Introduction

Edward Hoagland writes:

> I'd lie on my back on a patch of moss watching a swaying poplar's branches
> interlace with another's, and the tremulous leaves vibrate, and the clouds forgath-
> er to parade zoologically overhead, and felt linked to the whole matrix, as you
> either do or you don't through the rest of your life. And childhood—nine or ten,
> I think—is when this best happens. It's when you develop a capacity for quiet, a
> confidence in your solitude, your rapport with a Nature both animate and not
> much so: what winged things possibly feel, the blessing of water, the rhythm of
> weather, and what might bite you and what will not. (49–50)

Perhaps it was because my father was a freshwater ecologist and we spent a lot
of time on lakes when I was a child that I know this feeling of being linked to
the whole matrix and that it is deeply sedimented into my thinking. Much of
this book was written at my camp on Lake Superior,[1] the Big Lake, and a lot of
my thinking was done as I walked along the beach or in the woods, distracted
or inspired by the loons who called to my border collie and by the redstarts,
black-throated green warblers, and yellowthroats in the trees whose colors
and calls commanded my attention. This is the place I feel most connected;
this is where I write from.

This is a book about writing and the teaching of writing.[2] Writing comes
from someplace, but it also takes you places. In my quest to think anew about
why writing matters and how we can best help students to become good writ-
ers, I stray far from the bay that shelters the small community of composition
and rhetoric scholars to troll the deep waters of complexity theory and process
philosophy, hoping to catch concepts I can cross with the mid-water concepts
of scholars in anthropology and sociology of science who have also been fish-

ing those deep waters and bring them back into my small community. This is no longer such an adventurous quest, though as Alfred North Whitehead argues, there are always adventures to be had: others in composition and rhetoric have also been fishing these same waters. The world of scholarship always mirrors that of the wider eco/socio/cultural/economic world, and scholarship in all communities now exhibits characteristics of ecosystems like Lake Superior in which everything is connected, or entangled, in Hoagland's whole matrix, all busily intra-acting and trading their stuff.[3]

It was a long trip, and many concepts dear to composition and rhetoric fell prey to the sharks of continental philosophy and complexity theory, if not devoured at least substantially transformed: the writer as an autonomous human subject and sole agent of writing; writing as essentially a conscious, cognitive, and rational means of communicating, representing, and interpreting the world through linguistic texts. As Collin Brooke and Thomas Rickert point out, "both process and postprocess theories rely on essentially humanist assumptions about what writing is, how it occurs, how it is received, and how it is taught" (163). They allow that postprocess theory did attempt to move beyond the assumption of the autonomous subject but remained committed to "a linguistically mediated sociality that obscures more basic, even fundamental relations to technology and materiality" (164). A look at what Thomas Kent recently wrote about postprocess theory reveals its humancentric and linguistic bias. He differentiates postprocess from process theories by emphasizing that writing is not something to be learned but an action of producing comprehensible texts, which necessitates triangulation "with the world and with other language users who inhabit that world" (xvii–xvii). Thus writing is a "doubly hermeneutic" activity: since texts "represent someone's interpretation of the world . . . when we confront a text . . . we must interpret someone else's interpretation" (xv). As writing is "a kind of communicative interaction" (xviii), it is social: it requires not just a solitary writer but at least two actors, a writer and reader. But in Kent's vision, both actors are human with everything else in the world being merely a reference point, something to be interpreted through language. This understanding of writing has been challenged by several movements inspired by the vision of the world as a matrix of linked beings.

Posthumanism, new materialism, and the nonhuman turn from epistemology to ontology challenge the assumptions that writing is simply a cognitive activity of symbol use; that humans are the only agents involved in the activity of writing; and that writing is an activity that is dominantly directed to understanding, or as Kent says, interpreting the world. Attempting to rework Kent's definition of postprocess, Byron Hawk argues that a "posthuman image of the world . . . includes humans but decenters them in relational mod-

els of assemblage and expression" ("Reassembling" 77). Diane Davis argues for "an affectability or persuadability [that] operates irrepressibly and below the radar" of reason and "that precedes and exceeds symbolic intervention" (*Inessential Solidarity* 36). Posthumanism is a repudiation of what Rosi Braidotti calls universal humanism, in which "subjectivity is equated with consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behaviour" (15) and to which she opposes a posthumanist subjectivity that is "materialist and vitalist, embodied and embedded, firmly located somewhere" (51). Writers are not just disembodied brains working with symbols but rather, as Hawk says, bodies that "occupy material situations that are in constant motion, interpret those flows through bodily knowledge and expression as much as language, and contribute to those assemblages by participating in their public gathering" ("Reassembling" 77). Writers are affective and kinetic as well as cognitive bodies that learn about and participate in their worlds through all these modalities.

