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The Leap In Place: Rethinking Key Concepts In The History Of Composition And The Return Of Lore.

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THE LEAP IN PLACE: RETHINKING KEY CONCEPTS IN THE HISTORY OF COMPOSITION
AND THE RETURN OF LORE.

by

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DEDICATION

For my son, Thomas

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I want to thank my Mother and Father for their undying persistence and their loving spirit and my wife, Frances, for her priceless companionship and nearly unlimited understanding. I also want to thank the outstanding Professors I was able to study under at the University of South Carolina: John Muckelbauer, Byron Hawk, Chris Holcomb, Paul Allen Miler, Erik Doxtader, Pat Gehrke and many more. Finally, I would also like to mention Christian Smith and Johnathan Maricle for their support and friendship. I think about my time at USC every day. It was truly one of the best things that ever happened to me.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation attempts to affirm a key set of practical terms in order to guide Composition Pedagogy. These terms include error, language, voice, teacher neutrality, and rationality. In recent years, many of these terms have been discredited theoretically; however, they remain dominant in textbooks and in our actual teaching practice. The result has been a significant divide between theory and practice, resulting in a cognitive dissonance between our classroom activities and our scholarly activity.

However, by presenting each of these terms as dynamic and performative, this dissertation invites the field to find productive practical possibilities inside of them. Moreover, the deconstruction of each term results in a local intervention in the larger economy of force that have worked to divide Composition theory from pedagogy. The end result of these deconstructions is a reconsideration of Stephen North's concept notion of lore as an attempt to offer phenomenological approach to the theory/practice divide that emphasizes the shared experiential world of the Composition instructor.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Over the last fifty years, there can be little doubt that composition has expanded its conceptual toolbox. Nor can there be much doubt that this expansion can be tied to the so-called Composition Revolution of 1963, a moment that reconfigured the field as a research discipline and that, therefore, called for innovative approaches and, ultimately, new ideas. Notably, Stephen North describes the significance of this turn and identifies its most salient feature as the demand to produce something different from existing disciplinary practice. “We can therefore date the birth of modern Composition, capital C, to 1963,” North writes, “And what marks its emergence as a nascent academic field more than anything else is this need to replace practice as the field’s dominant mode of inquiry” (15). Jeff Rice notes that, for North, in practical terms this meant that “the practice of reporting classroom activities and results (what North calls ‘lore’) yields to theoretical concerns regarding writing instruction” (55). If North is right, the very space of modern composition opens with the demand that traditional practices yield their authority to something other than themselves.

That is, modern composition divides theory and practice by insisting that the authority of existing practices no longer holds sway. Thus, a large part of the 1963 revolution, according to North, consisted in declaring that composition was now “essentially virgin territory” (17), or a discipline whose existing practices had been nullified and which, therefore, called out for and even required *new* concepts and *new* theories. Shortly after this revolution, the next major event in the history of the discipline, open admission policies and the rise of federal aid, repeated the revolution’s demand to replace traditional pedagogical practices. Amid these changing student demographics, Mina Shaughnessy described the emerging field of composition as “a frontier” that was essentially “unmapped,” or a kind “pedagogical West” where the value of traditional practices were likewise nullified, leaving instructors to “fabricate” their tools out of nothing but their own “mother wit” (4). In this way, she repeats what might be considered the inaugural gesture of Modern Composition: the inscription of a distance between theoretical and practical work that authorizes theory to provide something other than existing disciplinary practice.

Indeed this gesture-- and its many forceful repetitions—has provided the discipline many novel and incredibly useful concepts. Today, Composition instructors can legitimately invoke concepts such as multi-model composing,

visual argument, gendered texts, hybrid texts, contact zones, networks, intersectionality, and the ethical problem of otherness in a Freshmen Composition course and these concept emerged as responses to gaps in traditional practices regarding technology, gender, culture, context and ethics. By loosening the authority of traditional practice in the areas, theory produced something new.

However, in addition to providing innovation, this gesture also inscribes a binary between theory and practice, where theory seems forever outrunning practice, and practice seems to be forever hiding from theory. Hence, Post-1963 Composition has been characterized by an ever-increasing theory/practice divide. By the time the field gets to North's *The Making of Knowledge in Composition* many of the discipline's key concepts developed in relation to pedagogy had become marginalized from a theoretical perspective, given up as a functions of "lore" more than research or contemporary theory. Moreover, if the inaugural gesture of theory involves canceling the authority of existing practices, then what happens if these practices continue to exist, as almost certainly is always the case? What happens if our current practices simply cannot change fast enough to keep up with theory, if the discipline never reaches a strong enough theoretical consensus to change our fundamental practices, or if, as I

have suggested, the very condition of the possibility of producing theory involves canceling the authority of practices? At what point can the discipline be said to possess authoritative practices or simply practices that do not seem to contradict what we study, read, and write about outside of the classroom?

What is needed perhaps is a way for to harness this demand for novelty--which amounts to a demand for increased pedagogical possibilities--*inside* of existing practices. One approach to this dilemma would be to retain of a set of basic practical terms that have traditionally characterized the practice of teaching writing, but to retain them in such a form that they appear as viable sources of pedagogical possibility. Hence, this dissertation attempt to re-think some of these key concepts such as error, linguistic structure, authorial voice, teacher neutrality, and rationality, concepts which, I argue, remain crucial in the classroom, despite having been rendered suspect by the contemporary theory. Moreover, it attempts to do in a way that allows these key terms to be a source of novelty rather than an obstacle to it.

However, if rethinking these key terms is going to be successful, it will not be because this rethinking simply produces a better concepts of theory or a better concept of practice. It is important to remember that if there is indeed such theory/practice divide in our discipline, then this divide only emerged as a result

of particular kinds of discursive and non-discursive forces that cast the exigence of theory in the need to produce something other than existing practices. As previously mentioned, these conceptual and non-conceptual forces include the 1963 revolution, Open Admissions policies, and changes in federal aid, but they also include the Dartmouth conference, the influence of Marxist dialectical materialism, the rise of separatist ideologies based on a kind of sociological or cultural positivism, and a whole host of other factors that extend far beyond this dissertation. In one way or another, these forces pushed and continue to push Composition theories to break from existing practices, as they often find or create their exigence in assertions of failed or outdated practices. However, by deconstructing the terms associated with traditional composition practice, this dissertation aims to intervene in this field of linguistic and non-linguistic forces and move toward a notion of theory that rather than being *outside of existing practices* is instead entangled with them, and that rather than simply reworking a particular terms like theory or practice, reworks the general system of dissemination that governs our understanding of theories and practices.

