Brenda Ueland is a writer whose most noted work is a book which explains her theory about how to write. She also published an autobiography and a collection of essays as well as achieving some notoriety as a magazine writer in the twenties and thirties. Ueland's writing theory is based on the premise that all people have a natural desire to express themselves in writing. In her book about writing she explains her belief that all people have the potential to write as an expression of their natural, creative instincts. Ueland's theory identifies her as an Expressionist in terms of contemporary rhetorical theories.

Considered eccentric by her family and friends, Ueland chose to live a life that demonstrated a desire for independence and equal treatment as a woman in a male-dominated society. Ueland's attitudes and ideas about choosing a lifestyle not within the bonds of the conventional expectations of marriage identified her with feminist ideals. Although feminism as a recognized movement was to
come later, Ueland felt that equal work required equal pay, and, therefore, she objected to the inequalities in salaries based on gender. Ueland also tried to define herself in terms of her own accomplishments and not through her husband’s career. In her published works Ueland not only teaches about writing as a form of self-expression, she also shares her search to discover her personal beliefs and values as an inspiration to other people who want to write.
Brenda Ueland:
Early Feminist and Writing Theorist

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From her early twenties until she died at age ninety-three, Brenda Ueland kept journals, creating a large volume of writing which reflects her struggle to discover her identity and to find a way of life that suited her. She also published an autobiography and a book about writing. There is a unifying theme in each of these works which reflects Ueland’s idea that writing is an important means of self-expression and self-growth if it is done honestly and without fabrication. Ueland defines this need for self-expression as the natural by-product of the “joyful, imaginative, impassioned energy” that represents for her a “creative power” that comes with being human (UE 6). Believing that all people have a natural longing to write, Ueland describes an approach to writing, unfettered by criticism and self-consciousness, which encourages people to write not as a dutiful response, but as a natural, creative act with intrinsic rewards. This belief forms the foundation of Ueland’s theory of writing and identifies her as an Expressionist among writing theorists.

Ironically, Ueland did not always adhere to her own admonitions about writing. While in high school, she experienced writing as a rewarding avenue of self-discovery, a means of tapping sources of creativity in herself that she had not recognized. Her interest in writing never flagged, but for several years after college when she was supporting herself by writing articles and short stories, she felt that
writing was painful, constraining, unimaginative, and even boring. Not until she began writing her autobiography at age forty-six did she write in a style of prose that "came out transparently, from her true self... interesting and straight to the point" (Me 3). The change in her writing style marked the end of her published work in magazines, but she went on to write another book, several essays about musicians, and articles for newspapers. While newspaper articles did provide her with an income, Ueland regarded writing more importantly as a means of personal growth and as an avenue for establishing her self-identity.

Ueland's desire to find her own form of self-expression is also reflected in her personal history. Prizing a sense of independence fostered in childhood, Ueland made choices in her life that reflected a desire to break free of the restrictions of conventional feminine roles. In the first chapter of her autobiography, she explains that she writes about "how it feels to be a woman and the limitations of that... and about what women might become" (5). Although the feminist movement of the sixties was yet to come, Ueland allied herself with feminist concerns by rejecting marriage as the only choice for women leaving school, by objecting to the inequality between salary scales for men and women, and by establishing her self-identity through her own work rather than through a husband's career. Often choosing to survive on meager funds rather than ask her father or a husband or ex-husband for assistance, Ueland demonstrated independence. She pursued a career in writing which gave her an income that sometimes allowed for affluence, and at other times barely supported her basic living requirements. Despite financial hardships, Ueland consistently
reaffirmed her desire to make her own choices in life, choices not bound by conventional expectations of a male-dominated society. Ueland's life was her testimony to feminism. Although she recognized feminists as people identified by a common concern for women's rights, Ueland's support for feminism arose from an individual desire to be free to live her life exactly as she wanted.

Although she wrote to provide herself with a living, Ueland also valued writing because it gave her a means of sharing herself. When asked by a friend what she would put in her autobiography, Ueland wrote that her "inner life, like everybody's in the world, is interesting" (Me 5). This belief that everyone has something interesting to share acts as the basis for her teachings in If You Want To Write. Ueland placed a high value on writing as a means of self-expression, as a way to self-awareness, and her desire to share this realization led her to write, lecture, and teach throughout the second half of her life about the work and rewards of writing. Although not a recognized scholar, Ueland's voice is still being heard in the second edition of If You Want To Write republished in 1983. She has a personal writing style and voice that speaks to ordinary people who desire to put down in words what they think and feel as a way to further self-understanding. It is her appeal to the inner voice in each person and her belief that this voice can be expressed in words that mark Ueland's contribution to the field of writing. Recognizing writing as an important means for personal self-fulfillment, Ueland shares her experiences and ideas as an account of her own beliefs and as inspiration for those who want to write.
2. Biographical Information

Brenda Ueland was born on October 24, 1891 in a house on the south shore of Lake Calhoun in Minneapolis, Minnesota (Clara 71). The large home, described as having 1,000 rooms and one bathroom, was built by her father, Andreas, who came from Norway to Minnesota when he was eighteen. Andreas' father, Ole Gabriel Ueland, a farmer and Norwegian statesman, left Andreas with stories about America. As Andreas told his children years later, he caught a "desperate case of homesickness reversed" (Me 9) and wanted to go to America to work and live. His mother agreed to let him go for five years, and alone and determined, he made his way to Minnesota where he worked on farms as a laborer and in the city digging sewers. But during these five years, he studied law at night, and in his sixth year, 1877, he became a lawyer. When he had a more stable income, Andreas began courting Clara Hampson, a beautiful girl of fifteen. They married ten years later on June 19, 1885 (Clara 28). Andreas went on to a successful career as a lawyer, while he and Clara became parents to eight children.

Clara Hampson spent much of her life fulfilling her role as a mother, but equally important were the numerous activities she pursued which concerned women's rights. Clara lobbied legislators, wrote essays, and gave speeches in her work for the suffrage movement. Ueland recorded much of her mother's activities in a biography which was never published, but which was eventually bound as a manuscript. Born in America, Clara lived with her mother and brother in Minnesota after she moved there from Akron, Ohio, where her
father died, his health broken by the Civil War. Although her family lived in meager circumstances over a hardware store, Clara was considered talented, bright, beautiful, and acceptable by the more prosperous and fashionable people of the city. In 1890, after her marriage to Andreas Ueland, Clara moved to the large, square, wooden house Andreas built on the south shore of Lake Calhoun where she and her husband were to live the rest of their lives. Situated on five acres and surrounded by farms and woods, the house was a five mile carriage drive from downtown Minneapolis.

Clara Ueland created an atmosphere for creativity and learning in her home which may have influenced Ueland's later belief that each person possesses a natural, creative talent. Clara installed a blackboard along the wall of the upstairs hall so the children could draw and write, and they often learned from each other as the younger children tried to copy the older ones. Ueland attended a kindergarten which her mother had established in her home because Clara believed strongly in preschool education. The presence of two hired girls enabled Clara to spend time on educational and community activities as well as manage a household for nine people. Clara worked tirelessly for many causes focusing on children and women, and her work earned her mention in: Notable American Women 1607–1950, Woman's Who's Who of America, The Biographical Cyclopaedia of American Women. Influenced by her mother's community pursuits, Ueland's later life reflected a concern for women's rights. Clara made a continuous commitment to the women's suffrage movement until July, 1919, when the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified (Clara 413).
After women were granted the right to vote, the suffragettes established the League of Women Voters, an organization Clara continued to work with until her death. In the afternoon of March 1, 1927, Clara returned from the State Capitol where she had been lobbying for a bill that would limit women's work in factories to 54 hours a week (Clara 491). She stepped off the streetcar, and while walking the short distance to her home, was struck by a truck whose driver was not able to stop on the frozen, snowy ruts. Clara Ueland's life ended at the age of 66, but her influence is commemorated by a plaque in the Minnesota Capitol rotunda and by a scholarship fund at the University of Minnesota for women graduate students.

