



An Integral Writing Tour

THROUGH THE FOUR STUDIOS OF YOUR OWN AWARENESS

Edith Friesen

Using Integral Theory as my framework, I explore the four quadrants or fundamental perspectives of reality with respect to writing. This consists of inquiry into the use of subjective, objective, intersubjective, and interobjective perspectives to better understand and express writing. My thesis is that together these interrelated perspectives comprise the whole writing space: an Integral writing space. I also identify three developmental levels within each quadrant (e.g., three increasingly complex subjective perspectives, objective perspectives, etc.). This results in a total of twelve unique perspectives that map the horizontal breadth and vertical depth of the territory of writing. I offer experiential exercises for each of these writing perspectives in order to help the reader recognize them. My conclusion is that each of these perspectives is already present within our experience and is vital for a comprehensive understanding and expression of writing.

Introduction

Interested in awakening *more* of your writing potential? I thought so. The good news is it is probably easier and more fun than you realize. Consider this: As a reader or writer, you already know when a piece of writing rings true and when it sounds hollow and false. When it oozes with colour and life and when it feels bone dry. You know when it flows naturally and when it stumbles across the page. When the words speak to you and when they hide behind a fog. And you know when a piece of writing takes you by surprise and moves you, when it opens the window of your mind and expands your horizon. When it takes you beyond yourself—higher, deeper, wider. When it shakes you to the core and changes you forever.

Such is the mystery of the written word, and it is within your reach—right here, right now—whether you are a beginning or an experienced writer. It is within your reach because this mystery already lives within you and is expressed in *every* dimension of your reality.



However, most popular writing resources only focus on one or two dimensions of that reality. The next time you visit the writing section of your local library or bookstore, check it out. Some resources help you free the writer within. Many show you how to craft your writing. Others help you influence your readers. And still others advise you on publishing and marketing your writing. All of them offer to help you maximize your writing potential, but in the greater scheme of things, they offer only a few pieces of the puzzle. The same goes for the various theories that directly and indirectly inform these popular resources, but that's another discussion.

I want the *whole* puzzle, and maybe you do too. I want to write with *more* of me, even *all* of me. I've spent my whole life wanting this. For many years, I looked for ways to write with more depth and shine—with greater self-expression, meaning, potency, and value. Greater freedom. More fulfillment. In the process I devoured books, participated in writing groups and workshops, and wrote. I wrote and wrote and wrote, both personally and professionally. Along the way, I vaguely sensed I was missing something, but I could not put my finger on it. It turns out I was not only missing a few pieces of the puzzle, I was missing the big picture.

Integral Theory showed me what I was missing—a comprehensive way of seeing my reality. Integral Theory is grounded in the Integral framework as developed by Ken Wilber. From the vantage point of Integral Theory, I was able to access the *whole* of my writing potential. Briefly, the Integral framework is comprised of five elements (quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types). Each of these elements is essential for an Integral approach to writing. For example, when we write, we are simultaneously writing from different quadrants, levels of awareness, various lines of development, states of consciousness, and personality types. To understand fully the complexity of writing, all these dimensions need to be considered. However, in this article I will focus on writing from the four quadrants or perspectives of reality. Future articles will explore how the other elements contribute to Integral writing, as my understanding and application of the Integral framework continue to evolve.



When I first began applying the Integral framework to my own passion for writing, I was delighted to discover that I didn't have to master each and every piece of the puzzle; I could simply relax into what I already knew and become more aware. This *awareness* transformed me and it changed my writing—profoundly.

Along the way, I created a map (see appendix A), actually a series of maps (see appendices B and C) of this Integral writing space. This map could have been drawn in many different ways, but this is the way it evolved in my understanding. Thankfully, it became a co-creative effort, and I was able to refine it with the gracious guidance of Sean Esbjörn-Hargens and the insights of Matt Rentschler, both of Integral Institute.¹

And now this map is in your hands, a map of the entire writing space as I see it.

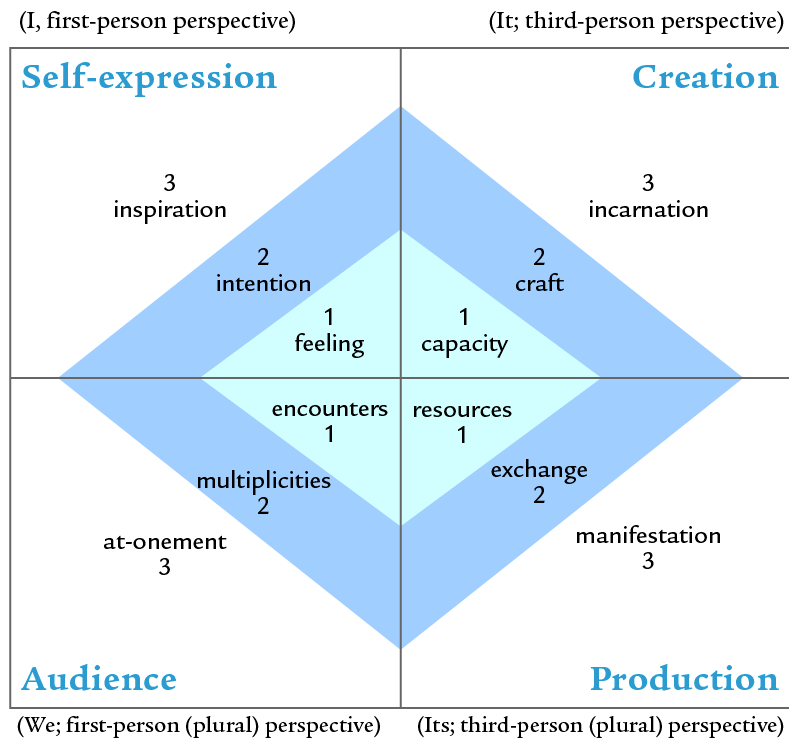


Figure 1. The Four Quadrants of Writing



I've drawn the map to correspond with the four quadrants of the Integral framework. For example, *self-expression* corresponds with the subjective, "I," and first-person perspective; *creation* corresponds with the objective, "It," and third-person perspective; *audience* corresponds with the intersubjective, "You/We," and first-person (plural) and second-person perspective; and *production* corresponds with the interobjective, "Its," and third-person (plural) perspective. Together, these unique yet interrelated perspectives comprise the whole writing space: an Integral writing space.

From now on, I will refer to these perspectives or dimensions as *studios*, mainly because this metaphor is a useful hook: each dimension or perspective is like entering a distinct studio space that supports a particular kind of creative awareness. Also this metaphor can remind us that writing, in all its dimensions, can flourish when we enter these distinct but inseparable studios, especially if we take time to nourish our creative impulses through various practices associated with each perspective. At the same time, writing is also playful. So think of these studios as playgrounds *and* places of mystery.

Notice that each of the studios contains three progressive levels. Each level (from the inside out) builds upon yet transcends the previous one. For example, each studio has a welcoming entry level, with a solid foundation and a main floor that firmly grounds our writing (level 1). Each studio also has an intriguing mezzanine with balconies and viewing galleries that expand our horizons and writing possibilities (level 2). Finally, each studio has a spacious and peaceful rooftop garden, with luminous platforms that launch us into the mystery and essence of writing (level 3). Four studios with three levels each; a total of twelve unique writing spaces.

Also notice that each of these studios has an atrium space, where light filters through a skylight, touching all levels. However, there are no elevators, which means that we will have to climb from one level to the next, and we will use different abilities or aspects of ourselves to navigate through the various levels and writing spaces. The writing exercises provided throughout this



tour (listed in appendix D) will give you some clues about how to develop these abilities. They will also help you experience the heart of each space in a palpable and powerful way. Doing the exercises will not only help you taste the unique flavour of each writing space, it will also take you beyond intellectual knowledge into direct, experiential knowledge. The results may surprise and move you in unexpected ways.

About halfway through the tour, you will probably notice horizontal links connecting the similar levels of each studio. For example, all four ground floors are linked, as well as all mezzanines and all rooftops. At the end of the tour, step back and notice how exquisitely each set of levels arises from the one beneath it. It took my breath away the first time I noticed it.

Before we begin, here's a bird's eye view. First we will tour the studio of *self-expression* and its progressive writing spaces. Here we learn to:

- write freely and trust our unique writer's voice;
- reflect and play with writing ideas; and
- stop time and lose ourselves in the writing.

Our second destination is the studio of *creation* and its progressive spaces. This is where we learn to:

- infuse our writing with energy and descriptive detail;
- skillfully craft our words into powerful laser beams; and
- give birth to writing that has a life of its own.

