressivism, at that moment, looked to reignite the personal as a lens for the writing process; it is now decades later and we look upon what is, at its heart, a noble pursuit as something to be relegated to a small niche of composition thought. Too often, we fail to remember the continuing reach of expressivism for its merits: student-centeredness, empowerment, understanding, and self-reliance. These ideas were paramount to strong writing and strength in a fully developed personality. Those qualities did not suddenly vanish, nor should they. In the end, expressivists, like so many living the upheavals of 1960s and 1970s—just like those who came before and those still to come—want to change the world. We would do well to remember what peace activist and author David Lamotte has said, "you are changing the world whether you like it or not." Indeed, we have been changed. What lies ahead should be an opportunity to reincorporate these approaches that have been mislabeled at best and, at worst, misunderstood. The role of expressivism offers a unique way in which student writing may be strengthened in thought and consideration; extending or expanding expressivism into process writing or cognitivist writing

would aid a student's understanding of the psychological moves necessary to produce quality writing—something the Human Potential Movement would highlight. In the first chapter, I offered a definition of strength: strength both acts and represents action or the potential of action; strength is a considered reaction to external stimuli in which that reaction may or not involve actual action. To have strength requires the necessary means to acquire strength, though such means are themselves variable and changeable. It is, by definition, action. What action or actions are involved is nonspecific; indeed, strength as dynamic change may be in reaction rather than action. As self-psychology texts motivate individuals to understand themselves so that they may take action in society—in whatever form of action called for, from assertion to effecting political change—strength is an integral part of this call. Expressivist notions of writing embraces a similar call, in what should be considered a more accurate definition and characterization of expressivism: the kinds of writing which offer a means for self-exploration resulting in process of taking action within a society using an active understanding of human ecology and interaction. Personal identity, in writing, is marked by social action both in self and in writing of the self. In turn, the dynamism of strength, alongside the reaction to external stimuli, mirror these notions of self-psychology and expressivism. Furthermore, this locus of strength, just like self-psychology and expressivism, has not exited entirely.

Infusing expressivism into social epistemic philosophy has already yielded social expressivist writing; in an increasingly interconnected planet, combining these approaches with multiple modalities and genres of writing through computer-based writing would offer monumental opportunities toward social action and change. A chronicling of the history of composition, it would seem, should never be a straight line; when examining the knots and turns of our timeline, perhaps it is best to celebrate the tangles.

At the moment, a decided turn has incurred on the definition of strength: no longer relegated to the body and physicality, strength is now a matter of the mind. Rhetorical strength is cerebral

strength, a psychological strength. Genetic potential for physical expression, access to equipment and trainers, the attainment of physical qualifications for military service, or simply the desire to achieve a certain level of fitness—physical strength has become secondary to the mind. In essence, the shift to psychological strength was a democratizing factor in how strength was defined. Furthermore, that shift from the body to the mind will have powerful repercussions in the next chapter, as I examine how writing assessment practices value strength as an attribute of writing.

CHAPTER III

ONLY THE STRONG SURVIVE: THE RHETORIC OF STRENGTH IN WRITING ASSESSMENT

Rubrics, as an object with standards of strength, represent an artifact of the action of the mind, an action of values. The phrase "strong writing" and "strong writer" have become part of the lexicon of writing instruction and even general parlance; such phrases evoke a kind of quality that may, at first, seem ephemeral. In much the same Robert Pirsig dissected the meaning of "quality" in his masterwork *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, I am driven to understand what a definition of "strong" really means when it comes to writing, if only because that term is used to describe writers and writing far more than any other descriptor. However, for all its usage, its definition has never been concretized. No clear definition of "strong writing" exists, and if the label is to continue to be used, then qualifying exactly what "strong writing" means is imperative. To say that an essay contains "strong writing" has become a cliché; using such a term is taking a qualified idea and transforming that idea into a quantifiable score. Worse yet, the tools to invoke such a transformation are often equally—if not more—vague. If "strong writing" is to be achieved and to be valued, then understanding that value and how it is assessed is of

paramount importance.

This chapter is an attempt to develop and examine assessment practices, to explore the full ramifications of rubrics as assessment tools, and, ultimately, to uncover what a definition of "strong writing" might look like in conjunction with writing assessment practices. I intend to investigate these questions: what does it mean for writing to be "strong"? How do we, as composition instructors, value and judge "strong" writing? Is the language appropriate? Finally, how do assessment practices call upon writing to be strong? The field of writing is changing as rapidly as the forms that writing takes; composition, within this growing paradigm shift, should reevaluate the kinds of terms it uses to assess writing—especially those without a definition. As Brian Huot notes, "We need to begin thinking of writing evaluation in new ways, not so much as the ability to judge accurately a piece of writing or a particular writer but to be able to describe the promise and limitations of a writer working within a particular rhetorical and linguistic context" (173). Calling a student a "strong writer" has no bearing without meaning. This label pervades how we talk about writing and writers, but it fails to account for a non-static rhetorical context—writers and writing simply *are* strong or they are not. Furthermore, he writes, "[because] assessment is the site where we marshal evidence about what we will value globally as a society and more locally as teachers, researchers, and administrators, we can, by changing assessment, change what we ultimately value" (8). It is because of this notion that I, after reviewing and reconsidering my grading practices over and over again, I again find myself wondering how it is that composition instructors judge what it means to have "strong writing." After all, as Eric D. Turley and Chris W. Gallagher write, "While the language of the rubric represents a consensus of the values of this community of writers, it is also a launching point for conversation: a place to start, and never a place to end...Instead of declaring all rubrics 'good' or 'bad,' we need to examine what they do, why, and in whose interests" (90-91). Turley and Gallagher call forth a discussion on the context of rubrics, but they also to point to another

issue—that of consensus. Here, they discuss a singular community and its agreed upon terminologies, but I wonder to what extent those terms are actually normalized and to what extent they are transferable to outside contexts. In other words, what presumptions do they have that others and I may not? It is my intention here to not only understand rubrics and their use, but to also uncover something fresh about assessment—to inquire as to whether I have unearthed all my presumptions about my grading practices. In other words: how do I and others define "strong writing"? One of the primary concerns and criticisms of rubrics is that they often fail to account for the development of ideas and purpose, the goals of a process-oriented approach to writing instruction, and a writer in context. Therefore, I mean to uncover and explore what those values reveal at a more complex level in order to understand, fully, what we mean by the cliché "strong writing" and "strong writer." These rubrics assess writing based on this quality, and therefore quantify an overused and ill-defined quality. But how is that possible? How can an ephemeral quality be quantified?

I want to trace this idea through rubric-based assessment practices. Because rubrics should indicate the goals of the course, students should able to understand what is required of them and how to succeed based on such requirements. And if the requirements include the idea of "strong writing" in some form or fashion, then, ultimately, it may indicate the makings of a definition of the cliché. Huot, again, writes,

> In order for assessment judgment to be fair, we must know something about the nature of the judgment. Procedures that involve teachers in development and discussion and reflect clearly defined and negotiated local standards should provide for fair and responsible judgments of student writing. Translating reliability into fairness is not only inaccurate, it is dangerous because it equates statistical consistency with value about the nature of the judgments being made. (167)

Huot, here, marks the problem of one goal of writing assessment throughout history: its undying need to correlate localized practices to universal ones. And that is a dangerous leap, but an unavoidable one. After all, if writing values are reflections of a classroom first and then the university, the surrounding community, and so on, it stands to reason that values should entwine as a singular, unified entity—and clearly, that's not entirely true. I want to work in reverse, however. I assume that, because of how writing is talked about in common parlance, there are universal descriptors like strong writing that are applied or taken away by those in judgment of writing. I want to find the "clearly defined and localized standard" of strong writing so that, eventually, we can move forward from defined localized values to universal ones in order to hopefully sort out this mess. Taken together, this approach sidesteps Bob Broad's argument in *What We Really Value: Beyond Rubrics in Teaching and Assessing Writing*:

> Theories of learning, composition, and writing assessment have evolved to the point at which the method and technology of the rubric now appear dramatically at odds with our ethical, pedagogical, and political commitments. In short, traditional rubrics and scoring guides prevent us from telling the truth about what we believe, what we teach, and what we value in composition courses and programs. (qtd in Martins, 123)

Broad's concern is certainly valid; the use of a rubric may well slip into a nebulous zone of an administrative safety net if they are not properly used and referred to—or, worse yet, believed in. Although his approach is broader than my own, his argument is often in the back of my mind. Overall, however, his problem is not with rubrics, really—it's with their perceived dishonesty.

Stellmack, et al., seem to agree: their work entails assessing assessment practices by testing the reliability and validity of rubrics specifically focusing on APA-style introductions in a research methods course. Their findings were complicated, to say the least:

> We undertook development of the present rubric with the optimistic view that near-perfect interrater agreement could be obtained through careful and diligent refinement of the rubric. That turned out not to be the case, with graders reaching perfect agreement only 37% of the time, and graders agreeing perfectly with themselves (intrarater agreement) only 78% of the time. Note that development and evaluation of the rubric spanned much of a semester, which probably represents a greater degree of effort than most instructors typically devote to rubric development. Although interrater agreement and intrarater agreement were not as high as we might have hoped, the rubric exhibited a reasonable degree of reliability in that three graders agreed with each other within 1 point 90% of the time. (106)

In sum: the rubrics themselves did work, albeit through an arduous process in which the graders agreed only a fraction of the time. And therein lies the distinction of a tool versus the person or persons using the tool. Part of the work of Stellmack, et al., points to one obvious problem: multiple graders. Even with multiple graders in disagreement, their grades were certainly within acceptable norming parameters—despite the graders disagreements, despite their inability to align the lesson, the course, or the assignment with their values—despite all that, the rubric seemed to work. Still, as Stellmack, et al,. finally note:

> The results of this study underscore the inherent subjectivity of evaluating student writing. This subjectivity is problematic if one desires a grading rubric that can produce objective assessments across graders and course sections. An understanding of the reliability of a rubric can aid an instructor in converting scores obtained with the rubric into letter grades by revealing the potential variability associated with assigning a score to any particular paper. (106)

Certainly, *grading* may be considered a subjective practice; this is the exact issue that rubrics, as a tool, defy in favor of objective standards. Objective, standardized levels of achievement deter subjective favoritism. This objective stance is not without its own set of problems, which will be discussed later. Regardless, when rubrics are, in fact, aligned with our pedagogical goals and value systems, then the tool becomes useful again. When the tools are misaligned to favor subjective preferences, they fail. Perhaps Broad's objects lay in the changing landscape of writing and writing instruction, but there is no reason to believe that the rubric, as tool, cannot evolve. Indeed, it should. And along with that evolution should also come an honest definition and explication of the needs of writers, of a course, of an institution, etc.

Vicki Spandel offers an alternative perspective, noting, "[because] it demands reflecting on and describing performance with some precision, creating a rubric teaches us to think. For this reason, whenever possible, we should include students in the process, encouraging them to examine writing from a reader's point of view" (19). Reflective assessment practices should quash any objects to the use of rubrics; if they are rhetorically adapted to new contexts and altered or rewritten so as to fulfill the needs of the specific locale, then a rubric might be the ultimate assessment tool. This is not to say that rubrics are perfect; far from it. The use of rubric may limit an instructor's focus or hold students to standards ineffective for their current endeavors. David Martins writes:

> Rubrics alter how we approach a piece of writing by focusing our attention on only those characteristics of the writing that is addressed by the rubric, and, in the process, they compel us to see a dynamic rhetorical act in decidedly limited ways... other detractors argue that, because rubrics are 'relentlessly reductive,' they standardize how teachers think about student work, limit a teacher's range of judgment...When a rubric that focuses entirely on the attributes of the final product is used, the message is clear to students that

> the most valued component of the learning environment is that final product, and, as a result, the process by which the written text was produced becomes less valued. (127)

Martin's solution to these problems is to design a rubric in dialogue with his courses, rubrics that allow for evaluations that focus on the generic elements of academic writing—to create a genre for analysis. My own solution is simpler: use a built-in revision component to the rubric and create a rubric that can take on extra, specific criteria for specific assignments. Both answers, however, are certainly not permanent. I believe Spandel's idea that rubrics "demands reflecting" stands as a recursive practice on the part of the teacher; rubrics are not meant to be stale monoliths nor are they meant to be forgotten about—indeed, Spandel's emphasis on the necessity of dynamic rubrics prompts an investigation into the function and language of rubrics so as to understand their purpose at a deeper level. Furthermore, these dynamic rubrics may originate from the values and needs of instructors, but they need not stay that way. Virginia Crank explores this notion, writing

> [a] rubric designed specifically for student papers should describe the particular assignment's requirements or expectations and provide some mechanism for indicating the students' success at meeting those expectations...In order to be effective teaching tools, not simply impersonal "copouts" from real responding, these rubrics must be designed and revised according to each group of writers and each type of assignment. Students can and should participate in the design of the rubric, indicating what features they would expect to see in, for example, a narrative essay. This input engages them in conversation about what constitutes good writing and how standards are established. (62-63)

Spandel, Martin, and Broad write on a limited dimensionality of rubric writing; including students in the process adds a level of depth and may challenge our preconceived notions of what

good writing is or is not. Even Crank only goes so far as to connect student engagement in terms of standards; she does not connect student engagement to larger entities, the community of the classroom, or the definition of how higher education functions.

If rubrics reveal our values as educators and as writers, then examining composition rubrics from major institutions should yield a small cross-section of how we treat writing at the university level. Therefore, if we value strong writing, then a definition of that value should be explicit. Rather than using the phrase as a blanket statement for a certain kind of writing, unpacking the idea of strength as it applies to writing merits attention. Willard-Traub, et al., writing on the evolution of the portfolio method at the University of Michigan, note that their method "gave importance to faculty values in understanding how it is students learn to read and write, as well as political values about the need to connect university teaching with teaching that comes before—that is, values which are mindful of a larger social context" (43-44). In this way, Willard-Traub et al., expand on this previous notion that rubrics express our values as instructors to the extent that they also reveal our values as a community of faculty and as a university. While these seem like singular, unified entities, the ramifications of these values are vast. As Jim Penny, et al., note:

> Remuneration, employment, placement, promotion, and graduation are all posited, to some extent, on the accuracy of the assessment of writing samples, and it is frequently the limited precision of four- and six-point rubrics that people express as a concern. One might argue that the use of augmentation, and the implicit extension of that rating scale that augmentation provides, could, at least partially, address some of those concerns...Regardless of the possible benefits that the use of augmentation may bring to assessment, there is one issue that should be explored more fully by those who are charged with the implementation of educational policy, and that issue is an implication of the increased precision that augmentation introduces to the scoring procedure (162).

Rubrics, at a deeper level, reveal the values of the university, and, by extension, the values of the community at large. And, as Penny et al, note, this is problematic if used in a nefarious manner: if policy is implemented (and, thus values directed by those policies) to radically alter or even slightly modify assessment procedures in the service of balancing low scores on an adjusted scoring plane, then those imposed values are not in alignment with educational practices and it is unquestionable in the current political climate as to whose values would be deemed "correct." In addition, this problem is multiplied when one rhetorically informed context is perceived to have universal application. After all, as reflective and reflexive documents, values-driven rubrics should have a universal applicability, shouldn't they? Clearly, this is not the case. Consider the work of Haswell and Wyche-Smith:

> It is a serious mistake to think that a local context sets current problems to which solutions will be found in the literature of past assessment. On that false assumption, teachers who fear the technical specialization of the literature (or only discover how poor the bibliographical access to it is) will soon despair and turn to readymade exams. Teachers who persist will find that solutions reported for one locale only occasionally match the problems of another, or that the solution promoted in one report will be questioned in four others. (227)

Haswell and Wyche-Smith point to the unspoken hope of instructors: an ephemeral, universal rubric, a philosopher's stone of grading. The mythical solutions to assessment. But such solutions are just that—pieces of a mythology many cannot give up, always in service of an overwhelming phobia that persists in pedagogy and praxis: standards, usually set by someone else (who clearly has less knowledge than the rest of us) dictating specific standards to be followed blindly. We look for universal solutions to universal problems rather than seek out our own, local, solutions. Our own assessment practices should contain not only our own values, but also the values of our own community—including the community of our classroom. And these values

are, hopefully, less malicious. If we, as instructors, build individual assignment rubrics with students, then we reveal the values our students hold in writing. But, at the same time, we should be careful not to impose our own values over our students, as doing so would prevent students from uncovering their own presumptions and needs in the writing process.

Historical Approaches to Assessment and Connections to Expressivism

At first, it may seem paradoxical to juxtapose a study on expressivist writing alongside assessment practices using the lens of rubrics. To study both on the grounds of their usage of "strength" may seem preposterous at best, ill-conceived at worst. Although I have proposed a reframed definition of expressivism, one better characterized as activist writing from an actualized, understood self within a greater ecology of human culture, there still may be doubt as to how expressivist writing can be quantified, standardized, and graded. After all, the earliest concerns with assessment were in the form of rater reliability. In 1912, Starch and Elliott, in their work *Reliability of the Grading of High-School Work in English*, one of the earliest texts on assessment practices, focused on rater reliability and found almost no consistency in that regard. Their work focused on finding such consistency by narrowing topics and standardizing coursework. Overall, their goal was to determine the reason for such a lack of consistency. Later, in 1961, Diedrich, French, and Carlton continued to tackle the difficult issue of reliability in their seminal study, *Factors in Judgments of Writing Ability*. Raters were told to use "hunches, intuitions or preferences"—anything they would utilize to regularly grade papers. In doing so, Diedrich, French, and Carlton meant to discover the kinds of ideas raters would use to grade papers, noting "[it] was not the purpose of this study to achieve a high degree of unanimity among the readers but to reveal the differences of opinion that prevail in uncontrolled grading--both in the academic community and in the educated public" (v). While unanimity would

normally be sought out by researchers[17], the purpose of Diedrich, French, and Carlton's study was to uncover the primary factors for grading in an inductive manner. Their findings localized five areas of rater concern: Ideas, Form, Flavor (style), Mechanics, and Wording. These findings would later be used as points of concern in rubrics. According to Huot and O'Neil, in 1966 "Godshalk, Swineford, and Coffman published a study detailing a set of procedures in an ETS research bulletin. These procedures, which would become known as holistic scoring, assigned texts single scores based on a set of criteria, or rubric, through which readers were trained to agree" (3). Thus began a movement towards norming and grader reliability.

It is at this historic moment when expressivism and rubrics collide. In the middle of the 1960s, in the decade most known for expressivism, there is a newfound turn in reliability of testing and assessment. This collision should be an impassable mountain, even despite their mutual coexistence. How is it that, in a new era of testing, one of the primary forms of writing comes out of self-exploration? How can that writing be quantified? At least two possible answers arise. The first is entirely unsatisfying: expressivist writing can't be quantified, and therefore wasn't. According to Ohmann, graduate teaching assistants experimented with expressivism more than any other group; it stands to reason that this same group might experiment with alternative forms of grading. That logic, though, is just logic and not grounded in any recorded history of the field. The other answer reveals deeper connections for expressivism and the history of assessment practices. According to Huot and O'Neil, "[the field of assessment] was also influenced by the development of psychometrics, the statistical apparatus for measurement, as well as by the largely positivist paradigm within which most social science operated during the first half of the twentieth century" (4). Assessment practices were developed, in larger part, out of psychological

[17] And indeed, they did not find unanimity. According to their findings, "94% of these papers received either seven, eight, or nine of the nine possible grades and no paper received less than five different grades from the 53 readers. The median correlation between the readers' grades was .31" (58).

testing; psychometric tests were developed to score a range of psychological characteristics—everything from intelligence to emotional instabilities—and these tests were tested themselves for their reliability. At the same time, however, "validity theorists headed by Lee J. Cronbach had begun to repudiate the positivist basis for validity in educational and psychological tests" (3). The positivist approach, that of a search for "truth" developed out of Platonic philosophy, was seen as a threat to validity. However, the psychologist J.P. Guilford, writing the seminal and referential text on validity theory in 1946, *New Standards For Test Evaluation* argues:

> Validity, in my opinion, is of two kinds: factorial and practical. The factorial validity of a test is given by its loadings in meaningful, common, reference factors. This is the kind of validity that is really meant when the question is asked "Does this test measure what it is supposed to measure?" A more pertinent question should be "What does this test measure?" The answer then should be in terms of factors and their loadings. The practical validity of a test is given by its correlation with a practical criterion of adjustment, vocational or personal… In a very general sense, a test is valid for anything with which it correlates. (428-429)

The remainder of this chapter will argue for such an approach to rubrics as a metric of writing assessment. While Guilford's ideas are simple and straightforward, they are also self-affirming. But that self-affirming nature belies an undercurrent of an immense array of factors and complex approaches necessary to ensure understanding within a learning environment. Lee Cronbach, a validity theorist, expands on Guildford's work, questioning that if the test is, in fact, valid for anything which it correlates, did the test serve its purpose? (Huot and O'Neil, 4). At the heart of this nexus of writing and assessment is the notion of a localized assessment focus that I will further explore at the end of this chapter. Huot and O'Neil, in summarizing and extending the work of Guilfrod, Cronbach, and others, write:

> we cannot assume, assert, or even argue that one form of assessment is more valid than another, because validation is a local, contingent process…it is…an ongoing process in which every use of an assessment implies a series of inquiries into the assessment's accuracy, appropriateness, and consequences for learners and the learning environment. This local, contingent, fluid nature of validity and validity inquiry also marks a movement away from a fixed, positivist notion of truth to a more postmodern notion of reality as something in which value is constructed by individuals and groups to reflect the ongoing, changing nature of human experience. (4-5)

Whether positivist or postmodern, expressivism relies on a localized assessment and localized validity interred within a "series of inquiries," delving into the depths of the assessment process, the metrics of assessment, the assignments, the cultural context of the community, university, and nation, and the students themselves. In the postmodern era—or even beyond postmodernism—expressivism not only offers alternative modes of personal expression within a larger cultural context, but it also supports and, I would argue, demands the kinds of writing assessment practices that are necessary throughout the field of composition.