The first four children born to Andreas and Clara were girls: Anne, Elsa, Dorothy (who died at age 2), and Brenda. Then followed four boys: Sigurd, Arnulf, Rolf, and Torvald. Ueland was born shortly before Dorothy died of pneumonia, and the sadness and grief experienced at this time affected her parents deeply. Because her other two sisters were older and close in age, Ueland's closest sibling was Sigurd. Ueland spent much of her time with her brothers as they had to eat upstairs until she turned eight and could join her sisters and parents at the main dining table. Clara's attitudes about raising children allowed the children much freedom in their play, and Ueland, her siblings, and perhaps ten or twelve other children enjoyed such household games as hockey in a long paneled hall. The Ueland home was recognized as a place to congregate not only for children but for the numerous visitors the Uelands welcomed. Ueland writes about her childhood as a time unfettered by social restrictions or parental rules, a time of
exploration, freedom, adventure, and fascination, but all within a very secure environment provided by two parents who saw their children as individuals worth fussing over.

Despite the attention and companionship Ueland enjoyed as a child, she admitted she also felt isolated. "The affectionate aloofness of my mother, who had too much to do, made me solitary and independent" (Me 34). Describing herself as "bashful and taciturn with the family but jokey and talkative with outsiders, a cut-up" (Me 34), Ueland was a monopolizer of conversations, a person who demanded notice from those around her. In an October, 1990 interview, Ueland's daughter, Gabriel "Gaby" Ueland McIver, spoke of her mother's large ego and her need to always come out on top—"I spent my whole life learning the most wonderful ways to get around fighting. I didn't like to fight because she [Ueland] always won, and she could get in the last words and no holds barred and no prisoners taken. You had to give up because it just got worse." Gaby insisted that her mother loved a verbal joust and enjoyed heated conversations as a form of entertainment.

Ueland admitted that her feelings of independence were influenced by her mother's attitude about girls. Clara Ueland was described as a mother who felt "girls were just as precious and important as boys. We never felt that girls had to do housework and boys outdoor work. She made no distinction between them in actions, freedom, education, or possibilities. Elsa and I could be presidents and admirals, just as much as Sigurd, if we happened to feel like it" (Me 36). Ueland was not castigated for unfeminine behavior when she got into fights with boys, nor was she told that playing with toy army soldiers or wanting a
French bayonet for her twelfth birthday was unladylike. Fascinated by military heros in stories she read as a young girl, Ueland much later in life adopted a style of attire that reflected this attraction. Gaby described Ueland's favorite daily attire as her "burglar suit," a title Ueland felt appropriate but for unexplained reasons. "Ueland may have been the most stylish of anyone we knew because she dressed perfectly for herself. The burglar suit would be like khaki army pants, but light tan, and a shirt like that with pockets like a safari shirt. Under that she always wore a white shirt, a nice ruffled cotton, and a man's bow or string tie. Then she would wear a pin-on medal." Although Gaby said her mother felt exactly suited to this style of dress, Ueland's choice of clothing gained her a reputation as an eccentric among her family, friends, and acquaintances.

When Ueland was a high school student and had to wear clothes that her mother's dressmaker sewed for her, she was concerned about her appearance because she was also overweight. At one time Ueland weighed 150 pounds and shunned feminine clothing; Clara said her daughter "dressed like a cowboy," and the boys in the family called her "the sodpacker" (Me 60). Disgusted by her fatness and wanting to disguise her emerging figure, Ueland admitted in her autobiography that "my struggle against fatness was one of the fierce efforts of my life" (Me 60). More than once she lost weight only to see it reappear. But the worst torment as a youth was getting into a fancy dress, putting on white gloves and going to dancing school. Ueland recalls the painful moments when all the girls were chosen as partners except her, which left her feeling rejected and resentful. "This dancing school suffering
was to last two or three years, and sometimes I think it accounts for a
whole train of things in my life, like my bad judgment in marrying and
my broken, truncated emotional life thereafter" (Me 63). From that
time on Ueland derided boys and romance. She felt insulted by her
mother because at the same time Clara told Ueland to encourage boys,
she told Ueland's older sisters not to sit too close to boys. Because of
her weight, Ueland felt singled out by boys as unattractive, which left
emotional scars that she carried throughout her life.

At home, Ueland was exposed to a great diversity of people who
came to participate in the active social life of her parents. That social
life was distinguished by a devotion to intellect and culture. An
assortment of teachers, actors, statesmen, and businessmen, who read
Ibsen or wrote critical essays, gathered to share in intellectual
conversation at the Ueland's home. Not only were the older children
allowed to be present at these gatherings, but the discussions often
carried on through the week when the family dined together in the
evening. Intellectual conversations were an ordinary part of the
household atmosphere for Ueland, and she became a "talker," a person
who enjoyed conversational fencing and who took to intellectual
arguing with the spirit of one going into battle. Even in her last days,
Ueland agreed to speak before groups; she described herself as a
"sieve," wanting to tell everybody everything (Me 70). Gaby spoke of
the last time her mother left her home. "Right to the end people would
ask her out, and she was really close to death, and she'd go. She gave a
speech at this college, and that was the last time she left the house.
They kept her out for over five hours, and I stayed up worrying as if she
were a child. She shouldn't have been standing up that long let alone talking, but she had a great time."

The gatherings at her parent's home frequently exposed Ueland to a variety of musicians. In her autobiography, Ueland recalled the parlor parties her parents gave which included informal musical performances by the guests who sang a 16th century song while they strummed the zither or guitar, or played a sonata on the piano. All the Ueland children participated in music lessons, and Ueland fondly remembered her piano teacher, Mrs. Alexandra Hollander Fahnestock, who opened her eyes to an appreciation of music. However, one of the people who influenced Ueland the most was Francesca, a woman who at times lived with the family and taught the violin. Francesca's free-living philosophy affected Ueland, who referred to her as a person who was "magnetic, fascinating, oracular... living in the present" (I, 52). Ueland's daughter gave a colorful reply when asked about Francesca:

Francesca influenced our family so much. And yet she talked all this vague, wispy stuff. We were leaving to drive to New York for a summer, and we left my new little kitten with Francesca, and I don't think we were at the bottom of the drive, I'll bet, before Benny [the dog] had eaten that kitten. Because, you know, Francesca thought about the lion and the lamb. I knew that idiot; I knew I couldn't trust her with my kitten. She thought everything was peace and harmony--I didn't like the music lessons either. And Ma was more influenced by her then, when she wrote, than she was in retrospect. In some ways it was awfully simpy. Francesca had everybody dancing around
the yard like Isadora Duncan. Isn't it funny she [Ueland] could be taken in by people like some kind of child and yet not be taken in by others.

Ueland's initial regard for Francesca changed as she aged, but she stayed involved with music, and later in her career wrote critical reviews for the newspaper about musical performances and composers, many of which were published in 1984 in *Mitropoulos and The North High Band*.

As a high school student, Ueland had a writing experience that she remembered as a "happy creative absorption" (Me 74). Miss Watts, who taught English, assigned several themes during the year, and Ueland felt elated by Miss Watt's interest in her writing. Inspired by this attention, she looked forward to writing a story with an anticipation she described as "pleasant and easy, like making a new dress" (Me 74). Rather than being repulsed by the struggle to write the "writhing" words, Ueland was overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the task of finding and arranging words into comprehensible text (Me 74). Paradoxically, she also admitted that the initial feeling of hopeful anticipation she experienced with this first story would soon leave her and would not return again for thirty years. However, Ueland recounted this experience as the beginning of her interest in writing as a means of self-expression.