Our third stop is the studio of *audience* and its spaces. Here we will learn to:

- write in partnership with our readers;
- write from multiple viewpoints; and
- liberate our awareness and write in solidarity with all beings in all realms.



Our fourth and final destination is the studio of *production*. This is where we will learn to:

- harness our writing resources and claim our writing environment;
- seize opportunities to put our writing “out there”; and
- channel the greater current that writes through us.

We travel in good company, as the writers’ quotes sprinkled throughout the text will attest (see appendix E). We go where countless writers have gone before us. I’m up for it. How about you?

Remember to make this *your* tour. Feel free to zip through it or linger. Create maps, metaphors, and exercises of your own. Or join the conversation.² Even if you don’t consider yourself a writer, you will recognize many places along the tour. They are simply aspects of your own experience waiting to be discovered and rediscovered, facets of the writer within each of us.

Self-Expression: (1) Feeling (2) Intention (3) Inspiration

Let’s begin our tour in the studio of *self-expression*. Here, the writer in us taps into the wellspring of creativity from which all arises. Here we learn to *free the writer within*. Naturally, we can’t find this studio “out there” in a box or a simple location, only “in here.” This is the studio where nothing can be seen or touched and that’s why it bothers some folks. They say it does not exist because it cannot be measured, sliced, or diced. But as writers, we know it exists. This is the home of our desire, motivation, and drive to write. Here we discover *why* we write. Here we tap into the wellspring of feelings, ideas, and imagination. We become silent and connect with the deepest source of our creativity.

This studio corresponds with the “I” of the Integral framework, the home of first-person language.³ Here we explore subjectivity, consciousness, creativity, and the interior space of the writer. It is the proving ground of truthfulness and sincerity.



And this is where it gets dicey—if we want to write with an authentic voice, we first have to look inside ourselves. In the process, we may discover shadowy places where we lie to ourselves as well as light-filled openings where we have to face the truth. Questions like *Who am I?* and *Who am I becoming?* confront us here. These are places where our identities as individuals and writers expand beyond our skin-encapsulated selves, beyond our communities, and even beyond the world, as our writing carries us to places we have never been.

Self-Expression: (1) Feeling (2) Intention (3) Inspiration

Let's begin at the first floor of this studio, *feeling*. Here we learn to get up close and personal with our inner selves. This is a space to *trust our unique writing voice*, and even more, to honour that voice as it evolves, instead of loathing the way it sounds now or sounded then. It's time to drop pretensions and be real.

As you enter the ground floor, notice that you are no longer aware of anything outside yourself. Your focus has turned inward, allowing you to *become aware of your naked impulses, emotions, and desires*. Take a moment to become quiet and check in with yourself. What are you feeling right now? What are you being pulled towards? What are you pushing away? Just notice whatever comes up—the good, the bad, and the ugly—without analyzing or thinking about it. That's all you need to do for now, just notice what's going on inside you. If you are tempted to run from the ground floor of this studio, just remember, your words can only ring true if you fully claim your feelings. If not, you will be writing with a ventriloquist's voice or with the colourless voice used in business letters, legal briefs, and instructional manuals. All fine and good, but that belongs elsewhere.

In this space we write with authenticity. This is what gives our writing special distinction and sincerity. It's hard to fool a reader when it comes to sincerity. As Tristine Rainer says, "Readers have uncanny radar for emotional inauthenticity. By the same token, they intuitively know when



you have hit the mark. Just as you gasp with recognition when you read truly honest writing, so a reader will have that response to your work if you risk the truth.”⁴

Yet it’s so hard to write with emotional honesty and allow ourselves the vulnerability it demands. It takes courage to expose ourselves on paper; sometimes we would rather borrow someone else’s voice. I find it helps to write “for my eyes only” on top of the page and just write for myself. To tune out the critical voices that lecture me on how to write. Staying true to my voice and writing the way I talk. Writing about my passions and the topics I speak about. In short, *writing with fearlessness, integrity, and heart.*

How will you know when you have claimed this writing space for your own? Your writing will *evoke the interior world of feeling* within yourself and your reader. Whatever you write will sound convincing, real, and sincere.⁵

Free-Flow Writing. Prepare your writing materials and settle into your writing space. Take a few cleansing breaths and get in touch with yourself...

- At the top of the page write the words: *Right here, right now, I am feeling....* Get your hand moving and write whatever comes. Write as quickly as possible, without controlling, censoring, or editing what goes onto the paper. Write for just five minutes, letting the words flow. Then, if you wish, write for another five or ten minutes. This is a good way to warm up before you begin other types of writing.
- At the top of the page write: *I’d rather not write about...* and then dare to write about it anyway, quickly, freely, without censoring. Let it all spill onto the page. If you stop after a few sentences, begin again with *I’d rather not write about....* Write fearlessly, with integrity and heart.



Self-Expression: (1) Feeling (2) **Intention** (3) Inspiration

Now let's climb to the second level of this studio, *intention*. Building upon feeling, we are now ready to *write mindfully*, to explore, reflect, and play with writing ideas. It's time to think, to make conscious choices about *why* and *how* we write.

As you enter the mezzanine, notice the many windows enabling you to look out, further than you have ever seen. As Wilber says, "we *see* things with the mind's eye which were not fully present to the eye of the flesh."⁶ So take a moment to check in with yourself; to *become aware of your thoughts, beliefs, biases, concepts, intuitions, and visions*. What are you thinking about right now? What are some of your strongest convictions? How would you characterize your mind? Of what does it remind you? How far can you see with your mind's eye? In a curious way, the mind's eye exists both within and beyond the confines of our skins.

Most of us are quite familiar with the mind's eye. It's the place where we make sense of our feelings. This is also where writers have a matchless opportunity for self-discovery, to uncover new insights and truths about ourselves. As Alfred Kazin says, "In a very real sense, the writer writes to teach himself, to understand himself; the publishing of his ideas, though it brings gratifications, is a curious anticlimax."⁷

At this level, we are given the tools to reflect on our feelings, to plumb the depths of our psyches, to consider alternative points of view and to change the patterns that limit us. No longer ruled by impulse or emotion, we now have reason and choice on our side. We can see and write from different angles, from higher and broader and clearer perspectives. So many exciting options, it's positively intoxicating. Why, we almost get the sense that we are in control, especially on a clear day, when we can see forever.

It is here that vision opens and possibilities emerge. We develop metaphors here. Daydream and play with our memories and imaginations. Make friends with intuition. Toy with ideas for stories



and poems and plays. Mentally create scenarios and characters and conversations. Lady Caroline Lamb: “My mind is a world in itself, which I have peopled with my own creatures.”⁸

Naturally, a lot of us writers hang out in this world. What’s more exhilarating than playing, undisturbed, in this magnificent space? It’s easy to get lost here and tempting to stay. Sometimes I wander here for days, until my body screams: “take a break, you fool, or get broken!”

On the flip side, it’s tempting to walk away when the fun goes out of writing. That brings us to intention, the star that twinkles in the mind’s eye and reminds us *why* we write, even through the darkest night. When we *write with clarity and conscious intention*, our motivation becomes deeper and easier to sustain.

Stop for a moment and ask yourself why you write. Is it to dismantle the old? To create the new? To preserve the past or sustain the status quo? And to what end? With what attitude? For whose sake? Keep asking until the truth rises to the surface and reveals itself.

Intention’s star also guides *how* we write. Cornelia Nixon shows the connection: “Critical writers hunt down ideas, take them home and kill them. Creative writers make love to ideas.”⁹ Hmmmm. I like the thought of making love to my writing. But that’s my bias. What’s yours?

When written with clear intention, our words become powerful laser beams, spare and to the point, lighting up the vast space of the mind’s eye. Blazing through the fog. Revealing hidden and long forgotten truths.

How will you know when you have claimed this writing space as your own? Your writing will *evoke the “ah ha” of recognition and realization* within yourself—when you have planned it that way, but mostly when you least expect it.



Reflective Writing. Prepare your writing materials and settle into your writing space. Take a few cleansing breaths and get in touch with yourself. Now shift your focus and enter the mind's eye....

- At the top of the page, write: *I write because...*, then write whatever comes. Keep playing with the question—moving deeper and clarifying—until your intention is crystalline. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, just truthful and untruthful ones.
- Think of an experience you'd rather forget. Begin with the words *I remember...* and briefly write about the experience, as though you are in the middle of it. Then shift your perspective. You are now a wise and compassionate observer, sitting in the balcony of a theatre, watching the experience play itself out on the stage in front of you. Write from that perspective. Notice any insights, hidden moments, or realizations that appear. Finish the piece with *I now realize...*, and write what you noticed.