Definitions and Theoretical Underpinnings

Assessment, for the purposes of this paper, is relegated to the grading practices of composition programs, but I do not intend (for the moment) to answer the harrowing questions about grade norming or standardization across curricula. In other words, I am less concerned with the logistics of assessment and more interested in how we think about writing. I want to go beyond "I know what an 'A' paper looks like." The real goal of assessment should be—should always be—transparency. Rubrics are used to ensure such transparency so that students are able to gauge their progress in the process of writing an essay. At the same time, that transparency extends to

the instructor; we must make our goals for an assignment clear to not only our students, but to ourselves.

In this regard, one of the difficulties in discussing assessment lies in the discrepancies between theory, practice, and the origins of either. Huot writes:

> ...assessment procedures which attempt to fix objectively a student's ability to write are based upon an outdated theory supported by an irrelevant epistemology. Emergent ideas about measurement define teaching, learning, and assessment in new ways, ways which are compatible with our own developing theories about literacy, though for the most part they have yet to filter down to the assessment of student writing. (162)

Huot points directly to the notion that assessment procedures are often an attempt to "fix" student writing and student ability, which implies, therefore, that student writing is in some way broken. Such a premise is damaging, and Huot's warning should be heeded with enthusiastic care. Huot, an avid proponent of the portfolio method, espouses the notion that different students develop in their writing in different ways—and we should honor and reward those differences. The aim of assessment as a means to repair writing is far from the only goal available. David Saltmarsha* and Sue Saltmarsha posit:

> We argue that assessment can and should: (a) offer students a means of effectively negotiating scholarly subject positions through the development of academic literacies; and (b) contribute to the strengthening of learning cultures within faculties and institutions…we see the cultivation of academic literacies as central to strengthening the learning cultures of faculties and institutions for whom decisions about the purposes and processes of scholarly learning and assessment remain a primary responsibility. (622)

For Saltmarsha and Saltmarsha, then, assessment is less about fixing student writing and more about enculturation within an academic environment; fostering academic literacies through

assessment offers a return on investment, that of an an enhanced academic environment. Such an environment will then lead to an improved ability to foster of academic literacies—and thus, to foster better writers. The cyclical optimism of Saltmarsha and Saltmarsha is grounded in a long arc of change and development. Their approach is one based not on individuals but on large-scale, macro solutions. While their work may appear to lack the rhetorically informed, community-based, values-driven approach, their philosophy engulfs such approaches. The need for cultivated academic communities ushered through the "development of academic literacies" via assessment practices only serves to enhance assessment practices at a local level—classroom or university-wide. I contend that rubrics, as an assessment tool, are the primary means to develop these kinds of environments. But, at the same time, I would also contend that the terms we use to define standards of writing are, in some cases, ill-conceived. In the next section, I will discuss the kinds of rubrics used and how the individual scoring mechanisms reflect these ill-conceived definitions—assuming quality definitions exist in the first place.

Understanding Rubrics, Understanding Values

Scholars generally agree that only two types of rubrics exist: holistic and analytical. In short, a holistic rubric assesses a paper and assigns that paper a grade based on a contained set of characteristics. Each grade level contains descriptive statements on what an "A" paper should contain, a "B" paper, and so forth. These kinds of rubrics might also offer a label correlating to a grade: an "A" paper might be labeled as an "Excellent" paper, for example. Holistic rubrics are often utilized in standardized testing; the sheer volume of material to be assessed and scored likely explains the need for a global approach to grading a piece of writing. Ali Reza Rezaei and Michael Lovorn write of holistic rubrics, that they are "used to assess the overall quality of a student's response...are more product-oriented than process-oriented, and are primarily concerned

with the total performance or product rather than with the individual steps taken to arrive at the final product" (19). Rezaei and Lovorn note that the views of holistic grading are perceived to be too subjective and such subjectivity usually leads to a problematic dirge of reliability, predictive assessment, and validation. By the 1970s, the factors such as syntax and spelling—the mechanical aspects of writing—were primary factors in essay grading and rating. Further, they ascertain that the conventions of writing impact the method of grading, both positively and negatively (19-20). Content, purpose, rhetoric—these aspects of writing were eschewed by holistic rubrics in favor of quantifiable errors. While some have worked diligently to change this, the danger in counting comma errors still remains. An analytical rubric, on the other hand, contains several categories and these categories are broken down into several levels of quality. Typically, analytical rubrics will have between four and eight categories with three to five levels of quality. For example, an analytical rubric might contain the category "Style" and contain a definition for the varying levels of the quality of style present. These may be as simple as "Great," "Good," "Adequate," or "Inadequate;" each of these four levels would contain a definition of the kind of writing representative of that particular scoring level.

It should be noted that there is no universal rubric. This may seem obvious, but it bears repeating not as a warning but as a recommendation. And many scholars have gone to great lengths to reiterate this point. Olinghouse and Santangelo note:

> Different student profiles require different approaches to intervention; good assessment practices identify specific areas of concern for each student. While all students benefit from good instructional decisions based on assessment, students who exhibit writing difficulties have special needs that require targeted intervention. A teacher who fully understands a student's specific strengths and needs can design a better instructional program for students using a multitude of assessment tools… While educators can choose from an array of writing assessment tools and methods, the purpose of assessment should

> guide the assessment process. In short, there is no "one size fits all" writing assessment. The best writing evaluation is aligned with the purpose of assessment. (1-2)

While Huot writes:

> A theory of assessment that recognizes the importance of context should also be concerned with creating assessment procedures that establish meaningful contexts within which teachers read and assess. Building a context in which writing can be drafted, read, and evaluated is a step toward the creation of assessment procedures based on recognizable characteristics of language use (559)

And Blake-Yancy writes:

> It is the self that we want to teach, that we hope will learn, but that we are often loathe to evaluate. What is the role of the person/al in any writing assessment? A second future concern has to do with programmatic assessment: how can we use this kind of assessment-which is quite different than the individual assessment that has focused most of our attention for 50 years-to help students?

Olinghouse and Santangelo, Huot, and Yancy-Blake call for contextually-based assessment over universal approaches and instructional methods that reinforce the personal rather than the population. For what seems to be a relatively simple point, major figures in assessment and composition have spent valuable column inches detailing exactly why the individual and why individual context—and, in the process, calling on the traditions and emphases of expressivism—is so dreadfully important to assessment practices. And with so much reiteration, the question must become: why? Clearly, rubrics are at their best when they are adapted and changed to the assignment or course. A rubric for a first semester composition course should look and function differently than a rubric for a second semester composition course. A research paper's rubric should look differently than a rubric used to assess a literacy narrative. For such obvious points,

there are complication elements that cannot be ignored. Returning to the points made by Broad and Martins, rubrics, however contextualized, do set certain standards based on assumptions made by the instructor, the course, the university, national bodies, etc.; these standards because locally universalized—but not on a student by student basis. This becomes exceptionally problematic when students' backgrounds are considered. We cannot predict what experiences our students will have, and some will certainly have an advantage over others based on their high school education, community, class, etc. We have what the philosopher John Rawls called a "veil of ignorance." Because rubrics hold all students to the same standard—students which we know almost nothing about as they enter our doors on that first day of class—-there is a conflict, or at the least the massive potential for conflict, between the level at which we want our students to perform and their ability to get to that level. As I have alluded to earlier, revision scores may be a way to counter relative factors with relative scoring, but, ultimately, it comes down to good teaching and equal parts hope and monumental faith. This is not the best answer to this problem, but it is, I think, one that counts more than any other.

Such notions are localized issues; what of the bigger picture? If rubrics are instances of contextual needs while holding to a need to reflect the values of umbrella institutions within culture and society, then their continual adaptation to assignments and courses may put them in opposition to those larger values. The values-driven approach seems to originate from a position of a static value system—hence the conflict—but that, too, is simply not the case.

Too often, we think of these values as one-way streets. In fact, while I would not go so far as to write that these values are so permeable that a constant interchange takes place, there does exist a certain give and take. Just as the philosophy of grading assessment is connected to the needs of an assignment, a class, a university, a college, a university, a community, etc., so too are the needs of those programs, those communities, and those cultures keenly connected to grading practices. This interconnectedness is not constant, but it is present. Its presence looms largest in

large-scale assessment that occurs in a myriad of forms, from instructor observation to federal programs and initiatives. According to Huot, "In such large scale assessment, individual matters of context and rhetoric are to be overcome in favor of producing a "true" measure of student ability whose validity can only be established through technical and statistical rigor" (550). And therein lies the problem: there is a disconnect between the values of both parties and the methods and tools used to validate those values as well as the products produced by students (to say nothing of the assessment of instructors). In truth, the changing needs and values of the culture at large are outside the scope of this paper, but needless to say, those needs do change.

Overall, the pedagogical values found within rubrics aim for a moving target. Furthermore, this moving target is never created in a vacuum by a single instructor. Those values of the institution, community, etc., all play a role in crafting a rubric, even if that role is subconscious. In part, this allows for a carefully-considered position when designing assessment documents. On the other, it may lead to frustration and an all or nothing approach, not limited to but most often seen in the form of the holistic rubric.

The limitations of a holistic approach to writing, in general, outweigh the benefits. While it certainly simplifies assessment practices and offers a shortcut to grading large volumes of essays, holistic approaches to assessment are plagued with generalizations about what good writing looks like and treats the quality of writing as a predetermined pattern; in other words, an essay can only be assessed at one particular grade level. In doing so, holistic rubrics treat papers with "all or nothing" standards—and writing simply does not work that way. A paper may have excellent style but no substance. Or it may have perfect organization, but rudimentary style. A paper may be filled with original, innovative ideas but be plagued with grammar issues, making such ideas unintelligible. In using a holistic rubric, a student cannot rise past the "weakest link" in their chain; logically, a student's paper must fit into a grade level, and holistic rubrics force a grade

into the lowest slot by default—and this is disservice to students and their writing. That said, holistic rubrics are necessary for large-scale assessment, such as in standardized testing.

Still, there exists a major conflict that has remained invisible—or just ignored by assessment scholars. No matter the approach to grading, at the end of the course, the student receives a holistic grade which represents his or her performance for the class. It doesn't matter if writing works this way or not. Ultimately, no matter if we grade with gold stars or multi-axial grading matrices, there is a holistic grade for the student by semester's end. And unless that course utilized a holistic approach throughout, there may be a kind of cognitive disconnect for the student. While I do find some faults in a holistic rubric, I'm less in favor of leaving my students confused about something so important to them.

It is not my intention to tear down or insult the holistic rubric; after all, it is just another tool and each tool has its use. Used under certain conditions and contexts, the holistic rubric can be used in exceptionally effective ways. In fact, when the real issues of the holistic rubric are taken down to their essential qualities, these kinds of rubrics suffer from the problems as the analytical rubric: the labels used to qualify a piece of writing lack a concrete definition. Many of these labels are especially problematic. These labels can be simple qualifiers indicating a kind of level of grade: good, excellent, fair, average, etc. Some, like "strong" carry with them an elusive definition with odd connotations. Consider the theoretical opposite of strength, "weak," another common rating in rubrics.

Appearing almost as often as "strong," the idea of "weak" writing tends to be better defined. This may be due to the ease of describing the faults of writing rather than the merits. For example, a score of "weak" generally indicates major problems or a lack of development or progress; essays with "weak" scores are relatively rare in my experience and estimation. Often, these scores are

symptomatic of major deficiencies that relate directly to either a lack of writing experience or a disregard for the workload or assignment.

Weak essays, according to my own rubric, do not develop their theses or ideas to any meaningful degree. Usually these essays fall far too short of the word count requirements. They may misunderstand the assignment, fail to make a claim, or fail to answer the "so what?" question. These essays are incoherent in their structure and likely have vague, monotonous writing—writing which may have a multitude of grammatical errors. While these kinds of essays do exist, they are incredibly rare in my experience or, when they do appear, they are often radically improved by the time a second draft is written. This improvement can create abundance from a lack. In other words, a student may add in what is lacking and then go beyond the requirements for an average grade—to create strength, abundance, from weakness. To develop strong writing, then, involves an acceleration of progress at an inverted proportion to a linear progression. Compensating for a lack by developing the missing pieces, then, is easier than developing an already strong paper to an even higher level. This complicates the relationship in between weak and strong. In fact, descriptors of weak are often marked by a sense of passive acceptance. Strength, as defined by action or the potential action in the opening chapter, then, must be extended to develop a binary notion of weakness as passivity on a semiological level. As an assessment element, however, weakness incorporates other connotations and, ultimately, ramifications for both its own semiological construct and its place in assessment.

Distilling the descriptors of weakness reveals a sense of lacking in writing. If weakness is based on a lack, then, logically, as an inverse of weakness, strength would hinge on abundance. The idea of strength, then is not necessarily the opposite of weak; strength, for writing, becomes an extension of what is already present rather than a just a certain degree of ability. Weakness, in turn, signals a negative aspect in writing; but this is not the idea of a qualitative negativity (i.e. “that’s a bad idea”), rather it is a quantitative negative, in that these are essays which do not

contain a certain criteria from the outset. Therefore, these "weak" essays lack a specific element or elements; the implications of this must then be that by implanting those elements or coaxing them out of a students' mind, the essay will become stronger. This works at every level: adding in grammatically and rhetorically sound punctuation or unpacking ideas hidden in claims brings about a strengthening of a student's paper. The question then becomes: does merely adding in those missing items account for all the sum total of improvements in a student's grade or even writing ability? Does the mere presence of writing elements constitute improvement or worthiness? As I noted above, if weakness is based a lack, then, logically, strength would hinge on abundance. Therefore, if weak scores are indicative of major deficiencies, then a strong score represents something more—improvement, skill, knowledge, practice—of a writer in motion and in process. That's the picture of a strong writer. But this definition isn't quite sufficient, at least, not yet. As discussed earlier, the mere inclusion of writing elements questionably fulfills the needs of an assignment Strong writers don't just "fill in the gaps" of what is missing. Strong writers and strong writing, if it depends on abundance, should by definition go beyond merely filling in what is missing—they will add more to fulfill the idea of abundance. If the idea of strength was not just as an opposite of weakness, then filling in the gap would lead to a competent paper and a competent writer. There is a paradox, then: the idea of fulfilling a lack but grading on abundance. The question remains as to how to reconcile these definitions and to bring about an understanding of strong writing in conjunction with developing strong writers. A process-based approach involving multiple drafts may find the answer to this kind of inquiry, if only because the opportunity to both add and expand are allotted.

Strong writing though, still remains paradoxical: it is both having and having more. Weakness denotes a lack, and a lack can be satisfied by addition. Filling in what is missing does not and should not create a sense of strong writing. The temporality of these terms offers insight into their use as assessment descriptors. Weak and strong are both states of being relative to an

outside influence. A piece of solid aluminum is weaker than titanium but stronger than lead. Relativity in grading is a precarious notion, one typically seen in environments in which a curve is used to balance a mathematical score. The difficulty in quantifying a quality, here, is that the quantification changes. What I think of as strong may be weak to others; the relative value of strength is, certainly, not universal. How could it be? Just as weakness is a moving standard, strength in writing relies too much on a localized notion of what is valued in writing. Other terms commonly used—excellent, good, competent, etc.—these are terms locked in time and judgment. They are steady-state labels with fixed positions in assessment. In essence, an "excellent" paper simply "is excellent" or it "it not excellent." These are terms residing in an on-off state and achieving these standards should be a relatively simple matter of fulfilling the requirements of their stated definitions. Such a flickering arrangement accounts for the frailty of holistic systems and the complexity of analytical rubrics. The systems in place for grading may be evolving, but they are evolving without fully accounting for the philosophical underpinnings of the labels we use to assess writing. Indeed, there is no simple solution. In order to rethink the foundation of writing assessment, answers will only be found in teasing out exactly what we value and how we define those values as well as the large implications for those values.

How to Grade Ourselves

Overall, "Strong" essays are not perfect essays, nor are they top-tier essays. What does this reveal about the nature of "strong writing"? If anything, grading an essay that contains strong writing indicates only that a student has gained some degree of mastery of this level of academic writing, but has not gained mastery. Contrasted with terms like "excellence" or "superior" (labels usually associated with top-tier scores) which often denote "going beyond" this ranking, "strong" essays typically meet the needs of the essay requirements and do so quite well. Excellent or

superior essays, in most cases, go above and beyond: they are those essays which analyze a complex idea in a fresh and surprising way for a specific audience with a fresh answer to the "so what" question using an engaging and lively style, free of errors after a careful and considerate revision. Essays with completely excellent scores are, like essays with completely weak scores, exceedingly rare. In other words: an excellent score is reserved for a refrigerator-worthy essay, one that leaves a teacher beaming. But is it appropriate for a first semester composition course? In a word: no.

What strong writing indicates, at least to me on a general level, is a developing writer that is coming to grips with his or her own voice entering into a larger conversation in a gradual manner. A "strong" score shows the writer to be working on a conscientious level, coming to an awareness of his or her own processes and needs as a writer in an academic environment. From a certain point of view, a strong score might be considered better than an excellent score; students should strive to achieve excellence—and often they do achieve such a score over time and work—but the expectations of a strong score are much more realistic and attainable for a first-semester composition class. Indeed, part of the semiological definition of strength I have proposed involves the notions of adaptability and variability; that is, to have strength requires the means to acquire strength. Strong papers are a direct correlation to this notion of strength as a kind of development. An excellent paper is often indicative of a second-semester ready student in a first semester course. It's a writer who has already attained a level of achievement not in line with the goals of the course. We should not be seeking excellent papers, not in this philosophical paradigm.

The difference between a "strong" essay and an "excellent" essay is the degree to which a student can fulfill the essay assignment well or fulfill the assignment at a level that may be beyond the student's standing in a first-semester composition course. This relative relationship from one term to the other is, again, problematic. Still, the idea of a strong essay seems to identify a writer

as one who is proficient and able to succeed, even thrive in the first-semester class as a student who is more than competent but less than superior: a student in process in the right place at the right time of his or her writing life.

Although strong essays are not perfect essays, they indicate a more than competent level of achievement along with a degree of writing mastery that most students will be able to carry with them to other classes and other situations involving writing. A strong essay should explore ideas with some thoroughness while using a relatively complex thesis. Strong essays have a clear stance with appropriate language in an organized manner with well-connected paragraphs and a strong voice that is prevalent throughout the essay and adapts to each rhetorical situation as needed by the assignment. A strong essay reveals a writer in process, a writer in development.

A cursory glance at various departmental rubrics in which "strong" is used in some fashion to describe an aspect or aspects of writing reveals that, for the most part, strong writing seems to be defined as a matter of clarity and control, at least according to other departmental rubrics. The idea of strength as control is rather problematic and offers connections I am not fully comfortable with as an instructor and as a human being. For one, it tends to eliminate the move towards taking a risk in the genre of academic writing. As a young student, I would never have opened a paper with a personal story. I wouldn't have used humor. In fact, I spent many hours reading academic articles and an equal number of hours trying to emulate that form of writing—to my detriment.

While emphasizing control as a means of strength may empower students to make careful, considered choices in their writing, it will not enhance their creativity nor their critical thinking. Most rubrics point to the attribute of strength as a means of development; students are not creating "superior" or "excellent" drafts which, if they are early drafts, are more likely to indicate that the student is already prepared to move on to the next composition course. Strong writers are

those who craft essays that should be celebrated. As instructors, this may be the ultimate lesson—that the B paper should be highly regarded, perhaps even more than the A essay.

But this is not what common sense would dictate. How is it possible that a "B" paper should be celebrated in higher regard than an "A" paper? Certainly no student would ever agree with this notion. What is called for, then, is a greater emphasis on the need to reward the development of writers over the product that writers create. Because the nature of composition courses is intertwined with developing writers, there is a question of how to teach writers at varying levels of ability and background while using a standardized rubric. How can students develop strong writing even without a strong background in writing education? The answer may lay in a combination of approaches: the portfolio method espoused by Huot, the University of Michigan, UNC, and myself along with many others involves multiple drafts and therefore multiple opportunities for feedback and revision. Even without a portfolio system, using multiple drafts help to encourage individual and class-wide development in writing ability. In essence, we must turn to a larger context so that issues of class, geography, disabilities, access, technology—any of the myriad factors which could limit the development of young, talented writers waiting in the wings—are accounted for and regarded as much as the words on the page.