New materialism further decenters the human writer. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost note that "materialism has remained a sporadic and often marginalized approach," for thinking about matter usually seems to inspire instead the emergence of superior idealities believed to be fundamentally different from matter: "language, consciousness, subjectivity, agency, mind, soul" (1–2). They argue that it is now time "to give material factors their due in shaping society and circumscribing human prospects" (3). As Brooke and Rickert say, "The world and its objects are essential to the ability to think, speak, write, make, and act" (168). Scholars in composition and rhetoric are now recognizing such things as language, word-processing technologies, and databases as tools that distribute the activity of writing across multiple agents. Even further, nonhuman beings and things are recognized as agents in themselves. Bruno Latour calls them actants, and Scot Barnett and Casey Boyle describe them as "vibrant actors, enacting effects that exceed (and are sometimes in direct conflict with) human agency and intentionality" (*Rhetoric* 2). Finally, as Barnett and Boyle explain, rhetoric has joined with other "humanities" disciplines in a nonhuman turn from epistemology to ontology: "Rhetoric is conceived as more than just a knowledge-making praxis; at the same time, it is thought to constitute ways of being and ways of being-with-others-in-the world" (*Rhetoric* 9). Writing is no longer conceived of as an epistemic or even a socio-epistemic practice of understanding the world but rather as a behavior of intra-acting in the world in which writers participate in their own and the world's emergence.

I have contributed to furthering these ideas that have been flowering in rhetoric and composition, ideas that writing is a process of the world's becoming; that the agents of writing are not just human animals but all living and

nonliving entities, and especially, increasingly, technologies; and that humans are animals who write, not so very different from other living beings in how we feel and think and act. Humans are not the masters of the world, much less of the universe. This loss of humancentricity can be disheartening, even frightening. Still, as Karen Barad says, we do have a role to play.[4] By embracing our entanglements we can learn to meet the universe halfway: "Intra-acting responsibly as part of the world means taking account of the entangled phenomena that are intrinsic to the world's vitality and being responsive to the possibilities that might help us flourish" (Barad 396).[5] As intra-action, writing is inescapably an ethical practice, what Barad calls a worldly ethics: an ethics that is "not about right response to a radically exterior/ized other, but about responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming of which we are a part" (393). Whitehead envisions it as an openness to the "vivid immediacy" of specific entanglements (PR 341). Whitehead was terrified, as Isabelle Stengers says (TW 333), of the "trick of evil" (PR 223) in which the embrace of "what everyone knows" overpowers vivid immediacies, obliging them to "fade into night" (PR 341). Writing ethically, I argue, entails developing habits of paying attention to the relationalities of becoming and always entertaining the possibility that "what everyone knows"—and what you believe—might be wrong.

This understanding of humans as entangled participants in the becoming of an ever-changing world emerges from a radical rethinking of the foundations of Western thought that has been developing over the past century and that is now coalescing into a coherent, if not yet common, vision, a vision I refer to as enchantment ontology.[6] It is a vision that is responsive to the overriding challenges of our times—globalization, late capitalism, and climate and technological change—challenges that require that we take account of our intimate entanglement with other beings, things, and forces, that we understand all entities including ourselves as not prior to these entanglements but as emerging from them in an ongoing becoming, and that we recognize this emergent process of making in which we participate as writers and rhetors as one of the sources of novelty and complexity in the world.[7]

From my long and often adventurous "fishing" trip in conferences and lectures and college classes, in writings by various scholars, and in walks along Lake Superior, I've brought back these answers.[8] I think writing matters because it is the way we make things that are meaningful to and have important effects on ourselves and others of all kinds. I think we can best help students become better writers by encouraging them to adopt and hold to habits that enable them to make meaningful things. I've been working on this project for a long time. I've made a theory that I believe in, that has changed the way I

think about writing (and about other kinds of making), and that I hope will have meaningful effects on you who read the book. Most of my work has not been in "getting the words right," as Hemingway said about finishing the ending to *A Farewell to Arms*, but in more creative work that was essential in making this theory: paying attention to how making watercolors changed the way I look at the world; how training my dog involved a certain kind of trust; how an unexpected meeting with a dragonfly sparked an aha moment and helped me understand Whitehead's concept of propositions.[9] Pondering what Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant say about the how the helmsman "pits his cunning against the wind" (20) while watching a kite surfer leap waves. Arguing with a colleague about the importance of rationality in arguments. Daydreaming in the morning when I woke up, before I sat down to another day at the computer. All the work that's sometimes referred to as prewriting and is anything but. It wasn't brainstorming or invention, either, because I wasn't looking for ideas to fill up a thesis, but mixing my feelings and thoughts with those of disparate others, human and nonhuman. I'm sure these experiences sound familiar—but are these the activities commonly thought of as central to writing? And are the habits that lead to such activities taught in composition courses?