Self-Expression: (1) Feeling (2) Intention (3) Inspiration

Now let's climb to the highest level of this studio, *inspiration*. Building upon feeling and intention, we are now ready to *lose ourselves in the writing*—completely. It is time to move beyond the confines of the mind, beyond imagination and the boundaries of the familiar self.

As you enter the rooftop level of this studio, you forget all sense of time, as if in a dream. As if you have always been here. Thoughts drop. Fears dissolve, as you *become aware of your timeless essence*. It feels like you, but not you. Infinitely greater.

Disappearing into the blank page, now. Dissolving into the silence before the sound of words. Paul Klee: "Everything vanishes around me, and works are born as if out of the void. Ripe, graphic fruits fall off. My hand has become the obedient instrument of a remote will."¹⁰ Open to



the Mystery which opens within you. Thoughts begin to form, words arise, unbidden. Self-expression is effortless now. You feel light and free, writing from this space, basking in the clear light of inspiration.

As you *write with spaciousness*, from an infinite sky of creative potential, words *evoke a profound opening* because they arise from your deepest essence. Words that make you gasp and swoon. Haunt you with their timeless beauty. Right here, right now, as you claim this studio for your own.

Timeless Writing. Prepare your writing materials and settle into your writing space. Take a few cleansing breaths and get in touch with yourself. Then shift your focus and enter the mind's eye. Now allow yourself to open to something even greater....

- Feel yourself enveloped by a warm, open, timeless space. At the top of the page write: *I want my writing to take me to....* Trust the writer within and write whatever arises.
- At the top of the page write: *Who am I?* Then write whatever comes, gently nudging yourself into deeper realms of self-discovery, past your self identifiers, roles, and labels. Moving ever closer toward the timeless essence that sees through your eyes and writes through your hand.

Creation: (1) Capacity (2) Craft (3) Incarnation

Now for something completely different, let's travel to our second destination, the studio of *creation*. This is where the writer in us spits out the words, cleans them up, and sends them out to play. Here we learn to *breathe life into our writing*, in a world so awesome and mesmerizing we may never want to leave. This is where we feel our hearts beat for the first time, blood coursing through our veins, energy rippling from our soles to our scalps. Here we root our feet firmly in a garden of earthly delights, chart the journeys of the sun and moon and stars, watch the leaves



turn colour, wither, and die. Kiss a newborn's cheek; hear a robin sing. Eat and drink and dance. Make love and weep. A place where everything around us breathes and moves and changes over time. As writers, we want to describe it all, every last juicy morsel of this awesome and all-too fleeting feast. And when our thoughts echo the words of Oscar Wilde, that “the true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible,”¹¹ then we know we have entered the studio of making and shaping reality, the *what* and *how* of writing.

This studio corresponds with the “It” of the Integral framework.¹² We explore objects, facts, surfaces, simple locations, and the exterior space of the writer here. This is the home of third-person language. It is also the proving ground of empirical or propositional truth and thus perfectly mirrors subjective truth in the studio of self-expression. Distinct yet interdependent and co-arising, these two studios are like twins born at precisely the same moment.

And yet, as we scan the walls of this particular studio, we notice disconcerting signs posted by various religions and “isms.” Some signs warn us to get out while we can. We hear that we have entered the den of The Tempter, the evil twin, and that our souls will be banished to Hell if we succumb to, let alone write of, worldly pleasure. Other signs mock our ignorance, reminding us that despite what our bodies tell us, nothing here is Real, there are no twins—it's just an illusion, so why waste the ink? Still other signs welcome us prodigal sons and daughters back to our true nature, proclaiming that we have finally come home to the good twin, to the language of our bodies, our senses, and our Mother Earth. That it is all about energy in motion and nothing else. We have come too far, by now, to fall for such extremes. We know that this studio of creation is simply another perspective of our reality. At the same time we know that in this, and *only* this glorious studio, can we breathe life into our words.

This is the home of action—we can feel it in our bones. Writers are busy here, arranging words on paper and computer screens; checking spelling, grammar, and syntax, adding colour and life to those dry words until they sizzle and shake and shimmy. This is where words become



sentences become paragraphs and more, where they fly into perfect formation, becoming magnificent creatures in their own right. And sometimes, if we let them, these creatures will even take on a life of their own, as if they were just waiting to be born. As if a greater sense is speaking through us and through those words.

Creation: (1) Capacity (2) Craft (3) Incarnation

We will begin at the first floor of this studio, *capacity*. Here we use our hard-wired ability to *just write*. Not simply in our minds, but with our bodies, with words we can read and hear and feel. It's time for action, time to infuse our writing with vitality and life.

As you enter the ground floor, pay attention to your own life form, the way your body moves and looks, smells and feels. Sink deeply into your own body and take a few moments to glory in it. As Saraha says, "Here in this body are the sacred rivers: here are the sun and moon as well as all the pilgrimage places.... I have not encountered another temple as blissful as my own body."¹³

Now move beyond your body and take a good look around. Sniff the air. As if you are a newborn, as if you are a scientist. As if this is your last hour on earth. And from any or all of those places, sink deeply into the body of creation. *Become aware of sensations, movements, behaviours, and forms* that you never noticed until this very moment. Let your body become an instrument of discovery. Then pause for a moment of reflection, bringing your attention to your interior experience of this exterior reality. What impulses, emotions, or desires does this exterior reality evoke?

Here we observe, explore, experiment, practice, and have fun with words. We develop our capacity to *write in a state of relaxation, with keen observation and movement*. It helps to remain fully grounded in our own bodies, in the body of creation and just write from that space. You can write about anything, everything, and nothing here—the content and form are secondary—just



keep your fingers moving across the page or keyboard and write. As Jiddu Krishnamurti says, “Learning is movement from moment to moment.”¹⁴

Speaking of movement, beware of the writing-wreckers who can stop you in your tracks. Like me, you probably know them already—the well-meaning, fifth grade grammar teacher with the red pen and stack of dictionaries, style manuals, and so-called writing companions that act more like bullies. Those pesky shadows clinging to the ground level of feeling—lack of confidence, depression, fear of failure. Your massive collection of “should” tapes and all those critics and rascals who place doubt into your mind. Do not let them scare you away. Forget about spelling, punctuation, grammar, or beautiful prose and write a crappy first draft. I find it helps to just get the words out as honestly, powerfully, and spontaneously as I can. Go back to inspiration and write from that space. Push forward with discipline and keep writing. Look at something with fresh eyes and write about that. Have fun and dance with the words. Above all, let the writer within you run wild and free.

There are so many writing techniques and practices you could play with, but they all depend on using your basic capacity to just write. Once you get yourself writing, you can always experiment with various techniques. If you decide to develop a particular technique, feel free to make it yours. Adapt it to your own style, infuse it with your own voice, and stamp your unique thumbprint on the page. At this level, there’s no right or wrong way of writing, there’s just your way.

And by all means, read—especially good writing. It’s amazing how much you can learn by osmosis. Don’t bother analyzing what you read; just enjoy it and register the impact. How will you know when you have claimed this writing space as your own? Your writing will *evoke the colour, taste, pulse, form, and pattern of life* for you and your readers. Your words won’t lie flat on the page—they will sizzle with life. They will ring with your voice. One of the best ways to



find out what works and doesn't work is by reading your writing aloud, to yourself. Your body will let you know—with a tingle, a yawn, or another palpable response.

Vital Writing. Go outside if you can (or imagine yourself there). Prepare your writing materials and settle into your writing space. Take a few cleansing breaths and get in touch with yourself...

- Limber up your writing hand(s) and brain with the following series of five movements. *Step 1:* If writing by hand, lightly run your pen or pencil back and forth over the page, 10 times, but without touching the page or leaving a mark. (If writing by computer, lightly tap the keys with all fingers to the count of 10, but without making a mark.) *Step 2:* Randomly pick a letter of the alphabet and, as quickly as possible, write it all along the first line of your page, filling the line with repetitions of that single letter. (If using a computer, tap out the letter repeatedly.) *Step 3:* Pick a word that begins with that letter and write it along the second line, quickly filling the line with repetitions of that single word. *Step 4:* Focus on that word and write as quickly as you can, for only 5 minutes. Explore anything and everything that word conjures up. Infuse your writing with energy and graphic details. Let the words run wild and free, exploring their full range of movement. If you run out of breath, write the word again (or pick another word that begins with the same letter) and keep going. Write without stopping to make corrections or second-guess yourself. *Step 5:* Crumple the paper (or delete the page) and relax. Much as a pianist uses scales to limber up, you can use this exercise to get into the rhythm of writing.
- Read a favourite passage or poem. Focus on the vitality and sensuousness of words. Feel their delicious taste in your mouth. Hear their music and



rhythm in your ears. Follow their curves and lines with your eyes. Revel and delight in them. Now write something of your own, for the sheer *taste*, *music*, and *energy* of words. At this point, it doesn't matter if it sounds a bit crazy. Just express the rhythm and rhyme, the energy and flow. This may bring the vitality of words into your body and get the flow going. Even better, playing around like this keeps your writing relaxed and the writing-wreckers off guard.