As instructors we cannot disregard the larger context in which writers have learned to write. Huot notes that

> Few important or long lasting changes can occur in the way we assess student writing outside of the classroom unless we attempt to change the theory which drives our practices and attitudes toward assessment. At present, assessment procedures which attempt to fix objectively a student's ability to write are based upon an outdated theory supported by an irrelevant epistemology. (551-552)

If a strong paper is regarded higher than an excellent paper then the grading scale that judged those papers is askew. Worse yet, the value systems in place that promote that scale are askew; spiraling out, the value systems of the university, the community at large, and so on—these are just as askew, perhaps more so. Process pedagogy, analytical rubrics, portfolio systems—these are stopgap measures in the pursuit of a system which takes into account the needs of a student at the intersection of their writing life and the instruction they receive. They do not and cannot account for large forces at work. What is needed is a processed-based, contextual rubric in line with course goals, assignment goals, and that evolves concurrently with individual courses and perhaps even individual writers. This may be an impossible, radical solution to an overwhelming to an often-unacknowledged problem. But it may be what is most desperately needed to uncover our unexplored values and to employ what we, as instructors, truly value in writing and in our students so that our own assessment practices are philosophically and ethically balanced. What this looks like, how it is to be implemented, how it will evolve or grow—these are unanswered questions and, perhaps, unanswerable ones. But only for the moment.

Connections

In the long days since this project first began, I have still continued to rethink and reconsider my approach to grading both in local and global formats. I still see paradoxes and curiosities at every level of assessment. In this chapter, I have only briefly touched on program assessment and university accreditation; indeed, these are dragons that cannot be slain here. In addition to simply being outside the realm of this theoretical undertaking, I am in no position to take on these subjects given both my status in academia—and nor do I want to. Certainly those issues are worthy of tackling, but I am of the mindset that change starts small. Understanding the tools of writing assessment is a small step in a ten thousand mile journey. But it is an important step. The

echoes of "I know what an 'A' paper looks like" still screech like so many nails on a chalkboard. Fighting back against that feels like Don Quixote. I can only imagine the size of windmills involved at the university level.

The greater point of this chapter is that too often we describe these ideas in terminology that, upon examination, makes little sense. The terms we use to describe and define specific levels of quality must not be murky, but transparent. The craft of writing has alongside it a craft of understanding it, a craft of assessment. These terms become labels, and students are not labels. While the conflict of these paradoxical pulls rages on, we must at least acknowledge the problem rather than passively accepting it. These layers of unpacked undercurrents of strength, as also seen in the previous chapters, calls on us to dig through these layers of meaning and discover perhaps not a greater truth, but a greater meaning. To understand the implications of language that we use not just in the classroom, but in our everyday lives. The following two case studies are meant to do exactly that.

CHAPTER IV: CASE STUDY I

STRONGER THAN IRON: A RHETORIC OF STRENGTH IN THE GOLDEN AGE OF PHYSICAL CULTURE

The first section of this project has been devoted to tracing an evolving rhetorical definition of strength and to do so within the bounds of composition and writing studies. Starting with theoretical analyses using rhetorical theory and semiotics, I argued for one possible definition of strength, that strength both acts and represents action or the potential of action. In addition, strength may also be considered as a reaction to external stimuli in which that reaction may or not involve actual action. That definition, while somewhat vague, does encompass a rhetorical conception of the persuasive aspects of strength.

Following that semiological and rhetorical breakdown of strength, I then turned to composition studies starting in the late 1950s through 1980, in the era most commonly associated with expressivism. Using artifacts from that era, namely, textbooks, I have shown that the stereotypical characteristics attributed to expressivism often fail to fully capture the movement in all its complexity. In order to do so, I included major figures from self-psychology, figures who had a profound influence on American thought and, ultimately, of writing instruction.

Strength, as a concept, began to turn inward so that it may be then moved outward toward social action.

Finally, the rhetoric of strength in writing studies revealed new depths of the definition of strength as it has appeared in rubrics under the guise of a descriptor of writing quality. Strength has become part of a cliché in writing studies, that of "strong writing." Yet without a concrete grounding, the term naturally becomes meaningless. In total, my aim in concretizing a semiological definition of strength (found in the first chapter) was not to provide such a grounding, per se (although I did argue for one possible grounding in the process), but instead I connected the philosophical underpinnings of values-driven assessment practices to the problem of undefined labels for grading.

In the final two chapters, I want to turn from composition studies to a rhetorical approach to strength in order to uncover how strength has been used as a persuasive act in material American culture. Doing so will allow me to expand and explore the political implications of strength, visual representations of strength, and to trace the historical and cultural legacy of strength in America following the Civil War.

The History of Strength Culture in the United States

In 1898, George Hackenschmidt, a renowned strongman, toured Russia and trained steadily in wrestling and weight lifting. He fought in wrestling matches held in gymnasiums, auditoriums, even circuses. Although he had garnered fame as a wrestler, Hackenschmidt's passion lay in weightlifting. Hackenschmidt's book, *The Way to Live*, part devotional text for a healthy life and part autobiography, details a visit to Vienna and to Count Ribeaupierre's private riding school. Arranged like a circus and filled with distinguished guests, Hackenschmidt recalls a particularly poignant moment when a feat of strength captivated his audience:

> The doctor was at this time wearing a new pair of trousers, which fit him exceedingly well, insomuch that I more than once expressed a wish to possess similar garments. Dr. von Krajewski jestingly replied, 'My dear George, when you can beat Sandow's world record of putting up 116 kilogrammes or 255 1/2lb. with one hand you shall have just such another pair!' It may have been this jest which spurred me on to make a special effort by putting up a weight of 122.25 killogrammes (269 1/4lbs. English)…When I lifted this weight Dr. Krajewski in front of all the people rose from his seat, and lifted his hat to full arm's length above his head. I shall never forget the doctor on this occasion. His admiration for feats of strength was almost beyond understanding (112).

Hackenschmidt's lifting prowess garnered something beyond mere praise or satisfaction; his writing indicates an ethereal appreciation of physical power and strength. This would normally be attributed simply to an overindulgent memoir, but other writers have described Hackenschmidt as "the epitome of calm, self-assurance and inner peace…He spoke softly, so that you were forced to listen and pay attention, rather than raise his voice to be heard. His serenity was 'catching', calming all those in attendance at his lectures...and it was a developed calmness" (Gentle). Given these characterizations and the extensive measurements and records kept by Hackenschmidt and contained in *The Way to Live*, the seemingly hyperbolic language present throughout his accounts rings true. The fascination expressed in *The Way to Live* mirrors similar accounts in other texts written by strongmen of this era. Each author conceptualizes the idea of strength in a unique manner: some weave strength into an overall pattern of health while others divorce strength and muscular power from health and vitality. From 1894 to 1935, systematized fitness and health began to develop as circus strongmen and performers began to write manuals and guides centered on strength and health. These manuals have been largely overlooked by both scholars and even by the mainstream fitness community, but analyzing this genre and these books may offer new understanding in both the rhetoric of strength and in terms of genre. Thankfully,

many of these manuals and related materials have survived due to a small, but dedicated community of fitness enthusiasts who collect, study, and even practice the techniques outlined in these fitness texts. While this community is somewhat small, it is disproportionately devoted to these manuals, investing hours upon hours scanning and restoring these books, the bulk of which are now in the public domain and freely available online. Unfortunately, their work is far from finished, as several books have yet to be scanned and made available to the public at large. Several pamphlets and strength manuals from this era have been lost to history. In fact, during the process of revising this chapter, I found that one website containing many of these texts had gone offline, due to the death of the webmaster. As a result, many enterprising business owners pounced on the formerly-free downloads and turned them into paid webtexts. Still, it is fortunate that most of the fitness materials from this era have survived, though many are difficult to acquire due to their rarity. While I have attempted to be as thorough as possible in my study of early fitness texts, I know of many texts that are currently only available in special collections, both in specific university libraries and in private collections. Others are available, but have not been made publicly available through digital scanning and online posting. My own collection of these texts is limited to what is currently available online for little or no costs. More work is needed not only to analyze existing fitness manuals and texts (as this is a genre often overlooked) but also to find, catalogue and compare these texts, many of which are extremely rare, as they provide a unique insight into American culture and American non-fiction writing during the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era. The samples I have collected for this study are those currently available in full; as more are found and scanned, they too will be included in the ongoing pursuit to catalog and analyze this genre. This chapter aims to uncover and explore the rhetoric of strength in the age of the strongman, the golden age of physical culture in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the United States. In addition, I intend to uncover some of the origins of the genre of the fitness manual and how an unorganized and unsystemetized genre developed into a concretized series of documents.

This era in question, 1894-1935, marks the golden age of physical culture, an era in which physical development first rose to popular interest as part of travelling vaudeville acts. The beginning of the physical culture era began in the late nineteenth century, starting during the Gilded Age, (1880-1900) and culminating during the Progressive Era (1890-1920). The Gilded Age is most famous for the creation of a modern industrial economy and upper class prosperity, of manufacturing and urbanization. It's also the age of Social Darwinism. The Progressive Era, as a reaction to The Gilded Age, was a period marked by social activism and political reform, by prohibition and suffrage. The Progressive Era called on science to propose grand solutions to grand problems. It's also the age of eugenics. Strongmen and weightlifting represent a culmination and a collision of these social and political ideologies. In addition, the generation following the American Civil War was notable for the spread and interest in organized sports: boxing, tennis, golf, and others. Michael Kimmel, in his book *Manhood in America*, notes that "[sports] were heralded as character building; health reformers promised athletic activity would make young men healthier and instill moral virtues. In short, sports made boys into men" (93). This era was marked by a path littered with sports as a means to compete and prove one's self. These sports embodied a literal interpretation of "survival of the fittest" from Social Darwinism and a metaphorical inception of eugenics' flawed understanding of the optimal expression of physical capacities. And while activists raged on against corrupt politicians and robber baron industrialists during the Progressive Era, physical fitness and the rise of sports offered a means of trust, a trust in one's self and one's own capacity to achieve and succeed by honest and consistent work. Physicality and physical culture were the hallmark of this era in American history. In the years following the Civil War, Americans needed a controlled outlet for aggression while rebuilding the nation. Forming communities and groups through sports—the same sports that engaged people in a physical manner—assured this need would go fulfilled. Additionally, because of an increased emphasis on scientific understanding, trust could be found in regimented, scientific methods from experts.

Soon, the strongmen of vaudeville were seen as celebrities and fitness experts. In an attempt to cash in on their notoriety, these strongmen began to write fitness manuals and instruction guides on gaining muscle and physical development. These experts then marketed strength to an audience that was either unwilling or unable to locate it at a national scale, but the idea and expression of "strength" could be found at the level of the individual. The pursuit of physical strength became a middle class movement and would remain as such for decades. Metaphorical, intrinsic strength would only change when the Great War approaches, when strength evolved from an individualistic notion to a nationalistic ideal. But for the golden age of the strongman, strength was not for everyone.

The cultivation and evolution of the idea of strength was, in part, responsible for the distancing of middle class culture as an entity separate from its working class roots; strength development through sports and exercise was a means to replicate the physical capacities of the working class without necessarily involving the act of getting one's hands dirty. How strength became defined in the burgeoning era of physical culture was not found in kinesiology or exercise science, per se. Nor would a definition of health come to be prescribed by a dietician or nutritional science expert. Instead, these two concepts would be intertwined and defined, complicated and dissociated by men who made a living lifting anvils while wearing only a fig leaf. The definition of strength would fall on the sturdy shoulders of strongmen. Much like the expressivists of the 60s and the rubric writers who would follow, the definition of strength would be created, cultivated, and used by the community itself.

Michael Kimmel, in his signature text *Manhood in America*, describes the end of the nineteenth century as a time when America became "sports crazy" and the country was host to a surge of sports: tennis, golf, boxing, weightlifting, and others. This was an era that bore witness to a new interest in football and basketball, a time when baseball developed into a national pastime (93). This era marked the path to a new conception of manhood, a path littered with sports as a means

to compete and prove one's self. A means to contend with others without killing, sports provided a means to compete as well as a sense of teamwork and community; this paradox ultimately gave way to an emphasis on the individual. Baseball, a team sport which largely emphasized individual performance, was at the forefront of this change. Sports were only one cause of this shift; large socio-economic transformations in America altered ideas of manhood and masculinity as E. Anthony Rotundo writes in his book, *American Manhood*:

> This communal form of manhood lingered on through the first decades of the nineteenth century, but it was eclipsed by a *self-made manhood* which had begun to grow in the late eighteenth century. The new manhood emerged as part of a broader series of changes: the birth of republican government, the spread of a market economy, the concomitant growth of the middle class itself. At the root of these changes was an economic and a political life based on the free play of individual interests. In this new world, a man took his identity and his social status from his own achievements, not from the accident of his birth. Thus, a man's work role, not his place at the head of the household, formed the essences of his identity. And men fulfilled themselves through personal success in business and the professions, while the notions of public service declined. (Rotundo 3)

In short, it is the responsibility of the reader to act and consciously work towards this cultivation of fitness; it is a matter of both character and personal identity. While Rotundo's analysis does take into account larger, nationalized trends, he fails to integrate the overwhelming rise of sports in America concurrent to this time period. Kimmel, however, does not: "thousands of men sought to combat the enervating effects of their urban white-collar working lives with manly physiques, health regimens, and participation in sports. Muscular development revealed a Self Made Man" (180). Here, the integration of social changes alongside individual changes is made clear: to be whole, to be complete as a man, one must be physically fit. This fitness would evolve into something beyond a basic desire for general health; some practitioners of physical fitness

would take the human capacity for strength and develop it to extremes. Klein note that "the period dating from the 1870s is also the inception of the 'strong man era,' in which proponents of strength and muscularity toured the country putting on shows for millions. Exhibitions of strength typically existed within traveling circuses and in the gymnasiums" (34). Strongmen were regular performers and often the stars of vaudeville shows, with audiences aghast at their feats of strength as well as their sheer muscularity. It is little wonder that this same era saw the development of technologies complimenting physical culture, as Jacqueline Reich notes, writing that "The rise of the physical culture movement occurred simultaneously with the popularization of photographic consumption in the United States as both an art form and the preferred means of visual reproduction" (452). Such an emphasis on appearances and visual appeals would later complicate an easy definition of strength from several strongmen.

Among the innovators of physical culture and the new wave of fitness enthusiasm was Eugen Sandow. An immigrant from Prussia, Sandow would eventually be discovered in 1892 by Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr., the producer of the famous Ziegfeld's Follies vaudeville show. Under Ziegfeld's direction, Sandow grew to be a headlining performer. According to David L. Chapman, it was Ziegfeld who first emphasized Sandow's looks over his appearance, noting "[another] of Ziegfeld's successful innovations was a change in Sandow's stage costume. Prior to this, he had appeared before the public clad in a blue top and discreet pink tights that covered him from neck to toe. It was his managers' idea to discard the tights and to have him appear on stage wearing nothing but his brief jersey" (63). Although his feats of strength brought him to the stage, his physical appearance kept him there. According to an 1894 article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Sandow's penchant for entertaining his audience using his musculature surpassed his displays of raw physical prowess:

> every eye wandered frequently to the curtains of red plus at the back of the stage. Finally they parted, and Sandow stood revealed in the blaze of light just as he does in his regular

> performances, only with a difference. The athlete had put off his belt, tights and shoes, and wore but a single garment, a strip of silk not much larger than a handkerchief...There were some suppressed giggles, but it was mercifully dark in the house and the offenders had no need to hide the consequent blushes; no one could see them (qtd. in Klein 35).

Contemporary accounts not withstanding, in 1894, Sandow met Thomas Edison and short a film consisting of several poses from his stage routine. Under Ziegfeld's direction, Sandow would remain a headlining act until 1896, in both The Follies and as a solo performer. According to Jacqueline Reich, "[his] act reflected a shift in the physical culture world from demonstrations of feats of strength to the static display of masculine muscle" (452). Clearly, as a stage and film performer, Sandow's concern lay not in strength, per se, but in the appearance of strength. An odd, recurring pattern takes shape: the contrasting forces between the perception of strength versus the performance of strength. Certainly, given the time period, one could explain this based on the relative scarcity of heavy weights. Much of Sandow's stage show involved objects that were not, in fact, barbells and dumbbells: pianos, large animals, etc., were regular features. Transporting these and many other objects would be a logistical nightmare and likely expensive (and as evidenced later, Sandow was especially focused on money). But the simpler answer is likely more accurate: audiences didn't need the performance to believe the phenomena. In part, Sandow's reputation preceded him. But more than that, seeing was believing: the idea of strength (something I will focus on exclusively in chapter four) was far more powerful than strength as an act.

While Sandow may have initially focused on showmanship and stage presence, later his financial concern would rest in his ability to market this appearance as a standard of health. His first book, the voluminous *Sandow's System of Physical Training,* is filled with hundreds of photos and sketches, and according to David Chapman, Ziegfeld advertised the book and sold it before and after Sandow's many performances (70). Sandow's use of so many photographs belies a lack of

concern with appearance and instead indicates that outward appearances could at least be construed as an indicator of overall health. Still, the fact remains that Sandow was a driving force in the new physical culture movement that swept across the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Later, Chapman writes that

> [partly] because of Sandow's magazine, partly because of his correspondence course, and partly because of the popularity of his stage performances, the desire to become healthy and strong was beginning to catch on. Slowly at first, then later gathering momentum, a physical culture craze was sweeping the world. For the first time since the ancient Greeks, large numbers of people were starting to take stock of their health and their physical appearance. The wonderful possibilities of bodybuilding and exercise were suddenly dawning on the popular imagination, and Sandow was in on the ground floor of this movement. (110)

What Sandow's patrons began to seek was not merely the ability to lift heavy objects; the average man or woman, now often distanced from hard labor, sought a means to cultivate a new kind of health, one grounded in a new definition of "strength." This idea of strength would developed by Sandow as a means of personal development in line with the capacities of everyday men and women.

Eugen Sandow writes in his later work, *The Gospel of Strength According to Sandow*, "Indeed, the reader will find that the keynote of this booklet is Nature, and that the word 'Strength' in the title refers rather to perfect robustness of constitution than to mere muscular power that permits of a man performing Herculean tasks" (5). Here, the concept of "strength" is brought to the forefront; Sandow is not alone in calling attention to his definition of strength. What separates his conception of strength lay in the diminution of muscularity and power in favor of overall health, or as he refers to it, "perfect robustness of constitution." Although other writers, such as

Thomas Inch, would correlate a complimentary relationship between heath and strength, Sandow defines strength as integral with health rather than separated from it. Given Sandow's history as a performer who emphasized muscularity and aesthetics, his emphasis on overall health is questionable—but while the impressive feats of strength that strongmen such as Sandow were capable of may be out of reach of average man or woman, reasonably good health offered a reasonable possibility.

Furthermore, Sandow's definition of "strength" contrasts the concept of "Nature," labeled as the thesis of Sandow's text, with the attributes associated with "Herculean" abilities. The photographs of Sandow placed throughout the text are clearly reminiscent of Grecian sculpture and the Grecian ideal; separating nature from such an ideal promotes a disconnection between potential and the impossible for most people, serving instead to reinforce the necessary definition of health over strength. Sandow further ingratiates strength in this manner by separating the aforementioned Grecian ideals in his later text, *Sandow's System of Physical Training*, writing "Even the ancient Greeks, noted as they were for their fine physical development, grace and symmetry of form, groped largely in the dark regarding many things which modern physiological science has now made plain" (2). By invoking modern scientific methods with empiricism at the ready, Sandow eschews again associations of Grecian strength and superhuman efforts in favor of attainable health. In doing so, Sandow's emphasis shifts to a more contemporary perspective and relegates the conception of strength not as a mythical quality from a bygone era, but instead as attainable attribute in the present. Sandow then further refines this distinction of modern training methods developed for a modern audience by recounting the needs of his audience; according to Sandow, in his work *Sandow's System of Physical Training*,

> it is health rather than strength that is the great requirement of modern men at modern occupations; it is not the power to travel great distances, carry great burdens, lift great weights, or overcome great material obstructions; it is simply that condition of body, and

> that amount of vital capacity, which shall enable each man in his place to pursue his calling, and work on in his working life, with the greatest amount of comfort to himself and usefulness to his fellow men. (5-6)

For Sandow, the idea of strength is divorced from health in both a literal and a metaphorical sense. Certainly a portion of his audience may have been concerned with strength in order to "carry great burdens"—indeed, carrying heavy objects may have been part of a man or woman's "working life," as Sandow puts it. Still, the cultivation of health for "modern men at modern occupations" indicates that physicality has been deemphasized in favor of long life. Further, Sandow writes to, as he puts it, "a modern audience" and this emphasis on modernity indicates an audience divorced from the hardship of labor; after all, those workers who carried "great burdens" for a living had no need to develop strength. Arguably, Sandow could be writing to a classless audience as laborers may not be concerned with strength may still have a need for overall health. However, Sandow's texts emphasize and analyze prescribed movements of exercise far more than they advise or enforce ideas or techniques to further one's health.