Kent argues that "the production of texts constitutes the writer's raison d'être" (xvii). I argue instead that the overriding purpose of writing is rather to make things like consumer protection policies, techniques for 3-D printing of prosthetic hands, alliances between environmental groups, theories of writing, and, yes, even facts.[10] As Latour argues, facts are not discovered out in the world but are carefully and laboriously made with a lot of work, over time, using various techniques or methodologies, through the efforts of many agents intra-acting in institutional (and other) communities ("Textbook Case" 95). This intra-active work, and not validation by reference to the "real world," is what distinguishes facts that are thus "well made" (cf. MC).[11] Latour focuses on how scientists make facts, but his description applies as well to other writers such as reporters who work together using journalistic methods of interview, document searching, and cross-checking to make "real news" unlike the "fake news" that is the product of fancy. Writing is creative in this sense: it adds new things to the world (Whitehead), including entities (Barad) as well as artifacts—it remakes writers as well as the world—and thus creates an ever more complex cosmos (Kauffman).[12] We make ourselves and our worlds in our writing, and even though we are never masters of the outcome, we are responsible for and accountable to what we make. We can participate in the emergence of what Latour calls a good common world, the best of all possible worlds, even though we often fail to do so.

As many writing teachers note, students who are cognizant of how school works largely agree with Kent in seeing what they make in writing courses simply as texts whose only purpose is to be evaluated, which quite reasonably attenuates their level of engagement. Nora Bacon, who taught in one of the earliest service learning programs at Stanford University, suggests that because students participating in these projects have a "real" audience and can make "a genuine contribution to the community organization," they are "highly motivated and thoroughly engaged in their writing" (41). Linda Adler-Kassner, Robert Crooks, and Ann Watters observe that "in the most successful cases, such as the one related . . . by Nora Bacon, participants in service projects make the crucial transition from students to writers" (2). When students work with others to make things that matter, they begin to understand what writing ethically involves.

Rosemary Arca suggests that it is not just providing students with a "real" audience or even helping them understand that they can make a contribution that turns students into writers.[13] More important is their intra-action with those others they "serve" who are quite different from them and who are also engaged in shaping and accomplishing the purpose of the writing that emerges out of the project. Arca says, "When we acknowledge our interconnectedness, we recognize how we can effect change, and then we seek to serve. When we serve, we realize that our service is changing not only the focus of our service but also ourselves" (133). Students who understand that they are working *with* other agents and not just *for* some passive unfortunates come to understand their roles—and themselves—differently, not as all-knowing missionaries who have nothing at stake in the outcomes they work toward but as engaging with others to make changes in the world and, in turn, in themselves.

Connecting students with real audiences and changing the venue of teaching as is done not only in service learning but also in approaches that focus on public writing begin to align writing pedagogy with the tenets of enchantment ontology,[14] but more needs to be done and can be done in traditional courses. We can help students to develop habits of writing well, habits that will allow them to make good policies, alliances, facts, and so forth. Habits of writing well are habits of intra-action that help writers to pay attention to their entanglements with other beings, technologies, institutions, and forces, and to how they can work with them creatively and how they affect and are affected by them. The habits I offer bear some similarity to the "habits of mind" detailed in the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, but my goal differs; habits of mind, instead of ways of paying attention to entanglements, are ways of approaching learning (*Framework* 1). In addition, while my habits of

writing well are ways of doing things, the *Framework*'s habits of mind are at-tributes or abilities. So, for example, I describe the habit of wonder as a habit of asking questions and speculating, while the *Framework* describes the habit of curiosity as "the desire to know more about the world" (1). In defining habits, I follow Aristotle's understanding of *hexeis* as elaborated by Joe Sachs; habits are "an active having-and-holding that depends upon the effort of concentrat-ing or paying attention" (*Nicomachean* xii). They involve an active comport-ment toward the world, an awareness of something that matters in a particular way. Such an awareness is not necessarily conscious, though it is available to consciousness, and not dominantly cognitive but affective. They are learned by practicing them consciously, but they become, as Sachs says, "an active condition, a way in which we hold ourselves, having taken hold deliberately of the feelings and dispositions that are in us merely passively" (ix). For example, Barack Obama's disposition to mediate differences, to seeing common themes in the midst of an arguing bunch, became a habit of centered flexibility, a way of acting that then felt to him as the thing to do.[15] The habits of writing well I offer are ethical ways of intra-acting, practices that respect differences and strive for creativity—for example, making good decisions.

