Blogging

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It has been a running joke of literary culture for decades that, as the popularity of MFA programs in creative writing attest, there are likely more people actively writing novels than there are people actually reading novels. But blogs and their descendents – from MySpace to Facebook to Twitter to Tumblr - make it clear that the problem is far more widespread than even these jokes suggest. In a not-very-hyperbolic sense, *everyone* today is writing and not only writing but *publishing.*

This situation is sociologically relevant, another step in the general direction of mass literacy, technological advancement, and their generally wonderful but sometimes strange consequences. But it also, if relatively silently, is significant in other contexts of consideration. In particular: these new electronic forms of writing – writing with a sense that, in a way that has only been reserved for ages for the authors of properly published works, one's work will be read by any number of unseen readers – force a rethinking of our basic assumptions of what it means both within aesthetic and politco-aesthetic frames to write something for others to read. More specifically: if from Aristotle's analysis of tragedy forward we have understood expressive and artistic writing to have a therapeutic dimension, the emergence of these new outlets for the publication of personal writing urges us to reconsider the relationship between writing as a complicated sort of self-help and writing as an act of communication, whether of informational content or beauty. While the therapeutic aims of writing have generally been rendered as surreptitious (in the psychotherapeutic parlance, "repressed") and complex, the advent of the mass writing and publishing engendered by social networking media forces the issue to the fore.

In short, blogs and other virtual technologies, whose capacity to address the psychological needs of their users would seem to require an expanded sense of what counts as properly therapeutic, actually shed a new kind of light on more traditional forms of therapy. Above all else, as I will argue, blogging and related forms expose a fundamental *sociality* at the base of therapeutic behavior and practices, one which stands as a corrective rebuttal of the classic critiques of therapeutic culture as purely narcissistic advanced by Philip Rieff, Richard Sennett, Wendy Kaminer et al. These new modes of therapy provide another way of looking at one of the central conundrums addressed in the introduction of this collection; namely, what to make of a practice or mindset that seems at once intensely focused on the cultivation, improvement, or repair of the *individual* as such but which despite this atomistic focus is clearly a collective endeavor, a *culture*. And further, as I will show, it is not so much that the blogger needs to have a sophisticated awareness of the therapeutic nature of her practice, any more than the analysand needs to have brushed up on the works of Freud to benefit from his time in the therapy. Rather, beyond or perhaps below everything else, it is the very *form*, indeed the social form, of such practices that first endows them with their efficacy and significance as well as their ability to reveal certain wider truths about the therapeutic in general. Rather than the content of what is said or written in blogs and other social media, it is the ways that such entries are written, and the structure of their address, that are constitutive of our therapeutic social space.

While of course it is a stretch to think of blogging and the like as properly "aesthetic" forms, it is useful to consider them in the light of the history of aesthetic theory. It didn't take Freud and the advent of psychoanalysis to start us thinking about the therapeutic aspects of art, representation, or writing in general. Aristotle's description of tragedy, a good choice for an originary moment of aesthetic theory, climaxes in a description of the psychological

benefit that is provided by watching, for instance, a play in which Oedipus suffers for his hubristic sins. (Aristotle defines tragedy as that form which effects "through pity and fear the purification [*Katharsis*] of such emotions.") [1]

Directly confessional works from later in the classical period, such as Augustine's *Confessions*, still put the emphasis on the salutary effect that reading them would have upon their audience rather than the effects that producing them might have on the writer. But even before the advent of psychoanalysis proper, the conception of the redemptive or restorative effects of watching plays (or reading texts, viewing paintings, etc.) began to turn toward the therapeutic effect of creation upon the creator herself or himself. Romanticism urged new attention to the author's own experience of making the work – and it is thus very difficult not to detect intimations of expressive relief in, for instance, Wordsworth's definition of poetry as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."