Sandow's definition of strength as integrated within a larger definition of health seems to contrast Kimmel's assertions of early twentieth century America and the self-made man. For Sandow, though, health is the key to forging a self-made man. Not men, as in a community, but a man. Each individual is responsible, according to Sandow, for his own health. In this regard, Sandow's logic aligns itself with both Kimmel and Rotundo. Like Euguen Sandow, the strongman Thomas Inch worked to break down and make lucid the means to develop strength through health. Unlike Sandow, Inch expanded on the definition of strength in new ways and with different directions.

Thomas Inch begins his text *On Strength*, writing "[the] trouble in delving deep into lore about manly strength and tracing out astonishing performances of the strong man of antiquity, is to separate the probable from the improbable, to decide just what is legendary and obviously

distorted during its travel through the years and what is humanly possible, judged by present-day standards" (1). Inch, a former strongman, begins his book by immediately identifying strength with two divergent qualities: one, that strength is a masculine quality and feats of strength are associated with a group of men from a bygone era, and two, that mythical qualities, possibly dubious, surround these tales of strength. Few writers of health and fitness in this era would consider strength to be anything but masculine; Inch's qualification is unsurprising. What is interesting, however, his insistence on uncovering the truth of the history and abilities of strongmen. Inch punctuates his work with records and measurements from his own years of experience in an effort to sort out the historical record of physical culture. Indeed, his history attempts to extend beyond past generations of strong men and physical culture and into the mythical: "I suppose that the first strong man of whom we have any record is the biblical Samson, whose name has been perpetuated by stage and other strong men for thousands of years" (1). In evoking Samson and The Bible, Inch may gain a certain level of ethos with his audience but at the sacrifice of logic—after all, if he intends to create an accurate historical record of strong man feats in order to uncover the potential for human strength development, his inclusion of biblical references offers a dubious connection.

Unlike other authors of this era, Inch offers a roadmap to successful health and increased strength capacity: "Once again, muscular development will not give this success, health comes before muscle or strength, strength before muscle, mental efficiency before all three. For, given mental efficiency, all things are possible and it becomes a simple matter to develop muscle, to increase strength or better the health" (27). Clearly, Inch separates his conception of strength from health and mental acuity. "Mental efficiency" is his foundational attribute and his description is somewhat lacking, constructed from analogies and anecdotes about boxers and former students rather than a qualitative definition. Still, the term is privileged throughout the text and Inch's descriptions hint at a kind of mental clarity and sharpness as pertaining reaction time as well as

intelligence and adaptability. What follows mental efficiency is not muscle, but strength—a reversal of what basic biology would inform a modern reader.

Inch's lack of understanding of physiology and biology, given the era and relatively primitive development of kinesiology, is forgivable. Instead, it is more likely that his observations derived from a philosophical motivation of the mind-body connection, as he would later write "For up-to-date physical culture, the kind about which I have written and lectured for some [thirty-seven] years, means mental as well as physical efficiency working harmoniously together in perfect co-operation" (32). For Inch, the basis of mental efficiency is most pronounced when it is combined with strength in order to generate a given outcome, typically muscle or general health. Once this balance of the mind-body connection is achieved, these outcomes are "a simple matter" as Inch noted earlier. In his later work, *Strength Secrets*, Inch would offer a method to ensure these outcomes: "[Weight lifting] will tune up the muscle you already possess more surely and at a more rapid pace than any other known method, it does not, as is the case with many forms of light exercise, leave you with muscle which is only of use for show purposes, it gives real strength in proportion to the development" (4). Unlike other writers, such as Eugen Sandow, Inch emphasizes how strength should be used for "real" purposes rather than just for "show." His final phrase "it gives real strength in proportion to the development" seems to lack completion; in its original context, Inch includes this phrase in a list-like format and attempts to persuade the reader with the benefits of weightlifting. The original passage attempts to refute the "[damaging] statements [that] have been made as to [weightlifting] making people slow, damaging hearts, shortening life" (3). In short, Inch's argument for weightlifting was an activity that led not necessarily to strength, but to health. Phrases such as "real strength" are remarkably conspicuous; Inch's contrasts "real strength" to muscle built only for "show purposes."

What constitutes "real strength" or "strength before muscle" and, for both Sandow and Inch, what is "possible" for the average man or woman to cultivate must be a more complete definition of

health. However, such a definition does not rely merely on a single attribute, such as strength development. Rather, for early strongmen the definition of health included standards of strength, hygiene, sleep, diet, and various other holistic practices. Although individual strongmen placed different emphases on any given aspect (the most notable being the considerable variations on one's diet), their philosophy of training and of the body was constantly systemic. Inch notes in *On Strength* that "[in] physical culture training, 'system' is everything, and the 'system' here is to ensure that no part of the anatomy escapes attention" (63). The body, for Inch and for others, operates as a unit and any attempt at increasing one's health must address this. Further, in the introduction to *On Strength*, Inch writes that "no one recognises more fully than the author that mere weight-lifting is not the be all end all of physical culture. Curing ill-health, the eradication of physical defects, attainment of perfect fitness for every day life, ability to face the ever increasing stress and strain of to-day's commercial life, are of far greater importance [sic]" (x). Although weight lifting is stressed, Inch's rhetoric indicates that whole-body and mental health are the aims of exercise. His insistence on "perfect" health identifies with a rhetoric of control and responsibility; adherents are expected to cultivate perfect health by actively curing their own diseases and defects while simultaneously coping with stress and strain. Because these texts typically address the subject of physical culture as well as many aspects of daily life, these instructions act as a kind of contractual agreement between strongman and everyman: do the work, systematically and consistently, and make your life better.

George Hackenschmidt begins his book *The Way to Live* by writing "Health can never be divorced from Strength," (9) thus setting the tone for the entirety of his work. Although he devotes two chapters to nutrition and sleep, the vast majority of *The Way to Live* concerns the cultivation of strength through exercise, either for the reader's benefit or as illustrated in those chapters which detail Hackenschmidt's life. Even the title of the book, when viewed through the lens of this opening passage, indicates that the cultivation of Strength is path which men and

women should pursue. Further, Hackenschmidt notes that he has "devoted several pages to exercises with heavy weights, for the purpose of developing Strength" (12). In these opening pages, Hackenschmidt insists on writing about Strength not as an expression, but as a concept. Throughout the book he writes of Strength, not strength, indicating a kind of platonic ideal associated with physical expression. In doing so, Hackenschmidt thus assumes a philosophical stance in the area of strength; here, Strength is Health and Health is Strength. The two terms are inseparable not because they are complimentary or synergistic; rather, Health and Strength are synonymous.

The Way to Live outlines a number of exercises and training regiments intended for the beginning practitioner of physical fitness. Additionally, the text incorporates information on other aspects of health, but unlike many other texts of this early era of physical culture, Hackenschmidt's text contains multiple chapters outlining a philosophy of strength: not only arguing a rationale of the importance of strength and strength training, but outlining what strength and training mean. Early in his book, Hackenschmidt writes that

> It may be suggested that there is no reason why a man should go to the trouble and exertion of struggling with heavy weights, since there is no crying necessity for that particular man to acquire any phenomenal degree of strength.
>
> To that I would reply by asking why a man should desire to *weak?*
>
> He was endowed by his Creator with muscles and sinews which would enable him to cope successfully with such physical feats as he might be faced with during his earthly career. (12)

In the first section of this excerpt, Hackenschmidt addresses the concern with class structured outlined earlier. He calls for the lack of a need for modern, professional class workers to be strong for their professions in "any phenomenal degree." It may be assumed that Hackenschmidt

uses the term “phenomenal” here in a sense equating with the seemingly superhuman abilities employed by the strongmen of this era, and indeed few men would ever actually require such impressively developed qualities. But his inquisition is short-lived and supplanted by a query contending the opposite: that a lack of strength does not imply an average aptitude of physical capacity; rather a lack of strength must implicate a man (in this case) as “weak.” Because there is a cosmological endowment of physicality to that same man, he is obligated to develop such a capacity in order to conquer whatever corporeal obstacles he may encounter.

Although the works of Thomas Inch and Eugen Sandow emphasize health over strength, Hackenshmidt’s text asserts that Strength is neither the roadmap to health nor one aspect of it; rather, Strength is health. Later in *The Way to Live*, Hackenschmidt compounds this concept in the manner by which he outlines a training regiment. His emphasis on strength in this idealized conceptualization is reified by a training methodology that focuses on the body as a whole unit. Hackenschmidt writes that “[no] one can afford to neglect any of these groups. All, in fact, should be equally developed, those which are naturally weaker to greater extent than the others, until all are equally strong, when the object in view should be that of *equal* all-round improvement” (57-58). Again, Hackenschmidt argues for weakness in the absence of strength but here he tempers his language with words like “developed” and “improvement.” While this language is not exactly softened, it may be characterized as something separate from the cosmological imperative for exercise discussed earlier. Later, Hackenschmidt will continue this thread, nothing that exercisers should "...give their attention to *all* parts constituting their corporate frames, for real strength is all-round strength" (96). Again, he reiterates the need to employ the entire body as a unit, but here Hackenschmidt utilizes the familiar phrase “real strength.” Just as Thomas Inch wrote about “real strength” and as Eugen Sandow postulated on the “prefect robustness of constitution,” Hackenschmidt’s conception of “real strength” is just as integrated into an overall definition of health as in other texts.

Hackenschmidt's work embodies the core beliefs of the philosophy of the self-made man. The work includes an extensive autobiography with detailed records of Hackenschmidt's accomplishments. Even without the portion of the text devoted to Hackenschmidt's memoir, *The Way to Live* incorporates and espouses the mindset of the self-made man not only by outlining exercises and offering advice for self-improvement, but the book also expounds on the philosophy of physical fitness and training. Early in the text, Hackenschmidt notes "…I have come across many young men, who by nature seemed very weak, but who, in consequence of physical exercises and a strong will power, became prominently strong. *You must have faith in your ability to make yourself strong"* (27). Hackenschmidt implies that young men can defy nature in favor of self-development and the application of the will toward hard work. Here, strength can—and should—be cultivated in order to earn success. He describes a faith; one that does not correlate to the ethereal, rather, it is a faith religiously devoted to the individual will to change. Hence, physical fitness is a path to perfection and can be attained on one's own. Later, Hackenschmidt writes that a man

> …may secure and maintain a condition of fair physical fitness by means of exercise without weights… but he cannot hope to become really strong unless he exercises with weights; for it is only by so doing that he can develop muscle of really good quality, and, as already hinted, it is important, both from the Strength and the Health points of view, that *every* muscular group throughout the body should be of the best quality attainable. (58)

Again, Hackenschmidt refers to a platonic version of Strength and Health, and both are reliant upon "really good quality" muscle. What constitutes "good quality" muscle or even what constitutes "really strong" is never fully explained; Hackenschmidt's emphasis on a degree of perfection may be without a metric but his vague writings do reveal two implicit emphases: one, the return to stressing the importance of exercise the whole individual. Hackenschmidt includes

exercises that utilize multiple angles of work or that target body parts usually ignored, such as the neck. The second aspect focuses on the idea that each person is responsible for physical development. Hackenschmidt's language in this passage and throughout the text individualizes the reader, underscoring the need for personal responsibility and reward from an immersion in physical culture.

Genre Analysis of Early Strength Manuals

Prior to these manuals, almost no other kind of book focused on fitness and fitness alone. Certainly, there are books of etiquette and on gentlemanly virtue or health textbooks which mention or contain a short section on exercise. But before this explosion of the glorification of fitness culture, these kinds of pure fitness manuals simply did not exist. Browsing through any present-day bookstore yields entire sections devoted to the genre. Interestingly, little has changed. In this section, I aim to uncover the primary traits of these early fitness manuals and how they functioned rhetorically. In doing so, obvious traces to current fitness and health books will become readily apparent.

Genre has been described by Flowerdew and Wan as "staged, structured, communicative events, motivated by various communicative purposes, and performed by specific discourse communities" (78). The New Rhetoric School of genre has consistently focused on issues of social context, power, and identity in genre. Ken Hyland, examining the various schools of genre theory, writes:

> New Rhetoric provides us with serious food for thought, emphasizing the crucial role of discourse communities, text dynamism, and individual manipulation of genres…while we can recognize that genres evolve to meet the changing needs of communities, technologies, and specific situations and that individuals take liberties with text

> conventions, the mechanisms by which changes occur and the extent to which such manipulation is possible remain central unresolved issues of genre studies (43).

A rhetorical approach to these texts will provide unique insights into how the texts themselves can manipulate, motivate, and create a sense of self and a relationship in between author and audience.

My corpus for this genre analysis contains twenty-one texts in total. As previously noted, these are the full manuals that survive and are currently available in scanned, PDF format. Others survive, but they are fairly rare, hard to locate, and rather expensive. Still other documents from the era, such as pamphlets, articles, and advertisements, are also available, but their presence falls outside the scope of this particular inquiry (though they may merit their own study in the future). Many of these manuals contain similar information, such as exercises and dietary advice, but my analysis focuses only on the full-length fitness manuals. It is my contention that these books, as a genre, are most notable for their construction of identity and use of ethos and that these two concepts can be illustrated largely through a rhetorical understanding of the lexico-grammatical features as well as the structure of the instructions contained within these manuals. The authors of these texts are usually strongmen: circus and vaudeville performers by trade. As such, while they may have been experts in their field, they were experts at a time when no accrediting body for strength and fitness training existed, when entertainers could be advertised in pamphlets, newspapers, or magazines, and performers and performances were usually seen once, live, before moving on to a new town and to a new audience. As such, these performers had to cultivate their own sense of ethos to a degree largely unknown to experts today, and this affords a unique moment in genre history.

Early fitness manuals are a genre enjoyed by a niche audience, even in the fitness community. While authors of modern exercise texts recognize the current ubiquity of fitness machines, weight

equipment, and their readers' access to training facilities, early fitness books had an audience without equipment or resources. As such, much of the information in the books relate to bodyweight or isometric resistance where no extra equipment or apparatus is required. Modern audiences, unless they are specifically inclined to study calisthenics or fitness history, often pass over these texts completely, if they learn of their existence at all. These early fitness manuals fulfill Flowerdew and Wan's definition of genre with their communicative purpose: the spread of information to a specific discourse community, has not only been rediscovered, but this lost knowledge is currently being preserved for the benefit of the discourse community.

If one does learn of these texts, he or she will not find a book dedicated solely to exercise and movement; one major difference between modern fitness manuals and these early texts is the treatment of the body as a singular unit. Early texts detail not only exercises, but also aspects of mental clarity and intelligence, hygiene, sports, and personal attitude. Further, early fitness manuals nearly always include an autobiography for a rather large portion of the book. Therefore, contemporary audiences sought out a manual detailing not only how to be strong, but how to live one's life. Today, however, is a different story. Only those who seek to study early fitness culture search out these texts. Their use for these manuals is, in part, to learn "lost" techniques of exercising. Because these books are in the public domain, they are often repackaged and sold using heavy advertising that capitalizes on the relatively obscure nature of these texts. Usually, this is accomplished by using available scans of the books, adding new cover art, and comparing the original price with their inflationary counterparts. Those not in the business of selling otherwise free texts are fitness enthusiasts, history buffs, or those with a penchant for Americana.

These books typically include testimonials, glowing reviews, and forwards written by publishers or colleagues who are not in competition with the authors—writers who are fitness enthusiasts but who are not fitness writers. They are rife with photographs; as Jacqueline Reich notes, "the rise

of the physical culture movement occurred simultaneously with the popularization of photographic consumption in the United States as both an art form and the preferred means of visual reproduction" (452). As such, page after page contains photographs of various sizes featuring the authors posing in the nude or partially clothed (often in scenes reminiscent of ancient Greece), performing various feats of strength, or demonstrating the movements in an exercise pattern.

More importantly, an autobiographical section precedes any description, prescription, or instruction of exercises. This autobiography, as the first major section in these books, will invariably recount the feats and records held by the author in addition to how such feats were accomplished. These autobiographies are lengthy; in some cases, such as George Hackenschmidt's *The Way to Live*, comprise the bulk of the book. Usually, however, these sections account for a quarter of the total work. In almost every case, the author will relay to the reader that these feats may appear to be "superhuman" while assuring the reader that health and fitness may be attained and cultivated within an individual. Hyland notes how "genres incorporate the interests and values of particular social groups in an institutional and historical context and work to reinforce particular social roles for individuals and relationships between writers and readers" (37). Hyland's assertion incorporates historical contexts and constructions, a corresponding keystone can be found in Rotundo's notions of the new "self-made man" movement in American history. These fitness manuals, then, could be said to be a reflection on a larger social movement—but not entirely limited to a predominately male perspective. While Rotundo refers to the "self-made man" ideology, many of these manuals were not made solely for men; in fact, nearly all of the manuals in question include chapters concerning women's fitness or non-gendered chapters on various sports. In other words, the audiences of these genres was relegated to those interested in fitness; the means to get fit through these texts were not reliant on equipment or apparatus and therefore other factors, such as class, had little bearing on the

audience. The audience, then, was based on their valuing of health and vitality. The steady inclusion of the autobiographical passages in these early fitness manuals is emblematic of Hyland's description of the relationship of values between writer and reader. This complicates, but does not condemn the originative definition by Flowerdew and Wan, however; rather, although not specified in their definition, the consideration of certain historical contexts may be implied in the phrase "specific discourse communities" if these communities existed only in a specific historical context.

These autobiographical sections serve another purpose: to purport a philosophy of strength, how it should be attained, and what it means to be a strong individual. Bawarshi and Reiff note that "a genre, therefore, is a relatively stable class of linguistic and rhetorical 'events' which members of a discourse community have typified in order to respond to and achieve shared communicative goals…a text's genre membership is not defined by 'either/or' essential properties but rather along a spectrum of family resemblances" (45). While these philosophies of strength differ in length, purpose, and placement in the text, they still unite the genre, connecting texts despite the various purposes each author may hold.

Typically, using an appeal to ethos, these strongmen authors impose an idea of strength as inseparable to health and well-being. It order to thrive as a person under any conditions, one should be strong—just like them. J.P. Muller, whose book "My System" consists of a series of stretching exercises designed to improve the health of any given individual, regardless of his or her current health, writes

> The aim of my first editions was first of all to show how the fairly healthy, average person could keep fit, fortify health and stamina and increase physical and mental efficiency. But so many doctors recommended the book to chronic sufferers and placed

> it in the hands of their patients, it became more and more evident that this "System" also formed a splendid means of curing several chronic ailments. (11-12)

Muller emphasizes the idea of the "average person" and how they could "fortify health," though the text was not limited to that. Similarly, W.A Pullum, in his introduction, writes "[the] average individual, even when his former fears have been removed, hesitates to take up what he imagines to be a difficult and tedious pastime without the aid of qualified advice. To remove this final barrier is the principal aim of the writer of this book" (xiv). As a strongman, Pullum has already taken up the "difficult and tedious pastime" and his qualifications are meant to act as the missing guide for the average man or woman attempting to take up strength training. The strongman Saxon goes so far as to call out a specific group of individuals, and how improving health will lead to prosperity—a prosperity that is directly related to the career and identity of the individual:

> …enduring strength means that the business man shall stand, without a breakdown, business cares and worries, that he shall be capable, when necessary, of working morning, afternoon, and night with unflagging energy, holding tightly in his grasp the reins of business, retaining all the while a clear mind and untiring energy, both of body and brain" (17).

Identifying his readership by their career reveals the attitudes towards Saxon's readership and how actions are intertwined with identity, just as strength and identity are intertwined for the authors.

Similarly, Albert Treloar focuses on a white-collar audience, further complicating the ideas of other writers largely due to his speed to embrace professionals as his primary audience. Like other writers, Treloar incorporates Grecian ideals and imagery into his descriptions and writing. Unlike others, he intertwines these mythical motifs to illustrate his conception of strength alongside an audience of professional workers. He begins *The Science of Muscular Development*

by writing "[it] is possible for any business or professional man to change his whole physical tone for the better through exercise, thus doubling his capacity for both work and for pleasure. Any young woman who wishes to make the most of herself physically as well as mentally, can become more perfect than the nymphs and goddesses of ancient story" (9). Treloar's construction of audience identity differs from other writers in his capacity to narrow his focal audience. His work stands as the least personable of the corpus, leaving out the lexical-grammatical features utilized by his strength mentor, Eugen Sandow, who wrote much of his texts using the second person tense. In doing so, he includes those educated in Greek mythology and caters to their needs; at the same time, he relegates strength and fitness to those who can afford it. As such, his follow is reminiscent of Flowerdew: "Knowing how to perform a genre...involves knowing both its schematic structure...and the specific form-function...Someone participating in a genre who does not have a command of these specific patterns...is quickly recognized as either incompetent or an outsider..." (124). While not an outsider, per se, his work was not as well-received in terms of sales as other strongmen's manuals. Although this may self-fulfilling, as he clearly aimed for a specific, well-to-do market; ultimately, it failed.