For instance, if the concept of voice can be shown to be something other than the binary opposite of exteriority, technicity, materiality, or other forms of subjective absence, then act of showing intervenes in and alters the labor and the

operations that have opposed and continue to oppose voice to its other. More particularly, such an act also acts on the forces that locate the voice exclusively in the purity of the child, in unconscious and uninhibited acts of freewriting, or moments of inner and private soliloquy. In short, such a performance would act on the entire conceptual economy that produces theoretical conceptions of the voice that are outside of existing institutional practices.

Theory Outside of Practice

A brief glance at Sharon Crowley's *A Teacher's Introduction to Deconstruction* shows how theoretical understanding of various terms can conflict with what many would see as their practical necessity. For instance, Crowley quotes Jasper Neel to demonstrate how a pedagogy focused on error not only fails to help students learn to write, but instead has the opposite effect, producing what Neel calls "anti-writing," where "[students] can avoid writing altogether by providing shells with no interior" (qtd in Crowley 45). Moreover, while in classroom practice it often seems necessary to transmit knowledge about language, Crowley argues that the endless "movement of language" leads to the "the futility of establishing spatial or temporal limits or borders around acts of knowing" (10). And while it often seems necessary to appeal to notions of intentionality in the classroom, Crowley speculates that "perhaps [a

deconstructive pedagogy] would even reject the notion of intention altogether” (36). Finally, while in practice we may ask our students to explain certain ideas and the reasoning behind them in their essays, Crowley argues that deconstruction undermines this practice by insisting that if one “accepts Derridean notions about writing, of course, ‘expository writing’ is not thinkable” (43).

Hence, after reviewing this text, much of the everyday practice of a Composition teacher that still involves appeals to some sort of notion of correctness, to a writer’s intentions, to knowledge about language, or to expository writing can easily appear to have lost much of its authority. However, by deconstructing key terms such that guided traditional practice of teaching writing, I hope to begin the process of working toward entangling theory with existing practices in order to retain these practical terms, re-establish their authority, and intensify their classroom practice.

Deconstruction: Abolishing or Retaining Traditional Concepts?

While Crowley’s case may appear extreme, in one way or another, it seems hard to deny that contemporary theory--much of which has focused on a critique of the philosophy of the subject--makes our conceptual and practical inheritance from the subject-centered pedagogies suspect. As a result, a

pedagogy based on traditional concepts of error, voice (especially “authentic voice”), language, neutrality, and rationality—despite continuing to populate textbooks, instructional materials, and students’ attitudes—likely appears today as naïve at best and theoretically (and politically) regressive at worst.

That is, in today’s theoretical conversation, like Crowley, we largely take it for granted that deconstruction has undermined the notion of voice and the Western notion of reason that was built on it, exposing both as primarily ethnocentric enterprises based on illusory notions of self-presence. While passing over or letting go of terms in debt to notions of self-presence can create the possibility for a new gaps in our knowledge to emerge, the fact remains that many of our textbooks and classroom practices still rely heavily on these concepts, and that it is hard to imagine going over a student draft without implicitly invoking intentionality or voice by asking “what are you trying to say here?” or asking the writer to summarize something “in your own words.”

Some in the field have responded to this situation by going back and remaking old terms that have been lost, forgotten, neglected, ignored or somehow marginalized (Hawk). However, fewer people since the late 1960’s attempted to remake terms from the other side of coin: the key terms that have traditionally been associated with “the center” of the discipline. Hence, less work

has been done to re-think the key concepts of current traditional rhetoric. Yet this is precisely what this dissertation attempts to do. Moreover, it attempts to do so, not in spite of the theoretical intervention of deconstruction, but precisely *because* of it.

The Politics of Difference

However, somewhat ironically, the dominant way to take exception to the use of privileged terms is to claim to speak on behalf of difference. Usually this means an explicit of affirmation of what inside of the discipline has come to be called “the politics of difference,” a position that has come to encompass a variety of approaches, but which has generally taken two major forms.

The first insists that that the lack of a rigid identity is a good thing and, therefore, seeks to avoid identity. Identity excludes difference; therefore, we should work from the margins, the borderlands, the contact zones, or some sort of site where we would continually negotiate the difference. This way we can minimize the violence and exclusions of identities and maximize democratic relations inside of the institution. Historically, the strength of this position is its willingness to experiment in the classroom and the way that it values language in action; however, in practice, what constitutes the margins has tended become

that which is recognizably different from the center so that this position finds itself simply working from a different, yet identifiable place.

For instance, in her own description of a classroom based her theory of a contact zone, a theory she develops based on Roman Jakobson's notion of contact and "the phenomenon of contact languages" (60), Mary Louise Pratt explains that "all the students in the class had the experience, for example, of hearing *their* culture discussed and objectified in ways that horrified them; all the students saw *their* roots traced back to legacies of both glory and shame (my italics, 18). Hence, while Pratt's theory began by problematizing the notion of identity, in the classroom practice the notion of identity remained in place. Thus, Joseph Harris describes the end result of putting contact zones pedagogies into practice in the classroom: "what we are offered is a balkanized classroom: a connection of different 'cultures' with separate 'roots' clustered in various 'safe houses' (124). For Harris, the proposed contact zone inevitably breaks down into different identities. If this is so, then, in practice, it may not be possible to install an explicit politics of difference that avoids identity, especially if difference becomes a recognizable position or an explicit requirement of the course.