But of course in the aftermath of Freud and his fellow developers of modern psychology came a pervasive sense that many non-artistic forms, including dreams, slips of the tongue, or the speech of the analysand on the therapist's couch are also means to the indirect evasion of repression and thus modes of psychological release. It would seem that the non-instrumentality of these forms, the fact that they are not directly harnessed to the end of purposeful communication, allows them to sidestep the interdictions of the individual's psychology. To dignify these para-aesthetic modes with the same powers as traditional aesthetic forms – that is, to understand seemingly quotidian, undirected, or meaningless discourse as staged or framed expression, like a work of art – is very much at the center of Freud's project. All are legible as indirectly expressive, both symptomatic and therapeutic at once. Further, this sense inaugurates a fundamental change in the dynamics of the ways that we analyse both forms. As the practices of everyday communication and representation

become open to "aesthetic" interpretation, works of art come at the same time to be more definitively seen as auto-therapeutic acts. As Freud has it in *Civilization and its Discontents*:

> Another technique for fending off suffering is the employment of the displacements of libido which our mental apparatus permits of and through which its function gains so much in flexibility. The task here is that of shifting the instinctual aims in such a way that they cannot come up against frustration from the external world […] One gains the most if one can sufficiently heighten the yield of pleasure from the sources of psychical and intellectual work. When that is so, fate can do little against one. A satisfaction of this kind, such as an artist's joy in creating, in giving his phantasies body […] has a special quality which we shall certainly one day be able to characterize in metapsychological terms (29-30).

Even beyond sophisticated and self-consciously psychoanalytical analyses of art, it is safe to say that we today reflexively tend to think of aesthetic works as in some sense or another manifestations of psychological tensions and instances of their indirect, halting relief through exposure. Whether it is our sense of Shakespeare's sonnets as efforts to grapple with his own ambiguous sexuality or of Vincent Van Gogh's paintings as releases of chaotic psychological energies, we believe that creation is bound up with psychological trauma and the quest, often errant, for relief. Never in a straightforward way, the work of art, like the dream, releases buried preoccupations and energies, and in so doing provide the artist (or speaker, or writer) with an opportunity to make repressed contents manifest. [2] And despite episodes of feigned "impersonality" during the modernist period, literary artists in particular have never strayed far from a post-romantic model of expression as confession and, implicitly, as a form of auto-therapy.

In this Freudian model, it would seem to be the distancing effect of self-presentation to an audience (even if the audience in question is as proximate as the dreamer to his dream)

that allows both aesthetic and para-aesthetic forms to route unconscious contents around the fenceworks of repression. Of course, blogging and related forms would seem to be a matter quite distant from the intricate dance of the therapeutic and the aesthetic that we find in canonical masterworks. But it is important to note from the start how our ways of talking and thinking about these new modes of writing intersect with or parallel the age-old discussions of the aesthetic that I have telegraphically described above. While there has been plenty of ink spilled (and html coded) discussing the therapeutic nature or potential of blogging and related internet forms, both in academic and journalistic forums, it is worth noting that there is an even more directly symptomatic way that culture registers these developments, surreptitiously and in advance of any theorization. Even our popular mythologies of the origin of these forms cast them as essentially therapeutic in their very development. *The Social Network* (2010) narrativizes the invention of Facebook as an act of ultimately unsuccessful cathartic revenge on the part of Mark Zuckerberg against an old girlfriend who has left him for being an "asshole." Even Twitter, more baroquely, finds part of the story of its origins in an episode of trauma (albeit of the physical rather than the psychological variety) and therapeutic recovery. Jack Dorsey, the brains behind the operation, apparently suffered a repetitive stress injury to the wrist, entered into massage therapy and was so fascinated by the art that he trained to be licensed as a therapist himself, an event that in the long run led to his founding of Twitter.[3]

These stories speak vividly, if only indirectly, to the fact that we as a culture perceive these forms therapeutically. Rather than simply the productions of technological innovation or outlets driven by the profit motive, there appears to be a compulsion in us to understand these media as somehow founded out of deep, personal psychological trauma and efforts at recovery. Significantly, in most milieus that aren't rampantly high-tech, telling coworkers, friends, or family members that one writes a blog has long brought looks of concern,

suspicion, or a bit of both - as if writing in this way is a sign of some mixture of narcissism, self-delusion, an affective disorder, or just generalized strangeness. But when we step beyond moralizing or condescending suspicion, we find that blogging has an important message for us about therapeutic self-expression, whether properly "aesthetic" or not, and how it relates to our current social and cultural atmosphere.