In order to fully transfer the kind of identity held by the strongman to the reader, many authors employ a second-person tense so as to call upon the reader directly. Interestingly, these writers, when referring to an image displaying the way to perform a certain exercise, simply describe the picture in the third person. When writing their philosophies of strength training or expounding on the virtues of exercise, authors in this genre often utilize second person; the effect of which results in the author writing directly to a single reader. Siegmund Breitbart, starting with a definition of what exactly strength is, notes

> [strength] is the basic quality of life. Just enough strength is not quite enough, because strength is like money—you never get enough until you have more than enough. The only way you can develop strength is through exercise, and exercise of the proper kind

> will not only give you strength, but will also give you a wealth of treasure beyond your fondest dreams" (2).

Brenarr Macfadden echoes Breitbart's rhetorical constructions: "You cannot become extremely muscular, in the real sense of the word, unless your lung capacity is pushed to the utmost limit of normal development" (24). These grammatical tactics offer a comforting command to readers, ensuring that they will believe the author has their best interest in mind.

To further build a personal conversation, the authors of this genre rely heavily on the use of the personal pronoun "I." This is unsurprising, given the autobiographical nature of these fitness manuals, but the context of usage here indicates a relationship to the reader rather than a declarative statement made in a vacuum. In short, if a writer uses the word "I" in an early fitness manual, it will be in service to the "you" of the reader. Adolph Nordquest, in his introduction to *Strength and Health: How Disease May Be Successfully Combated by Physical Culture*, writes

> My athletic experience has extended over a period of years, and during that time I have posed for many famous artists, and I have been told that I am absolutely symmetrical. I wasn't born that way, for now that I look back, it doesn't seem to me that I was even in robust health. But I made up my mind to be an athlete in the fullest sense of the word, and I have succeeded even better than I ever expected. What I have done for myself other young men may do for themselves. (12)

In the beginning of this passage, Nordquest writes what amounts to a resume of sorts, recounting his many feats and qualifications. While his layering of ethos might be connected to his credibility as an expert, the turn within the final line of the passage takes the focus from the author and puts the rhetorical spotlight on the reader, enlivening and guiding his or her own ethos to follow a path similar to the that of Nordquest. In the same volume, Nordquest employs similar tactics throughout:

> It is with no vain-glorious feelings that I have recounted in detail my various performances, nor have I any desire to bore my reader with a heap of statistical facts. My sole purpose is to provide posterity with an authentic record of what I believe to be an unprecedented series of feats, which the subsequent efforts of other lifters will place in the right perspective…if, however, it serves to inspire only one weak or ailing member of the community to improve his physical condition…it will not have been written in vain. (35)

Here, Nordquest makes evident the notion that any biographical details are present in order to make clear his own ethos as an instructor in order to convince the reader that not only does he have the skill and ability to guide the reader to peak physical performance, but that this information will convince the reader to take on this challenge and identify with what it means to have an improved physical condition.

One strongman author, Thomas Inch, begins his text *On Strength* by warning the reader to carefully wade through these strongman accounts to find the truth. He writes

> [the] trouble in delving deep into lore about manly strength and tracing out astonishing performances of the strong man of antiquity, is to separate the probable from the improbable, to decide just what is legendary and obviously distorted during its travel through the years and what is humanly possible, judged by present-day standards (1).

Inch's foreboding is meant not only to quell the possibility of such fantastic feats in the minds of his readers, but also to push himself forward as a leading expert in the field by casting doubt in the mind of his readers. Interestingly, there is still a sense of the implied second person in this and in other passages in his book, further cementing the need to communicate directly to the reader.

The use of personal ethos, combined with the lexical-grammatical features of the second person tense reveal a genre that is dependent upon posing the identity of the author onto the identity of the reader. This is imperative, given the content of lifting heavy objects or performing certain feats of strength, as these activities might seem impossible to the average human. Furthermore, given the time period, heavy weights and equipment were not as ubiquitous as they are today. These strongmen were obligated to convince their readers that these feats were not only possible, but specifically possible when using techniques described in their texts. As Hyland notes, "Genres are the purposive social actions routinely used and recognized by community members to achieve a particular purpose, written for a particular audience and employed in a particular context" (45). Although many of the fitness writers in this period focused on how to improve the health and strength of the average person for their particular field or work, strongmen had to demonstrate how their knowledge would apply. The fitness manual genre, then, must then have a "particular purpose, written for a particular audience and employed in a particular context" and these particulars are to both motivate readers to exercise while convincing them that others (the authors, specifically) have already achieved peak fitness.

In order to demonstrate their knowledge and its application to the average person, strongmen were utilized widely varying forms of instructional features in order to relay information to their readers. In doing so, these authors reinforced their own ethos while further imposing the strongman identity on their readers. Because these instructions vary to such a great extent, only a few patterns and common rhetorical elements emerge.

In order to compare the construction of instructions across multiple texts, I have excerpted eight instructions which concern the strengthening of the back muscles. This selection is not arbitrary; most strongmen write organize their books by major muscle groups (the back, the legs, the arms, etc.). However, many authors of this genre and in this era focus on ways to exercise the body as

singular unit. As the back constitutes a major muscle group, these authors often make an exception and detail specifically how to strength the back.

Ideally, a study on instructions would cover a single exercise; because exercise equipment was neither readily available nor widespread, the exercised detailed in these manuals varies considerably. Focusing on a muscle group became the common denominator for analysis; as such, these exercises may be categorized by those which require equipment and those that are focused on the exerciser's body. Alternatively, these instructions may be categorized based on the author's focus on a body part and exercises for that specific part or the author's focus on the exercise and the body parts that exercise is designed to strengthen. For a complete recreation of these instructions, see Appendix A.

Liederman, Pullum, Danks, and Maxick all require equipment. Pullum and Maxick both require a barbell; Danks calls for a specific apparatus (which he sold in magazine advertisements) and Liederman simply asks for "a weight." Unsurprisingly, Pullum and Maxick are the only two authors who work from an exercise-centric perspective. Their manuals call for compound barbell movements to strengthen multiple muscle groups. The remaining manuals that contain instructions for specifically strengthening the back call for bodyweight exercises only.

Few patterns emerge in an era not known for strict technical editing or publication standards. Pullum and Jowett write instructions which most resemble modern instructions more than the others in the corpus; Jowett utilizes single sentences in a chronological progression of the movement. He does not incorporate numbered steps nor the use of notes. Jowett does, however, include a list of points to avoid at the close of his instructions. Pullum, similarly, uses chronological steps. Instead of using single sentences, however, Pullum writes in short paragraphs.

Similarly, Macfadden, Treloar, Danks, and Nordquest write their instructions using paragraphs. An exercise is contained in full in each paragraph. In one sense, this is logical: a paragraph expressing a single movement, containing all the necessary instructions for an exercise should work as a structural feature. However, these authors assume a certain level of biomechanical expertise from their readers; the expectation here must be that a reader would comprehend the paragraph and immediately be able to implement the exercise in his or her workout regime. Physical culture, as a movement, was only in the beginning stages of development during this era, and as such, these authors perhaps assumed too much of their readers. In fact, these paragraphed structures point to two paradoxical assumptions, one that relies on especially fanatical readers who crave physical perfection and one involving sedentary workers. The first set of readers would pour over these materials, refer to them often, and perhaps memorize these paragraph-length descriptions of movement. One need only look to the price tag of these courses: many would cost hundreds of dollars, adjusted for inflation. These readers would need to save a considerable amount of their disposable income for these manuals. The second audience, as described in the books themselves, was sedentary office workers. Likely, then, the authors would assume that office workers would be detail-oriented and highly literate, able to navigate these dense volumes and remember the steps necessary to perform various movements. In both cases, audiences would have had an especially inflated sense of devotion to the strongmen authors.

In fact, the relationship of writer and audience and its connection through ethos cannot be understated. While this may be due to the fact that these books were often acquired through mail-order catalogues and pamphlets and, thus, writers were forced to create connections with their audience, it shaped the genre at a foundational level. More than this, the connection through ethos reinforces Bawarshi and Reiff's outline of how what is required for uptake in genre:

> For genres to perform actions, they must be connected to cognition, since how we know and how we act are related to one another…Genre knowledge is also linked to

> background knowledge—both content knowledge and knowledge of shared assumptions, including knowledge of kairos, having to do with rhetorical timing and opportunity (487-91). As forms of situated cognition, thus, genres enable their users not only to communicate effectively, but also to participate in (and reproduce) a community's "norms, epistemology, ideology, and social ontology" (501). (79-81)

Bawarshi and Reiff link genre knowledge to kairotic knowledge, and in doing so connect genre knowledge to Berkenkotter and Huckin's emphasis on dynamism and situatedness. The relationships of these principles to an historical examination of fitness manuals are based on an interconnectedness of the context and the texts themselves.

The "self-made man" ideology that permeated the early years of the twentieth century propagated a need for the means to enhance one's life; American culture and the obsession with sports permeated every aspect of post-industrial life during this era. The idea of a kairotic moment for fitness and strength manuals is directly related to the form and content of these manuals. As Berkenkotter and Huckin write:

> Genres are dynamic rhetoric forms that are developed from actors' responses to recurrent situations and that serve to stabilize experience and give it coherence and meaning. Genre change over time in response to their users' sociocognitive needs (p. 286)…Genres, therefore, are always sites of contention between stability and change. They are inherently dynamic, constantly (if gradually) changing over time in response to the sociocognitive needs of individual users (288).

While these fitness manuals responded to the ideological, cultural, and material needs of readers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and, over time, little has changed. The writing and structure of fitness manuals has changed little in the decades to follow; what has changed are the approaches to exercise and the kinds of specialized needs for specific audiences. Ethos and a

connection to the reader are emphasized. Writers still employ techniques such as autobiographical exposition, ethos, and specific lexical-grammatical features to forge a relationship with skeptical audiences wary of injury and seemingly impossible feats. What we, as scholars and writers, can take away from these texts is twofold: Burgeoning fitness writers may look to the past for their future endeavors; writers of all genres may envision a more personal approach to their work. As Flowerdew writes "society reflects generic structures because generic structures are there before society can make use of them...on the other hand, generic structures reflect society because they are continually modeled and remodeled by society, their users" (133). The modern day users of these manuals are rediscovering and reconsidering these texts in the light of a new millennia. These manuals offer a profound connection to the past; the small following they maintain is comprised of physical fitness enthusiasts seeking out forgotten knowledge and what they might consider “truth” in a philosophy of movement and strength. More than that, they are finding authority and a constructed ethos at a time in American history when centralized identity was difficult to locate amidst reconstruction following the Civil War.

Strong Women

Few strongmen of this era wrote about women. Strength training was considered, at least on a general level, something that men did, if these books are to be believed. In general, the authors write instructions to a general audience. Specified genders are not often mentioned, and if they are, they are male. The photographs are predominantly of men—and in almost every case, of the author himself. Of the many fitness authors in this era, none have been women; however, as this work is archival, there may be many texts lost to history that were, in fact, written by women. As of this writing, however, none exist. But this is not to say that no writers wrote *about* women.

Some did; the occasional writer, in small sections, instructed more focused demographics: younger men, children, professional adults, and, finally, women.

William Blaikie was one such author. His work is emblematic of the few authors who segmented their instruction. That so few authors attempted to write different instructions for different groups may be telling in and of itself: if they believed in a universal approach to fitness, then no segmenting would be needed. Perhaps only men sent away for their mail-order courses. Or, culturally, women were not seen as people interested in physical culture. I believe the real answer is much more simple: they didn't know to write instructions for women. So when an author like Blaikie takes two pages out of nearly three-hundred, I took notice.

Unlike men, Blaikie groups all women, young and old, rich or poor, together (with men, he tackles each group individually). Women have a simple prescription: using light (two pound) weights, do the same exercises for young men, but at much higher repetitions and increasing those repetitions over time. Later, they should walk outdoors or ride horses (276-277). In addition, "[girls] should also learn to run" (277); that such condescension was included at all speaks volumes. After lifting tiny wooden weights, walking for an hour, riding her horse, and learning to run, Blaikie's final prescription is for a woman to develop her posture.

Strength, then, for women, was reflected not as a reality but as the perception of that reality by a select few authors. The relationship of author to audience was, here, weak at best. Without an idea of the needs of their audiences, fitness authors reached in the rhetorical darkness for what they hoped would amount to a fitness program for women. In many cases, they were simply ignored and assumed to be completely uninterested in fitness. In others, authors simply wrote their manuals for any reader, regardless of gender. Regardless, no book specific to women's fitness would appear until decades later.

Strength and Class

While physical culturists such as Eugen Sandow, George Inch, or George Hackenschmidt write with unfocused attention on the cultivation of strength to develop the average white-collar professional into a self-made man capable of coping with the obligations of a new, modern work environment, one writer, Albert Treloar, envisioned a philosophy of strength that focused almost entirely on class, writing to a professional audience rather than a general reader. Additionally, Treloar is one of the few physical culturalists who writes to both genders; his methodology and prescribed exercises do not change, rather, he writes a chapter devoted to women's fitness. If the title is to be considered, this should come as little surprise, since Treloar's book, *The Science of Muscular Development* formulates a qualitative, regimented approach to fitness; interestingly, however, the language he employs often embraces a mythical quality that belies such a scientific approach.

Few details are known regarding Albert Treloar; David Chapman's biography of Eugen Sandow, *Sandow the Magnificent,* contains more information on Treloar than any other source available—and the information Chapman presents could best be described as fragmentary. What can be ascertained is relatively benign: he worked for a time in Sandow's vaudeville show alongside Sandow (62-63), he won the first bodybuilding contest (135) and he brought the science of weightlifting to the west coast (189). Beyond those brief moments of history, little is known.

Treloar's focus complicates the ideas of other writers largely due to his speed to embrace white-collar professionals as his primary audience while incorporating mythical motifs to illustrate his conception of strength. He begins *The Science of Muscular Development* by writing "[it] is possible for any business or professional man to change his whole physical tone for the better through exercise, thus doubling his capacity for both work and for pleasure. Any young woman who wishes to make the most of herself physically as well as mentally, can become more perfect

than the nymphs and goddesses of ancient story" (9). This passage, appearing in the second paragraph of his book, immediately and overtly refers to professional-class men and women who "can become more perfect" than mythological heroines and goddesses. Interestingly, Treloar recalls Thomas Inch's insistence on mental efficiency, although unlike Inch, mental efficiency is mentioned only in passing rather than heavily emphasized and no doubt related to increased performance on the job rather than increased health. Treloar continues, noting "The young man or boy with a partly romantic, partly practical, yet thoroughly manly desire for prowess and heroic strength can realize that desire beyond even his own imagination" (9). Counterpart to developing women "more perfect than the nymphs and goddesses" is Treloar's envisioning young men as dreamers of "prowess and heroic strength" and able to achieve a physical capacity well beyond those dreams. Such hyperbolic language is not atypical of writers of this era; Treloar's hyperboles simply occur more often. Given the growing modern industrial economy of the era and the need for professionals specializing in intellectual pursuits rather than physical aims, it may be reasonable to assert that Treloar composes in such an exaggerated manner in order to capture an emotional resonance with his readers.

Treloar continues this trend of utilizing pathos throughout his book. *The Science of Muscular Development* oscillates between a grounded approach to physical fitness and a call to arms for modern man to embrace a warrior's nature, to encourage a raw sense of physicality, and to harden one's body in order to harden one's spirit. Treloar writes that

> [encouraging] a love of strength for its own sake is not acquiring a new taste. It is natural to every one of us. Through all ages the love of bodily grace and vigor has characterized mankind. Savage races worshipped strength in nature, and further progress brought the worship of gods and heroes, conceived as personifications of bodily strength. The athlete and warrior, in all history and to-day, holds first place in the hearts of the people. This universal admiration of physical prowess was not solely because of the greater efficiency

> it gave in self defense or war, but was to a great extent a love of beauty and strength for its own sake. Our conceptions of courage, chivalry, patriotism, and honor carry with them the idea of physical strength. The picture of great strength is, therefore, rightly the delight of age, and childhood's summit of imaginary glory. (42-47) [*sic*]

Treloar's language drips with pathos and embraces a reverence of the corporeal form of the human body. He cites historical precedent and the mandates of biology—a scientific, if dubiously so, approach—demanding respect and admiration toward muscular strength and, in fact, muscular power. To live in accordance with Treloar's philosophy of physical fitness is to regard greatness, both physical and moral, as outgrowths of strength. For Treloar, strength is not only to be desired, but it is a principle that is always already desired and may be transformed in to the nexus of all that is good. Ultimately, however, Treloar's philosophy returns to a firm grounding in work and the changing business environment for young professionals:

> Another aspect of the results of exercise that will appeal to busy people is the greatly increased capacity for work produced. The business man or mental worker who gains a strong and healthy physical make-up will not only endure more hours of work, but will be bale to accomplish *vastly more and better work in the same time that before*. Not only are one's chances of high success increased by fine bodily vigor, but from the examples we see one is almost led to believe that a well trained and vigorous body is necessary to the best success. (19-20)

This passage is one of many within Treloar's text: physical training is a means to success not in terms of health or even the cultivation of strength, as other authors profess; rather, for Treloar physical training and the expansion of one's vital capacity are a means to ensure success at one's career. Interestingly, Treloar does not account for laborers, instead writing to the "business man or mental worker" who will be able to work longer hours or be able to accomplish more by

supplementing his life with physical exercise. Beyond this correlation, Treloar remarks that physical training is necessary to being successful as a white collar professional. His goal with *The Science of Muscular Development* may, then, be described as two-fold: to outline a methodology of training regiments, as evidenced by the bulk of his writing on different exercises, and to ascribe an emotional relevance and urgency to train in physical fitness for white collar professionals.

The End of a Forgotten Era

Treloar would go on to be the physical director of the Los Angeles Athletic club for forty-two years. He died in 1960. Little else is know about his life. Thomas Inch died in 1963 in relative obscurity. Eugen Sandow died of a brain aneurism in 1925. He was fifty-eight. In 1911, after being a wrestling champion for more than a decade, George Hackenschmidt retired from professional competition and never looked back. He was thirty-three years old and suffering from torn cartilage in his left knee. He died in 1968 at the age of ninety. Even as an old man, Hackenschmidt still exercised regularly with weights. According to David Gentle, Hackenschmidt would often run seven miles in forty-five minutes, a supreme pace for anyone at any age—and Hackenschmidt was in his eighties. He wrote in *The Way to Live*, "Throughout my whole career I have never bothered as to whether I was a champion or not a champion. The only title I have desired to be know by is simply my name, George Hackenschmidt" (159). Hackenschmidt's final passage of his book is a testament to the golden age of physical culture, an age marked by the achievements of the individual and the pursuit of success for one's self.

Taken together, these writings represent the major works of the golden age of physical culture. Their works reveal a disconnected idea of what strength means, both in the application of strength and the rationale for developing strength. As Donald Mrozek, the sports theorist, noted, the gift

of those early physical culturalists was rooted in the idea that no one was required to keep his or her body as it was born; the human form could be built, altered, or created to an idealized version of itself (qtd. in Chapman 190). The great lesson from the strongmen goes well beyond the cultivation of a physical form, however. Their rhetoric reveals a connection of physical achievement to psychological achievement. Two generations removed from the Civil War, American citizens became enamored with sports. Sports represented a competition lacking the grave seriousness of war, where winning could be enjoyed be opposing teams from game to game. Games led naturally to the players themselves; indeed, many of the sports so enjoyed were sports in which individual players were matched up, e.g. golf, boxing, or, arguably, baseball. Individual players led to individual achievement. Physical culture naturally grew out of this pattern; in a new society devoted to modern scientific notions—where cerebral labor rose to prominence—physical fitness was an outlet for professionals looking for outward signs of personal development. Ironically, this physical achievement that grew into a psychic success for those "self-made men" arguably developed into a strange sense of nationalistic achievement—a nation all together, isolated from itself. Eventually, this isolated union would keep the United States an isolate country, arguably delaying an entry into the First World War. Ultimately, the strongman era and the texts produced during this period offer a complicated definition of strength, one that is grounded in nature but may be developed to seemingly supernatural heights; strength that holds a tenuous relationship to health and vital capacity. What can be determined about the idea of "Strength" is that more than a component or a defining element of health and fitness, it is a metric of achievement, a metaphor and an outward sign of persona success. The evolution of a definition of strength will continue to evolve, but for the golden age of physical culture, strength relies not on muscle, but on the conditions by which men and women formulate their sense of self in the beginning of the twentieth century. For these strongmen authors, strength became a cause set in motion, one of personal development in the broadest sense using a focused lens. Strength resonated in accordance with outward external forces—here, health and vitality—

in order to better the lives of those cultivating their own strength. In this way, the notions of strength developed by strongmen have more to do with writing than with barbells, are more in line with expressivism than with musculature, and are as local as rubrics.