Likewise, it is difficult, if not impossible, to know when one has, in fact, written from a borderland, or when one has negotiated difference. Consequently,

many critics have noted that in practice, writing that seems to support recognizably marginalized identities tends to count as negotiating difference, while writing that does not tends to be seen as being invested in a naturalized, unreflective, and exclusive identity (Rickert 152, Ellwanger 39). Either way, once there is a group of people, texts, or theories that *represent* difference, then in practice, the politics of difference becomes the politics of identity.

A second approach to difference fears a clear, disciplinary identity, not so much because the sedimentation of an identity is inherently violent, but because a single identity creates a monolithic culture rather than a more democratic, pluralistic one. Hence, this liberal humanist approach affirms a concept of identity and simply argues for the need to multiply identities, to allow more voices into the conversation, and to limit the influence of a single, hegemonic identity. This strength of this position, historically, has been its insistence on broad, liberal learning based on sympathetic exposure to multiple perspectives. However, in its tendency to declare all identities equal, this position has always struggled with questions of value and, therefore, has been open to charges of nihilism.

Yet as I discuss in Chapter Five, in the present era of culture wars, a new version of this position has emerged, bringing a new set of challenges. This

version ups the ante by declaring politics to be a zero-sum game among competing identities, where the existence of privileged social group identities is understood as existing on the basis of their oppression of marginalized identities. To have a genuinely pluralistic culture, for this new, more aggressive, social justice position, the representation, voice, and influence of privileged social groups must be negated, and the representation, voice and influence marginalized groups must become the new norm. In other words, power relations must be reversed.

Thus, like the liberal humanist position that preceded it, this new social justice version of the democratic classroom devalues both the form and content of position and focuses on the speaker. What matters now is the identity of whoever is doing the speaking, writing, or thinking. While in theory this position claims to advocate for social justice, in practice, it often advances the cause of particular identities, while unapologetically working at the expense of other ones. For instance, instructors call on minority students and refuse to call on white males. The result, then, ends up being a war among competing identities, where the subject position of the speaker, not what is actually said, becomes the decisive factor in any given rhetorical situation and the means of establishing the authority of assertions and arguments. This theoretically motivated position,

therefore, often goes against many of the practices of traditional composition courses, such as evaluating arguments on their merit, avoiding *ad hominem* arguments, resisting stereotypes or hasty generalizations, practicing charitable reading, and writing for a general reader.

Thus, if the politics of difference attempts to oppose the use of privileged terms, then, in practice, it almost inevitably does so using an identity-based paradigm in which difference is difference from a recognizable identity. Thus, despite what appears to be a vast gulf between the traditional pedagogies and the politics of difference, both sides agree on one thing: the concept of identity is a fixed concept with a stable meaning that remains self-identical and recognizable by excluding difference.

This danger of this notion of identity is made clear in Edward Said's essay, "The Politics of Knowledge," where he argues against identity-based forms of the politics of difference. For Said, the "epistemology of imperialism" is based on "the extremely stubborn thesis that everyone is principally and irreducibly a member of some race or category, and that race or category can never been assimilated to or accepted by others—except as itself" (196). This thesis was adopted by both sides of the imperialist struggle. That is, the separatist ideology of "a politics of identity" drove global imperialism, where "the natives were

considered to belong to a different category—racial or geographic-- from that of the Western white man” and where it was also true that revolutionary resistance to imperialism formed around “this same category” (197).

While it is important that these disposed groups reclaimed their identity, in Said’s opinion, “the politics of identity has nevertheless proved itself to be insufficient for the ensuing period” (197). In fact, he argues that it has proven to be “a disastrous process, whether for postcolonials forced to exist totally outside of the circuits of world power, or for powerful societies whose triumphalism and imperious willfulness has done much to devastate and destabilize the world” (198). This disaster occurs when the dominant and marginalized group both stress their difference from each other, and this difference becomes the very thing that prevents them from participating in producing the larger culture in which both groups live.

Hence, for Said, this kind of identity-based politics of difference has become a decontextualized, theoretical fetish that now works against the ultimate goal of revolutionary struggles which was the participation of as many people as possible in the production of culture. After arguing against any “theoretically rigid ideal” that does not yield to “the actual participation of peoples in the making of human life” (196), he argues that modern day assertions

of identity betray the spirit of earlier revolutionary struggles by insisting on the separateness of marginal identities, resulting in theoretical and absolute claims that end up dismissing this larger processes of cultural work.

I submit that these clamorous dismissals and swooping assertions are in fact caricature reductions of what the great revisionary gestures of feminism, subaltern or black studies, and anti-imperialist resistance originally intended. For such gestures it was never a matter of replacing one set of authorities or dogmas with another, nor of substituting one center for another. It was always a matter of opening and participating in a central strand of intellectual and cultural effort and showing what had always been, though indiscernibly, a part of it, like the work of women, or blacks and servants—but which had been either denied or denigrated (200).

Hence, the goal was always to get as many people as possible to participate in the dominant culture, not to install the dynamics of replacement that I discussed at the beginning of this essay.

In the same way, this dissertation argues for goal of getting as many people as possible to participate in the culture not by replacing historically dominant terms of writing instruction but by retaining them and making the

responsive to as many people as possible. Said says something similar when he claims that “the great anti-authoritarian uprisings made their earliest advances not by denying the universalist claims of the general dominant culture, but by attacking the adherents of that culture for failing to uphold their own declared standards, for failure to extend them to all, as opposed to a small fraction of, humanity” (202).

Identity as Productive Difference

Likewise, Karen Kopelson’s 2003 article “Rhetoric on the Edge of Cunning; Or, The Performance of Neutrality (Re)Considered As a Composition Pedagogy for Student Resistance” takes issue with pedagogies of difference on the grounds of abstract determinations and the way they often, in practice, promote outcomes that are in opposition to their theoretical goals. In particular, for Kopelson, the pedagogy of difference, which she confesses to sharing similar goals with, has, in her opinion, become a decontextualized pedagogy that ignores the reality of today’s hostile student audiences (120). This audience demands neutrality, objectivity, professional authority, and mastery from instructors, shunning those who break away from these expectations, seeing them as personalizing the course, pushing an agenda, and failing to teach their subject matter. Ignoring this context, pedagogies of difference insist that

instructors adopt and perform alternative or oppositional subject positions, despite their pragmatic ineffectiveness. The result has been damaging for minority instructors, as the demand to make difference visible has undermined their authority, since these instructors fail to perform authority in a way that would be recognized by students.

