WRIT 1506

Stroupe

**The Writer’s Audience is Always a Fiction (Ong on Diaries)**

"The writer’s audience is always a fiction" (Ong, “Writer’s” 53-81).   The writer must set up a role in which absent and often unknown readers can cast themselves.  Even in writing to a close friend, I have to fictionalize a mood for him, to which he is expected to conform.  The reader must also fictionalize the writer. When my friend reads my letter, I may be in an entirely different frame of mind from when I wrote it. Indeed, I may very well be dead….  Even in a personal diary addressed to myself I must fictionalize the addressee.  Indeed the diary demands, in a way, the maximum fictionalizing of the utterer and the addressee.  Writing is always a kind of imitation talking, and in a diary I therefore am pretending that I am talking to myself.  But I never really talk this way to myself.  Nor could I without writing or indeed without print.  The personal diary is a very late literary form, in effect unknown until the seventeenth century (Boerner 1969).  The kind of verbalized solipsistic reveries it implies are a product of consciousness as shaped by print culture.  And for which self am I writing?  Myself today?  As I think I will be ten years from now?  As I hope I will be?  For myself as I imagine myself or hope others may imagine me?  (Ong, *Orality* 100-101)

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