Creation: (1) Capacity (2) Craft (3) Incarnation

Now let's climb to the second level of this studio, *craft*. Building upon capacity, we are now ready to *write skillfully*. It's time to shelve the toys and craft our words into powerful laser beams. As you enter the mezzanine of this studio, you may notice various types of writing aids: shelves of how-to-write books; writers and writing teachers smiling or shaking their heads; classrooms of all shapes and sizes; caseloads of writing instruments and supplies; and recycling bins for crumpled rejects. This is the space where we *become aware of the spectrum of representational strategies, genres, and skillful means*. Will it be fiction or non-fiction? A report or an essay? A private journal, a memoir, or a family history? Will it be a play or a poem? A short story or a novel? And what kind of novel? Romance, historical, thriller, feminist? In this space we not only have choices, we also have the means to execute those choices.

It is here we unlock the treasure chest of patiently acquired skills and learn to write well, by reading how-to books. By reading more good writing and analyzing what good writers do. By taking classes and workshops. But beware (I learned this the hard way): if you lack confidence or a discerning eye, these helpers can quickly turn into squelchers and squeeze all the fun, energy, and heart out of your writing.

One of the best ways to learn is by rewriting. And this is where it gets tricky. Some folks believe that rewriting takes the fun and freshness out of writing, and so their words never go beyond the



rough gem stage. Others get a bit obsessive about it, grinding their writing to dust. Rewriting requires discipline and a discriminating eye, but it also needs balance and a light touch.

When we do it with wisdom and compassion, rewriting becomes a beautiful act of creation. As Dylan Thomas put it:

What I would like to do is treat words as a craftsman does his wood or stone or what-have-you, to hew, carve, mould, coil, polish, and plane them into patterns, sequences, sculptures, figures of sound expressing some lyrical impulse, some spiritual doubt or conviction, some dimly realized truth that I must try to reach and realize.¹⁵

The point is to keep learning and keep doing. It is in this space that we learn to *write with flexibility and precision, power and shine*. Here we learn the secrets of developing compelling story lines, creating intriguing characters, stringing our scenes together, and adding texture. Here we experiment with different viewpoints, rhythm and pacing, structure and development, detail and precision. Here we work with images, concepts, metaphors, and rules of language.

How will you know when you have claimed this writing space as your own? *You will evoke the potency and alchemy of the written word*. Herein lies the rub. Because the written word has power, this writing space is not without its pitfalls and detractors. Some folks put writing on a pedestal and hide their true feelings and intentions behind beautifully crafted words. Some even become seduced in this heady space, falling hopelessly in love with their own words. And some play mind games with words, using them to exploit and manipulate others. (Ah yes, intention.) No wonder this level of carefully crafted words is sometimes feared and maligned.

And yet, as Diane Ackerman says: “Words are small shapes in the gorgeous chaos of the world. But they are shapes, they bring the world into focus, they corral ideas, they hone thoughts, they paint watercolors of perception.”¹⁶ Crafted words, crafted minds, walking hand-in-hand.



Skillful Writing. Prepare your writing materials and settle into your writing space. Take a few cleansing breaths and get in touch with yourself. Now shift your focus and enter the mind's eye....

- Picture yourself as a gardener, a jeweler, a carpenter, or a guitarist. Take a previous piece of writing. Now work with it until it is cleaner and clearer, more concrete and concise, more colourful and beautiful.
- Take a previous piece of writing and locate the heart of it. Now expand the heart by adding texture—more depth of feeling and thought, more vivid and telling details, more precision and insight.

Creation: (1) Capacity (2) Craft (3) Incarnation

Now let's climb to the highest level of this studio, *incarnation*. Building upon capacity and craft, we are now ready to *make something out of nothing*—through no effort of our own. It's time to release control of our writing and give birth to writing that has a life of its own. As you enter the rooftop level of this studio, you may feel a new sensation, perhaps a shimmering sound or clearer light. A sense of holiness. A tickle or hum in every cell. A deeper surge. As you *become aware of embodied energy flows* moving through you.

A vessel of creation. Vladimir Nabokov: "The pages are still blank, but there is a miraculous feeling of the words being there, written in invisible ink and clamouring to become visible."¹⁷ Words pressing to be told. Rainer Maria Rilke: "We are only mouth. Who sings the distant heart that dwells entire within all things?"¹⁸ Who indeed?

You heed the call. Surrender to the urgency, the inexplicable surge to write. Unique creations springing forth now, words that only you can write. Strong and steady. Serene. As you *write with presence and equanimity*, every line just feels so right. Taut, juicy, and primal.



Words come to life as you feed the energy, moment-to-moment. As you draw them down, one by one, and fill them with your silken breath. As you *evoke the Word made flesh*. Give birth to something that has its own existence apart from you. And make it dance across the page. Then watch, so delighted, awed, and humbled. It is your creation, yet not yours. Letting it go, watching it disappear over the horizon. Then rest, until another surge, then another and another. And once again you ride the waves of creation. Right here, right now, as you claim this studio for your own.

Surrendered Writing. Prepare your writing materials and settle into your writing space. Take a few cleansing breaths and get in touch with yourself. Then shift your focus and enter the mind's eye. Now allow yourself to open to something even greater....

- Relax into the blank page and do nothing. Let the words come to you. Try not to chase them. Wait, listen, sense them emerging. Then let the words write themselves.
- Is there something you feel pushed or pulled to write about? Surrender to the urge and write about that.

Audience: (1) Encounters (2) Multiplicities (3) At-onement

Our third destination beckons, the studio of *audience*. This is where our readerships, fan clubs, and writing circles develop and expand. Here we learn to *join the conversation*. John Barth: “Every artist joins a conversation that’s been going on for generations, even millennia, before he or she joins the scene.”¹⁹ Tuning in, we may hear snatches of conversations between writers and readers. Affirmations of shared understanding like: “I totally get it.” “Couldn’t have said it better myself.” “We’re on the same wavelength, buddy!” Probes like: “Where are you coming from?” “What did you *really mean*?” “What will it take to get through to you?” Appeals like: “Run that by me again.” “Please listen more attentively.” “Speak my language.”



Welcome to the studio of shared (or not so shared) horizons and meaning. As human beings, we already know it's a very sticky space to negotiate; this is where wars start and truces are made, where we come to know ourselves through each other. And this is where we learn a surprising truth: we do not merely write for our readers, we write *with* them.

This studio corresponds with the “We” of the Integral framework.²⁰ We explore intersubjectivity, shared meaning, and the cultural worldspace of the writer here. This is where the “I” of ourselves and the “I” of our readers becomes the “We” of shared understanding through the “It” of our words. It is also the home of language, ethics, justness, rightness, and appropriateness, as well as how we anticipate, recognize, respect, and interpret each other.

As writers we are painfully aware that so much can get lost in translation. Who wants to run the risk anyway? Not everyone. Some folks would rather play it safe in the shallow end of the pool. Others believe that words don't work; that all interpretations are simply misinterpretations, so why bother?

But we are writers, creatures of meshing, makers of shared meaning. We live to create bridges of understanding with our words. We love to swim in the sea of intimacy and depth and resonate with our audience. We are messengers of the highest order and the widest horizon. And when we get it right, there's nothing sweeter.

Audience: (1) Encounters (2) Multiplicities (3) At-onement

Let's begin at the first floor of this studio, *encounters*. Here we learn to *write with our readers*, especially those closest to us. It's time to connect and partner with others. As you enter the ground floor, *become aware of your audience including yourself, your family, your friends, your readers, your writing companions, and your larger community*. Take a few moments to notice how you mesh with the folks in each of those contexts. Reflect on the history and traditions you share with them. The language you share. The values you share. How does it feel to stand in this



we-space, in these circles that shape your life? Where do you feel the most comfortable? The strongest pull? The deepest resonance? The greatest sense of solidarity?