Citing Indira Karamcheti, Kopelson argues that instructors who signify difference are put in a difficult position and pedagogies of difference serve to further limit their classroom authority and their pedagogical effectiveness.

[Instructors who signify difference] are read/cast, in other words, as teaching the personal but usually unspoken story of ourselves in the world...In fact, I would argue that in today's suspicious and resistant classrooms, it is often this very conscientiousness, the concerted effort with which we do "teach for diversity," that itself delimits pedagogical effects and effectiveness, especially if we are marked or read as 'different' in such a way that students may ascribe political agendas to us the minute we walk into the classroom (Kopelson 2003, 120).

To counteract this situation, Kopelson suggests that we revisit the notion of teacher neutrality.

Kopelson is aware that *prima facie* her appeal to neutrality goes against many of the conventional canons of progressive and feminist pedagogy: everything is political, there is no position of neutrality, and Audre Lorde's celebrated feminist credo that "you cannot dismantle the master house with the master's tools." Indeed Kopelson confesses sympathy with these positions and hesitates to affirm a concept that has historically been thought to occupy a position in the master's house. However, she eventually advocates for concept of neutrality within a performative logic, where variable performances of a concept can produce unstable and differential effects. While this performative logic is in no way immune from producing the violent normativity of traditional idealist logic, it does provides a means to think of concepts as practices and to think of this conceptual practice as producing variable effects.

Performative Resignification

One of these effects of particular interest is what she calls resignification. In order to explicate this process, she cites the work of Indira Karamcheti, for whom the ability to seize an authoritative, impartial or neutral role is not an assimilatory move, but "a co-opting" one. One way this "co-opting" proceeds is by what she calls "delegitimation," which she defines as "the destabilization, of students' identity-based presumptions" (123). When marginalized instructors

perform traditional forms of authority, they potentially reconfigure student's perception of authority, often revealing marginality "is not an inborn, natural category" but something constructed and "something learned" (144).

She compares this performance to a "Brechtian performance," which results in Brecht's famous alienation effect on the audience. Such an experience of de-familiarization, according to Karamcheti, "alienates the viewer from the spectacle, discomforts rather than fulfills audience expectations" (145). Through this performance, Karamcheti claims, the minority teacher can "seize control of the machinery of representation" and use this machinery to play de-legitimizing "visual and epistemological games" (143). In these cases, a traditional concept is affirmed, however, in the performance of this concept, the concept comes to signify something different.

To this end, she cites the work of Judith Butler, who argues that by working inside of the system Antigone utilizes "a politics not of oppositional purity but of the scandalously impure" (5). In her resistance to the state, Butler claims, Antigone uses "the very language of the state against which she rebels" and "the language of entitlement" from which she is purportedly excluded, so that she may "produce a new public sphere for a woman's voice" (5, 82).

The language of entitlement becomes useful once we think of this language as consisting an impure set of “performative names.” Deborah Youdell discusses how these impure performative names function in Butler’s work.

Understanding these performative names as bearing equivocal meanings offers both possibilities and limitations. As Butler has argued, it means that they are open to strategic reinscription, they can take on non-ordinary meanings and they can function in contexts where that have not belonged. This suggests that a given identity is not either wounded or privileged, inert or capable of resistance. Rather, the possibility of both injury and resistance is intrinsic to performative constitutions (485).

Hence, a given term, in and of itself, is neither privileged nor marginal and it becomes difficult to simply be “for” or “against” a term, to declare inherently metaphysical or inherently oppressive.

In our current situation, Kopelson suggests that the performative re-inscription of neutrality better accomplishes the pedagogical goals of a politics of difference. Moreover, she shows how traditional terms can be re-signified and how this resignification can produce differential, destabilizing effects on the system that governs them.

Deconstruction and the Re-inscription of “Privileged” Terms

The irony here is that much of the politics of difference often contains latent appeals to deconstruction. Deconstruction, so the story goes, undoes binaries and shows the fallacy and violence of identity claims. This highly popular, “negative” interpretation of deconstruction, as an undoing or a critique of binaries has led to the belief that one must argue necessarily against stable concepts like voice and reason. Voice becomes a privileged term only by excluding that which is external and inert. Reason becomes a privileged term only by excluding the body. Language becomes a privileged term only by othering the non-linguistic.

On this reading of deconstruction, there is good reason to abandon certain terms and, if possible, to replace them with other ones. For instance, using the term human invokes a certain conceptual economy that hinges on an unwarranted privileging of humans over animals. Hence, we should invoke terms like the human animal, the post-human, the cyborg, or some generic sense of a body. Likewise, invoking the concept of authenticity re-inscribes the very same conceptual economy that casts the inauthentic as a dangerous outsider that threatens the integrity of a particular identity. Indeed, there are countless other “privileged terms” that invoke hierarchies and economies of privilege and,

therefore, provide good reasons to want to police, prohibit, or even punish the use of various terms and to urge newer, better terms. In nearly all these cases, it is understood that invoking privileged terms affirms a conceptual economy that inscribes vast inequities or political violence. In this extreme case deconstruction becomes primarily prohibitive theory, and its main function involves telling people what they cannot or ought not to do.

There are problems with this approach. First, it hinges on an incomplete reading of Derrida. While deconstruction begins by undoing or neutralizing binary opposition, it does not end there. In fact, this moment is simply one gesture of “a double gesture” that addresses and discipline the very system that governs metaphysical oppositions. Derrida explains:

Deconstruction cannot be restricted or immediately pass to a neutralization: it must, through a double gesture, a double science, a double writing-put into practice a reversal of the classical opposition and a general displacement of the system. It is on that condition alone that deconstruction will provide the means of intervening in the field of oppositions it criticizes and that is also a field of non-discursive forces (21).