Ueland entered Wells College after high school, a choice of schools made by her parents. Ueland remembered her college experience as much more positive than her high school years. She wrote, "The first day an extraordinary thing happened. I experienced suddenly a
wonderful sense of power, a feeling I had never had before. I began to walk around free and hatless... I cannot tell you how remarkable it was to find myself that very first day a card, a wag. It was so immediate, a complete change. I can still feel how it surprised me" (Me 85). College boosted her self-confidence so that she began to think of herself as attractive and popular. Rejecting the usual sequence for women of high school, marriage, and children, Ueland relished her individual freedom while away from home and did well in her studies. She formed several friendships with women she admired and who in turn liked her. But after three years, she transferred to Barnard. Ueland's decision to change schools was partially influenced by an event she dreaded back home. Anne, Ueland's eldest sister, had "come out" or made her formal entrance into society, and Ueland, recalling her dancing school humiliation, was determined to avoid this event. Her second eldest sister, Elsa, had escaped the "coming out" by going to work in New York in the Richmond Hill Settlement House after her graduation from the university. If she could go to school and live in New York, Ueland felt she could avoid a family ritual that she considered degrading and unnecessary. Convincing another Wells student to go with her, Ueland rented a room in an apartment building and began an existence subsidized by her father. She studied at Barnard for one year, graduated in 1913, and moved in with a friend, Margaret Stuart, at the Settlement House in New York (Me 103). At this time in her life, Ueland adamantly rejected marriage as an option.

College life was liberating for Ueland, and life in New York exposed her to a new world of poverty, suffrage meetings, factory
workers, socialist meetings, and the Bohemianism of Greenwich Village. Frequenting restaurants with groups of artists and writers, Ueland met people who talked about social injustice and political ideals. Her life at this time was adventurous and full of new experiences. Exposed to a less privileged environment, Ueland began to explore the awakening of her social consciousness in her journal writing.

The next summer, Ueland returned home to find a job with the Minneapolis Tribune where she wrote about women's clubs. Ueland disliked her first opportunity to work as a journalist—the numerous phone calls, the unchallenging task of writing about scheduled meetings, the feeling of being forced to do formula writing. But through her contacts at work, Ueland met two people who were to permanently change her habits about exercise and eating. Mrs. Vincent, a professor's wife, and Dr. Owre, a dentist, walked ten or twelve miles a day, ate sparingly of only unprocessed food, and maintained a high level of energy and health. Still fighting her obsession with sweets, Ueland walked six miles to work instead of riding the street car. From that time on, walking became a habit that Ueland continued throughout her life. She believed that exercise not only restored energy but allowed for inspiration to manifest itself in the form of original thoughts. Walking was an important part of Ueland's process of writing because the physical exercise allowed her time to contemplate, to let her mind relax. "And during these moments of contemplation, of imagination,—in that fraction of a second when my mind seems to open up and take something in forever, I find I walk less and less fast. I
slow up. The more I am contemplating (i.e., thinking creatively so that the understanding is stretched) the slower I go and often I stop walking altogether for that moment— that creative instant of getting it, adding it unto myself forever" (If 47). Ueland said of walking, "My whole spiritual vigor depended on it" (Me 116).

At the age of twenty-three, Ueland's Village lifestyle came to an end. She met and married Wallace Benedict, a divorced man. Ueland considered this marriage a mistake "because it was not a case of true love at all. It was his persistence and my good nature that brought it about. I think it was not love because it took me so many months to like him deeply" (Me 150). Ueland and Benedict met before he was divorced, and when he got the news that his divorce was finalized, Ueland joined Benedict and they "went to Goshen, New York, and were married, and went to a movie afterwards" (Me 162). Instead of feeling elated, Ueland admits to an anticlimactic feeling after the wedding. Struggling seven years through a difficult marriage, Ueland finally asked Wallace for a divorce.

Much to her surprise and initial remorse during her marriage, Ueland found herself pregnant and gave birth to her daughter, Gabriel, on November 5, 1921 (Clara 449). Knowing that her marriage was doomed, Ueland didn't want to complicate her life with a child, but her feelings changed after Gaby's birth as she soon became very attached to her daughter. Fueled by the necessity of providing for her daughter, Ueland aggressively asked for interviews and obtained a job as a staff writer first for Charm magazine and later for Liberty magazine. Earning seventy-five dollars a week, she was able to support herself
and Gaby in a time when "it was still exceptional for a woman to make a half-way decent living... it was not so wonderful what she [a woman] did, but that she did it at all" (Me 213). Pleased by her success and her ability, Ueland broke all ties with Wallace and would not accept alimony or child support payments even though he became financially successful. Ueland wanted full control of her daughter's welfare, but she also admitted of her concern about money. She disliked taking money from other people, even her former husband or her father. At times, Ueland depended on her father and other family members for financial assistance, but she stubbornly refused any alimony from her husband. She admits that marriage always produced a conflict for her: spiritual imprisonment in trade for security and attachment. (See Chapter 3, Feminism) Rather than finding mutual support, encouragement, and personal growth, Ueland described marriage in a 1984 journal entry as "living so close to a person we are invaded by them, spiritually infected, inundated, you might say drowned by the other's being and spirit."

For five years after her first divorce, Ueland free-lanced and lived in a small house where she, Gaby and a young maid lived. At Liberty magazine Ueland was asked to write articles about celebrities, but she found the writing repetitious and contrived. Disgusted with these assignments, she resigned and began writing stories and articles of her own which she submitted to magazines of her choosing. At one point when her funds ran out, she came home to find checks from The Ladies' Home Journal and The Saturday Evening Post that gave her fourteen hundred dollars (Me 224). Ueland established a disciplined routine of
writing every morning for four hours, walking six miles, in the rain or
snow, and reading everything from Nietzsche to Shakespeare to H. L.
Mencken (Me 224-25). For a period of several years, she published over
twenty short stories and articles in the slick women’s magazines. (See
Chapter 4, Short Stories) Ueland described these years as a time when
she was trying to become perfect, a time when sheer will and physical
conditioning became the panacea for her internal struggle “on the one
hand, to be sweet and wonderfully good, and on the other, to be
ruthlessly remarkable; the struggle between my mother and my father
in me” (Me 230). Reconciling her need to please people with her desire
to be true to herself created an internal conflict for Ueland which she
wrote about frequently in her autobiography.

Ueland continued to free-lance, but she found it increasingly
difficult to earn a living. Several articles were rejected by magazines,
and she thought about returning to her family home in Minneapolis. Her
father lived alone in the big house which was a short distance from the
homes of three of Ueland’s brothers, and in 1930, Ueland and Gaby
moved to Minneapolis. At the same time she enjoyed some feeling of
security, her writing slumped. “I work on a story but find excuses to
quit it after an hour and a half. I cannot explain it. Is it the removal of
financial pressure? The presence of people on the tennis court?...I
don’t know. Anyway, it begins to alarm me” (Me 258).

Disturbed by her continuing failure to sell articles or stories,
Ueland decided to study at the University of Minneapolis for a Master of
Arts degree with the goal of teaching writing. Although she finished
the required course work, Ueland did not write her thesis, planning
instead to write her dissertation for a Ph.D. In the course of her studies she began to free-lance again and had some success writing news for a radio show. Encouraged by her success over a five month period, Ueland resumed her writing while she taught writing to a class of adults at the YWCA. From her teaching experiences and the lectures on writing that she gave at the University of Minnesota, Ueland collected the material for *If You Want To Write* which she published in 1938.

Married again at ages 55 and 65, Ueland divorced both husbands and bought her own home close to Lake Calhoun and lived there until she died in 1985 at age 93. She continued to write in her journals, to give speeches, and to talk with people interested in learning to write. Ueland believed each person to be unique, to possess qualities that made them creative and talented. She tried to discover her own creativity through writing and rebelled against any curtailing of her own talents. Ueland's only two rules were to tell the truth, and not to do anything she didn't want to do. People called her independent; she saw herself as just following her instinct to grow and to express herself without adornment, superficiality or exaggeration. Struggling with the need to be accepted and admired and the desire to be alone and independent, Ueland wrote that she finally came to some reconciliation of these contradictory feelings.