In this writing space we connect with our readers—at home, in the workplace, in our writing circles, in cyberspace. It is here that we learn to *write with the language of shared values, culture, and meaning*. In other words, all the cultural software we normally take for granted when we interact with others. The trick here is to transfer our relational abilities into our writing—to write with a friendly attitude.

I find it helps to imagine writing for a close friend or a big fan. Someone who will cheer you on no matter what, who will appreciate whatever you write. Perhaps you can feel their presence, visualize them, or even hear their words. Just tune in and write how you talk, as though you are having a conversation. Become the reader *and* the writer. It does not matter if the grammar is not quite right or if your sentences are incomplete. Just keep the dialogue going, listening, anticipating, responding. Let the interaction shape the content and tone of your writing and let your writing shape the interaction. This helps to establish a basic sense of comfort, trust, and connection in this encounter.

You can write like this with other members of your audience, too. Stepping into the we-space, getting to know your readers intimately and writing in partnership. The more I do it, the more natural it becomes and the better I am able to communicate. And isn't that the point? Madeleine L'Engle: "No matter how true I believe what I am writing to be, if the reader cannot also participate in that truth, then I have failed."²¹

How will you know when you have claimed this writing space as your own? Your writing will *evoke rapport and affinity*. You will have fallen in love with your readers. And you will hear a chorus of: "Me too!" "I can so relate to that." "How did you know what I was thinking?" "We are on the same page."



Partnership Writing. Prepare your writing materials and settle into your writing space. Take a few cleansing breaths and get in touch with yourself...

- Picture someone you feel very close to and write a note of appreciation to them. Describe what you see and feel about that person, the things you share—history, traditions, values, perspectives, etc. Then write a response from them to you.
- Write a getting-to-know-you dialogue between yourself and someone you do not know very well. Get past the small talk and create a sense of rapport and mutual respect through the dialogue.

Audience: (1) Encounters (2) Multiplicities (3) At-onement

Now let's climb to the second level of this studio, *multiplicities*. Building upon encounters, we are now ready to write from multiple perspectives. It is time to look at the bigger picture. As you enter the mezzanine, notice that different camps have been set up here. Each camp has its own banner and often a clearly marked boundary around it. Within each camp, folks greet each other with high-fives and speak the same language. They think they have got the only correct perspective and that their camp is the best. And when they look over at their neighbours in the other camps, it is with total mistrust, bewilderment, or disdain. If you happen to see folks from two different camps talking to each other, chances are their words are flying helter-skelter, seldom hitting the mark.

As writers, we want to hit the mark with our audience. And this writing space gives us the golden opportunity to become aware of disparate value structures, belief systems, and power dynamics, and to work with multiple viewpoints. Here we learn to appreciate differences and similarities, to put them in context and see where they fit. Of course, it's almost impossible to do this if we happen to be nestled inside one of those camps along with the folks who think just like we do. It is much easier if we lift off the ground and get a bird's eye view. From this height, we can see it



all in a single view. Every camp is part of the puzzle, each has a bit of the truth. Some camps encompass more of the truth than others. From above we can even see how the camps fit together and influence each other.

From this perspective, you and I can embrace all these camps because our hearts are that big. We have been there, done that, believed that, and perhaps still do. I remember believing in the good old days and ways. Do you? I remember believing in forcing my way, in “my way or the highway.” Do you? I remember believing in the one right way, in following rules and social codes. Do you? I remember believing in success, that the world was my oyster and I could achieve anything. Do you? I remember believing that all ways were equally valid, that “you do your thing, I’ll do mine, and nobody will get hurt.” Do you? I remember believing in the best way for now, everything considered. Do you? Expand these beliefs and you get different worldviews or camps.²² Apply them to writing and bring them closer to home.

Understanding the strengths and limitations of each worldview enables us to write with compassion and wisdom, honouring all perspectives. That makes us better writers. As Galway Kinnell says, “If you’re going to write about a frog, become that frog. Inhabit frogness.”²³ By inhabiting different worldviews we come to understand motivation in a new and expanded way. And we learn to speak to each audience in its own language. We also learn to write so that multiple audiences can understand us (well, maybe not frogs).

But beware of those who would try to pull you away from a bigger perspective, the missionaries, lobbyists, or protestors—affiliated with various camps—who may try to influence your writing to suit their own agendas. If they cannot win you over they may even try to intimidate you with “If you’re not for us, and only us, then you must be against us.” Even if these voices just live in your head, they can knock you off center and make you change your writing to suit them. But you get to call the shots here because you have a higher and wider perspective. You have learned to recognize, respect, and write with everybody.



How will you know when you have claimed this writing space as your own? You won't automatically slip into cahoots with one camp and you won't totally trash another. Instead, your writing will evoke empathy and shared understanding. Perhaps it will even spark flashes of insight. Help folks see eye to eye. Contribute to a more caring world for everyone.

Aperspectival Writing. Prepare your writing materials and settle into your writing space. Take a few cleansing breaths and get in touch with yourself. Now shift your focus and enter the mind's eye....

- Think of someone whose values or perspectives are very different from yours. All the better if it is someone who irritates you. Write a dialogue between yourself and that person, taking both parts. Try to bridge the gap.
- Imagine that you are traveling to a foreign land and are looking for advice on how to get along with the locals. Mr. My-Way-or-the-Highway, Mrs. Rules, Ms. Success, Jr. Do-Your-Own-Thing, and Miss Best-Way-For-Now tell you what they have learned. Write what each says. Then summarize the kernels of truth.

Audience: (1) Encounters (2) Multiplicities (3) At-onement

Now let's climb to the highest level of this studio, *at-onement*. Building upon encounters and multiplicities, we are now ready to merge with the greater context. It's time to liberate your awareness, to move beyond your separate identity, and write in solidarity with all. As you enter the rooftop level, notice the same hum vibrating through every unique being. The same essence, the same heartbeat, the same light. And everywhere you look the radiant Mystery smiles back at you. Through mountains and wildflowers. Snowflakes and stars. Critters and music. Human eyes. Feeling deep comfort and resonance with all. Until you become aware of the sea of mutual aliveness and the Kosmos as your audience.



A wave of kinship washes over you. Ursula K. LeGuin: “In the tale, in the telling, we are all one blood....”²⁴ Immersed in a deeper unity than you’ve ever felt, you write in solidarity with all sentient beings in all realms. You disappear into your audience—no gaps or echoes left. Only shared essence remains. Only witness and compassion. Awash in boundless love, your words evoke harmony and infinite care for ALL. Thus you write for countless ears, to please the only Ear that hears your words with many ears. For countless eyes, to please the only Eye that reads your words with many eyes.

Shared Essence Writing. Prepare your writing materials and settle into your writing space. Take a few cleansing breaths and get in touch with yourself. Then shift your focus and enter the mind’s eye. Now allow yourself to open to something even greater....

- Feel your sense of kinship growing, expanding like a sphere. Beyond your gender and age group. Your family and friends. Beyond your race and socio-economic class. Your neighbourhood and country. Even beyond your life form. When you have stretched yourself as far as you can, sit back and write whatever comes.
- Feel yourself merge into the universe. Relaxed and completely at home. Completely loved and loving, without limit or condition. Laughing with those who laugh. Weeping with those who weep. Write what is in your heart.

Production: (1) Resources (2) Exchange (2) Manifestation

It’s time to visit the fourth and final studio on our tour, the studio of production. For us as writers, this is where yesterday’s idea literally morphs into today’s bestseller and tomorrow’s blockbuster movie. Here we learn to work the system that makes it happen. This is the place that makes the world go around—literally. Where we wake up every morning, go to school, work and



earn a living, and serve others. It is also in this dynamic environment—of influences and effects, structures and forms, processes and flows, interactions and connections—where we write.

This studio corresponds with the “Its” of the Integral framework.²⁵ We explore interobjective connections and third-person language here. This is the home of the wider linguistic, economic, technical, and social system in which we write. It is the proving ground of how well things function, fit, and work.

For us as writers, this is where pens, paper, and computers are produced. Where the rules of writing and copyright laws are enforced. Where books are printed and published, advertised and distributed, bought and sold. Where money, goodwill, and energy change hands. This is where technologies evolve, markets open, governments regulate, and innovation goes mainstream. A place of lurches and quantum leaps. And as long as we can remember, it has always been so. It is such a familiar place that we sometimes think it’s the only one. But by now we know we could not have this studio without the “I” of self-expression, nor the “It” of creation, nor the “We” of audience.