Therapeutic Blogging

The relationship between self-expression and mental health has of course been a preoccupation of the psychological sciences from their very beginning. But in recent years, this issue has become a central concern of research into the mind and its operations. While it might be clear that simply "getting something out on paper" would at least bring a degree of relief through disinhibition and externalization, neurological studies have sharpened our insight into the specific changes in the nervous system that accompany writing. [4] The findings range from ratifications of what is common-sense obvious to elaborately provocative discoveries, but what is perhaps missing is an approach to such acts, especially in terms of their therapeutic usefulness, from an aesthetic perspective.

There have been countless articles, many fittingly written in a first-person, confessional mode, that extol the therapeutic benefits of blogging and other forms of social media. Phrases such as "cyber-catharsis" have long been deployed. The following paragraphs, taken from a 2005 piece in the *Washington Post* are typical in the advantages that they highlight:

> Pamela Hilger, for example, considers herself a member of a very tightknit community of dozens of people who read each others' online journals -- even though, after more than two years, most know her only by her first name.

> "My father used to say, 'You don't air your dirty laundry in public,' " she said. But now Hilger, who lives in Los Gatos, Calif., said she shares nearly everything online, including photos of scars from the surgery she had after her lung cancer was diagnosed in June. "After I was diagnosed, the first people I turned to are my friends and journaling buddies," said Hilger, who reads about 50 other blogs. "They're never failing with support and encouragement." [5]

Many of the articles that appeared in the popular press during the early years of blogging advanced similar claims about the value of blogging, casting it as a means towards the discovery of ad-hoc support groups. Rather than offer a grand tour of these, most of which say basically the same thing, I want to focus in closely on one that seems at once appropriately emblematic and inadvertently revelatory about the strange dynamics of blogging's therapeutic value.

In a January 2009 article for the UK *Daily Mail*, the author Jane Alexander recounts in fairly representative terms the healing value that this form of writing had for her as she battled with depression. [6]

> A few months ago, I hit one of my lowest ebbs: I barely had the energy to type one word after another. Yet blogging about how awful I felt helped and, with some new-found energy, I went to make a cup of coffee.
>
> When I came back to my computer, there were already five comments offering comfort, support, some sage advice. Then the phone rang – one of my fellow bloggers (from France) was worried and wanted to check I was OK.

As she recounts, the most direct benefit of blogging is that it operates as an always-on, just-in-time outlet for group therapy:

> With a worldwide membership, I knew the site could always provide fellow bloggers in different time zones, who were awake and happy to 'talk' even if a crisis hit in the middle of the night.
>
> When you have a support group that numbers around 50 regulars, you get a lot of expertise and life experience on tap. I have been overwhelmed by the care, support and comfort my online friends have given me.

None of this, of course, is surprising. We are all familiar with the internet's oft-announced power to enable us to overcome the anonymity of contemporary experience through the virtual fora and immaterial relationships. Whether one is looking for work or company, arranging sex or babysitting, selling collectables or finding a freecycled bookshelf, the internet is famously useful for reestablishing a sense of collectivity and even intimacy amidst the general disconnection of our lives.