Well, it was this concept of using something higher than my reasoning intellect, that seemed to make it possible for me to reconcile my two warring selves, my doubleness, the thing that I describe as the struggle between my mother in me and my
father, between self-forgetting and belief in myself, between humbleness and arrogance. This means my energy can pour out better. (Me 344-345)

Ueland's energy was expressed in writing, a form of creativity that revealed her spirit, imagination, and independence.
3. Ueland and Feminism

Brenda Ueland made many choices during her life which often placed her at odds with the conventional roles for women at the time. Ueland was not rebellious in the sense of fighting for a public cause. She desired to be free to be herself. In her attempt to find personal power and her own identity, Ueland's actions and ideas often allied her with feminist ideals. Carolyn G. Heilbrun, a feminist and author of *Writing A Woman's Life*, defines personal power as "the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter" (18). Ueland's choices reflect a very strong need to have "her part matter." The paths she chose illustrate her support for feminism as exemplified by her desire for independence, equality in the work place, and personal identity. Ueland's experiences suggest that she attempted to redefine or reinvent a woman's role because she felt that the restrictions of the acceptable conventional role for women did not allow for a free expression of her own identity.

Ueland recognized feminist concerns which for her were based on the belief that all persons, male or female, should be allowed to express themselves as they are and not be corralled into stereotypic, restrictive roles based on gender. It is not difficult to surmise that the attitudes of her mother and father about gender differences influenced Ueland's feminist outlook.

Andreas was losing his hair and Clara had a theory that very short hair might account for baldness in men, so she let Sigurd's hair grow to this shoulders, lying in silken yellow on
his beruffled sailor collar, and all her subsequent boys had uncut manes. The girls were allowed to wear boys' pants if so inclined, and a lady visiting the Uelands said, "The first time I went there the Ueland children were all girls and the next time they were all boys." (Clara, 75)

Ueland's mother gave much latitude and freedom to her children which allowed Ueland time to roam the woods, to read copiously, to swim and play ice hockey, and to grow up feeling unrestrained by gender norms. By being treated as an equal with her brothers and by participating in boy's activities, Ueland's early conception of herself in relation to men differed from the norm. Throughout her life, Ueland made choices that reflected her desire for independence and equality, and she was supported by parents who not only encouraged individual expression but who also avoided repressive discipline.

The desire for independence and the necessity for being recognized as a separate person remained important aspects of Ueland's relationships with men later in life. In one instance, when she was in her early twenties and living in New York in a small apartment on West Fourth Street, a male friend arrived unannounced, and said he decided he would stay the night. Ueland wrote, "As a feminist I could not turn into a prissy conventional woman and cry out: 'Oh! How can you!' As an equal and a brother... I could only say: 'Why, sure. There is the bed. Fine. Do it'" (Me, 138). But she was angered when he offered to make love to her merely because she had agreed to let him stay. Refusing to play the romantic role of the coy female, Ueland witnessed more than one man leave in consternation because she frankly said that she "had
no particular feeling at all" (Me 139) for them. Ueland tested conventional moral rules by letting a man share her apartment for the night, but this did not mean she had adopted the Greenwich Village Bohemian lifestyle. After describing the incident about the young man in her apartment, Ueland writes, "I just didn't want anyone to come in there as though I were a sexy Greenwich Villager." (Me 138).

Shortly after this episode Ueland met Raoul Hendrickson, a fashionable Norwegian, who began a relationship with her that eventually led to talk of marriage. Despite her feelings of romantic involvement, Ueland would not become sexually involved as long as she was living on an allowance from her father, whom she felt would not approve of such behavior. Hendrickson later wrote Ueland that he was going to Athens with Isadora Duncan. The relationship ended without, however, much disappointment on Ueland's part as she admitted to having loved his aura and glamor and not him (Me 143). Capable of making her own decisions and not allowing herself to be persuaded to act against her will, Ueland considered her feelings as important as the man's in a relationship. Her demands for equality, for being treated as a separate individual with her own needs and identity, allied Ueland with feminist ideals. In an interview with an author who wrote a book of profiles of notable women, Ueland said, "Women should be more manly, and men should be far more womanly, much more tender and much more graceful, beautiful. I mean, women should neither be subordinate nor superior" (Brannum 307). In Ueland's eyes, equal consideration for the sexes meant changes for both women and men, so that they might arrive at a common ground where the needs of both
parties could be mutually supported in a nurturing relationship.

Ueland’s plea for equality and the search to find her own personal power created difficulties in her marriages. Ueland never succeeded in finding a permanent relationship with a husband. Of her first marriage at age 24 Ueland wrote, “There are married people who keep their most important thoughts sealed off from each other. They may be sleeping together and having meals together and discussing the month’s bills, but there is no sympathy, intimacy, communication, that lovely, friendly alternating current” (Me 176). Rather than continue living in what she considered an immoral, monstrous condition, Ueland asked Wallace for a divorce. She recognized in herself a strong resistance to Wallace’s role as a husband when she recalled a dream in which she had remarried him.

Well, there he was, brown-eyed, his bright, round brown eyes, short nose, tan strong hair, alert, drawling good-naturedly, and a little nasally. But inside me there was the sense of oppression that had almost the sense of a nightmare, that I was not free; that I must be with him, could not strike out, go where I pleased, but he would be there always, and I would have to listen to him and could never act as one, alone and debonair. Such a strong painful feeling that I would burst nearly, and could not endure it. It was the same as in New York last spring when my beau seemed like a husband and took me places and walked slower than I could bear to go. A quiet weight and ego-force insisting, implacably, on his power and authority, in buying things, and making me go to this and that art gallery.
Fatherly, and a benign tyrant. 

Neither blaming herself nor Wallace for the failure of their marriage, Ueland resolved to "understand things better, more generously" (223) the next time.

Ueland still struggled with the issue of personal power and control in her second marriage to Manus McFadden, a newspaper editor in Minneapolis. Excerpts from her unpublished journal reveal that Ueland experienced a long inner struggle over her feelings for McFadden. She was fifty-eight and had been married three years when she wrote about her frustrated feelings of wanting to flee and wanting to forgive:

"Just what happened at my last marriage is happening now, a deterioration; money going, my ability, power and magic. And suddenly he is darling, sad, sympathetic. It really hurts me in the heart to see it. And so this week I walk, and think and think all about it, and see that I must practice detachment, i.e., not to be torn, angered, dreadfully perplexed by his shockingly disagreeable moods... Well, I walk long Lake Harriet miles and practice and live this. Detachment. Holy indifference is a good way to think of it. His moods are not mine. I am free... Lord, I don't know how I can live this way--it cuts my heart in two with division. Every other night I can't sleep. What to do?"

(Journal, 7/6/49)

In her marriage to McFadden, Ueland did not achieve an equal partnership, an imbalance which caused her to feel she had to escape a hopeless situation in order to save her own identity. The lengthy entries in her journal describing her frustrations while married to
McFadden are evidence of Ueland's lifelong struggle between a need for intimacy and a need for independence. In her third marriage, Ueland admitted that she was unable to find a mutually supportive relationship with a husband. Although personally unsuccessful in finding a lasting marriage, Ueland never despaired of the idea of a supportive relationship with a man in which both partners shared themselves in ways that were neither submissive nor superior.