Enchantment ontology inspires a focus on how all writing begins in intra-action and is realized through accountability for what comes to be in the process. It is an ontology that requires a major shift in how we understand reality and ourselves. Instead of a world made up of bounded individual enti-ties, enchantment ontology envisions individuals as entangled in intra-active phenomena from which they co-emerge contingently in an ongoing process of becoming. Change is not the result of intentions and planning, but emerges continually as parts of the universe affect one another. Everything is made new in every moment. In chapter 1, I describe these shifts as involving three assumptions: (1) parts of reality are entangled in intra-active phenomena from which emerge individual entities; (2) reality is a process of unceasing and con-tingent change in which everything is always in the process of becoming; and (3) novelty is immanent, inevitably emerging in a self-organizing world. These assumptions—entanglement, becoming, and creativity—also envision the universe as a single system, a cosmos, not divided into the separate realms of nature and society. Commenting on the hybrid phenomenon of the ozone hole over Antarctica, Latour says, "A single thread links the most esoteric sciences and the most sordid politics, the most distant sky and some factory in the Lyon suburbs, dangers on a global scale and the impeding local elections or the next board meeting" (WM 1).

Michael Pollan relates an incident that nicely illustrates the vision pro-jected by enlightenment ontology. When a set of tornadoes came through his

hometown, a forty-two-acre forest of old-growth white pines near the center of town was reduced to a pile of fallen timber. The forest, called Cathedral Pines, had been enjoyed by the residents as a popular place for hiking and Sunday outings and weddings and had been preserved as a national landmark owned by The Nature Conservancy. A dispute, framed in terms that pit humans against nature, arose over what to do about the catastrophe. As Pollan considers the history of Cathedral Pines, however, what to do does not seem to come down to a simple choice between attending to the desires of humans or the "laws" of nature. Cathedral Pines was not a true wilderness, untrammeled by man. It had been logged twice, clearcut by the first settlers and selectively logged for hardwood a hundred years later, producing a pure stand of pines. The option of leaving the forty-two acres to restore itself through the process of forest succession turns out to be just as conditioned by man—the imported Norway maples from residents' yards might take over the area instead—and just as subject to contingent factors like an increase in the deer population or floods that would result in a forest of spruce or a tangle of Japanese honeysuckle, another species imported by man. The "law" of forest succession turns out to be "a human construct imposed upon a much more variable and precarious reality" (183). The option of actively restoring the forest leads to the conundrum of which of the past versions of the forest to choose: the mixed species forest the settlers encountered or the pure stand of pines that took over after the logging? Indeed, the forest had been changing over its entire history: "Just since the last ice age alone . . . tree species forced south by the glaciers migrated back north . . . Indians arrived and set their fires . . . the large mammals disappeared . . . the climate fluctuated" (186). Concluding that clearly the actions of man and of nature cannot be disentangled, that the forest is always changing and becoming a new forest through complex intra-actions, Pollan turns to the garden "as a place with long experience of questions having to do with man *in* nature" (190). Our idea of a garden, he argues, is no different from any of our other ideas of nature—wilderness, resource, ecosystem—all are "an indissoluble mixture of our culture and whatever it is that's really out there" (191). The best we can do is to "Consult the Genius of the Place," as Alexander Pope advised landscape designers, which comes down to paying attention to what will grow in a particular kind of area (not palm trees in the area that was Cathedral Pines). And we can exercise our human nature and act for "our well-being and survival as a species" and for the well-being of other forms of life on which we are dependent, which involves acting with restraint in the battle against nature's weeds, storms, and plagues. Pollan says, "Attentiveness to nature can help us attune our desires with her ways" (195). Just as Barad says, "We can learn to meet the universe halfway . . . taking account of the

entangled phenomena that are intrinsic to the world's vitality and being responsive to the possibilities that might help us flourish" (396).