But despite these obvious benefits, there does remain one complication that is a little bit harder to understand. It is this aspect of therapeutic blogging that enables us to re-open one of the perennial questions about the nexus of self-revelation, self-healing, and writing that long predates the emergence of Blogger or Wordpress. Alexander, late in her *Daily Mail* piece, evokes this issue without taking note of its strangeness:

> As our house-selling fiasco became a nightmare (it took over two years to sell), blogging became a lifeline. You can't moan endlessly to your 'real life' friends; but you can pour your heart out online knowing that people can choose to read and comment or not.
>
> I can't count the times I have sobbed over my keyboard in genuine catharsis. I wasn't the only one to be taken by surprise at how powerful blog-therapy can be.

This might seem to be just banal prose about a banal situation, but I would argue that these two paragraphs are structured around a revealing logical gap. Given that Alexander has just listed at length all of the occasions in which the intervention of her blog's readers made a difference to her in the course of dealing with her problems, what do we make of the non-sequitur, both in terms of the overall "argument" of the piece and within the individual sentence itself, that occurs in "You can't moan endlessly to your 'real life' friends; but you can pour your heart out online knowing that people can choose to read and comment or not"?

Forgive me for pushing so hard on what is, to all appearances, some hastily generated mass-market copy. It is easy to understand the usefulness of those people who comment on the blog to someone who is upset, disturbed, or depressed. But what is less easy to grasp is the value of those who *don't* comment – who might never actually make their presence as readers felt beyond appearing as raw "clicks" on the blog's statistics page. In the absence of return commentary, does the blog then become a surrogate for the infamously old-school Freudian analyst, silently scribbling notes while the patient endlessly unrolls the talking that will ostensibly bring the cure?

In an age of deracination and ambient anonymity, in which busy work-lives, incessant media distraction, and geographic dispersion all conspire to tip what would seem to be increasing individual autonomy over into loneliness and the silent panic that comes of it, the form of communication that internet self-publishing represents plays a role that at once resists and, just as significantly, *mirrors* the very social dynamics in response to which it arose and became popular. Beyond the journalistic metaphors, which deploy "therapeutic" as a stand-in for "anything that makes you feel better" – it is worth thinking more specifically about the formal dynamics of these on-line genres, their affinities with older modes of therapeutic practice, and the ramifications that these dynamics in turn have upon broader social and

aesthetic issues. Perhaps, above all else, these forms have something important to tell us about the aesthetic as a category and the therapeutic powers that we sometimes attribute to it.

Presence of the Lurker / Silence of the Therapist

It is, then, the figure of what is called in the blog community "the lurker" that invites the most interesting questions about the therapeutic aspects of blogging. This, more than any other aspect of blogging, accounts for the formal specificity of the genre, as the other aspects are present in other forms and media. Shadowy presences who read without commenting, lurkers can be counted (blogs generally have "stat counters" that permit the writer to know how many are visiting the site, which posts they are reading, and the like) but not known by name or even by a pseudonym. While there aren't statistics available on the number of readers an average personal blog attracts, it is worth betting that the majority or even vast majority of most blogs' readers are in fact "lurkers." The fact is that so long as a blog is publically available to read, the writer inevitably writes for this generally anonymous public, and, per Jane Alexander's description above, writes with this fact in mind.

Probably the closest corollary to a blog's audience, at least as it virtually presents itself to the blog writer at the moment of composition or publishing, is in fact the psychotherapist, especially in his or her classical guise. The unknown, only ever potential readers, in their silence at the nearly simultaneous moments of writing and publishing, play the part of the speechless analyst whose mute presence somehow sanctions and renders meaningful the speech of the analysand. Sigmund Freud, in a note entitled "Recommendations to Physicians: The Psychoanalytic Mode of Treatment," urges practitioners to maintain "in regard to all that one hears the same measure of quiet attentiveness—of evenly hovering attention… evenly distributed attention is the necessary corollary to the demand on the patient to communicate everything that occurs to him without

criticism or selection."[7] For the most part silently listening, sometimes egging the patient on with neutral encouragement, the traditional psychotherapist is the person whose quiet presence and attentiveness without much in the way of intervention nonetheless spurs the revelatory operation of analysis. This sort of anonymous listening is structurally implicit in blogging, just as it has always been in writing for publication, as it is tacitly anticipated in the very act of typing a post and clicking the "publish" button.