In *Writing a Woman's Life*, Carolyn G. Heilbrun defines marriage as a state in which "...the equality of the man's and woman's quest" is realized by the partners (95). The thesis of Heilbrun's book is that women autobiographers need to admit that they have a desire for power and control over their lives (13), a feeling which Ueland reflects in both her autobiography and journal. The kind of marriage Ueland conceives as desirable by both the woman and the man is one perhaps best described by Heilbrun. "The sign of a good marriage is that everything is debatable and challenged; nothing is turned into law or policy. The rules, if any, are known only to the two players, who seek no public trophies" (95). Heilbrun asserts that the basis of a good marriage is a true friendship, an intellectual and mutual willingness which continuously reaffirms the sense of care that each partner has for the other. This willingness implies an ability to communicate thoughts and feelings to a listening partner so that there is a constant "remarriage" going on, an adjusting and reflexing to changes and growth in both partners (Heilbrun 95). The frustration Ueland expressed about her marriages focused on the inability she saw in both herself and her husbands to break free of confining roles and to recognize each other's
actual needs. At the end of her first marriage, Ueland wrote, "No, we must never blame other people for what happens, or blame ourselves either. I think the only thing to do is to try to understand things better..." (Me 223).

One positive result of her first marriage was the feeling of fulfillment Ueland realized in her relationship with her daughter, Gabriel. Ueland's attitudes about children reflected a feminist outlook because she did not believe that marriage necessarily meant having children. Ueland remembered one experience as a child which gave her an insight into her own mother's feelings. Walking up the stairs, Ueland unexpectedly came upon her mother who looked dejected and was crying over the news of an eighth pregnancy. It was then that Ueland realized her mother had conflicting emotions about the inevitable pregnancies in a marriage without birth control, and as an adult, Ueland decided she would never allow herself to be caught in that situation. When she was married to Wallace Benedict and became pregnant, she considered having an abortion with the consent of her husband, but after "a glimpse of the dirty operating room," she "vaguely and indecisively" left the doctor's office (Me 194). Resigned to having the child, Ueland wrote after Gabriel's birth, "No more stepping out-of-doors again with a light foot. Never. I had that sad, queer, captured feeling which has never left me since. Never, never would I be free again" (Me 197).

Although she initially dreaded having a child, her care for Gabriel became extremely important, and Ueland's autobiography recounts numerous happy occasions coupled with warm feelings for her daughter. Ueland's decision to move home to live with her father provided Gabriel
with a nurturing environment since there were many cousins, aunts, and uncles nearby. Ueland accepted her role as a mother with an ardor that belied her initial fears of feeling restricted. She and Gaby read together, made up stories for each other, took long walks, and went on vacations. Ueland was granted full control over her daughter's welfare and was able to raise Gabriel in an unrestrictive environment.

Faced with the necessity of having to support a child, Ueland was highly motivated to write for a living. However, her income from writing was often sporadic, and at times she lived poorly rather than ask her father for money. After her first divorce, Ueland boldly demanded a job writing for Liberty magazine. It was at this time Ueland realized the inequality of the salaries for male and female staff writers. One particular male writer for Liberty, who had a wife and one child, earned three times what Ueland had asked. She objected to her low pay as a staff writer because she had the same level of responsibility in her work as her male co-worker. With a housekeeper and a child to support, Ueland felt she also had the same financial obligations as a man with a family. Ueland recognized that unequal pay for equal work was unjust, and she attempted to correct this situation by asking for wages equal to the salary of male writers working in similar jobs. She was refused an increase in her salary and accepted the job rather than be dependent on any relatives for financial support.

Heilbrun claims that women writers before the 1950's had few models of autobiographical writing that allowed them the admission of ambition and recognition for work that was neither luck nor the result of the efforts or generosity of others (24). I suggest that Ueland lived
and wrote as an exception to this statement because she actively pursued her life's work, her writing, by her own choice, and took action despite the dependence imposed on her through marriage and motherhood. The story Ueland tells of her life centers not on the pattern of "the female life of prime devotion to male destiny" (Heilbrun 26), but on the invention of her own narrative, a written account that stays close to Ueland's conception of herself despite society's constraints.

Ueland's quest for equality and identity in relationships extended to her friendships with other women. Ueland admits her attraction to another woman during her first year in college. She wrote, "I fell in love with her. This was 'a crush.' It did not last long, I think only about ten days. This incipient homosexuality in college (it is such a disagreeable, unspiritual, scientific, evil-laden word for something that can be romantic and inevitable and all right) is interesting" (Me 87). After her first divorce, Ueland writes of a five year relationship with Tomola, a woman artist in New York. Ueland and Tomola worked together on Tomola's drawing assignments for Harper's Bazaar. They also spent time together socially as they found their relationship mutually supportive. Ueland describes Tomola as "uncompromising, tenderhearted" and as "the nicest person that [I] will ever know in all the world" (Me 216). Although Tomola was quite successful financially, Ueland felt she could maintain her independence and continue her writing career without feeling restricted by their relationship. Ueland valued her friendship with Tomola and found the mutual support with her that she had looked for in marriage. At various times in her life,
she found meaning in close associations with both women and men, but her choices in adult relationships speak from the feminist viewpoint that meaningful attachments to other people should not be dictated by gender (Showalter 201).

Ueland's journal and autobiography are evidence of a concern for writing a new narrative, a life story demonstrating her strong adherence to her own identity unencumbered by the need for definition through patriarchal models. Ueland believed that women should receive equal pay for the same work that men did; she did not accept that a woman's identity was determined by a husband; she believed that women could be financially successful in their own careers and did not need to depend other sources of income such as alimony. In an attempt to determine her own identity, Ueland rejected some of the conventional roles for women by making independent choices that more closely met her individual needs.
4. Ueland's Short Stories And A Change In Writing Theory

Between 1923 and 1949, Brenda Ueland published twenty-eight short stories and articles in *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Colliers*, the *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Delineator*, and *Woman's Home Companion*. (See Appendix A for a complete bibliography.) Typically, the stories and articles that were commercially salable to slick magazines dealt with "romanticized juveniles, romanticized old people, the problems of marriage, or, most commonly, the boy-girl or man-woman situation, people attracted strongly to one another but held apart through the story trap" (Summers 115-16). These magazines demanded certain formulas in their stories to guarantee sales which ensured the magazine's economic survival. Appealing to an audience of men and women whose financial security came from wages, not riches, the short stories in slick magazines often reinforced middle class values and a lifestyle that supported these values. Ueland's published short stories provide examples of her adherence to the slick magazine genre of the twenties and thirties. Earning $700 or more for a story and sometimes selling more than one a month, Ueland was successful at covering her $500 a month living expenses in a comfortable home for herself, her daughter, and a maid (Me 223-24). She wrote for four hours every morning and diligently turned out about one story a month (Me 224). Although Ueland does not admit to using a handbook to learn how to write short stories, there are several books on library shelves published before 1940 that describe the elements of successful short story writing.
A handbook published in 1917 (second edition, 1930) defines the short story as "a prose narrative artistically presenting characters in a struggle or complication which has a definite outcome" (Williams 7). In attempting to construct a unified whole, the writer must consider specific parts: plot, characters, conflict or struggle, order of events, point of view, scenario, dialogue, emotional effect, color, and atmosphere. In Ueland's short stories there are repeated plots. In "The Great Big Society Sheik," Alexandra Saunders, a dancer on Broadway, is pursued by the son of a railroad magnate, Jack McTavish, a man she eventually decides to marry. The story is narrated by a female friend, also a dancer, who accompanies Alexandra on her adventures. Alexandra makes no pretensions about loving Jack, but is swept up by his forcefulness and determination. It is obvious from the very beginning of the story that Tom Nelson, an old friend of Alexandra's father who admires her in silence, will become her true love. During a party at his lavish house, Jack creates a situation to make Tom look bad but it backfires, and Tom emerges the hero. After the confrontation between Jack and Tom, Alexandra sneaks away from Jack's place to walk into Tom's waiting embrace and his declaration of love. True love triumphs and the rich and powerful are thwarted in their attempt to control others.