Derrida emphasize this field of non-discursive forces when he insists that “there is no concept that is metaphysical in and of itself” but that there is only “a labor performed on conceptual systems” (21). Hence, concepts like the subject, voice, neutrality, or reason are not metaphysical in of themselves, but become metaphysical through various kinds of labor and operations. Ultimately, the deconstruction aims to intervene in this labor, and in doing so, *displace* the system this labor has helped to create. Hence, rather than seek new concepts, it seeks new conceptual order or a new general economy in which concepts exist. As Derrida, explains, “Deconstruction does not consist in moving from one concept to another, but in reversing and displacing a conceptual order as well as the nonconceptual order with which it is articulated” (21). This involves performatively re-inscribing or “grafting” this term in a manner.

Hence, when discussing his use of the terms of writing, Derrida insists that the end result is that the predicates that the traditional concept excluded are ...grafted onto a "new" concept of writing that corresponds as well to what has always resisted the prior organization of forces, always constituted the residue irreducible to the dominant force organizing the hierarchy that we may refer to, in brief, as logocentric. To leave to this new concept the old name of writing is tantamount to maintaining the

structure of the graft, the transition and indispensable adherence to an effective intervention in the constituted historical field (21).

In other words, the moment of instability is necessary for undoing a largely conceptual or philosophical approach to language and non-discursive forces or powers upon which this approach depends. This instability, then, renders terms rhetorical, allowing them to be “grafted” or re-inscribed in a manner that intervenes in this system and in the social and historical forces that constitute it. Hence, this moment of instability only tells part of the story of deconstruction, and it is certainly not the *telos* of deconstruction. Instead, as Youdell explains, it enables the performative re-inscription of a term, where this term is always becoming different.

Without this latter moment of re-inscription, deconstruction has little to offer the discipline of rhetoric, and it remains a claim about the instability of meaning, perhaps suited to literary studies, and a form of endless epistemological skepticism, perhaps best suited to philosophy. However, by affirming this moment of performative re-inscription, deconstruction provides a uniquely rhetorical orientation to language and action. Moreover, contrary to the common perspective that deconstruction represents a critique of certain traditional concepts, this understanding of deconstruction involves affirming or

retaining terms rather than abandoning them, working inside practices and institutions rather than trying to get outside them (Nealon 18, Ulmer 22). Hence, the familiar deconstructive slogan: keep the term, displace the concept.

Presumably the terms that can be retained include voice, human, language, authenticity, reason, objectivity, neutrality, and the whole host of concepts we have come to associate with traditional forms of humanism. In short, inside of a deconstructive approach, nothing is abandoned; nothing dies. If so, then deconstruction may be the very thing that allows us to affirm—and not be inherently threatened by or seek to eliminate—traditional concepts such as error, voice, reason, neutrality, and language.

While it is easy to associate difference with the external, visible differences of race, class and gender, it is harder to realize that this not what deconstructive notion of difference is about. In fact, external difference is precisely what deconstruction responds to and tries to change. G. Douglas Atkins and Michael L. Johnson make this point in their introduction to an anthology they edited entitled *Writing and Reading Differently: Deconstruction and the Teaching of Composition and Literature*. Contrasting Derrida's difference with Saussure's notion of difference, Atkins and Johnson claim that "Derrida has shown how meaning derives not so much from differences between terms as from differences

within each term" (2). When describing how to interpret the effects of the first move of deconstruction which shows how each term of a binary is implicated in the other term, they quote Barbara Johnson's introduction to Derrida's *Dissemination*: "A and B are no longer opposed, nor are they equivalent. Indeed they are no longer equivalent to themselves. They are their own difference from itself" (3). And it is precisely this notion of internal difference that makes terms performative names, available for performative re-inscription, and that makes it conceivable that the conceptual toolbox of current traditional rhetoric does not need to be abandoned or replaced.

Conclusion and Chapter Overviews

Hence, we can think of this dissertation as an experiment to see how far we can affirm traditional, but "deconstructed" concepts in the teaching of writing. Affirming notions of error, voice, language, teacher neutrality, and reason in particular chapters of this dissertation can be considered part of a "deconstructed humanism." My use of the term deconstructed with an -ed is rhetorical, meant to underscore the idea that difference already inheres in this notion and that we do not need to install difference. My use of the terms humanism stems from the fact that many of the current stock of theoretically discredited concepts would fall under the banner of humanism, and from my

experience of their capacity to connect with students—particularly struggling students—and give them something to work with, provide an instructional focus, and get them interested in writing.

In our larger culture, it has become apparent that we can no longer afford to abandon or ignore theoretically discredited concepts. For instance, it is no longer clear that we can abandon the concept of authentic voice. In American politics, this one concept alone often decides entire presidential elections. In short, it is often the whole game. If so, then what does it mean not to have a version of this concept? Likewise, many intellectuals would avoid direct appeals to concept of the American, viewing defining such a term as inherently undesirable and talk centered on such a term as excessively nationalistic. The result of this avoidance has been that a small group of people are given the right to define what an American is. Once this definition is in place, the battle for America has already been decided. If an ice skater gets to define what an ice skater is for the judges, then this ice skater has a pretty good chance of winning the competition. After all, it will be played on her terms. In short, if we do not use a term or deliberately avoid it, then someone else will take control of it.

My contention is that a turn toward a deconstructed humanism could begin the process of making better articulations of what it means to be American

or to have an authentic voice, and avoid taking the moral high ground, abstaining from their use, and continually sacrificing rhetorical efficacy for the opportunity for a critique that provides the intellectual and moral transcendence of the masses.

Thus, this dissertation argues that for the need to embrace traditional concepts. The extended argument is as follows: a revised ontology of Error allows the deconstructive notion of internal difference to appear (Ch.1), this notion shifts the theoretical field from a philosophical or idealist approach to a rhetorical or performative approach that views concepts as unstable actions functioning in a variety contexts. In other words, it moves the field from an approach to theory as distinct from practice, to one where concepts and theories are written into contextual performances or practices. Once this performative approach is adopted, the question, then, becomes: what are we supposed to do with the various idealization that have existed throughout the history of the field. Chapter two recasts the process of idealization as one rhetorical performance

among others. Once this tendency for idealization is accounted for, I attempted to re-think three different concepts that have guided traditional versions of composition: voice, teacher neutrality, and rationality and show how these

concepts can be maintained as performances that do not exclude difference, but are capable of producing it. Finally, I conclude by arguing that the repetition of these traditional concepts in the everyday practice of teaching of writing is a theoretical act and that the ultimate stakes of this dissertation is return to a revised notion of lore that reflects this entanglement of theory and practice.