But for all the similarities between blogging and previous forms of therapy, there are also obvious and meaningful differences. First, rather than the individual therapist, blogging summons an audience seemingly maladapted to a therapeutic purpose. We have all heard that the internet is inducing in us a soft epidemic of ADHD, characterized by the fleeting attention-only-in-distraction that famously comes of habitually interacting with it. Second, relatedly, our notions of therapy have generally (though not exclusively) privileged the relationship between individuals, whereas blogging might be said to rely upon crowd-sourced, search-engine driven attention, small aggregated instances of reading rather than the prolonged preoccupation of the single individual. As I will show, these two differences point toward a significant change in both our situations as writers as well as our relation to the society in which we write.

The Therapeutic Aesthetic Redefined

Blogging and similar forms permit us to rethink writing and similar aesthetic practices, but this time starting not from the masterworks of canonical geniuses or even the cynically developed products of mass culture but through the vulgar masses of typers and clickers, incessantly sharing their words with the world, however many or few may care to read them. And likewise, due to blogging's similarity to but also essential difference from other forms of personal, confessional but unpublished writing, this rethinking is one that has

to be informed by the role that the audience plays in the psychological drama of composition. Finally, these shifts in turn index other emergent but fundamental changes in the relationship between the individual and her or his social environments – changes that have been in process for a long time but which may be tipping into new arrangement.

We are long accustomed to adopting a sort of vulgar Freudianism when it comes to self-expression, whether artistic or not. Writing, in this model is generally posited as a strange form of therapy, not unlike the talking cure of psychoanalysis itself, in the course of which what is latent becomes manifest to the cathartic if always incomplete relief of the artist. But what these theories have great difficulty accounting for is what role the act of making the art public – selling the painting for display, bringing the book or the poem into print – and what the nature of the public in question have to do with the therapeutic process that is allegedly at play. This, to bring things to bear upon the example that I cited above, is what it is mysterious about Jane Alexander's claim that she "sobbed over [her] keyboard in genuine catharsis" above, especially given her admission that sometimes her readers respond and sometimes they don't. Does this catharsis come of the *anticipation* of an empathetic response? Or is it simply the act of utterance – but utterance in this case in public, available for anyone who comes along to read – enough to endow the act of writing with the affective energy that it possesses?

When considered from this angle, blogging becomes a mass, unplanned experiment, one that sheds a new light on the relationships between the public and the private, the writer and the reader, and revelation and self-healing that structure the act of writing and publishing. Perhaps it is because of its uncertain status and relative lack of prestige – because its vulgarity opens it to angles of investigation we would avoid with "real literature" – that blogging legibly exemplifies something implicit in all publishing, but which we haven't been able to see before. This is a case where the very existence of a form, and the fact of the

form's tremendous popularity, are in themselves revelatory beyond any content that we might glean from close attention to the contents divulged. It is one thing to keep a journal, but it is something very different thing to publish personal reflections for anyone – known or unknown – to read. And it is still another thing to derive therapeutic benefit from the diffuse, often silent, generally distracted attention of an aggregate mass of mostly unknown readers.

Like psychotherapy before it, blogging emerges out of and as a compensation for a world in which deep interpersonal relationships are or at least seem to be harder to come by. But the solution it provides is not purely a restoration of what has ostensibly been lost. Rather than simply providing a means to regain the intimacy that seems so often missing from the modern world, it harnesses the faceless anonymity and contingency of interaction in service of a different model of human contact. That is, rather than affording a retreat from or a solution to alienated anonymity, it is alienated anonymity itself that both enables and defines the contact in the first place. Just as with traditional psychotherapy what would seem to be an alienating aspect of the process – that the therapist is not your lover, mother, or friend but rather a total stranger is exactly what permits the process (so the idea goes) to work, so it is with blogging only on a mass scale and on a purely voluntary basis. As such, it urges a reconsideration of the therapeutic nature of other, more definitively aesthetic forms of writing, suggesting that it may be more the structural situation of writing for an unknown audience than any actual "content" that bears the healing potential of the practice.