This plot is repeated in "Even Barons Must Live." The beautiful woman, Jeanie, works in a department store, and through the efforts of an aunt, is persuaded to join a weekend party with the high society crowd. Baron von Kleener, a rich man, immediately falls in love with Jeanie and wants to marry her, but Jeanie already has noticed a tall,
handsome, blond man at the same party. Eventually, Jeanie finds that the Baron is already married, and in a solitary walk along the beach happens upon the blond who says he is Lord Johnson. Disgusted with the antics of people in high society, Jeanie is put off by the title, but Johnson explains that it isn't "Lord Johnson in the way you think it is. It's because my mother was Edna Lord of Peoria, Illinois." Thus, the handsome young man admits he isn't rich and becomes the perfect match for Jeanie. These two stories are identical in plot--a romantic involvement of a beautiful, middle class woman with a handsome young man after she rejects a rich, powerful suitor. Reader appeal was directed toward middle class men and women and their desire for romance because these were the people who bought the magazines.

Ueland used the romantic theme repeatedly, but varied the scene and situation to create a different slant on the same story. In "Lady in Pursuit" the beautiful, young woman is studying for her Ph.D. and is supposedly in love with a brilliant young instructor. However, as part of her research in psychology, Elizabeth is doing field work "to discover the behavior of an American male of the upper middle class when pursued by a woman." At the suggestion of her fellow student, Miss Skiles, she becomes the woman who pursues a handsome, young, calvary general, and at the end of her "work," she suddenly realizes she actually loves him, and they get married. Elizabeth never finishes her thesis, but at the end of the story comes to the "scientific" conclusion that "the reactions of men and women to sexual aggression are identical. That is to say--they both like it." The only conflict for the woman in this story, published in 1936, and the women in the previous two
stories concerns their struggle to recognize and engage in a marriage with their "true" love. Romance was definitely a seller; "anything derogatory to religion, ...anything which makes a section of the South seem inferior to a section of the North, anything concerning the unfair practices of big business, anything derogatory to a large municipality, such as Los Angeles or Miami, which might injure the tourist trade" (Summers 110)--all these subjects were not acceptable as elements for short stories in the glossy magazines. In her autobiography, Ueland describes the rejection of an article in 1930 because The Saturday Evening Post said "there was too much religion in it" (251). Through her rejections, Ueland learned the formula for successful commercial writing and most often chose a plot which involved a romantic attachment between a man and woman who exemplified middle class attitudes and values.

The characters in her stories also reflect Ueland's adherence to the formula for successful commercial story writing. The characters consistently demonstrate an aspiration for middle class values--security, a home, romance, marriage, suitable work, and freedom to make choices. Both the very rich and the very poor illustrate lifestyles that are characterized as confining and undesirable. In several of Ueland's stories the beautiful woman must escape the clutch of a rich, powerful man, a plot with much appeal to a middle class readers who might like to think that living the life of the very rich had more drawbacks than advantages. While the young woman is initially attracted to the rich man, she never actually falls in love with him because she won't sacrifice true love for riches. Subtle
social issues underly this plot. The middle class audience wants to affirm their values by depicting the rich as somehow lacking in those elements which give meaning to life. The rich want the middle class to feel satisfied with their status as ordinary people so that the wealthy remain in an elite, separate, and powerful position. In her effort to sell stories, Ueland catered to the requirements of the audience, editors, and advertisers of slick magazines. Later, she adopted a different attitude about her writing, and she published no more short stories.

Twenty of Ueland's stories and articles were published between 1927 and 1932. Between 1933 and 1949, she published only seven stories and articles. There are several probable reasons for the decrease in her commercial work, and one involves an accusation of plagiarism. In an interview, Paul Johnson, who has possession of Ueland's personal journals, and Bruce Carlson, who republished a collection of her essays, related an incident about a western story Ueland had written. After it was published (neither Johnson nor Carlson knew the exact date), E. B. White claimed that at least part of the story had been written by another author. Johnson and Carlson could not verify the accusation, but since they were familiar with Ueland's writing habits, they did explain a possible mistake Ueland may have made. When she wrote in her daily journal, Ueland often copied quotations and sections of the materials she read, and she did not make a habit of noting the reference. Johnson and Carlson speculate that Ueland may have copied a section from an earlier journal not realizing that it wasn't her original writing since there was no reference to
another author. In *If You Want To Write*, Ueland often quotes William Blake but seldom identifies the original work by notation or reference. It is plausible to speculate that she may have later erroneously copied from her journal another author's work thinking that it was her own. Ueland used her journal as a resource for her writing as evidenced by the numerous journal entries she published in her autobiography and the repeat of identical experiences in *If You Want To Write*. Ueland's last commercial story was published in 1949 in *Collier's*, entitled "Men's Tears," and it is a western.

A reason Ueland may have stopped writing for the commercial market concerned her evolving attitude about writing. In 1939, at age 47, Ueland finished writing her autobiography. She only published two articles and one western story after that time. Clearly, fiction writing was not the mainstay of her existence it had been previously. Between 1927 and 1932, the busiest period of her fiction writing, Ueland recognized the limitations of her stories. "I had been writing a story... . I sent it first to the *The Saturday Evening Post* of course. When it came back, I experienced that usual realization (corroborated by reading it) that I was a repulsive, fatuous sap" (*Me* 186). An experience she relates a little later reflects her changing attitude about writing. John N. Wheeler, a magazine editor, told her when she asked how he wanted some articles written—"'I want them interesting,' his loud rusty voice ripped out. Yes, of course. That explained all writing to me. It must be interesting. That was the most helpful thing ever said to me toward writing" (*Me* 209). "For in writing you cannot possibly be interesting if what you say is not true, if it is what I call 'a true lie,'
i.e., a truth which gives the wrong impression. For no matter how subtly you lie in writing, people know it and don't believe you, and the whole secret of being interesting is to be believed" (Me 218).

In *If You Want To Write*, Ueland looks back at her slick magazine writing from a different vantage point; she became a teacher of writing and reread her own writing with a more critical eye. "For many years it puzzled me why so many things I wrote were pretentious, lying, high-sounding, and in consequence utterly dull and uninteresting. It was a regular horror to read them again" (63). There were even times when Ueland doubted her own desire to write. A journal entry of April 9, 1938: "I ought to work myself up to a real enthusiasm for writing, instead of being ashamed of it and half-hearted. I have this attitude: that I really hate writing, especially fiction, and think all current writers are fools and show-offs. This is very bad" (Me 334). Ueland reflects a growing disenchantment with her fiction writing and wanted to do some great writing instead of "slanting your stuff," as the horrible phrase is, for the *Woman's Home Companion* (Me 335). It is plausible to assume that Ueland turned away from writing commercial short stories and articles because her criteria for good writing changed. The methods and practices she explains in the 1938 edition of *If You Want To Write* reflect a writing style and process free from the formulaic style of her successes in the slick magazines. She encourages her students at one point by telling them, "Let her go! Be careless, reckless! Be a lion, be a pirate! Write any old way" (IF 64). Ueland's book about how to write continually illustrates her admonition to write "from" the self instead of writing "for" someone else. "Now to
have things alive and interesting it must be personal, it must come from the 'I': what I know and feel. For that is the only great and interesting thing. That is the only truth you know, that nobody else does" (If 71).
5. Writing Theory: Ueland as Expressionist

In *If You Want To Write*, Ueland writes not as a scholar with academic successes in mind, but as a person, a writer, willing to share her personal discoveries about writing with the hope that readers may experience the same sense of discovery. The last sentence in her book reveals her desire to share. "And if it has given you the impulse to write one small story, then I am pleased" (179). Finally, Ueland does not instruct, direct, teach, or force the reader to become a writer. Instead she wants to share the "impulse," the desire for creativity and expression in writing that she believes lies waiting in all people.