CHAPTER V: CASE STUDY II

WHEN SHIELDS BECOME WEAPONS: THE RHETORIC OF STRENGTH IN CAPTAIN AMERICA

In this case study, I aim to analyze the first story of Captain America, a brief but exciting origin tale found in *Captain America Comics* #1. The first issue contains four stories in total: two featuring Captain America and two other stories, one starring Hurricane, the son of Thor and the other with Tux the Caveboy as the protagonist[18]. Although each story contained within the comic book is historically important and culturally relevant, the origin of Captain America has a substantial bearing on the idea of strength and its intended purpose for the era immediately preceding World War II. Additionally, the remaining Captain America stories in the issue follow similar patterns in both story and plot; while they will be discussed it will only be in brief and will serve to reinforce themes and concepts already established in the examination and analysis of the first story. In short, the ideas of nationalistic strength are not a singular moment in the comic; they develop early on into a thematic pattern. It is my intention to move beyond the standard

[18] The inclusion of a coda containing an extra story from another character remains a common practice in comics to the present day; primarily, it is marketing tool meant to advertise other upcoming books.

equating of Captain America with nationalistic pride or fervent patriotism; such an obvious connection may be the cause of so little scholarly work centered on Captain America and although much scholarly work has been devoted to studying Captain America in a post-9/11 environment[19], little scholarship is available on the early years of Captain America[20] and how the ideas of nationalism translates to notions of national strength. The body of work dedicated to Captain America tends to fall into simplistic notions that amount to an equation of heroism to nationalism. It is my intent to reveal these connections and trace their significance to larger, political notions of strength relevant to the historical context of the era. There is value is revealing a more accurate interpretation of Captain America; however, my large aim is to uncover what "strength" meant in the era just prior to World War II, and how that translates visually. Such analysis will lead to a connection between visual meaning and temporal significance. Captain America Comics #1 is a lens by which this process will unfold.

However, it is not my intent to show that *Captain America Comics* #1 is, on the surface, an easy metaphor for nationalism. Typically, Captain America is positioned as a symbol of truth, justice, and the American Way (for better or worse). Although these readings capture the obvious nature of Captain America, they often do so when a storyline forces the character to question the values he symbolizes. These stories overdramatize the role of Captain America to the point where, rather than sacrifice his idealistic vision of America, he gives up the mask and shield for civilian life, or, more seriously, turns against the government as an enemy of the state. Although he is a monument to the idea of America, whatever that need be for a given time period, such analyses fall short of a more complex question about the nature of the character and his origins. In order to

[19] See, for example, Thomas Foster's excellent essay "Cynical Nationalism" in *The Selling of 9/11: How a National Tragedy Became a Commodity*, ed. Dana Heller or Jason Dittmer's "Captain America's Empire: Reflections on Identity, Popular Culture, and Post-9/11 Geopolitics"

[20] *Captain America Comics* was originally published from 1941 to 1946 before it was cancelled; despite an attempt to revive the character in the early 1950s (as *Captain America, Commie Smasher!*), Captain America faded from popular memory until his resurgence 1964, in the new era of the superhero as the leader of The Avengers. Most scholarship has been devoted to Captain America from the 1960s onward.

uncover deeper answers about the relationship of Captain America to America itself, I return to the origins of Captain America: Captain America Comics #1. The comic, beyond the action-packed stories, is about a specific kind of nationalistic strength, and that strength manifests itself throughout the comic book. But this is not about the stars and stripes on Captain America's shield or the might of his thrown fists; rather, this nationalism is about protecting American from within. It is a strength concerned with science and technology as they pertain to American interests, with positing national security over patriotism, and about guarding from with rather than exerting force beyond our borders. While most readings of Captain America are concerned with mere patriotism and nationalism, I mean to reframe those arguments in order to uncover what the strength of a nation means: how America positioned itself, politically and internationally, during the first moments of World War II.

Captain America, as the quintessential Marvel Comics character, represents the paramount of human development and the resurgence in nationalistic strength prior to America's involvement in World War II. Created by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, *Captain America Comics* #1 debuted in late 1940 or early 1941[21], months prior to America's entry into World War II. Unlike Marvel Comics' (then Timely Comics) previous superheroes—the Human Torch and Namor the Sub-Mariner—Captain America was a human being and, more importantly, American[22]. Private Steve Rogers, deemed 4-F by the recruitment board, volunteers to participate in "Operation Rebirth," a covert military program using a "super soldier serum" and "vita-rays" to enhance ordinary men and women to the point of peak human perfection. Rogers is the first successful candidate to receive the super soldier treatment and is transformed from his frail, small, and weak form into a

[21] Comic book publishers would often postdate their issues to insure longer shelf life for each issue.

[22] While Captain America offered an obvious metaphor, Marvel's other heroes were just as filled with meaning: the android Human Torch stood as a representation of the hopes of science and its ability to improve living conditions while Namor, the Sub-Mariner's violent need for isolationism mirrored national policies of the late 1930s.

tall, lean, muscular man within a matter of moments (or, in this case, a few panels). After a spy destroys the formula, Rogers is the only person enhanced by the serum for a great while[23].

The cover of the first issue of *Captain America Comics* depicts Captain America rushing in from the left border to punch Adolf Hitler in the jaw. Surrounded by Nazi soldiers, Captain America avoids gunfire and deflects bullets with his shield. The cover is bright with colors; in particular red, white, and blue dominate the scene. Stars and stripes cover the top third of the frame and the emblem of a white star on Captain America's chest is nearly centered in the cover. Unlike Hitler or his minions, Captain America is robust and muscular; clearly, Kirby's art positions Captain America dominating the scene with unbridled strength and power—power that overcomes what would quickly become America's greatest threat for the first half of the twentieth century. It would difficult to analyze the cover as anything but fiercely patriotic. As Aaron Taylor notes,

> …the fragmentation of the narrative caused by paneling dictates an equally splintered physicality. Heroes and villains alike are chopped up by the borders of the panels, their anatomy dissected and spread across the page. Totalities are rare. When full body shots occur, they glorify the reassembled body of the character in a magnificent, full page spread. (348)

Granted, Taylor is not writing about comic book covers, yet the logic remains the same: here, Captain America is glorified in an idealistic pose: for many Americans, including Jewish creators Simon and Kirby, the idea of knocking out Hitler in one punch was (and probably still is) cathartic. Hitler's inclusion is both an obvious choice and an unusual one. Unlike other comic book villains both then and now, Hitler was a real person and not a four-color supervillain. Using real people as comic book characters, at least from Marvel Comics, is a rarity at best. In addition,

[23] In 2003, the mini-series Truth: Red, White, and Black reveals the history of the super solider serum in a story that closely resembles the Tuskeegee Airmen experiments; while this story appeared four decades later, it nonetheless reveals the continued interest that comics have in mirroring, exploring, or commenting on history.

Hitler's rise to power was immensely meteoric while the US involvement in World War II was anything but. The analytical outlier here, however, is that the use of Hitler is the only international element for this comic—a comic with stories that go out of their way to keep the action at home, not abroad. By positioning Captain America across the cover in a position of action, Simon and Kirby endow a strength to their character that goes beyond mere musculature: it is the strength of a nation localized in the few square inches of a punch. This strength of nation was, at the least, hopeful and idealized. There is no evidence that Simon or Kirby knew that, within a year, the United States would actively enter the war. Captain America was a fantasy, and an idealized one. However, their inclusion of a real person rather than a comic book villain was unusual, at least for comics. Hitler had made a number of appearances in cartoons and comic strips, but in the case of Captain America, a hero literally designed to fight for America, his appearance was out of the ordinary—after all, this is an extraordinary hero in a completely literal sense. The mixture of real world figures and events would not end with the cover; further instances would offer deeper meanings.

The first page of the comic devotes half of the space to a full shot of Captain America; this time, he is merely standing and motioning to the reader, as if saluting. Here, the "[glorified] reassembled body" discussed by Taylor is given full weight. Captain America has hardly been introduced to the reader beyond the action-packed cover; the immediacy and intimacy of the totality of the image in full regalia speaks to the need for an immediate hero in this era. Alternatively, in 1940, superheroes were still a relatively new concept. Superman debuted a mere thirteen years prior and most superheroes in that era did not appear in comic books; most were staples of pulp magazines and dime store novels. In this sense, the full spread of Captain America so early on may be a necessary move in order to introduce the reader both to the hero and to the humanity of the hero—a regular American transformed through science, not an otherworldly being found in the cheap pages of pulp novels.

The remainder of the page is devoted to the setting of the initial storyline of the comic book, depicting a line of men at a recruiting station in one panel and two saboteurs about to blow up a munitions plant. The combination of a full introduction of Captain America—even before his existence is explained—and the introduction of an impending sabotage point early on toward the theme of internal strength. Sabotage, as an act, is based upon purposeful malfeasance from within. American propaganda throughout World War II was often concerned with the act of sabotage, either by "careless talk" or from outside forces. Even though most major acts of sabotage on American soil would fall well after Captain America Comics #1 debuted (most notably with 1942's Operation Pastorius), one major event did occur: in the fall of 1941, 33 members of the Duquesne Spy Ring were brought to trial on counts of espionage convicted for spying against the United States. A two-year investigation by the FBI (during which the FBI took the opportunity to send false information, thus sabotaging the saboteurs) revealed a spy ring that had begun almost two decades prior (fbi.org). The fall of the Duquesne Spy Ring was a national victory, and that victory settled into the consciousness of America.

But this was not the first time that a major espionage operation had occurred—far from it. During the First World War, there existed a massive German population in the United States; this demographic, as new immigrants, were still loyal to their homeland. The possibility of an overt and violent insurgent uprising was a genuine fear. Instead, however, there were covert acts of sabotage:

> The logic of the German spy masters — and this was a very narrow logic, and I don't think they understood the American mind — [was that] if they could keep America occupied, if America had to worry about what was happening at home — to its own munitions factories, to its own even subways and bridges — if America had to fear what was happening along the homefront, then they wouldn't have ... the volition to want to go off and fight in a war across an ocean… Germ warfare, munitions plant explosions, boats

> are destroyed, with considerable evidence of much more to come—these are acts that sound all too familiar, but for our recent memories, not World War I. But these acts of war are nothing new (npr.org).

For Captain America Comics #1, then, the first page thus depicts a relatively new, yet familiar, phenomenon juxtaposed with a recent slice of reality. If this hero is a kind of ideological and physical wish-fulfillment, then it is a wish grounded in the real world. In effect, the marriage of fantasy with real world headlines bolsters s sense of realism for the fantastic. Captain America, then, is not a symbol or metaphor—such a label would be too passive. He is, clearly, a hero, albeit a fictional hero, but one who is still ready to save America from real danger.

The following page involves a complicated structure of panels which manipulate time and space in order to provide chronological and spatial overlap. The first panel on the page splits the activation of explosives and the exploding munitions plant within the same frame; no border exists between the caricatured expression of the German saboteur and the lines of billowing smoke from the fires[24]. According to Scott McCloud, "most of us are so used to the standard rectangular format that a 'borderless' panel such as this can take on a timeless quality" (102). Here, however, the borderless panel indicates simultaneity of action with the detonator and explosion. In a sense, then, the panel is "timeless" in that the simultaneity of action defies a singular point in time. The multiple points of view here fit into a single, undefined moment; McCloud's idea of timelessness is utilized at a level best described as overly literal.

Further, the larger panel dominates the page; the explosion is the only action sequence and as such, overshadows the dialogue that follows. The only element that quickly guides the reader to the next panel is a literal signpost that reads "While in Washington…" and connects the top panel

[24] Interestingly, the munitions plant is depicted in red, white, and blue color tones. While I would like to believe that the symbolism is obvious here, it may very well be that this is a happy accident or a well-developed use of the limited color printing technology of the era.

to the next panel by covering a portion of each. This panel is then followed by an aside from one character—an aside that is framed in a semi-circular panel set at the margins of the right side of the page. Here, Kirby's structuring over the panel pacing is deliberate and controlled with thick lines indicating a strict degree of delineation; these early exposition panels shift time and space rapidly while connecting these panels in a fluid narrative. McCloud cites Kirby as a major figure and influence in comic book history throughout *Understanding Comics* (as well as in his subsequent work); Kirby's defiance of McCloud's explication speaks not to any ineptitude in McCloud's work but instead to the time in which Captain America was created: as a relatively young art form, complicated issues like representations of time were lacking in codification.

Another structural kink in these first few pages rests at the bottom of page four of the comic: a circular panel with a large arrow overlapping the two rectangular panels on its sides. While the overlap and arrow could indicate that the results of the large rectangular panels are included in the small circular frame, the circular frame is the action between the two larger panels. But the spatial relationships of narration and dialogue of those panels loom over the small circular panel quite literally. McCloud notes that "Comic panels fracture both time and space, offering a jagged, staccato rhythm of unconnected moments" (67). Throughout the first issue of Captain America Comics #1, Kirby uses arrows as transition signposts for the reader, solving the fracturing noted by McCloud to an extreme degree: the overlap serves to layer the panels to create a literal connection as opposed to the usual whitespace bordering panels (or "gutter"). In addition to the overlap, these signposts used by Kirby are often cleverly disguised; an elbow pointing to the next panel or a piece of equipment jutting over indicates the path of the story. It stands to reason that in the infancy of the comic book genre, these signposts would be necessary to guide the reader. Although comics typically follow a top-bottom/left-right ordering identical to the flow of English language text, contemporary readers were largely familiar with comics—especially those employing realistic scenarios from history—in comic strips. Kirby's transitions, both obvious

and occluded, constrain the reader's path so as to afford the stops and starts of a story arc. As McCloud notes, "…closure allows us to connect these moments and mentally construct a continuous, unified reality" (67). For early comics, then, closure became far more overt in an effort to guide the reader across what may have been, at the time, an unfamiliar narrative style.[25]

The crux of the comic, both in form and rhetorical content, are found early in the issue. Of the sixty-four pages in the comic, none stand out more than five and six: the transformation of Steve Rogers into Captain America. These two pages imbue the character with the kinds of strength—both physical and motivational—that would set a precedent for decades of stories to follow.

The first panel displays young Steve Rogers, still frail and small, wrapped in a towel and exuding some form of energy from his body. He holds his head as Dr. Reinstein, the scientist administering the formula, announces, "Today he volunteered for Army service, and was refused because of his unfit condition! His chance to serve his country seemed gone!" Clearly, nationalistic pride races to the forefront of meaning in the first issue. Further, as Rogers continues to transform, Dr. Reinstein speaks on the formula's effect on his body and brain, raising Rogers' ability to "an amazing degree," all in the service of his country. Here again, Aaron Taylor's "glorified" body of Rogers is given a total viewing in order to reveal in full the complete newfound strength of Captain America. This body, seen in totality, represents more than one man's obsession with creating a perfect soldier or another's question to overcome weakness. Rogers, now fully transformed into a human being in peak physical condition, remains silent while Reinstein pronounces to the onlookers: "Behold! The crowning achievement of all my years of hard work! The first of a corps of super-agents whose mental and physical ability will make them a terror to spies and saboteurs! We shall call you Captain America, son! Because, like

[25] Later, Marvel Comics, under the helm of editor-in-chief Stan Lee, would adopt the mantra "every comic is someone's first," and, as such, each comic book needs to be able to educate the new reader both in content and form (David 100). Such a tradition can be traced to an origin in the visual communication of the narrative structure and progression, not just narrative content, in early texts such as Captain America Comics.

you—America shall gain the strength and the will to safeguard our shores!" (5). Reinstein's announcement forecasts the impending meaning I aim to highlight in this paper: Captain America is meant to "safeguard our shores" rather than fight abroad. Simon and Kirby were certainly unaware of any plans to join the Allied powers; their character could only serve to protect America at home. This is in stark contrast of the cover and illustrates the degree of wish fulfillment implicit on that cover.

It is imperative to note that at this point in the comic book, Steve Rogers had yet to be named. Only on the last page of the eight-page story is Rogers' identity revealed—by this point in the narrative, "Captain America" was the only moniker offered to the reader. He is, at best, a sentinel of American identity, one with a mission to protect American interests within her borders. Still, the lack of identity of Captain America equates with the unnamed villains in the prologue of the comic; without identity, each character in the situation is simply a matter of good versus evil—identities and background information was unnecessary to the point of caricature. This is no surprise, given the cultural climate of the era, as Jason Dittmer notes: "[a] product of his times, however, Captain America's image and origin mirror the American identity/dream of 1941. Blonde-haired, blue-eyed Steve Rogers (with his almost obsessively Anglo-American name) overcomes his own physical weakness to become a proud soldier for his country" (629). If he is, indeed, a product of his time, then it becomes necessary to underscore the lack of identity in favor of metaphor. Of course, by the story's end, the readers are treated to Rogers's name. But until that point, Captain America is the only moniker available. His mission is all he is. In the same way, nationalistic policies developed and implemented in the early part of the twentieth century—indeed, until the advent of World War II—were fiercely internal. The American dream, at least for 1940, must then be to serve in the interest of defending American shores and, by proximity, American interests. Dittmer further notes:

> Significant to this role is Captain America's ability to connect the political projects of American nationalism, internal order, and foreign policy (all formulated at the national or global scale) with the scale of the individual, or the body. The character of Captain America connects these scales by literally embodying American identity, presenting for readers a hero both of, and for, the nation (627).

Here, Dittmer contends that the identity of Captain America is the visual equivalent of the American identity, and thus, the American dream. He is not a soldier inasmuch as a symbol for all soldiers. However, Dittmer's analysis is one grounded in the Captain America of today, not just 1940; the Captain America of 1940 appears to be far more concerned with internal order than foreign policy. Still, his identity is meant to stand in for an idea of the American dream. And this is problematic: if Captain America really is the representation for the American dream, and he is "obsessively Anglo-American" then the American dream then becomes an impossibility for different ethnicities, women, or anyone not resembling such a glorified Aryan image. The idea of Captain America's physicality as representative of the American ideal essentializes one incredibly varied group of people for another incredibly small homogenous group; however, if the idea of Captain America is extended to the *ideals* of Captain America, then physicality is less challenging to the readership of the comic book. Bucky, Captain America's partner in crime fighting, has no special abilities, yet he fights alongside Captain America. In this way, readers can be acutely aware of strength in both its potential and actual forms. If physicality and strength can be translated to both an ideal and a metaphor, then the essentialization of Captain America is less ethically troublesome while still capturing the nationalistic policies of the day. Strength, following the chain of Dittmer's logic, is connected to the American dream; however, this kind of strength is firmly grounded in the motivations and materiality of the era, while still retaining the semilogoical constants of action and the potential of action. Writing on masculinity and consumption, Holt and Thompson note:

> At the core of the man-of-action hero is the idea of reinvention. America's historic roots as a wayward colony of diverse seekers of new lives combined with Puritan religious beliefs to constitute the country's obsession with progress, both as individuals and as a nation. This idea crystallized as a core of American ideology during the Second Great Awakening, when evangelical protestant sects derived the doctrine of free will, which demanded that men should by force of will work together to create the perfect (Christian) society. A powerful current through American history ever since has been the pursuit of self- and societal-reinvention in the never-ending quest toward perfection. At the root of America's man-of-action hero is the distinctively American idea that individuals with vision, guts, and a can-do spirit transform weak institutions, invent wildly creative contraptions, build fantastic new markets, and conquer distant infidels. (428)

For Captain America, then, the teleology of Americanism is wrapped up in the destined journey towards technological perfection—a perfection incarnated in a hero rather than a machine. Captain America represents the strength that can "transform weak institutions;" Holt and Thompson seem to be referring to major institutions, and indeed, the mission of Operation Rebirth is to create an army of super soldiers in order to guard against the "vicious elements who seek to overthrow the U.S. government" (8). Strength here is defined not as the ability to lift weights, exert force, or to look a certain way, but rather to act in accordance with the will of the nation—to thwart "spies and saboteurs" in the name of "internal order." Safeguarding America from within was a means to maintain the status quo; it was a kind of survival through protection (unlike the personal development towards social evolution brought on in the proceeding generation). In one sense, this is troubling: some of the language used harkens the idea of a tyrannical dictatorship, a government motivated by order over the will of the people. However, given the cultural context of the United States as it contrasted with Germany, it is more likely that these missives are meant to deter such a dictatorship which, according to the comic, could only

come from an external force. The purpose of Captain America, then, is to halt such a force through, among other attributes, physical perfection. As Dittmer notes, "…more than simply reflecting America, [Captain America] actively helps shape the national myth" (35). For Captain America, along with the American population he represents, strength is tied up in that idea of a national myth: America must "safeguard its shores" from villainy.

Superwomen

Throughout the pages of *Captain America Comics #1*, only a few female characters appear. Those who do possess roles are best described, paradoxically, as simplistically complex. In the origin story of Captain America, Kirby and Simon go out of their way to introduce "X13, one of our most trusted agents!" (4). This agent initially appeared to be a frail, older woman managing a curio shop in Washington D.C., only to pull off a mask and reveal "an astoundingly beautiful woman" (4). X13 appears in only briefly in nine panels, primarily as an observer of Steve Rogers's transformation. However, she is the sole guard of the secret offices behind the curio shop (where she handles a firearm before confirming the identity of military personnel) and she is seen armed and chasing the saboteur of the Super Soldier project.