In other words, by re-casting the problem of Error as a problem of a non-dialectal gap that highlights the internal difference of the bodies and concepts involved, this dissertation then proceeds to re-imagine linguistic structures, voice, teacher neutrality and rationality. While many dissertations focus on a single concept and its historical development, this project focuses on a particular rhetorical approach to various related concepts. More specifically, it puts forward affirmative notions of language, voice, teacher neutrality, and rationality -- four concepts that have been criticized as being privileged "tools of the master's house."

Finally, this dissertation focuses on sources from approximately the late 1960's to the mid-1990's. Initially this focus emerged out of a desire to make sure that I was "rooted" in the discipline. However, it quickly became obvious that I wanted to write something like "a prolegomena" for contemporary composition theory. Having struggled to connect contemporary theory to older work in the

discipline, I began to think that there was a need for a book that would accomplish this task. Such a book could then been given to graduate students to contextualize their study of contemporary theory and to provide away that this contemporary theory can be connected to the practice of teaching writing. To this end, I offer the following chapters:

In Chapter 1, “Affirming Error: Toward a Theory of Responsivity,” I argue that the problem of error has traditionally been conceived in terms of an external and visible difference between the writing of incoming students and institutional norms, causing each generation to lament this problem without ever, in Mike Rose’s terms, asking whether or not this gap might be permanent. After providing an historical sketch of this problem from A.S. Hill to the present day, this chapter builds on Rose’s insight and argues that the problem of error is the problem of a non-dialectical gap between incoming students and institutional norms, a gap which fractures both bodies internally and subjects them to contextual and performative articulations.

In short, this chapter attempts to shake the discipline free of dialectical orientation that would insist on theoretical mediation, a concept which insists that theory should lead the way by ushering progress at the expense of existing ways of doing things. Without this chapter, none of the preceding chapters work.

In Chapter 2, “Inscribing Linguistic Knowledge: Toward an Affirmative Conception of Language,” I begin by invoking a “silent” gap that occurs between the institution and the general public when the problem of error is pushed out into the public in debates about correctness. I then proceed to examine the substantive notions of language that attempt to fill this gap, arguing that these positions depend on a certain epistemic *style* of figuring and inscribing this gap.

To dramatize this inscription, I examine two substantive views of language: the influential “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” statement and E. D. Hirsch, Jr.’s cultural view of language in *The Philosophy of Composition*. I argue that both positions, while very different in many respects, idealize language by inscribing “distance” and “separation” that becomes the means of dividing the ideal from the material and the theoretical from the practical. While this inscription allows these positions to make various (circular) knowledge claims, it ultimately backs these positions into an ethical corner from which they cannot emerge. That is, both positions, based as they are on separation and distance (visible or external difference), are essentially at a loss when it comes to pedagogical questions of how normative linguistic structures connects to life and, as a result, end up advocating forms of sacrificial violence rooted in the divide between theory and practice,

Finally, to demonstrate a different orientation, one that involves an affirmative approach to linguistic structures, I emphasize the notion internal difference and recast the production of distance and separation as simply one way to think about difference. Moreover, I argue that affirming internal difference does not occlude the search for knowledge of linguistic structures, but simply recasts this process as contextual, dynamic, and ongoing. In other words, the post-structuralist approach that I appeal to throughout this dissertation is not immune to structures, it simply tries to inject movement and responsivity into them. Hence, appealing to some form of linguistic structures and linguistic knowledge like we often do in the classroom remains a necessary and potentially dynamic practice.

In Chapter 3, "Figuring Voice: A New Materialist Craftsman," I explore the gap between thought and language in theories of language use, a gap which has formed the historical basis of cognitive/social divide in our discipline. In particular, I discuss two attempts to explain language use which, following Patricia Bizzell, I call the internalist and externalist approaches. In short, the internalist approach gives primacy to thought, and the externalist approach grants primacy to language. When discussing the former position, I focus on the work of James Britton and James Moffett and their attempt to explain language

use from a first-person, present-tense perspective. When discussing the latter position, I focus on the early work of Mary Louise Pratt and the work of Kenneth Bruffee and their attempt to understand language use from a third-person, past-tense perspective.

After this discussion, I argue that both attempts end up trapped in various *aporias*. However, I find these *aporias* productive in that it leads to the problem of voice, or the problem of the mystery of the link between thought and language that allows humans to use language, a mystery which demonstrates that voice remains irreducible to knowledge. In other words, there can be no linguistics of the voice. Moreover, the question is not how does thought pass into language or how does language construct thought. Instead the question is: how does the power of thought reside *inside* of linguistic performances and how is this relationship configured?

In light of this situation, I argue that voice is best understood through Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of a type. We cannot experience or ever know the voice itself and instead experience certain "types" of voices, or certain ways of negotiating this *aporia* of thought and language. After elaborating the concept of a type, I recast the expressionist notion of voice found Britton and Moffett as affirmation of the figure of the *child*. Likewise, I recast externalist position's

critique of voice as an affirmation of the figure of the *resident alien*. Both are limit-cases, ethical and political figures that by being visible different from the normative, academic writing while remaining however problematically inside of it occupy a unique place that allows them to perform a unique function. That is, both provide a kind of blank space that is both inside and outside academic writing and is, therefore, able to serve as the ground for alternative normative regimes that would potentially neutralize existing classroom practices.

Finally, in contrast to these figures, I affirm the figure of the *craftsman* as a type that exists inside of traditional writing practice and that figures the relationship between thought and language as attunement to the differential movement inside of various bodies.