Ueland frequently reflects William Blake's theories about the imagination in such a way that she demonstrates a strong connection between Blake's definition of the imagination and her understanding of the imagination as a creative power.

The title of the first chapter in *If You Want To Write* clearly states a primary tenet in her approach to writing-- "Everybody is talented, original and has something important to say" (3). Ueland identifies this natural source of creativity as the "imagination" (5). Her theory of writing is based on the expression of this imaginative, impassioned energy. Only by grasping her understanding of the imagination can a reader realize what Ueland means by writing from the "true self." In *If You Want To Write*, Ueland defines creative power as:

Now this creative power I think is the Holy Ghost. My theology may not be very accurate but that is how I think of it. I know
that William Blake called this creative power the Imagination and he said it was God. He, if anyone, ought to know, for he was one of the greatest poets and artists that ever lived.

Now Blake thought that this creative power should be kept alive in all people for all of their lives. And so do I. Why? Because it is life itself. It is the Spirit. . . . How could we keep it alive? By using it, by letting it out, by giving some time to it. (10-11)

Not only do all people possess this power, but it must be used in order to be fruitful. She advises writers that the unleashing of their creative power does not deplete their energies but, in fact, increases their powers. "...I think, that the more you use this joyful creative power . . . the more you have" (12). Therefore, working at writing, at "the creative thing that you care about," (14) should not be done out of a sense of duty or reasoning. "Duty should be a by-product. Writing, the creative effort, the use of the imagination, should come first,—at least for some part of every day of your life" (14). Ueland emphasizes the importance of writing daily because she believes a writer needs to write often to give expression to the innate imaginative powers that lie waiting to be freed.

In order to come to some understanding of Ueland's definition of imagination, it is first necessary to understand her basis for believing that everyone is original. She states that "Jennings at Johns Hopkins, who knows more about heredity and the genes and chromosomes than any man in the world, says that no individual is exactly like any other individual, that no two identical persons have ever existed . . .
Consequently, if you speak or write from yourself you cannot help being original" (If 4). Ueland defines "writing from yourself" as telling the truth, not speaking or writing from the selves people think they should be, but speaking or writing as they are from their uniqueness. Therefore, Ueland claims that because humans are uniquely patterned in genetic makeup and can speak from their uniqueness, every person is original and can express their creative power and share it with others.

Ueland faced the problem of explaining why many people do not try to use this power, or why when they do, the results are anything but original and imaginative. Ueland writes, "...this joyful, imaginative, impassioned energy dies out of us very young" (If 6). She points to a sense of obligation as the destroyer of the creative impulse. Criticism, nagging self-doubts, fear of failure, and teachers, critics, and parents all begin to snuff out the flame of creative power. It is through constant daily use that the power to create stays alive and active, and therefore, any person or thing that prevents or restricts creative practice eventually will destroy the creative power itself.

Ueland warns writers against focusing exclusively on the need to be important or financially secure, the need to fulfill their obligations without time set aside for free use of the imagination. Of artists she states:

So they dare to be idle, i.e., not to be pressed and duty-driven all the time. They dare to love people even when they are very bad, and they dare not to try to dominate others to show them what they must do for their own good. For great and creative men know what is best for every man is his own freedom so
that his imagination (it can also be called conscience or the Holy Ghost) can grow in its own way, even if that way to you or to me, or to policemen or churchgoers, seems very bad indeed.

What appears to be a rebellion against authority is actually a rejection of living life mechanically rather than intuitively. Ueland is not arguing that "honor thy father and mother" should be thrown out as a Commandment, but she is saying that people might search creatively through to an answer that has more meaning than "I'm supposed to do it." Ueland stresses that the imagination can not only die from neglect, but it is often actively killed by the restrictions placed upon people by parents, teachers, older siblings--people who do not listen, but who instead correct, demand, and criticize until people become so timid, and terribly afraid that they do not try to write or create anything. Writers then turn into perfectionists stifled by their sense of duty and self-doubt. For the creative power to be good at all, a person must feel free and not anxious, and therefore, a person's creative powers will grow and develop as the imagination is continually exercised without the interference of self-consciousness and criticism.

Creative idleness is not an activity that wastes time, but actually re-charges the imagination and allows living thoughts to grow and emerge. Writing freely for writers then becomes a very productive process of allowing the imagination to work. This sense of giving time to writing that is not the hour and minute counting done at the office is central to the process of writing. For Ueland, the creative power flourishes when a writer lives "in the present" (43). "In other words, it
is when you are really living in the present—working, thinking, lost, absorbed in something you care about very much, that you are living spiritually” (59). Ueland supports the premise that continual writing will enable writers to be honest with themselves. Defining the true self as the “immortal soul and life of the Spirit” (111), Ueland states:

But remember always that the true self is never a fixed thing. You can never say: “Good. Today I find at last what I am really like: splendid type!” You cannot say that because the true self is always in motion like music, a river of life, changing, moving, failing, suffering, learning, shining. That is why you must freely and recklessly make new mistakes—in writing or in life—and do not fret about them but pass on and write more. Active evil is so much better than passive good, which is just docility, feebleness, timidity. (If 112)

In the title for chapter two, Ueland quotes Blake: “Imagination is the Divine Body in every man” (10). She refers to Blake as an example of a person who had a “free abundant use of his creative power” (11); he painted and wrote from the need to express his creative energy rather than from the need to earn a living or to achieve notoriety. It is Blake’s understanding of the imagination and how it is used that is reflected in Ueland’s admonition to write freely and creatively as an expression of the creative power or Spirit.

Ueland’s approach to writing connects her with contemporary writing theorists such as Peter Elbow who define writing as a process. In an interview, Elbow acknowledged that he wasn’t familiar with Ueland’s work but he did mention that there were other teachers
who may be recognized as precursors of the pedagogical theories for teaching writing as a process. The strong similarities between Ueland's and Elbow's writing theories indicate that Ueland falls within the framework of current composition theorists who focus on writing as a process.

Ueland describes a practice of freewriting very similar to Elbow's in that she advises people to begin by sitting down with pencil and paper or before a typewriter quietly putting down what you happen to be thinking, that is creative idleness. With all my heart I tell you and reassure you: at such times you are being slowly filled and re-charged with warm imagination, with wonderful, living thoughts.

...to write it as carelessly, recklessly, fast and sloppily as possible on paper....to tell spontaneously, impulsively, what you remembered.

Compare her design for writing with that of Peter Elbow's instructions for freewriting, part of the process he calls open-ended writing. Freewriting is the easiest way to get words on paper and the best all-around practice in writing that I know. To do a freewriting exercise, simply force yourself to write without stopping for ten minutes. Sometimes you will produce good writing, but that's not the goal. Sometimes you will produce garbage, but that's not the goal either. You may stay on one topic, you may flip repeatedly from one to another: it doesn't matter. Sometimes you will produce a good record of your stream of consciousness, but often you can't keep up.
Writers must allow this creative idleness, as Ueland describes it, to flow freely without restriction or interruption; writers must think and write before making meaning out of it. In *Writing With Power*, Elbow cautions writers against trying "to get your piece right the first time" (39), and his open-ended writing process enables writers to "bring to birth an unknown, unthought-of piece of writing--a piece of writing that is not yet in you" (50). For both Ueland and Elbow the best way to write is to sit down and do it, no matter what comes out on paper.

While Elbow does write about specific methods and techniques for teaching writing, Ueland avoids naming techniques. She writes about her own experience as a teacher who has undying confidence in her students and a growing respect for the uniqueness of their perceptions in writing. Ueland enthusiastically nurtures a "break through from composition-writing, theme-writing, to some freedom and honesty and to writing with what I call 'microscopic truthfulness'" (If 64). It is evident in her own style of writing that Ueland is not a rigorous planner nor does she appear to do much rewriting. Throughout *If You Want To Write*, Ueland continuously attaches footnotes which seem to be afterthoughts, or qualifications as though she had just reread the chapter and garnered a further idea. Rather than revise and integrate these footnotes into the text, she writes additional sentences and even paragraphs at the bottom of the page. The reader is forced to glance up and down the page to put the thoughts together. Ueland teaches more of an attitude toward writing than a technique, whereas (despite the similarity of their freewriting methods), Elbow goes on to describe specific teaching methods that recognize revising as a critical step in
the process of writing.