Conceiving writing in line with the assumptions of enchantment ontology requires equally large shifts in how we understand rhetorical concepts central in teaching writing. In chapters 2 through 7, I develop my understandings of technē, agency, and persuasion and offer habits of writing well that they inspire. Chapter 2 details how the understanding of writing as thinking has changed: the thinking involved in writing is no longer limited to rational conscious thought nor is it a process internal to individual brains or bodies. Writers are embodied and enworlded—or, better, entangled with others in the phenomenon of writing. Work in cognitive ethology, cybernetics, and neurology has led to an understanding of cognitive behavior as what beings do in the world. All living beings, Jacob von Uexküll argued, are subjects: they exercise their characteristic modes of perception and action to make their living and their world. The tick perceives the odor of butyric acid given off by a dog's skin glands and drops onto the dog, where it scurries around through the fur until it perceives the warmth of bare skin and commences to drink blood. This behavior is a functional cycle, Uexküll says, not a mechanical response (*Foray* 50): the tick notices the odor and acts on it, just as, he says, a gourmet may notice and pick out raisins from a cake (53). Barad says, "Knowing is not a play of ideas within the mind . . . knowing is a physical practice of engagement" (342). Humans, like all living things, think by intra-acting with others in functional cycles of perception and action that depend on senses and feelings more often than on conscious thought.

I call humans the animal who writes to emphasize that writing is a behavior very like other animal behaviors, not only simple behaviors like the tick's but more recognizably in extended systems of cognitive ecologies, which involve tools and language. Bernard Stiegler conceives of tools and language as arising not from impressing a mental image on flint or by creating a symbol to refer to it but from an intra-action between cortex and material. As an early hominid works flint, what happens is a "meeting of matter whereby the cortex reflects itself" in the flint, a "movement of their mutual coming-to-be" (*Technics 1* 141). This is what Barad calls an agential cut, "*an agentially enacted ontological separability within the phenomenon*" (175), from which a distinction that did not preexist the intra-action emerges. Tools and language emerge from intra-actions between living beings and materials, tools from materials like flint, language from the material of perception and experience. I will argue that both tools and language are instruments of making, or technē.

When reworked through the assumption of entanglement, technē becomes a correspondence as in exchanges of letters, an ongoing entanglement involving

not only makers and tools and materials but also things and forces, a "dance of animacy" (Ingold, M 100–2). Writers make research reports, for example, with the tools of language and images and the materials of data, experiments, and observations. In chapter 3, I argue that the technē of writing is better conceived with reference to the practical intelligence of mētis and phronetic technē than to epistēmē. Joseph Dunne retrieves phronetic technē as an unofficial Aristotelean concept from Aristotle's examples of aberrant technai such as navigation and medicine where "success is to be achieved . . . not so much by keeping one's gaze fixed on the preconceived form which one will impose on the material, as by a flexible kind of responsiveness to the dynamism of the material itself" (256). Distinguished from poiesis, which is activity directed toward an end, phronesis is practical knowledge, aligned with mētis in emphasizing experience and perceptiveness rather than rules. Unlike mētis, however, which required scheming and cunning in dealing with the ungoverned contingency of the practical world, phronesis is the wisdom, or character, of an ethical person, "a person who knows how to live well" from long personal experience (Dunne 244). Thus a phronetic technē relieves mētis of the implication of making as a struggle of man against nature (Whitehead's bifurcation of nature), and endows the maker instead with the wisdom that comes from long experience. Like phronetic technē, Ingold's theory of making abandons hylomorphism and the bifurcation of nature, and like mētis it abandons any notion of an unchanging sphere of being and of true and definite knowledge. Also, just as mētis and phronetic technē involve bodily comportment (hexis), Ingold sees making as relying on habits, bodily "capacities of movement and feeling that have been developed through a life history of past practices" (BA 58).

As an example of writing as making, we meet in chapter 3 the plant biologist Nicholas Harberd who kept a notebook of his activities for a year. We follow him through the countryside to observe a single thale-cress plant and to visit a nearby nature reserve, and we hear of his work on two research projects and of his writing of the papers that came out of the research. His account exhibits three useful habits of writing as making: close observation of the subjects of the writing; connection of observations, experiences, memories, and feelings through patterns; and wonder: speculating and asking questions. Wonder is an especially valuable habit of enchanted writing, as it is a felt recognition that something is important, or as Barad says, how in intra-action something has come to matter.