In the second story, Captain America and Bucky encounter Betty Ross, an agent investigating the villain of this particular story. She has been captured, and Captain America and Bucky find her not by tracking her, but by investigating a case involving a psychic predicting bridge collapses (via saboteurs, of course). Ross is shown to be working alone in what appears to be an exceptionally dangerous situation—and one in which she, unlike Captain America, had already done the investigative work to connect the evidence to the villain. While she is not shown fighting her captors, it is certainly clear that she is in a situation that would take a superpowered

soldier and his sidekick to achieve victory. When Captain America and Bucky finish their fight, they leave Ross with the villains, assigning her to keep watch until the FBI arrive.

There is an inherent difficulty in assessing the role of women in *Captain America Comics #1*. While there are only two instances of active female characters, those characters are indeed active. The remaining female characters are non-speaking, inactive background characters who are placed next to non-speaking, inactive male background characters. X13 and Betty Ross are agents entrusted at some of the highest levels of government, shown handling firearms while acting with intellectual or physical ferocity, but are described primarily by their appearance by other male characters. Their roles are so brief any assessment or evaluation of women in this comic would lack depth. What is apparent, though, is that these women are active performers in roles not typically assigned to women, especially in 1941. It may be that while *Captain America Comics #1* does not actively pursue the goals of feminism, in acknowledging female strength, it upholds a progressive feminist stance in these positive portrayals of female characters.

Echoes from the Recent Past

As Holt and Thompson alluded to, a national myth had not developed overnight; despite the United States' relatively late entrance into World War II, the political rhetoric in the decade prior had begun to reinforce the idea that the best interest of the United States must be to strengthen the area within its shores; the rest of the world would be fine on its own. In 1932, speaking to the Commonwealth club in San Francisco, then-nominee Franklin Delano Roosevelt called for

> [faith] in America, faith in our tradition of personal responsibility, faith in our institutions, faith in ourselves demands that we recognize the new terms of the old social contract. We shall fulfill them, as we fulfilled the obligation of the apparent Utopia which Jefferson imagined for us in 1776, and which Jefferson, Roosevelt and Wilson sought to

> bring to realization. We must do so, lest a rising tide of misery engendered by our common failure, engulf us all. But failure is not an American habit; and in the strength of great hope we must all shoulder our common load.

Roosevelt, here, speaks only of America values: our "institutions," "traditions," and even "ourselves," evoking a sense of the past and the present; a curious rhetorical move given the close proximity to World War I and the recent publication of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (1924) during Mussolini's rise to power. Roosevelt speaks of the "the then distant roar of European cannon" or "the closing our Canadian frontier on the north, our European markets on the east, many of our Latin American markets to the south, and a goodly proportion of our Pacific markets on the west." These vague reflections are the few glances of foreign affairs in an otherwise America-centric address. He invokes nation origins (already myths in and of themselves) and our apparent destiny to fulfill these myths and obligations. Considering this obligation in context with language about "institutions" and "traditions" strikes an unusual chord when these aspects are wrapped in the religious language of faith. What faith we have must be maintained and cultivated—a belief the idea of America and ourselves as Americans. He speaks of utopia as an obligated destiny, one in which we the people are bound together for glory while honoring the history, old and new, that brought us here. The cited passage above ends Roosevelt's talk; the entirety of the speech rarely mentions countries or life outside of America. When he does, his speech reflects the great distance that isolationism has brought about for American interests, noting how only World War I was able to bring about a change in this isolationism. These changes, it must be noted, are considered in a positive light.

As President, Roosevelt would further entrench national policy in his radio address "The Great Arsenal of Democracy" by declaring support and aid for the nation's allies while not fully committing to the fight. Roosevelt's speech was delivered in December of 1940, coinciding with the release of Captain America Comics #1. In his speech, Roosevelt states

> I want to make it clear that it is the purpose of the nation to build now with all possible speed every machine, every arsenal, every factory that we need to manufacture our defense material. We have the men, the skill, the wealth, and above all, the will. I am confident that if and when production of consumer or luxury goods in certain industries requires the use of machines and raw materials that are essential for defense purposes, then such production must yield, and will gladly yield, to our primary and compelling purpose.

Roosevelt's motivation for this speech lay not in the protection of American interests abroad, but rather the reinforcement of an industrialized economy and infrastructure that, while likely beneficial to the war effort undertaken by Allied European Nations, would primarily act as a boon to the American people and American interests. Indeed, Roosevelt notes that the rise of industry is "essential for defense purposes"—but not offensive purposes. Industry and infrastructure were meant to bolster those in the fight, not to join the fight. While other scholars have noted a sense of clarity by the American people and the nation's leaders of the inevitable entry into World War II, Roosevelt only encouraged a fervent desire to strengthen America from within. With less than a year's time until the entry into World War II, Roosevelt's call for magnanimous industrial fortitude would seem prophetic; after all, such rampant build up of factories and stockpiling of raw materials seems a logical push towards entry into war. However, Roosevelt calls for a different kind of quality, noting, "we have the men, the skill, the wealth, and above all, the will." There is, once again, a great faith in the ability of a nation to rise up and work together—as a nation—to support the need to fend off a common evil. Just like Roosevelt's calling, Captain America Comics took on the call to secure American borders in order to support those overseas fighting the Axis forces. It seems that in order to secure the boundaries of America, our nation would have to rely on the people within those boundaries. For Captain America, such security had already been compromised.

Within the auditorium where a small audience of scientists, military personal, and government agents watched a frail 4F army washout grow into a perfect human specimen, a member of Hitler's Gestapo lurks in wait. Once the serum has been administered to Captain America and the small man has been transformed into a peak human, the assassin strikes, killing Dr. Reinstein and destroying the super soldier serum in the process. The other agents in the room, there to witness the transformation of Captain America, fail to stop the assassin and are killed or injured. Captain America, undeterred, kills the assassin by punching him until the spy falls into lab equipment that ultimately electrocutes him. This display of strength and action without remorse—Captain America states "Nothing left of him but charred ashes…A fate he well deserved"—offers a singular expression of what strength equates: unadulterated nationalism and a duty to protect American interests at any costs. Including murder. The ethics of strength and how it should be used are problematic; the Espionage Act of 1917 (18 USC 37) stipulates a punishment ranging from twenty years in prison and a $10,000 fine (or both) to death. Still, due process is especially lacking in this story. Despite this impromptu following of the letter of the law, the fact remains that the new savior soldier of America has immediately acted as judge, jury, and executioner[26]. Although an extreme response, his actions do recall the "man-of-action hero" as a central force in American ideology. In that sense, Captain America does "transform weak institutions" as he bypasses due process, though arguably not for the better.

The next panel uses a "newspaper montage" to speed up time, with a static Captain America racing past scores of newspaper headlines as the narrator announces that the Captain has "[become] a powerful force in the battle against spies and saboteurs!" reiterating that the superhero is not fighting for America as a soldier on foreign shores, but acting in the name of protecting America from within. Normally utilized in film, a newspaper montage only reveals an

[26] Interestingly, in the 2011 film adaptation (which takes several notes from this particular story), the spy commits suicide. The effect is two fold: the enemy is seen as so ruthless that he will go to any length to protect his cause, and Captain America has too much integrity and honor for anything but true justice via the authorities.

implied passage of time, this implication embodies McCloud's "jagged, staccato rhythm"—the newspapers offering no concrete pace nor span of time, simply offering brief summaries of Captain America's exploits. The use of a technique normally reserved for film is a curious one; while a motion-based newspaper montage does not fit in with the medium of comics and their static images, its placement here harkens to news reels depicting wartime footage from WWI and other conflict. Again, there is a mixing of elements of real world events with the superhuman exploits of a fictional character; this collision would not end here.

The following panels mark the reveal of Steve Rogers' identity as Captain America, but out of order: instead of knowing that Steve Rogers becomes Captain America, the reader instead learns that Captain America becomes Steve Rogers. The message is rather clear: the identity of Steve Rogers is irrelevant compared to the symbol of Captain America. Further, the narration describes the common exploits of Steve Rogers, primarily consisting of late arrivals for military duties (thanks to his extracurricular activities saving the United States from the forces of evil). Steve Rogers is a secondary character to Captain America; Rogers's identity is hardly of consequence through the comic series. For now, though, Captain America's mission is made clear in the narration: to fight "against the vicious elements who seek to overthrow the U.S. government"—marking a thematic pattern both implicit and explicit throughout the comic.

The first story of the comic ends not with high action or intensive drama, but with an advertisement to join Captain America's "Sentinels of Liberty," a fan club whose members "solemnly pledge to uphold the principles of the Sentinels of Liberty and assist Captain America in his war against spies in the U.S.A." For ten cents, members received a badge, a membership card, and moral superiority. Members join the fight to secure American shores from within, bolstering a literal sense of national defense. Still, entry into a fan club indicates, albeit dubiously, some continuity on the part of the publisher. Fans could expect a stable publishing schedule with a fan club already in place. In an era teetering on the brink of world war, such continuity acted as

a safe haven. Later, in the era of self-psychology, this emphasis on nationalistic strength would shift considerably. For now, though, the reaction to external and potentially deadly forces motivated expressions of strength toward a singular vision of nationalism in the name of defense. Moreover, this particular advertisement appears before the second story in the comic strip, further hinting at the commitment by Timely Comics to assure readers of the character's stability in an unstable time. The move to connect readers to the comic as well as the means to connect story to story, such a simple advertisement becomes a nexus of stability and material comfort.

Gauging Impact

Writing about the impact of comic books, whether in terms of cultural and historical significance or through the lens of rhetorical analysis, offers an exceptional challenge simply due to the nature of comic publishing: with multiple authors and artists working on any given book (or, as is often the case, several different titles) with changing editors over the course of decades[27], localizing rhetorical intent is a dizzying task. In my own efforts to uncover the rhetoric of the comic and to analyze the meaning of Captain America's origin, I looked to Jack Kirby, the legendary comic book artist. Although, according to Gerald Jones, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby both contributed to the comic, Simon's work lay primarily in lettering and the dialogue: Kirby's work involved "the layouts and the figures…energetic figures in motion, dramatic foreshortening and rippling musculature, high-impact punches" (200). And this is not surprising, given Kirby's now-legendary status as an artist and creator. Because the artistic duties of constructing the comic lay with Kirby, examining Kirby's own commentary on the creating Captain America may reveal, at the least, his motivations: "'He symbolized the American Dream,' recalled Kirby in reference to Captain America. 'Captain America was an outpouring of my own patriotism,' he continued. 'I

[27] For Captain America, a character so grounded in history, this rhetorical nexus is especially evident: the character has had considerable reactions to the Vietnam War, economic issues in the 1980s, and, as Jason Dittmer has written about considerably, post-9/11 politics.

found myself doing with Captain America what I would do myself'" (Nicky Wright 76). Kirby, born in 1917, grew up in a period of American history between the World Wars, a time of rebuilding and government expansion of social programs, culminating in the New Deal in the early 1930s. His formative years, then, occurred during an era of nationalistic pride and global concern. Kirby's art kept pace:

> 'Captain America was created for a time that needed noble figures,' Kirby once recalled. 'We weren't at war yet, but everyone knew it was coming. That's why Captain America was born: America needed a superpatriot.' As to their new hero's appearance, Kirby said, 'Drape the flag on anything and it looks good. We gave him a chain mail shirt and shield, like a modern-day crusader. The wings on his helmet were from Mercury…he symbolized the American dream.' (Goulart 117)

Kirby does not compare Captain America to a guardian, a soldier, a warrior, or even a superhero—instead labeling him a "superpatriot." This label disqualifies Captain America's role as a fighter and does not regulate his duties as a hero for America. But Kirby does call him a "modern-day crusader," invoking a kind of religious fervor while equating that fervor to patriotism. When combined with Kirby's intent to represent the "American dream" the evidence of Kirby's desire to create a hero to protect America for its citizens becomes apparent; Captain America's creation came at a time when the United States' entry into World War II was inevitable; but Kirby's vision, at least in the beginning, was of a hero relegated to staying within the bounds of America's borders. Despite his one-on-one fight with Hitler on the cover of the issue, the earliest stories of Captain America portrayed the hero as a force meant for security; although he was created to be the ultimate soldier, Captain America is still a figure of fantasy—and real fighting would be done by real soldiers.

Similarly, the other Captain America stories in the comic always function around the security of America from within rather than fighting in Europe. In the second story, a psychic is able to predict when and where industrial centers would fall under attack. When Captain America and Bucky investigate, they find out that it was all a trap set by spies and saboteurs to lure Captain America into being captured (they escape and justice is served). In the short prose story that follows, Steve Rogers finds saboteurs attempting to poison his Army camp (he stops them just in time). The fourth story begins with a murder of an admiral, which prompts Captain America and Bucky to investigate. During their investigation, Bucky is kidnapped. Captain America crashes through several windows and doors in an attempt to rescue him. Later, it is revealed that saboteurs (once again) were the root cause. In the final Captain America story, readers are introduced to the Red Skull[28], a strangling assassin by night, a captain of industry by day, who attempts to overthrow the government. Bucky is, as usual, kidnapped. Captain America, true to form, rushes in to rescue him. The Red Skull and Captain America clash in a fight spanning pages. The Red Skull is revealed to be Mister Maxon, an aircraft manufacturer, and exposed as an agent of the Fuhrer. Clearly, Simon and Kirby were concerned with spies, agents, and saboteurs bent on infiltrating the institutions of America. In every story, and for many to follow, Captain America would ensure safety and security throughout America, fighting to keep out those who would strive to destroy the United States from within.

But this on securing the internal strength of America wouldn't last forever. After all, if Captain America is the embodiment of the American ideal, the American Dream, then eventually Americans would wake up to see the atrocities of war. Although World War II was a clear-cut case for the necessity of American involvement, the years that followed—the era of the Blacklist, the Cold War, the Space Race—offered less of a clear and present need for a superpatriot. As Bradford Wright notes:

[28] Not to be confused with the Red Skull, a supervillain who would later act as Captain America's primary antagonist.

> Perhaps more than any other superhero, Marvel's Captain America bore the burden of these political and cultural changes. As a sworn champion of patriotic values, Captain America had to determine what those values now meant. What was to be his role in the Vietnam era and beyond? Readers and creators alike recognized the symbolic significance of the question. As President Johnson sent U.S. troops to Vietnam in 1965, readers wrote to Marvel suggesting that Captain America ought to go as well. Others asked that he stay out. He stayed home, and the controversy over his meaning intensified in later years (244).

Nationalistic strength fails in an internationally connected political schema. For Captain America, now outside the bounds of a clear and distinct need for a hero, values of strength have changed. Staying within the country does not mean only that borders are secured, but that the rest of the world is to be ignored. When patriotism is celebrated in the name of national security in an era with shifting perspectives on defense, that patriotism may shift into something resembling oppression. But in the decades to follow, Captain America would evolve alongside those shifting values. He would still embody not only the American ideal, but he would believe in the ideals of America—even going so far as to give up the shield and the identity when those in power worked specifically against his vision of America[29]. The adventures he would encounter were never as cut and dry as those he experienced in the beginning. For a seemingly simplistic character, one so ready to defend the dream of a once-great nation, Captain America evolved and progressed just as the vision of America changed. And it would begin September 2nd, 1945, on the main deck of the USS Missouri, floating in Tokyo Bay. There, Mamoru Shigemitsu, the foreign minister of Japan and General Douglas MacArther signed the Surrender of Japan, ending World War II.

[29] Notably, following the Watergate Scandal (*Captain America* #176), after experiencing government corruption (*Captain America* #332), and during Marvel's Civil War crossover event (in protest of government-mandated registration of all super-powered beings, a thinly-veiled metaphor of a new Red Scare in a post-9/11 World). These incidents coincide with large cultural questions, and so their inclusion in the Captain America ethos is unsurprising.

When the war ended, the political rhetoric of the era shifted as well. President Roosevelt, without a multi-front war to fight, began to reestablish earlier policies to rebuild the social and economic foundations of American political and cultural life. Similarly, Dr. Vannevar Bush wrote in his seminal article "As We May Think" of the point of crisis scientists faced in the weeks leading up to the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagaskai. These same scientists had gained a degree of control of material environments, biological processes, and performed a civic duty by creating new weapons of once-impossible destruction. Safeguarding American shores would be achieved—but what would come next? For Bush, sharing information for the purposes of communication and education was one step towards a newfound postwar humanitarianism. Captain America would ask the same question: what comes next?

After the war ended, the legacy of Captain America changed just as the legacy of America itself changed. No longer focused on the horrors of war, America and its leaders turned back to the missions undertaken prior to World War II: reinforcing and securing the structures and securities of America. Roosevelt too turned towards what would be his final, and more important aim. On January 11th, 1945, in what would be his final State of the Union address, not long before his death three months later, Roosevelt outlined his new vision for a more prosperous America by offering an Economic Bill of Rights:

> This Republic had its beginning, and grew to its present strength, under the protection of certain inalienable political rights — among them the right of free speech, free press, free worship, trial by jury, freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures. They were our rights to life and liberty. We have come to a clearer realization of the fact, however, that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence…[all] of these rights spell "security." And after this war is won we must be prepared to move forward, in the implementation of these rights, to new goals of human happiness and well-being.

Here, strength has been equated to a national legacy, as well as the recognition of basic human rights. This is enormously important. Strength, for Roosevelt, for a man in the winter of his astonishing life, was a concept bound to American identity to a near-mythological degree. Robust health and "well-being" cap this section of his speech: a clear connection to the recent past and the nature of health as a metaphor for success. And so it should be: Roosevelt's second Bill of Rights would have established economic security at the level of the individual; in this regard, free speech and the freedom of religion would be equal to the right to have a job which pays enough to afford one a reasonable living, including owning a home and having access to a good education and health care. For Roosevelt, these rights represented a natural progression in the destiny of America and the expansion of its national strength. For Captain America, the mission is the same: to protect America from within. Against a backdrop of espionage, war, and science, the first issue of Captain America Comics offered a new definition of the idea of strength, one grounded not in nationalism but rather in the protection of a nation. The comic book predates the United States' entry into World War II by mere months; as an American hero without a war involving America, Captain America set out to defend the nation's interests at any cost. Always fighting the good fight from within, the definition of strength, equates to Roosevelt's "unity of purpose" found in the four freedoms, in the arsenal of democracy, and held in safety and security, not just the four-color muscles under stars and stripes. Only now, Captain America would find trouble fitting into a world without war, in a nation that is no longer just a nation but a superpower.

After a few failed attempts to fit the character into a brave new world, Timely Comics cancelled *Captain America Comics*—the Captain would return briefly in the 1950s, only to be shelved again. He was not alone, nor were cancellations relegated to Timely Comics. As noted by David Hajdu, "Invulnerable in the panels of the comics books, superheroes succumbed to common criminals on the newsstands. In the late 1940s, dozens of costumed characters, including Captain

America, the Flash, the Green Lantern, Hawkman, the Human Torch, and the Sub-Mariner, were all discontinued by publishers quick to move on to the new trend, crime" (110). In the era following the last Great War, the mixture of fantasy and reality was skewed in favor of reality. Escapism, for a superpower, was no longer necessary and the exploits of real-world criminals became new fodder for comics. Later, in 1964, Captain America would be revived by Marvel Comics—this time, it would be permanent—only to be forced to rethink again what the strength of a nation means.

As the War ended, so did this particular incarnation of strength. Although the nation would endure conflict many times after 1945, a new shift came into focus. No longer did rhetorical values of strength exist solely at a national level; strength began to shift back to the individual, as seen in the generation to follow through the Human Potential Movement. Strength, in the collision of fictional fantasy and the reality of war, began on that new path set forth by Roosevelt's Economic Bill of Rights: a strength that is both personal and social, using the lessons of nationalism in order to forge a new era in a superpower might remember what it was like to be a nation.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Implications

This project has sought to define strength as it pertains to American culture, examining theoretical underpinnings, tracing strength in writing studies, and analyzing rhetorical motivations of strength. Covering texts that range from the Gilded Age and Progressive Era to the present day, these analyses hint at some historical developments that warrant further investigation. These analyses suggest a conceptual shift in the evolution of strength, from the emphasis on muscular strength and the body representative to psychological development of personal strength and, finally, to the idea of a representation of strength. In this conclusion, I have included a brief historical organizational scheme in order to illustrate one thematic structure that has developed from this work. Though I have not organized the project in this manner, these artifacts I have included reveal various ways in which the rhetoric of strength acts to persuade audiences of its own value and of the incarnations of those values: abundance, power, expression, and structure. My aim throughout this project has been to explore those meanings and to analyze those

values, to connect them to history and to action, and to reveal the ways in which we have assumed strength within our culture. The sheer span of this project, 125 years, entails a vast expanse of change; expanded values, radical steps in technology, and monumental events—in addition to the infinite everyday moments in an uncountable number of lives—offers only a few slivers of study. Although these slivers are major, revealing moments in the idea of strength, I do not make claim to sweeping generalizations of cultural thought.