The therapeutic value of blogging, the catharsis that arrives, then comes in large part from the complex social situation in which it occurs. In the Freudian and post-Freudian theories of transference, the therapist functions as a surrogate for those who are responsible for or at least bound up with the trauma that initiates the psychological problem at hand. Rather than simply talking to him or herself, or addressing those who are entangled in one's problem, the patient addresses the therapist, who stands in for the problematic parent or lover.

Significantly, the therapist *is like* and *is not like* the person in question that enables therapy to function.

Blogging thus takes what it has inherited from previous forms and intensifies it to a point such that it tips over into something very new. Psychoanalysis – as well as the forms of art that echo its preoccupation with the turbulent human interiority – emerged in response to the changing pressures of modernizing society at the turn of the previous century. The destabilization of hierarchies both inside and outside of the home, a developing awareness of the links between physiology and the psyche, and the shattering effects of rampant urbanization and financialization all conspired to culture new neuroses and therapeutic practices that respond to them. But while none of these factors have disappeared, blogging shows us something that perhaps we all already know, if not particularly vividly. Our problems now – as well as the solutions to them that we seek – derive less and less from the close claustrophobia of the bourgeois family home per the Freudian model, and more from the lonely socialization that takes place in bustling, mostly anonymous avenues of cyberspace and even a physical environment which increasingly takes on the features of it.

Thus we begin to turn to the aggregate mass of distracted readers rather than the paid therapist. Our needs are at once exacerbations of the old dilemmas of modern life, but at the same time we seem to have come to terms with what was always implicit in therapeutic models of psychology. [8] Through blogging, one addresses himself or herself exactly to that ever present but never fully proximate crowd that is, ultimately, both the cause of the problem as well as its potential solution. Of course, this is a situation that, like therapy itself, is as dangerous as it is therapeutic. As with other earlier pre-internet forms of therapy, there remains a fundamental ambiguity as to whether this "cure" is itself as symptomatic as the symptoms it would seem bent on alleviating.

And yet, as symptomatic a solution as blogging may be, it still significantly differs from the situation that gives rise to it. It makes – or attempts to make – of the crowd an audience, though one as transient as those that fill a theatre from night to night. An audience is not a family or a group of friends, but rather a crowd that listens, a crowd that by its very act of freely showing up, attests to at least some degree of sympathy and interest in one's feelings, observations, and preoccupations. The importance of the negotiation between the liberatory randomness of the internet and the desire to enclose a community within it is visible even in the development of social media forms that have emerged out of blogging. Facebook, for instance, could be seen as a retrenchment against the contingency and anonymity of blogging, given its privacy features which allows writers more control over their readerships than blogs.

In all of this, blogging points us towards a conception of communicative, "vulgar" aesthetics whose therapeutic nature has as much to do with the relation to a countable but not knowable readership as it does with the personal "working through" of a psychological problem. We might even say that the very existence and popularity of blogging urges us to move from the age of the "death of the author" to the age of the "birth of the lurker," as it brings into focus the strange and complex sociality involved every time we type into the windows on our screens, every time we click "send" or "post." In doing so, it not only reminds us of the self-entanglement and correspondent interminability of all of our efforts to develop modern solutions to the problem generated by modernity itself, but also compels us to think again about some of our reflexive notions of expressive or aesthetic writing. On the one hand, there has, in recent decades, been a turn toward the *social* analysis of works of art – the consideration of them in terms of the influence of the world around the artist, in its economic, political, or ideological guises, upon his or her work. On the other hand, psychologically-minded theorizations of art have long urged us to consider the formal

attributes of the work as the evidence of a personal negotiation on the part of the artist with her or his internal psychology. But the dynamics of blogging and their therapeutic aesthetic, which I have delineated here, suggest that we might also begin to see these psychological aspects, the aspects that would be considered most private and internal, in terms of their essential and formative sociality.