Ueland's approach to teaching writing identifies her as a precursor to the current method of teaching writing as a process rather than as a product, but according to James Berlin, she was not alone. He writes in *Rhetoric and Reality Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*, "It is from Expressionistic rhetoric in the twenties, and just before, that we get the first extensive discussions emphasizing the 'process' of composing over the 'product'" (75). The Current-Traditional approach to teaching writing, the accepted method in the twenties, focused on dissecting the finished product to determine the writer's ability rather than examining the writer's process in creating a successful piece of writing. In 1919, Raymond Weaver of Columbia argued that a student be persuaded to recognize the "gifts of intellect and imagination [that] lie well hidden in some corner of his organism" (Berlin, *Rhetoric* 75). This is very similar to Ueland's belief that the imagination is the wellspring of creativity in writing. Allan H. Gilbert of Trinity College writes in the 1922 volume of "English Journal" that "...only what springs from within them [students] counts in making good writing" (Berlin, *Rhetoric* 76), therefore, each student should be encouraged to discover the genius in themselves. Writing as an art meant that writing could be learned but not taught, a theory that identified the Expressionist movement. If writing was to be considered an art, it was argued, there must be less formalism and more emphasis on the individual with the ultimate aim that students learn to express themselves. Although teachers could help students master techniques, the basis of writing was a mystery
that could not be simply formulated (Berlin, *Rhetoric* 77). By teaching her students to write from their "true selves," Ueland was teaching writing by calling on the students' "private, personal, visionary world of ultimate truth" ([If] 10).

With her emphasis on the writer as the source of creativity, Ueland fits in with the Expressionists. Berlin defines the Expressionist writer as one who "...is trying to use others to get rid of what is false to the self, what is insincere and untrue to the individual's own sense of things, as evidenced by the use of language..." ([Contemporary] 55). At the center of this theory lies the concept of discovery that there is something in the writer's mind waiting to be unlocked or discovered through the process of writing. Because truth lies within the writer's private vision, all writing becomes "personal," an attempt to explore the writer's feelings and experience. Berlin writes, "The purpose is to get rid of what is untrue to the private vision of the writer, what is, in a word inauthentic" ([Contemporary] 54). Ueland's admonition that "everybody is original, if he tells the truth, if he speaks from himself" ([If] 4) clearly aligns her with Expressionist theories in which writers "discover" what they want to write. For Ueland, then, good writing does not follow rules but reflects the processes of the creative imagination.

Expressionist theories try to define "originality" not as natural genius, but as "the innate potential of the unconscious mind" (Faigley 531). As evidenced by her copious journal writing, Ueland demonstrates that frequent personal writing becomes a means of self-actualization, a way of finding an authentic voice. "Good writing" lies within a person waiting to be discovered through constant
practice, which implies that writing can be learned through a freewriting process rather than through an instructive process. At the end of *If You Want To Write*, Ueland instructs writers not to "be afraid of writing bad stories. To discover what is wrong with a story write two new ones and then go back to it" (177). The truth will be learned through the process of writing rather than through correction of errors or imposition of standards by a teacher. Writers must work from their inaccessible inner world and through a dialectic process, arriving at "good writing."

Ueland may have found the Expressionist approach to writing applicable to her own experience as a writer and a teacher, but other writing theorists find weaknesses in the discovery method of writing. In "The Cognition of Discovery: Defining a Rhetorical Problem," Linda Flower and John R. Hayes look at discovery in a different light. They write, "Discovery, the event, and its product, new insights, are only the end result of a complicated intellectual process" (92). Positing that "writers don't find meanings, they make them" (92), Flower and Hayes point out that concepts and thoughts don't just lie waiting to be discovered, but the writer must actually create and build these ideas from memory and experience which means writers have to know how to "initiate and guide themselves through the act of making meaning" (93). Creating strategies for problem-solving, Flower and Hayes take a more orderly and methodical view of the writing process while criticizing the Expressionists for leaving writers without the necessary tools for significant writing thus allowing for situations in which writers feel defeated because they have not "discovered" the right words. Perhaps
one of the weaknesses in Ueland's approach is her belief that a writer must wait for inspiration to happen, whereas Flower and Hayes point out that there are methods of defining problems in writing that will enable a writer to create inspiration.

Ueland's process and discovery approach puts her in line with the contemporary theorists rather than the Current-Traditionalist school of thought. Even though *If You Want To Write* was published in 1938, Ueland's voice comes across as fresh and persuasive in the nineties. She reaffirms the notion that the process for creating well-written products holds an inherent reward for the writer simply through the elements of the process. Her sense of independence and joy in life emanates from her own style of writing—a bold, spontaneous, often insightful form of prose. An excerpt from the back cover of *If You Want To Write* states her purpose in writing this book—"It is about having values, about belief (in the imagination and its relation to personal integrity), and about the bravery of coming to understand yourself and of putting marks down on paper."
6. Conclusion

Brenda Ueland's life and writing are a testimony to feminism and the power of its ideals to shape lives even when labels may be missing. The career choices she made and the voluminous journals she wrote express a struggle to establish a life that brought together a desire for creative expression and a desire to define herself. Ignoring the restrictive choices for women in the male-dominated society of the time, Ueland made difficult choices in marriage and career in an effort to gain control over her life. Although she desired a mutually supportive relationship in a marriage, she was not willing to relinquish the freedom to establish her self-identity. Divorced three times, Ueland rejected marriages which might have made her life easier. In a time when social norms for women meant marriage and children, Ueland embarked on a writing career as a single parent determined to support herself and her daughter without help from others. Her career choices presented challenges that Ueland met with determination and singleness of purpose. Agressively pursuing employment as a writer, Ueland succeeded in selling stories and articles that provided more than an adequate living for herself, her daughter, and a maid. Ueland's success as a writer came at a time when women were not expected to provide the family income. Her aggressive pursuit of a writing career and her desire to be self-supporting reflect Ueland's strong personal commitment to ideals that granted her personal independence but not without hardships. Gradually, Ueland developed a style of writing that satisfied her growing need for creative expression. Unfortunately, as
her writing became more personal, the magazines quit buying her work. Regardless of the subsequent financial difficulties, Ueland continued to write in an expressive style and made compromises in her living situation by moving home to Minneapolis. Her journals, which she continued to write throughout her life, remain as a testimony to a woman whose great desire was to live as she saw fit and to express her individuality through writing.

In If You Want To Write, Ueland speaks in a personal voice, one of inspiration and motivation that is still being recognized by individuals who are intrigued by her invitation to sit down and let the words out. Although Ueland is not a recognized name among contemporary writing theorists, her process of writing, identified as "Expressionist," places her in the company of current theorists who focus on writing as a process. Ueland's belief in writing as a natural expression of creative talent resulted not from formal research but from personal discovery, an experience which changed her emphasis in writing from "product" to "process." Although Ueland participated in academic circles by attending graduate school and by speaking as a guest lecturer to college audiences, she did not become a university professor. She continued to educate herself by reading scholarly works and eventually collected a large personal library of recognized literature. Ueland's life, as recorded in her autobiography and journals, is a tribute to a woman who expressed in writing her constant search for new knowledge about herself and the world around her. She shared her ideals and experiences in a written testimony that satisfied her need to discover who she was. Ueland's voice draws readers to share in the discovery that writing is a
process of creative expression with inherent rewards while it also records her contribution to the history of feminism and the development of rhetoric.
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