Historically, in the Reconstruction era of the late 19th century and early 20th century, strength was an individualistic notion. In first generation immediately after the Civil War, a time of reconstruction and rebuilding not only of the physical layout of the country, but of the national psyche. This reaction to the Civil War laid the groundwork for the explosion of sports as a national pastime; sports offered Americans the means to compete without killing, to battle without fighting. Strength became a means to take action for a healing nation where fractures of the Civil War still ran deep. In order to better their own athletic performance, the communities turned to physical culture experts. As an idea, strength was perpetuated the new genre of fitness manuals, written by these experts in physical culture, and established itself as a primary characteristic for a fully developed human being. Strongmen performers developed new techniques in not only exercise, but in writing. After developing the fitness genre, they participated in emerging marketing techniques for their audiences—all aimed squarely at increasing health and strength. Strength, at the time, was an essential quality for a person and only considered at the level of the personal. The idea of strength was a complex intersection of ethos, identity, and historical circumstance manifesting in fitness manuals in the early years of the physical culture movement. Strength, as a concept, was largely individualistic and benefited a fractured, post-Civil War populace. According to strongmen performers-turned-fitness-experts, the development of personal strength was a responsibility necessary to cultivate a maximal capacity for everyday life.

Later, the political rhetoric of President Franklin and the visual rhetoric of *Captain America Comics* #1 refocused that individualism into a new sense of nationalism; the visual representation of rhetoric of strength soon amounted to an internal strength, one bent on taking the necessary actions to securing America's borders from within. With cases of rampant espionage throughout the United States, it is little wonder that strength so decidedly shifted in its focus. In the years preceding World War II, a surge of espionage overtook the national interest. As the war raged on in Europe, the political rhetoric of the era centered on the idea of a national strength from within; this rhetoric reinforced isolationist policies prior to the attacks on Pearl Harbor. When World War II ended, however, the need for such strength seemed obsolete and unneeded.

After the Great War, from the late 1950s and, arguably, continuing to the present day, the Human Potential Movement swept across America. Its presence hit its peak in the late 1960s and 1970s, particularly on college campuses, a major home for progressive thought and philosophy. Although traces of the expressivist movement in the history of composition appeared much earlier, the peak of expressivism occurred simultaneously with the Human Potential Movement. This chapter represented an attempt to untangle the history of expressivism from mischaracterizations and from strict periodization while connecting the ideals of the Human Potential Movement to contemporary textbooks of the era. A person developed his or her personal strength for the good of both the individual psyche so that each strengthened person could contribute to society at large.

The final chapter examined the ways in which writing studies, historically and in the present day, uses the idea of strength as a label for assessment. Strength, as a quality, is overused in both common parlance and in assessment procedures: "she is a strong writer," "that is a strong essay," or "he's going to be a strong writer" are common descriptors of writers' abilities. "Strong" is often a part of a composition rubric, either as an assessment level or as part of a definition. In any of these cases, the term is ill-defined and incomplete, at best. Because assessment practices

reflect the values of not only governing organizations such as the NCTE but also of composition programs, universities, and governmental bodies—none of which directly include the instructor—it is necessary and dutiful to explore what these values mean in order to define them, to make them explicit, and to apply them. If these values are reactions to social conditions, historical events, or stakeholder needs, then the effects of those reactions should be understood. Student writing, too, often reacts in accordance with such a storied, interrelated, and complex paradigm. As a term, strong writing has a long, storied history. That idea is a reflection on the previous chapters and research, all of which have a profound effect on what strength has come and what it will be.

These individual slivers though, offer something more to the total picture of rhetorical thought in American culture. The notions of nationalism, of physicality, of psychological well-being, and of assessment practices still exist. Tracing these ideas historically might give the assumption that an evolution of thought has left behind outdated concepts and modalities. Instead, we continuously encounter and compound these slivers. All of this has happened before; all of this will happen again.

Limits

The limitations of this work should be alarmingly clear: America is a big place and American history, while relatively short, is still quite long. Initially, I chose to research after the Civil War simply because that era is the birthplace of Physical Culture and my early projects involved documents from that era. However, because I have limited my study to the time period following the Civil War and to present day, two results are apparent: for one, there is a century of time from the Declaration of Independence to the Civil War, and another century and a half from the arrival of colonists that I have not included. Second, the twentieth century contains a myriad of events,

people, ideas, and texts; no dissertation could fit every tiny piece of information. I have made every attempt to collect and analyze the most relevant pieces of information and the texts most pertinent to writing studies and to strength.

However, even after making every available effort, I know that certain limitations crept into each chapter. The limits of the second chapter are rather simple: the relative wealth of textbooks produced during the 1960s and 1970s offer far too much information to cover even in a long chapter. Many textbooks have already been lost to time and are only available in private collections or libraries. As a result, I opted for a corpus of texts readily available and representing a wide swath of approaches in order to ethically study a balance of all available pedagogical styles. In addition, I chose to include Tillich, Maslow, and Rogers as these three men represent the major evolutionary and chronological steps in the ideology of the Human Potential Movement. However, many other figures were prominent during this era; the writings of these three men in particular involved the personal, the personal within society, and the social. Given this matrix of attributes, I felt that incorporating them as the lens of the study could overcome leaving others out.

Rubrics offer a means into understanding the connective tissue of writing studies; this particular chapter examines the philosophies behind writing assessment and the idea of "strong writing." Although this particular chapter is heavily theory-base, this chapter lacks an empirical element that could give a more complete voice to the ideas presented within. Furthermore, this particular corpus of study involves rubrics centered within composition. This is not necessarily a limitation—more a focus—but branching out these concepts to other subjects and their own assessment practices could offer different results.

For the first case study, I made a note of the limitations of my study as they pertain to archival work. Indeed, as I made revisions, I discovered to my dismay that one of the primary websites

that had worked diligently to archive all available texts from the golden age of physical culture had shut down due to the death of the webmaster. As a result, enterprising individuals looking to capitalize on public domain materials put many of these texts back into copyright using a loophole. Due to the scarcity of these materials, these scanned books were the only way to peruse the texts without a considerable amount of searching and large personal costs. Although I have begun to collect these antique books, even the more affordable are rarely available.

Although the second case study was meant to be an intersection of Captain America Comics #1, political rhetoric immediately proceeding World War I, and rhetorical theory, applying a model of strength to comic books or war rhetoric has endless possibilities. An analysis of Marvel's little-known series *The 'Nam* immediately comes to mind, given the subject matter. From World War II to the early 1960s, superhero comic books left the public eye in favor of western, crime, and war comic books. A survey and analysis of this era would lend itself to a study all its own; however, I found that a narrow focus was more beneficial for this particular case study.

Future Directions

In the previous chapters and case studies, I have discussed and analyzed artifacts ranging from fitness manuals to comic books to self-help texts. It is important to note that these texts all still exist: expressivist techniques still make appearances in classrooms; rubrics are a perennial fixture in composition classrooms and studies; Captain America has become a standout character for Marvel, appearing in not only comics but in television programs, movies, toys, etc.; the fitness industry is one of the largest industries in America; and self-help books continue to be published and republished. There are avenues of thought and analysis in each of these areas, but this project has been a rhetorical journey through strength, not a concentrated focus on one object.

As such, his project is only finished for a short while. With any academic work, there is always more to be done, and this is no exception. For example, I have previously stated, much remains to be analyzed, explored, and recovered in the early years of the physical culture movement. Further, there exists a recurring theme that action, and potential action, is one component of a semiological construction of strength while passivity opposes strength. Weakness, as noted in the third chapter, can be positioned as a binary to strength, but is more accurately defined as either a lack or as a descriptor all on its own; the relationship of weakness to strength is, ultimately, one without competition. Passivity, in accordance with Rickert's notion of ambient materiality, reveals more about strength than does weakness. Passivity, by definition, is inaction and thus the opposing force to strength. The potential to act still implies an act-in-waiting; passivity could just as easily described as "inactivity-always-in-process." Ambient rhetoric provides a new, refreshing means to understanding material environments. As I have defined strength as a considered reaction to external stimuli in which that reaction may or not involve actual action, material environments—even as passive constructions—could offer insight into how such action is provoked.

Other avenues of thought and moments in time are ripe for understanding their influence on strength, and vice versa: the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s and the strength of the philosophy of peace studies; the rhetoric of science in the Cold War: how strength influenced the political rhetoric contained within science; and political races of the late 20th century (in particular, the California governorship race won by Arnold Schwarzenegger). Any of these subjects, along with many others, would contribute to a more complete view of strength in modern and postmodern American culture. Furthermore, there are a number of areas within writing studies that have been left out either on purpose or through the process of composing the final drafts of this project. Of those areas, I wish to make mention of two in particular: multimodal composition and basic writing.

The development of chapter two is rather simple: more textbooks. While more figures from the Human Potential Movement may offer some new insights into the development of cultural thought and their influence into writing studies, I believe that Tillich, Maslow, and Rogers represent the primary figures who developed the overarching philosophy of the movement. More textbooks from the 1960s and 1970s would contribute to the main goal of the chapter: to build a better understanding of the timeline and history of composition and writing studies. Finding sales records of textbooks would also give a better idea of how popular or how used specific textbooks were at that moment in time, but that may be an impossible dream.

To continue my work with the final chapter, I foresee two options: one, simply develop the philosophies and theories present further. The second option is far more complicated: to collect a pantheon of writing rubrics and find a coauthor to aid in coding, quantifying, and qualifying these documents toward a large-scale study. Doing so would set up the groundwork for a WAC study or an interdisciplinary study of various rubrics and assessment practices. Obviously, this would entail a great deal of work and effort, but the reward would match such output. Any future work would likely be to explore different areas within writing assessment or different subjects utilizing various assessment procedures; these kinds of studies would connect, reevaluate, or complicate the values of strength within a rubric or other assessment materials to values of strength posited by the community, higher education, etc.

This project has been rather traditional in scope and focus; multimodal aspects have not been a major concern. The second case study is a visual analysis combined with a rhetorical analysis of political rhetoric; I would not define that chapter's scope as multimodal. Future work should take on a multimodal analysis as it pertains to assessment procedures and practices. In a similar vein, assessment of basic writing seems a natural fit for definitions of strong writing; indeed, I have hinted at this possibility in the final chapter, though I have not tackled the subject specifically. Given my analysis of strong (a matter of abundance) and weak (as it pertains to lacking), it seems

only natural that a study involving basic writing assessment procedures should be undertaken in order to add a new dimension to this chapter.

The Future of Strength

History carries with it an obligation not to simply look back in hindsight and understand what was wrong and what was right. Instead, it affords us a moment of clarity into our failures, our great hours, and the days in between. And within the best understanding of history and of culture lies a glimpse into what is to come. Strength, as an idea, has been integral and invisible to our culture, to our history, and to writing studies. It is an idea too often defined not by a situation, but for a situation. For a nation to identify with such permeable strength as a key component to its national identity is tantamount to running blindfolded; America, to paraphrase and appropriate Berlin, is in crisis. When we examine the manifestations of strength in culture, there comes a realization of how stitched strength is into culture itself. As cemented strength is into our national ideology and identity, there exists a great obligation to reexamine this key component in order to form a more perfect union, a more complete nation; while no final, concrete, invariable definition may be possible, there exists an open conversation. Words should remain at least somewhat flexible; they need a degree of relativity. Although there are rhetorical and semiotic tensions between universal and relative definitions, the answer may be that a clear definition should exist, but that this definition is expected to evolve. That definition should be one that is purposefully decided upon, analyzed, and understood. For semiotics in particular, lack of connection is tantamount to heresy. For every permutation of a sign, there are an equal number of semioticians working toward a unified theory of signs. I argue that strength is a sign that disrupts, that complicates semiotics. The relationship between language and culture is a tenuous one; the give and take of event and of the evolution of thought involves more take than give. This is not about just

strength, although given our nation's high pedestal for strength, we must pay attention to the treatment of that idea in context. More than that, however, this is about the value woven into words throughout history. That value adapts and changes and we must be wary and on guard for the day when our language evolves into the unexpected: into the uncontrolled and into the controlling. I have spent much of my academic career focused on what strength means because, in part, I fear what it may one day become. On that day, we may look back only to discover the path which led us there was not of our choosing. This project was meant to trace the history and usage of strength in American culture, to analyze that history and usage, and to suggest new definitions so that we will not look back in the future and wonder how it came to be. Strength, then, is that quality that gives us more, but it is our responsibility to ask more of what?

...It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
It may be that we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are---
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

"Ulysses" (1842)

Lord Alfred Tennyson

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APPENDIX A

I have attempted to recreate each set of instructions using the correct or near-correct fonts and formatting. These recreations have been made with the utmost attention to detail; however, certain elements are not possible to create within one document. Any changes made have had no effect on the analysis of these instructions.

Excerpted from George Jowett, *Jowett Institute Course in Muscle Building and Physical Culture* (np):

Exercise 9.

Keep your feet spaced well apart and clasp the hands behind the back.

Hold the head BACK and the shoulder blades forced together.

Now, commence with raising the right shoulder up as high as possible by hunch—ing it up towards the right ear as in Exercise 9, position (a).

Do not make it just a shoulder movement but use your hands.

With the left hand pull down on the right hand so that the hunching or shrugging movement is made harder.

By doing this, you are compelled to put forward more physical and mental effort and that is what I want you to do.

Alternate the movements. That is:

Shrug the right shoulder and then the left shoulder as in Exercise 9, position (b). The

right and then the left until you have shrugged each shoulder six times.

Every third practice night add one repetition.

DON'TS TO AVOID.

Don't grasp the hands listlessly. Use your strength.

Don't forget to breathe in as you shrug and out as you relax.

Don't forget to keep the shoulder blades close together.

Don't forget to raise the shoulder as high as you can.

Excerpt from Liederman, *Muscle Building* (84):

Some Exercises for the Latissimus Dorsi

EXERCISE 1. Pick up a weight from the floor in front of you by stooping over without bending the knees. Raise the weight to the height of the waistline and lower.

EXERCISE 2. Chin the bar, first with the hands close together and later with hands wide apart. Keep palms of hands facing you. Do the same exercise with the palms of the hands turned away from you.

EXERCISE 3. Stand sideways to the wall and hold the exerciser at arm's length. Bring the exerciser downward to the side while keeping arms stiff. Do the same with the other arm.

It is very difficult to find exercises that will tire the latissimus dorsi muscles within ten repetitions, for if the resistance is too strong, there is a tendency for the arms or shoulders to tire first. I have found that the best results are obtained by having sufficient resistance to tire this muscle in about fifteen counts. If you are able to perform more than twenty repetitions in exercising this muscle, the work is too light for you and you must work against a stronger resistance, or use heavier weights, as with the deltoid and other muscles.

Excerpted from Macfadden, *Muscular Power and Beauty* (140):

In photographs 50 and 60, illustrative of exercise thirty-two, the rhomboids, of which I have written, are seen just between the shoulder blades. In the first photograph they are shown somewhat, but in the second they are displayed with considerably more prominence. These muscles, which are so well worthy of development, are benefited very much by this particular exercise, giving them as it does, ideal work. If it is possible, perform this drill before a triple

mirror so arranged that one of the folds will readily reflect the motions of the rhomboids. The mirror will also be of aid to you in noting their gradual development.

Photograph No. 59. (146)

Exercise No. 32. Bring the shoulders as far forward and downward as you can, and also bring the head slightly forward. Now, with hands grasped together tightly, slowly bring the shoulders and the head backward as far as you can (See next photo)

Photograph No. 60. (147)

To the position shown herewithin. Take this exercise slowly, and with the muscles strongly flexed. This is especially valuable for remedying round shoulders and will be found to affect very quickly the muscles that are used in maintaining a proper position of the shoulders. Continue the exercise each time until the muscles are thoroughly tired. Frequently when the shoulders are in a normal condition, they still have a round appearance if the muscles at the back of the neck are not developed. This exercise of the neck will be inclined to remedy this defect.

Excerpted from Nordquest *Strength and Health: How Disease May Be Successfully Combated by Physical Culture* (129-131):

BACK AND STOMACH - No. 1

Raise the body up with effort, using the arms alone, and when they have been straightened out, stiffen every muscle, from the toes to the neck, and keep them in that state for an instant. Then, still continuing the effort, slowly lower the body to the original position. Always rest a few moments before repeating, as this exercise is a very trying one.

BACK AND STOMACH - No. 2

From the preceding position go to the one shown on the opposite page, allowing the body to move slowly backward, with the arms clasped behind the head, until it rests on the floor. Then rise to a sitting position. This is not only good for the back and stomach, but it brings into play every muscle in the body. When doing it at first, care should be taken to avoid any undue straining.

Excerpted from Pullum, *Weight Lifting Made Easy and Interesting* (39-40):

"TWO HANDS DEAD LIFT"

C.W.L.C. Definition

LIFT No. 42.—The barbell shall be lifted from the ground until the lifter stands erect. Throughout the lift the heels must remain together, and upon conclusion the legs must be straight and the shoulders taken back. Should the bar be brought to rest against the legs during the lift it

shall not be counted cause for disqualification, and the manner in which the bar shall be grasped is a matter for the lifter's discretion.

Detail of Correct Physical Performance

Commencing Position. - Stand with the feet well under the center of the bar (*the '"camber" of which should be turned to the front*), and take up the following position: Heels together, and in line; feet opened equally to an angle of 45 degrees; body upright, its weight distributed evenly on each foot; head erect, with chin drawn slightly in, and arms depending loosely by the sides.

Note.—This is the correct position to take up prior to commencing any double- handed lift performed in the stranding position, and will be referred to henceforth as "Position A."

Stage 1. —Bending the knees outward—and the trunk downward—take hold of the bar with the palm of one hand to the front, and the other to the rear. Keep the back flat—and the buttocks low.

Note.—The distance between the hands should be approximately equal to that of the width of the shoulders, and this similitude applies to all double-handed barbell lifts performed in the standing position.

Stage 2. —Gripping the bar firmly—and raising the shoulders high—steadily straighten the legs and restore the trunk to the upright position. This done, throw the shoulders well back, and allow the chest to come forward. Maintain this position for at least two seconds before returning the bell to the ground.

Note.—In the practice of all lifts it is advisable to maintain the finishing position for a period of two seconds, as this condition is laid down by the B.A.W.L.A. in their rules. Henceforth, the precise point at which the count is taken in each lift will be indicated.

Technical Performance Errors.

1. *Heels not kept together throughout the lift.*

Upon conclusion of the Lift: —

- *Legs not braced at the knees.*
- *Trunk not brought erect.*
- *Shoulders not taken back.*
- *Finishing position not maintained for two seconds.*

Note.—As No. 5 applies to every lift taught in this book, it will not be enumerated again.

Excerpted from Treloar, *Treloar's Science of Muscular Development* (144):

Group X. (The Lower Back)

Exercise 37. Seat yourself on something about seven inches high, and with wall machine adjusted to pull from below execute the motion of rowing—photos 37a and 37b; continue until tired. [Erector spinae.]

Excerpted from Danks, *Danks System of Physical Culture* (np):

EXERCISE 7

For the Latissimus Dorsi and Neck Muscles, and for Broadening the Chest.

Ready Position.—Stand erect, arms outstretched above the head, knuckles upward and head thrown well back.

Movement.—Bring the arms slowly outwards and downwards until they are level with the shoulders and the Expander across the chest. At the same time bend the body slightly backward and bring the head to its natural position, inhaling deeply. Return slowly to ready position, exhaling to the utmost.

N.B. —The arms must be kept straight throughout this exercise.

Excerpted from Maxick, *How to Become a Great Athlete* (28-30):

How to perform the Single-handed Jerk

Having got the bell to the shoulder rest the elbow inside the hip, and without any hesitation, send the bell aloft with a quick, powerful jerk. Fig. 1 shows the bell just leaving the hip.

This will naturally be followed by the straightening of the legs, which should bring the bell at least as high as the forehead.

Fig. 2 shows the dip under the bell, and the arm on the point of locking.

Fig. 3 shows the bell fixed, when all that is necessary to complete the lift is to bring the forward foot back to the rear foot.

The dip under the bell is accomplished by the simultaneous bending of the forward leg, and the hollowing of the back; more especially in the region of the waist on the rear leg side. Push hard the whole time, but do not dip too soon; but when the right moment comes dip like a flash of lightning.

The bar should have a slight “back-hang.”

My best performance in English with this lift is 232-lbs., and my weight at the time was 10-stone 10lbs. in costume.

The *most useful* of all feats, and the one giving the greatest bodily strength is the "two-handed" jerk, anyhow to chest.

Englishmen are not usually good at this lift, and the two chief reasons are as follows: Reason 1.—A lifter will often make a number of failures to pull a bell in clean to the chest, and consequently gets very little practice *from* the chest, especially as a weight that a man can take in clean to the chest is considered light for a two-handed jerk. Reason 2.—The two-handed press is too little used. If you wish to excel at the jerk you must practice the press; not the military press, but in the same positions used for the jerk as explained hereunder.

Begin with a light weight, pressing it very slowly. Increase the weight until too heavy to press, then thrust it up, increasing until too heavy to thrust, and then jerk it.

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