In Chapter 4, “Who is Afraid of Neutrality? Performativity, Resignification, and Experimentation,” I begin by discussing teacher authority in terms of what, following Gerald Graff, I will call the pedagogical double bind. This double bind consists in the fact that instructor must both exercise institutional authority, and at the same time, construct democratic relations in the classroom. In order to get purchase on this double bind, I trace its development through a discussion of the democratic classroom.

I begin by discussing the liberal humanist anti-authoritarian classroom, then proceed to discuss the emergence of oppositional pedagogies, arguing that one side chooses democratic relations at the expense of authority (liberal humanism) and the other side chooses authority at the expense of democratic relations (oppositional pedagogy). However, both sides operate on the same paradigm: the double bind is a logical dilemma or a zero sum game where one chooses one-side at the dilemma at the expense of the other side.

After this discussion, I invoke the work Karen Kopelson as a negotiating this double bind differently. This work hinges on the idea that while teacher authority has often been opposed to democratic relations in theory, this does not need to be the case. For Kopelson, the practice and performance of teacher authority in the classroom can produce democratic relations and democratic effects. This chapter builds Kopelson's negotiation of the pedagogical bind and, in particular, on her affirmation of instructor neutrality and concludes by offering some potential beneficial effects of performing neutrality.

In Chapter 5, "The Adventures of Affect: A Genealogy of Affect," I affirm a notion of rationality in the classroom, despite the fact the western reason has been characterized as site of privilege and a means of excluding or oppressing

difference. I accomplish this task by providing a brief genealogy of affect in the western tradition, as a way to discuss the “affective turn” in the humanities.

While the humanities have traditionally privileged the realm of language and symbolic behavior, the contemporary affective turn has questioned this bias and raised important questions about the role of affective experience for embodied life. This turn can largely be conceived of as reaction to the perceived textualism and anti-realism of theories and movements which were heavily influential in the 1980’s and 1990’s. These theories allegedly include social constructionism, deconstruction, the linguistic turn, and semiotics. In the course of moving away from these lines of thought, affective turn has positioned itself as a dramatic turn, intervention or even break away from the western notion of reason has underpinned much of history of humanities. Hence, while in practice our classroom may emphasize reason and symbolic behavior, affect theory allegedly shows that these practices are misguided.

While there is much that is new about this turn and many theorists of affect have emphasized the novelty or even the discovery of affect, this chapter argues that affective experience has, in fact, always played a central role in western forms of thought. Most importantly, it has played a vital role in the notion of western form of rationality. In particular, by providing a brief

genealogy of the notion of affect and focusing on what I call the moral, romantic and vitalist interpretation of affect, this chapter shows that affect has always been central to the western tradition, whose forms of thought and reasoning bear affective experience *inside* of them and can, therefore, best be understood as a certain modality or way of modulating affect rather than as something which excludes affect. Finally, I conclude by arguing if affect exists separately from reason, then we have never been rational. However, if it does not, then we can practice affective orientations inside of classroom, practices that emphasize language and reason.

Finally, I conclude by directing this research toward the possibility of a revised version of lore. While lore has been seen as stock of word-of-mouth, un-theorized, folk knowledge among practitioners that resists any sort of verification or justification. I argue for a concepts of lore as a collection of events where theories are entangled with practices and where this entanglement meets different audiences and achieves different effects. All instructors know that there is no guarantee that what worked today will work tomorrow or what worked in this class or with this material will work with that class or that material. However, all instructors are also interested in knowing what is possible. Hence,

lore is not simply of collection of what we do, but a collection of what we can do with what we do or of what is possible inside of what we do.

Instructors want to know: how can recognizable classroom practices be repeated differently and what kinds of effects might such repetitions have? If we accept that classroom practices can never be repeated identically, then the repetition of classroom practice becomes a theoretical act or a theoretical event, one entangled with the contextual performance of various classroom practices and with ideas about how this conceptual performance can be used and what might result from it.

However, in the process of pursuing this goal, I discovered that when taken as a whole this work pointed toward something that I did not initially see: a revised notion of lore. Hence, the ultimate stakes of retaining a set of traditional terms of composition practice is a revaluing of lore. However, lore is no longer what the 1963 revolution and what followed declared it to be: an untheorized discussions of pedagogical practice. Instead lore is a something like a virtual toolbox that contains the entanglement of theory and practices that can be used differently and productively. In other words, lore is a kind of meeting place where both theory and practice inform each other, challenge each other, and work together in unpredictable ways to rework the theory/practice divide.

CHAPTER TWO

AFFIRMING ERROR: TOWARD A THEORY OF RESPONSIVITY

If we accept the proposition that Composition began in 1874 with the introduction of a required entrance exam at Harvard, then we must also accept that, for the majority of its history, our discipline, in both theory and in practice, has been dominated by a single, forceful, yet somewhat unflattering concept: Error. From Adam S. Hill's *An Answer to the Cry for More English* in 1896 which describes the emergence of the notorious Harvard entrance exam, to the near-total assimilation of this approach in the mid-1930s as evidenced by the astounding commercial success of high-school textbooks such as Dana Jensen's 1936 *Corrective English Exercises*, to Mia Shaughnessy's 1976 classic *Errors and Expectations*, which brought intelligibility to error and, in doing so, almost single-handedly defined and legitimated the field of Basic Writing, Error has reigned as a centerpiece in writing instruction in America for over a hundred years, so much so that the argument can reasonably be made that the majority of the history of Composition is the history of Error (Santa "Dead" 10; Connors 72).

Yet a rupture in this history of error underwrites much of the work being done in today's discipline, often complicating the experience of the past and straining our capacity to recognize and identify our work in this history (Laurence 23; Downs and Wardle 3; Welch 6). That is, instead of focusing on traditional problems of grammatical correctness, many of us working in the field today identify with paradigms which de-emphasize written error and instead involve recognizing and responding to broader, social and rhetorical norms: the shifting of writing to the realm of sociality and public negotiations (Horner "Sociality"; McComiskey; Kent; Brodkey); the negotiating of complex issues of power, authority, and audience (Bartholomae, "Inventing"; Crowley, "Composition" 69; Miller 55); or the attending to various contexts with rhetorical nuance and sophistication (Gray-Rosendale 15; Connors and Corbett). Even those of us who are most concerned with technical, syntactical and sentence-level issues are much more likely today to contextualize and re-package grammar, largely removing it from the paradigm of legalistic correctness to one of style (Glenn 95; Hartwell 126; Lu, "Professing" 174).