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[1] Aristotle, *Poetics*. trans. Malcolm Heath. (New York: Penguin, 1996), 10.
[2] Freud's *Psychopatholgy of Everyday Life* makes a strong case for this blurring of the lines between dream and life, art and "normal" speech when it comes to the psychological processes at play in each. See *Psychopatholgy of Everyday Life*. trans. A. A. Brill (London: T Fisher Unwin, 1901).
[3] David Fitzpatrick, "Twitter was Act One," *Vanity Fair*, April 2011, accessed September 12, 2012, http://www.vanityfair.com/business/features/2011/04/jack-dorsey-201104.As Fitzpatrick has the story:

> After the dNet disaster, Dorsey returned to St. Louis and began studying botanical illustration at the Missouri Botanical Garden. As a teenager, he had spent hours in gardens, drawing with a graphite pencil. Suddenly, he considered this hobby a possible career path. He indulged his fascination with the challenge of precisely rendering a flower's intricate details. "I fell in love with flora of all types, especially ferns. Loved the sparse structure and repetition of shape—almost fractal." Illustrating flowers, like programming, was a "perfect intersection of art and science."
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> But shortly thereafter, deciding that illustration really wasn't for him, his wrist started hurting. He went to a massage therapist for treatment and, in short order, became consumed by the field. After a thousand hours of training he was certified and returned to San Francisco, where he moved into a shed in Kidd's backyard. He quickly learned, to his dismay, that the city had a surfeit of massage therapists. So, while working as a nanny for Kidd's daughter, Dorsey started thinking again about software—and that message he'd sent from Golden Gate Park.

The message in question was one that anticipated the development of Twitter a year earlier:

That evening, he wrote some code that enabled him to have an e-mail re-posted to as many people as he wanted. He entered the e-mail addresses of five friends into the software, and took a walk in Golden Gate Park. In an e-mail's subject line he wrote, "I'm at the Bison Paddock watching the bison."
[4] For an example of the two approaches to this issue, the psychological and the neurological, see in the case of the former, James W. Pennebaker, "Writing about Emotional Experiences as a Therapeutic Process" *Psychological Science* 8 (1997): 162-166. In the case of the latter, see Matthew D. Lieberman, Naomi I. Eisenberger, Molly J. Crockett, Sabrina M. Tom, Jennifer H. Pfeifer, and Baldwin M. Way, "Putting Feelings into Words: Affect Labeling Disrupts Amygdala Activity in Response to Affective Stimuli, *Pyschological Science*, Vol (2007): 421-428., a study which discovers through neuroimaging that the act of "affect labeling" – that is pressing distinct words upon amorphous feelings – has the effect of "diminish[ing] the response of the amygdala and other limbic regions to negative emotional images." In other words, speaking or writing calms you down.
[5] Yuki Noguchi, "Cyber-Catharsis: Bloggers Use Web Sites as Therapy," *The Washington Post*, October 12, 2005, accessed September 12, 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/10/11/AR2005101101781.html
[6] Jane Alexander, "Blog your way to health: Therapy at a click, *The Daily Mail*, January 10, 2009, accessed on September 12, 2012, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/you/article-1107962/Blog-way-health-Therapy-click.html

[7] Sigmund Freud, "Recommendations to Physicians: The Psychoanalytic Method of Treatment," 1912, 2:109-120 as cited in Miriam Elson, "Silence, It's Use and Abuse: A View from Self Psychology," *Clinical Social Work Journal* 29 (2001): 352-353.

[8] Even the history of psychoanalysis points in this direction. After all, Jacques Lacan's work takes the matrices that Freud discovers in the family home and generalizes them into universal pattern facing the self as it deals with a murky and amorphous otherness.