**Writing Off The Subject**

A piece of writing can be said to have two subjects, the initiating or triggering subject, which starts the piece of writing or "causes" the piece of writing to be written, and the real or generated subject, which the piece of writing comes to say or mean, and which is generated or discovered in the piece of writing during the writing. That's not quite right because it suggests that the writer recognizes the real subject. The writer may not be aware of what the real subject is but only have some instinctive feeling that the piece of writing is done.

Young writers find it difficult to free themselves from the initiating subject. The writer puts down the title: "Autumn Rain." He finds two or three good lines about Autumn Rain. Then things start to break down. He cannot find anything more to say about Autumn Rain so he starts making up things, he strains, he goes abstract, he starts telling us the meaning of what he has already said. The mistake he is making, of course, is that he feels obligated to go on talking about Autumn Rain, because that, he feels, is the subject. Well, it isn't the subject. You don't know what the subject is, and the moment you run out of things to say about Autumn Rain start talking about something else. In fact, it's a good idea to talk about something else before you run out of things to say about Autumn Rain.

Adapted from *The Triggering Town* by Richard Hugo