But giving our gift of writing to the world is not just a matter of waving a magic wand. There are many things that can hinder or help this process. So much depends on timing, on knowing how the system works, on having access to the best help and appropriate modes of production. For some writers, negotiating the system is nearly unbearable. Who wants to worry about all this practical stuff when self-expression is calling? Why can’t we just close the door on the world, sit in our rooms, and write to our hearts’ content? Well we can try, except that the system always comes into play, no matter how far we retreat into ourselves and our writing studios. We do not live or write in a vacuum. There are interconnecting sets of circumstances that brought us to this place, long before we decided to write, long before we were born. And there are countless subtle and direct influences upon our writing.



After all, this is the studio of co-creation, where people, places, things, and events have always converged. Here there are countless stories, calling from the past, waiting to be told. There are also stories, hearkening from the future, waiting to unfold. And here we stand, in the nexus, helping the stories evolve and launching them into the universe.

Production: (1) Resources (2) Exchange (3) Manifestation

Let's begin at the first floor of this studio, *resources*. Here we learn to appreciate and *work with what we are given*. It is time to harness our writing resources and claim our writing environment. As you enter the ground floor, *become aware of the realities that influence, produce, and sustain your writing*. Take a few moments to notice all the means that enable you to write. Consider the luxury of being able to write right now—the time and money that allows you to do this instead of something else. The tools and writing materials at your disposal. Your desk, chair, and the creature comforts that surround you. Your library of reading materials, including how-to books. The writing groups you belong to, the folks who encourage you with their constructive comments. Your network of contacts in the writing and publishing business. Consider how all of these resources have evolved, since humans began writing, since you began writing. Notice how these resources are connected to each other and to you. How they give you a strong and comfortable net from which to write. Sink into this net, remembering the cultural values that undergird these resources.

Here we develop our connections with our writing resources—environment, circumstances, writing tools, and helpers. Through time and space, they become extensions of ourselves, like extra organs and limbs that help us function as writers. When everything is functioning well, we are able to *write naturally, spontaneously, and productively*.

But oh, how we love excuses—about the lack of ways and means—and procrastinate. Most of them are just red herrings. In truth, there is very little stopping any of us from writing on the back of an envelope, writing on a park bench, writing in the early morning, writing with a pencil.



Sometimes I fool myself into thinking that I need the perfect conditions before I can even sit down and write. But it just is not so. An ideal writing environment (and only you can define that) is, well, ideal. The real trick is to adapt to the resources at hand—the circumstances and means—and write, no matter what. And that requires a little discipline. But this is how we make writing second nature, just by doing it whenever, wherever, no matter what. Then we do not have to wait until all the planets are perfectly aligned and Mercury is no longer in retrograde, or until our favourite pen comes back in stock, or until we have a shower or another cup of java. When you write this freely and spontaneously, then writing becomes second nature and it is really no big deal. Then it flows naturally, like breathing. But in the meantime, it is ok to get the ergonomic chair, the laptop, and take a shower. Just do not let the lack of those stop you from writing when the urge strikes. Stopping just creates a vicious cycle of guilt and recrimination. Remember, there is nothing like those two rascals for stopping the flow. Instead try, as Joyce Carol Oates suggests, to “locate yourself behind a wall of silence and no matter what you are doing, driving a car or walking or doing housework... you can still be writing, because you have that space.”²⁶

How will you know when you have claimed this writing space as your own? Your writing will *evoke satisfaction and appreciation* within you and your reader. Any circumstance will become an opportunity for writing. Your level of productivity will rise because you are no longer held hostage by your circumstances or environment. Your words will reflect a certain ease and your readers will sense that.

Enabling Writing. Prepare your writing materials and settle into an *uncomfortable* writing space. Take a few cleansing breaths and get in touch with yourself....

- Notice all the constraints or aspects in your environment that are less than perfect and amplify them. Connect with them, talk to them. What are they trying to tell you? Write about that.



- Notice all the constraints in your environment and find ways of adapting. Break free of their hold on you and just write. Write for the sake of being able to do so. Write with gratitude.

Production: (1) Resources (2) Exchange (3) Manifestation

Now let's climb to the second level of this studio, *exchange*. Building upon resources, we are now ready to *manage the ins and outs of co-creation*. It is time to seize opportunities to put our writing "out there." As you enter the mezzanine, you notice what is missing. Everywhere you look, you see gaps and holes and spaces. It is here that we *become aware of needs and opportunities, niches and fits in the system*. Here we notice information that could be synthesized. Ideas that could be linked. Stories that could be created. Audiences that could be reached.

An attitude of openness prepares the mind for discovery. Before you know it, practical or tangible ways to fill those gaps come to mind. Sometimes it happens when you ponder a question, look for the solution to a problem, or feel a longing. Other times it comes unexpectedly, as a flash of insight, or perhaps an unmistakable hint. Robert Frost: "How many apples fell on Newton's head before he took the hint? Nature is always hinting at us. It hints over and over again. And suddenly we take the hint."²⁷

The real trick, I have found, is to translate those hints and ideas into words before they disappear into thin air. Of course it is not practical or even desirable to act on every idea that comes along. But when an idea has legs, you can feel it in your bones. There is certain spontaneity that comes with it. It feels so natural and everything just says YES!

Then do it: *write with synergy, connect the previously unconnected*. Give your energy, your intention, and your craft to it, wholeheartedly. In the process, match your content to your real audience, not just your imaginary one. Know exactly who you are talking to, even if it is only to yourself.



This is also the space where we coordinate the ways and means of putting our writing “out there.” How far and wide do you want your writing to travel? And by what means? How much of yourself and your resources are you willing to invest? What do you expect in return? Who needs to be involved? What’s the appropriate timing? Who gets to read what you have written? And so on. In other words, the practical questions. At the same time, notice the sacrifices that go with the territory.

How will you know when you have claimed this writing space as your own? Your writing will *evoke respect and exchange for value created*. Your writing will be supported and new opportunities will open. You may hear praise and thanks. You may even receive contracts or royalty checks.

And more. You may feel a deep sense of completion, as though something beautiful and meaningful that you have written is flowing beyond you and returning in bountiful measure.

Connective Writing. Prepare your writing materials and settle into your writing space. Take a few cleansing breaths and get in touch with yourself. Now shift your focus and enter the mind’s eye....

- Draw a triangle. Think of something that you are uniquely qualified to write, no matter how insignificant it may seem, and briefly note that at the first point. Think of the types or groups of people who may be interested in what you have to say and note them at the second point. Think of the most appropriate means to engage those folks and note that at the third point. Write a piece, lightly holding all three points in your awareness.
- What could you gain by putting your writing “out there” for public consumption and what are you willing to give up in the process? Write



both sides of the equation—the difficulties or dangers, plus the ultimate joys—and tie them together.

Production: (1) Resources (2) Exchange (3) Manifestation

Now let's climb to the highest level of this studio, *manifestation*. Building upon resources and exchange, we are now ready to *flow with the greater process*. It is time to break free of our old patterns and let our writing evolve.

As you enter the rooftop level, you *become aware of luminous patterns and fields, flows and waves*. Everything faintly shimmers and undulates here. Gossamer threads connecting living words and worlds. Spinning themselves into and out of existence—infinately interconnected. All issuing from a vast and silent womb. Jayne Anne Phillips: “a great silence, with no end in sight. The writer surrenders, listening.”²⁸ Listening to the silence, vaster than the language in which you write.

Topics come to you out of nowhere. New patterns and directions announce themselves, and you simply trust the process. And thus you *write in the womb of manifestation, harnessing and surrendering to the energy*. No longer solely in charge of the writing, you move with the flow. Listening, watching for openings and connections. Expanding the channels. Giving the words more room to maneuver and emerge.

Offering the gift of words, you *evoke new worlds of possibility*. And when you do, somehow the universe shimmers just a little more. It seems a little richer and more luxurious than before, as you spin your own gossamer threads. Right here, right now, claiming this studio for your own.

Emerging Writing. Prepare your writing materials and settle into your writing space. Take a few cleansing breaths and get in touch with yourself. Then shift focus and enter the mind's eye. Now allow yourself to open to something greater....



- Feel the future emerging, bringing you a new topic or form of writing. Watch it evolve. Write whatever comes.
- Project yourself into the future and see your writing changing the world, a community, a family, or even one person. Write about your legacy.

Conclusion

Whew! We survived the tour of four studios and twelve unique writing spaces. Now it's time to step back and, with the mind's eye, reflect on the entire writing space and your experience in it. In which studio—self-expression, creation, audience, or production—did you feel the most comfortable? The most resistant? Which levels in which studios were hardest to reach? Which were the toughest to navigate? You may wish to return and work on the places of greatest difficulty. Or, you may just wish to remain aware that they exist. Fully mastering the entire writing space is earned by very few. But each effort carries us closer to claiming the entire writing space.