Chapter 4 elaborates the ongoing process of becoming. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari say that becoming "concerns alliance"; it is a "contagion" (238, 241). Stiegler, as discussed in chapter 2, calls it a "mutual coming-to-be" (*Technics 1* 141). Whitehead conceives it as a concrescence in which an entity infects

"its environment with its own aspects" while at the same time "the aspects of all things enter into its very nature" (SMW 94). Individuals are always becoming depending on the intra-actions they enter into, though they do also endure as a "route of antecedent occasions" over time (Whitehead, PR 43). John Holland observes cities, immune systems, and ecosystems in which "patterns in time" arise out of nonlinear interactions in a continuous becoming (*Hidden Order* 2). And Gunter Kress defines writing as a process of "transformative engagement in the world, [and] transformation constantly of the self in that engagement" ("Gains" 21). Becoming shifts our understanding of change. We are accustomed to think of influential individuals or significant writings as the engines of change, and we overlook the long, convoluted, intra-active processes by which writing comes into existence and influences us and by which individuals develop the commitments and happen into moments or positions that enable their writing to have substantial effects. Philosophers like Whitehead, scientists like Holland, and linguists like Kress and many others instead understand change as driven by complex, entangled, everyday phenomena and therefore inescapable, nonlinear, and contingent.

In thinking about writing, the most important aspect of becoming is the way intentions, purposes, plans—and even writers themselves—do not exist prior to writing but rather emerge in the process of writing. Writing and the agents of writing are intra-active phenomena. Writers intra-act with aspects of the immediate situation minute by minute without reasoning about what they are doing, unless something goes wrong. They may consciously and unconsciously form intentions and purposes in writing, they may change them in the course of writing, and they may formulate and reformulate plans before, during, and after writing, but these intentions, purposes, and plans function more like transient orienting devices (GPS) than like the instructions for assembly of Ikea furniture. Gilbert Simondon understands individuals in the same way, as a process of individuation: "a partial and relative resolution manifested in a system that contains latent potentials and harbors a certain incompatibility with itself" ("Genesis" 300). As a process, individuation interweaves permanence and change, the attainment of a partial resolution along with an instability that harbors potentials. Writers emerge as new entities along with their writing.

Reconceiving the relation of permanence and change as complementary rather than dialectical and individuals as emergent within metastable complex systems allows me to redefine agents and agency in chapter 5. Neither the modernist autonomous subject nor the postmodern socially determined subject can serve as a model for an enchanted understanding of writers as agents. Agents are not determined by social structures; they do act and make

a difference through their intra-actions. But unlike modernist subjects, they do not act with conscious intentions, and their actions cannot determine the difference they make. The enactive approach to the study of mind describes the process by which neural systems create meanings through intra-action: nonconscious acting into the world followed by conscious perception of and considering of the consequent meanings. Just as the tick notices the odor of butyric acid and acts on it, neural systems actively and creatively respond to emotions and sensations rather than being determined by them. The neuroscientist Walter Freeman explains that "this dynamic system . . . is the agency in charge, not our awareness, which is constantly trying to catch up with what we do" (139). In the sense that our actions, ensuing from our emotions, are always our own, we act with free will; agency is grounded in the actions of individuating entities.

Jeffrey Nealon as well as Carl Herndl and Adele Licona have defined agency on the model of Michel Foucault's power relationship, but Nealon still conceives of agency as a form of resistance. He argues that an agent is simply a person who acts, and he decries approaches in which "agency is a code word for a subject performing an action that matters, something that changes one's own life or the lives of others" (102). Foucault, though, says that a power relationship further requires that it open up "a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions" ("Subject" 220). Thus, I argue that agency always does have effects: it opens up possibilities and by doing so changes lives in ways that matter—it's just that it isn't either a free or determinate action of a conscious subject. Agency is a relation, an entangled intra-action, in which agents are acting and becoming together. Agency is productive in the way that Foucaldian power is productive and it is creative in the way Whitehead's concresence is: it is an intra-action that produces possibilities.

As an example of productive agency, I consider Barack Obama's speech on race delivered in his 2008 campaign for the presidency. Obama saw the speech not just as a political necessity but as a "teaching moment," an opportunity to mediate seemingly irreconcilable racial tensions and misunderstandings. He narrated incidents from his life as reflecting both the problems and possibilities involved in racial tensions in the country and rather than offering a solution, he offered a choice that left up to his listeners the decision to act. His speech demonstrates three habits of productive agency that Obama adopted as he became, over time, the individuating entity that he was on that day: a centered flexibility that impels him to mediate differences; a recognition of the wider import of his personal narrative; and a mode of addressing others as agents acting out of their own subjective experiences. These habits evince dispositions to trust in living values that can be modified without losing their