Now let's step back even further, into a subtler perspective of these studios. Notice how each shimmers with its own inner light. Feel and taste the quality of each unique light—the light of self-expression, of creation, of audience, of production. Notice how the light of each studio graduates from a solid earthy hue on the ground floor, to a crystal clear hue at the mezzanine, to a luminous radiance above the rooftop. Notice how these various expressions of light are reflected in your own writing, how they feel and sound very much like various pieces of your writing. Once you get the hang of it, you can use this subtle sense to navigate through your writing. It may help you bypass the constraints and insecurities of the mind, allowing you to write with greater ecstasy and freedom, to access more of your writing potential.

And now, one more step back... until you notice that all four studios and their spaces are simply different expressions of your unified writing space. They were always such; we just toured them



separately to bring them into our awareness and touch their unique treasures. Notice that you have the ability to toggle your awareness between the different writing spaces *and* the unified writing space. The more you do this, the more you and your writing will move as one, eventually to the place where the writer, the writing, and the words on the page become fully integrated and free.

In the meantime, I wish you this: May you awaken *more* of your writing potential, even if fitfully at first. May you write with *all* of yourself, even if fleetingly at first. May you live *fully* and *freely* inside your writing, even if shockingly at first.

Be the Heart that gives birth to your writing. Be the Life that sings and weeps and thunders through your words. Be the Light that shimmers within every letter and line. Be the Silence in which each syllable arises.

But mostly, just do it. Just write.



Appendix A: The Four Studios of Your Own Awareness

Self-Expression - Free the writer within.

Feeling

- Trust your own unique writing voice.
- Become aware of your naked impulses, emotions, and desires.
- Write with fearlessness, integrity, and heart.
- Evoke the interior world of feeling.

Intention

- Write mindfully.
- Become aware of your thoughts, beliefs, biases, concepts, intuitions, and visions.
- Write with clarity and conscious intention.
- Evoke the “ah ha” of recognition and realization.

Inspiration

- Lose yourself in the writing.
- Become aware of your timeless essence.
- Write with spaciousness, from an infinite sky of creative potential.
- Evoke profound opening.

Creation - Breathe life into your writing.

Capacity

- Just write.
- Become aware of sensations, movements, behaviours, and forms.
- Write in a state of relaxation, with keen observation and movement.
- Evoke the colour, taste, pulse, form, and pattern of life.



Craft

- Write skillfully.
- Become aware of the spectrum of representational modes, genres, and skillful means.
- Write with flexibility and precision, power and shine.
- Evoke the potency and alchemy of the written word.

Incarnation

- Make something out of nothing.
- Become aware of embodied energy flows.
- Write with equanimity and presence.
- Evoke the Word made flesh.

Audience - Join the conversation.

Encounters

- Write with your readers.
- Become aware of your audience: yourself, family, friends, readers, writers, community.
- Write with the language of shared values, culture, and meaning.
- Evoke rapport and affinity.

Multiplicities

- Write from various perspectives.
- Become aware of disparate value structures, belief systems, and power dynamics.
- Write with compassion and wisdom, honouring all perspectives.
- Evoke empathy and shared understanding.



At-onement

- Merge with the greater context.
- Become aware of the sea of mutual aliveness and the Kosmos as your audience.
- Write in solidarity with all sentient beings in all realms.
- Evoke harmony and infinite care.

Production - Work the system.

Resources

- Work with what you are given.
- Become aware of the realities that influence, produce, and sustain your writing.
- Write naturally, spontaneously, and responsively.
- Evoke appreciation and satisfaction.

Exchange

- Manage the ins and outs of co-creation.
- Become aware of needs and opportunities, niches and fits in the system.
- Write with synergy, connecting the previously unconnected.
- Evoke respect and exchange for value created.

Manifestation

- Flow with the greater process.
- Become aware of luminous patterns and fields, flows and waves.
- Write in the womb of manifestation, harnessing and surrendering to the energy.
- Evoke new worlds of possibility.



Appendix B: Writing with Body, Mind, & Spirit

Presence

Body

- Become aware of your innermost feelings, desires, and impulses.
- Write the naked truth, with authenticity and Heart.
- Evoke the world of feeling.

Mind

- Become mindful of your thoughts, preferences, gifts, values, beliefs, and worldview.
- Write with clarity and conscious intention.
- Create the “ah ha” of recognition and realization.

Spirit

- Become conscious of your timeless identity.
- Write with radiant equanimity.
- Serve the awakening of Spirit.

Craft

Body

- Use your body as a research and development lab.
- Write what you see, hear, touch, taste, smell, and do.
- Evoke palpable sensations.

Mind

- Use choice tools, techniques, and technologies.
- Write with colour, drama, concreteness, conciseness, coherence, precision, and skill.



- Create a virtual “you are there” reality—from memory, imagination, or the now.

Spirit

- Use a healthy self-transcending practice.
- Write from the “Zone.”
- Serve the embodiment of Spirit.

Communion

Body

- Enter the realm of rapport and communication with others.
- Write with the language of shared values, tradition, culture, context, and meaning.
- Evoke the “me too” of affinity.

Mind

- Enter the worldspace of various perspectives.
- Write with wisdom and compassion, from an ever deeper we-space.
- Create shared understanding and harmonic empathy.

Spirit

- Enter the sea of mutual aliveness.
- Write in solidarity with all sentient beings.
- Serve the fellowship of Spirit.

Mileu

Body

- Work in an energizing and enabling environment.



- Write naturally, spontaneously, and freely.
- Evoke constructive feedback.

Mind

- Work to fill a gap, niche, or need.
- Write with synergy, connecting the previously unconnected.
- Create value for all, by design.

Spirit

- Work with the matrix of subtle energy patterns.
- Write with flexibility, in the flow and stillness, wherever the energy leads.
- Serve the manifestation of Spirit.



Appendix C: Writing the Spectrum

Experience

- How do I create reader appeal in my writing?
- How does my writing create a “you are there” experience for readers?
- How do I write with intellectual depth?
- How does my writing stimulate the “ah ha” of contemplation, inspiration, or learning?
- How do I write from a space of expansive consciousness?
- How does my writing serve the development of consciousness or spiritual openings?

Behaviour

- How do I support my writing with healthy living choices?
- How does my writing support healthy behaviours for the readers?
- How do I act on new and better ideas?
- How does my writing encourage behavioural change?
- How do I surrender to where the writing wants to go?
- How does my writing serve a transformative spiritual practice?

Culture

- How do I create shared understanding with my writing?
- How does my writing create a “me too” feeling for the readers?
- How do I incorporate different perspectives in my writing?



- How does my writing stimulate the understanding of similar and different worldviews?
- How do I honour the divinity in various perspectives in my writing?
- How does my writing reflect an inclusive and expansive cosmology?

Systems

- How do I develop connections with other writers and potential readers?
- How does my writing fit with a genre?
- How do I market and distribute my writing?
- How does my writing fill a societal need?
- How do I tap into the energy patterns that help my writing fly?
- How does my writing enhance the energy of the universe?



Appendix D: Four Quadrant Writing Exercises

Self-Expression

Feeling Free-flow writing

Intention Reflective writing

Inspiration Timeless writing

Creation

Capacity Vital writing

Craft Skillful writing

Incarnation Surrendered writing

Audience

Encounters Partnership writing

Multiplicities Aperspectival writing

At-onement Shared essence writing

Production

Resources Enabling writing

Exchange Connective writing

Manifestation Emerging writing



Appendix E: Writer's Quotations

“I love quotations because it is a joy to find thoughts one might have, beautifully expressed with much authority by someone recognized wiser than oneself.”

~ Marlene Dietrich, actress

Self-Expression

“Readers have uncanny radar for emotional inauthenticity. By the same token, they intuitively know when you have hit the mark. Just as you gasp with recognition when you read truly honest writing, so a reader will have that response to your work if you risk the truth.”

~ Tristine Rainer, author

“In a very real sense, the writer writes to teach himself, to understand himself; the publishing of his ideas, though it brings gratifications, is a curious anticlimax.”

~ Alfred Kazin, 1915-1998, author, literary critic, cultural historian

“My mind is a world in itself, which I have peopled with my own creatures.”

~ Lady Caroline Lamb, 1785-1828, romantic poet, gothic novelist, diarist

“Critical writers hunt down ideas, take them home and kill them. Creative writers make love to ideas.”

~ Cornelia Nixon, novelist, short story writer

“Everything vanishes around me, and works are born as if out of the void. Ripe, graphic fruits fall off. My hand has become the obedient instrument of a remote will.”

~ Paul Klee, 1879-1940, expressionist painter



Creation

“Here in this body are the sacred rivers: here are the sun and moon as well as all the pilgrimage places.... I have not encountered another temple as blissful as my own body.”

~ Saraha, ca. 8th Cen. C.E., yogi

“Learning is movement from moment to moment.”

~ Jiddu Krishnamurti, 1895-1986, spiritual teacher

“What I would like to do is treat words as a craftsman does his wood or stone or what-have-you, to hew, carve, mould, coil, polish, and plane them into patterns, sequences, sculptures, figures of sound expressing some lyrical impulse, some spiritual doubt or conviction, some dimly realized truth that I must try to reach and realize.”

~ Dylan Thomas, 1914-1953, poet

“Words are small shapes in the gorgeous chaos of the world. But they are shapes, they bring the world into focus, they corral ideas, they hone thoughts, they paint watercolors of perception.”

~ Diane Ackerman, poet, essayist, memoirist

“The pages are still blank, but there is a miraculous feeling of the words being there, written in invisible ink and clamouring to become visible.”

~ Vladimir Nabokov, 1899-1977, novelist, poet, critic

“We are only mouth. Who sings the distant heart that dwells entire within all things?”

~ Rainer Maria Rilke, 1875-1926, poet



Audience

“Every artist joins a conversation that’s been going on for generations, even millennia, before he or she joins the scene.”

~ John Barth, novelist

“No matter how true I believe what I am writing to be, if the reader cannot also participate in that truth, then I have failed.”

~ Madeleine L’Engle, young adult and children’s author

“If you’re going to write about a frog, become that frog. Inhabit frogness.”

~ Galway Kinnell, poet

“In the tale, in the telling, we are all one blood.”

~ Ursula K. LeGuin, science fiction and fantasy novelist

Production

“Locate yourself behind a wall of silence and no matter what you are doing, driving a car or walking or doing housework...you can still be writing, because you have that space.”

~ Joyce Carole Oates, novelist, playwright, poet, critic

“How many apples fell on Newton’s head before he took the hint? Nature is always hinting at us. It hints over and over again. And suddenly we take the hint.”

~ Robert Frost, 1874-1963, poet

“As before, there is a great silence, with no end in sight. The writer surrenders, listening.”

~ Jayne Anne Phillips, novelist, short story writer

**Endnotes**

- ¹ Sean Esbjörn-Hargens, personal communication, 2004 and Matt Rentschler, personal communication, 2004
- ² What some people have said about the tour: “I have lived this...” “I’d like to think about it and play with it.” “The exercises are so powerful.” “Very inspirational, even for a non-writer like myself. You make me want to pick up a pen and try.”
- ³ Wilber, *A brief history of everything*, 1996, pp. 107-112
- ⁴ Rainer, *Your life as story: Discovering the “new autobiography” and writing memoir as literature*, 1998, p. 183
- ⁵ Sincerity at Turquoise altitude may not be interpreted as sincerity at Green or Orange, thus the statement isn’t universally true, but rather dependent upon the level of consciousness of both writer and reader.
- ⁶ Wilber, *Eye to eye: The quest for the new paradigm* (2nd ed.), 2001a, p. 5
- ⁷ Alfred Kazin as quoted in Good, “Wise words,” 2002. Of course, my resonance with the quote expresses my own level of development. An Orange writer might actually write to accomplish the task of being published.
- ⁸ Lady Caroline Lamb as quoted in Bennett, *Write from the heart: Unleashing the power of your creativity* (Rev. ed.), 2001, p. 167
- ⁹ Cornelia Nixon as quoted in Goldberg, *Room to write: Daily invitations to a writer’s life*, 1996, p. 151
- ¹⁰ Klee, *The diaries of Paul Klee, 1898-1918* (Felix Klee, Ed.), 1964, pp. 386-387
- ¹¹ Oscar Wilde as quoted in Goldberg, *Room to write: Daily invitations to a writer’s life*, 1996, p. 27
- ¹² Wilber, *A brief history of everything*, 1996, pp. 106-107
- ¹³ Saraha as quoted in Cameron & Bryan, *The artist’s way: A spiritual path to higher creativity*, 1992, p. 187
- ¹⁴ Jiddu Krishnamurti as quoted in Goldberg, *Room to write: Daily invitations to a writer’s life*, 1996, p. 199
- ¹⁵ Dylan Thomas as quoted in Goldberg, *Room to write: Daily invitations to a writer’s life*, 1996, p. 107
- ¹⁶ Diane Ackerman as quoted in Goldberg, *Room to write: Daily invitations to a writer’s life*, 1996, p. 195
- ¹⁷ Vladimir Nabokov as quoted in Goldberg, *Room to write: Daily invitations to a writer’s life*, 1996, p. 48
- ¹⁸ Rilke, “Heartbeat,” n.d.
- ¹⁹ John Barth as quoted in Goldberg, *Room to write: Daily invitations to a writer’s life*, 1996, p. 44
- ²⁰ Wilber, *A brief history of everything*, 1996, pp. 112-114
- ²¹ Madeleine L’Engle as quoted in Bennett, *Write from the heart: Unleashing the power of your creativity* (Rev. ed.), 2001, p. 59
- ²² Wilber, *A theory of everything: An integral vision for business, politics, science, and spirituality*, 2001b, pp. 1-13
- ²³ Galway Kinnell as quoted in *Quotes*, n.d.
- ²⁴ Ursula K. Le Guin as quoted in Andrews, Biggs & Seidel, *The Columbia world of quotations*, 1996
- ²⁵ Wilber, *A brief history of everything*, 1996, pp. 114-118
- ²⁶ Joyce Carol Oates as quoted in Bennett, *Write from the heart: Unleashing the power of your creativity* (Rev. ed.), 2001, p. 38
- ²⁷ Robert Frost as quoted in *Quotations from Robert Frost, 1874-1963*, n.d.
- ²⁸ Jayne Anne Phillips as quoted in Goldberg, *Room to write: Daily invitations to a writer’s life*, 1996, p. 121



REFERENCES

- Andrews, Robert; Biggs, Mary & Seidel, Michael (Eds.). (1996). *The Columbia world of quotations*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bennett, Hal Zina (2001). *Write from the heart: Unleashing the power of your creativity* (Rev. ed.). Novato, CA: Nataraj.
- Cameron, Julia & Bryan, Mark (1992). *The artist's way: A spiritual path to higher creativity*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam.
- Goldberg, Bonni (1996). *Room to write: Daily invitations to a writer's life*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam.
- Good, Sharon (2002). Wise words. *Living the Creative Life*, 43. Retrieved January 16, 2005, from <http://www.goodlifecoaching.com/CreativeLife43.html>
- Klee, Paul (1964). *The diaries of Paul Klee, 1898-1918* (Felix Klee, Ed.). Berkley: University of California Press.
- Quotations from Robert Frost, 1874-1963* (n.d.). Retrieved January 16, 2005, from <http://www.thespeechsite.com/quotes/frost-q.htm>
- Quotes* (n.d.). Retrieved January 16, 2005, from <http://www.iprimus.ca/~pjduane/Quotes.htm>
- Rainer, Tristine (1998). *Your life as story: Discovering the "new autobiography" and writing memoir as literature*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam.
- Rilke, Rainer Maria (n.d.). Heartbeat (Albert Ernest Flemming, Trans.). Retrieved January 16, 2005, from <http://www.poemhunter.com/p/m/poem.asp?poet=6608&poem=74936>
- Wilber, Ken (1996). *A brief history of everything*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Wilber, Ken (2001a). *Eye to eye: The quest for the new paradigm* (2nd ed.). Boston: Shambhala.
- Wilber, Ken (2001b). *A theory of everything: An integral vision for business, politics, science, and spirituality*. Boston: Shambhala.



EDITH FRIESEN is a published author, writing coach, and workshop leader. For as long as she can remember, Edith has played, wrestled, and worked with writing. As a child, she felt immediately at home in the mystery of writing. But it would take decades before she would honour it as her calling. Throughout her careers in journalism, public relations, corporate communications, marketing, and senior management, she would snatch any excuse to write, yet resist every reason to surrender completely...until recently. She now writes poetry, which is her daily practice, and creative non-fiction. Edith lives with her husband in Winnipeg, Canada. She has a B.Ed. and an M.A. in Communications Studies and is working on several projects around Integral writing.