At the origin of this rupture, no doubt, stands the so-called 1963 Revolution in Composition Studies, the familiars of which have now become second nature: the first great work of research, Braddock, Lloyd-Jones and

Smith's 1963 *Research in Composition*, producing evidence that teaching grammar in isolation fails to produce better writers and may even hurt students' development (37-38). Kitzhaber's influential *Themes, Theories and Therapy* appears the same year and argues that the Composition course, in its current regrettable form, only exists so "students can pursue their other college studies without making gross errors in usage and expression" (481) and that in order to remedy this situation, the discipline must develop a more in-depth course based on the rhetorical tradition. Finally, the transformative 1963 CCCC convention announced a new focus on rhetoric in a series of memorable speeches, resulting in an issue of *College Composition and Communication* that included Kitzhaber's "4Cs, Freshman English, and the Future," Wayne Booth's "The Rhetorical Stance," Francis Christensen's "The Generative Rhetoric of the Sentence," and Edward P. J. Corbett's "The Usefulness of Classical Rhetoric." Taken together, these texts suggest a definitive turn away from the traditional focus on error and a turn toward rhetoric, and this turn toward rhetoric brings about the modern form of the composition course, or some version of the course that we might recognize today.

Fifty years later, the only question appears to be whether or not this turn is now somehow complete: if the call for mechanical correctness as a focus of

Composition instruction has not been surpassed. In other words, today we can ask whether the emphasis on process (Flowers and Hayes), critical thinking and reading (Giroux), genres of discourse (Dewitt), and multicultural norms (Pratt “Arts”) has constructed an alternative pedagogical paradigm where the problem of error no longer compels our attention. Moreover, from an ethical perspective, is it even possible to raise the problem of error without necessarily invoking a particular set of cultural biases that take on normative status, and in doing so, inevitably constitute a blatant form of “violence to the Other?” And if the “Other” is the figure that grounds today’s ethical theorizing (Horner and Lu) and if mechanical correctness operates almost exclusively on a paradigm of the “Same,” then how are we to understand the problem of error, a problem typically embedded in the tradition of mechanical correctness?

As challenging as these questions are, they gain even more force in light of recent theoretical work on Digital Networks (Rice; Hocks), Ecologies of writing (Cooper; Syverson), Post-Humanist theories (Dobrin; Boyle), Vitalism (Hawk; Vitanza), Object-Oriented Ontologies (Barnet; Rivers) and the New Materialism (Graham and Herndl; Pflugfelder). While these approaches resist reduction to a homogeneous position, when taken together, they emphasize immanent relations, fluidity, invention, and movement—all ideas which, once again, resist

the fixity, recalcitrance, myopic and transcendent connotations often associated with a concept like Error. In one way or another, in today's context, very real questions emerge as to whether or not raising the specter of Error is still possible.

The Problem of Error Today

In this ever-expanding disciplinary trajectory, the problem of error likely appears—if it appears at all—as something of an afterthought, something removed from our immediate attention, something outside of our disciplinary gaze. Certainly, most of us still mark errors, but the stakes of research on the problem of error seem to have diminished considerably. At bare minimum, our professional and scholarly identities yoke us to a much different set of concerns, pushing error outside of our immediate horizon of attention.

In fact, the problem of Error is so removed from our identity that Robert Connors, in his 1985 essay “Mechanical Correctness as a Focus of Composition Instruction,” appeals to the contemporary identity of his reader by satirizing our disciplinary past's hyper-vigilance in regard to error by invoking “the image of a grim-faced Miss Grundy, besprinkling the essays of her luckless students with scarlet handbook hieroglyphs” (Connors, “Focus” 61). Certainly, such a satire produces a pathos of distance from an earlier “reductive tradition” and affords the reader the necessary distance to reflect on “the gains we have made as field”

(Connors, "Rhetoric" 95). But perhaps even more importantly, it enables a form of collective subjectivity based precisely on this distance and separation from issues of error.

Of course, Connors is not alone in advocating for a disciplinary distance from the practice of focusing on errors, for the discipline itself openly advocates for this distance. In fact, de-emphasizing error has become a matter of policy. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) define Standard English as the language "spoken and written by those groups with social, economic, and political power in the United States" and, therefore, treat notions of error and correctness as tools inside of a process of class warfare (qtd. in Bertonneau 1). Likewise, the Conference for College Composition and Communication (4Cs) declares that "if we can convince our students that spelling, punctuation, and usage are less important than content, we [will] have removed a major obstacle in their developing their ability to write." (qtd. in Bertonneau 3). As these statements show, if error remains on the disciplinary map—as an object of satire, as a form of political oppression, and as an obstacle to teaching writing—then there seems to be a fairly clear consensus that it something we must move away from.

Research Trends in the Study of the Problem of Error

Indeed, if research trends are any indication, we have experienced a profound shift away from the topic of error in the last 25 years. In the 1960s, large-scale, influential studies flourished such as the 1962 study in England undertaken by Roland Harris, the 1963 Braddock, Lloyd-Jones and Shoer study, the highly recognized New Zealand Study by Elley, Barham, Lamb, and Wyllie published by in 1975 by the NCTE, and the 1977 Shaughnessy study (Patterson 50-52). Moreover, in his afterward to his Braddock Award-winning essay, "The Study of Error," David Bartholomae claims that error was such a pressing problem that everything he wrote for the entire decade of the 1980s and "most of what [he] has written" in his entire career could have been entitled "The Study of Error" ("Study" 109). Following the publication of Mina Shaughnessy's classic *Errors and Expectations*, journal articles and chapters in edited collections were in high demand as the specter of error loomed large inside of the disciplinary horizon (Santa, "Response" W19). But even before Shaughnessy's 1977 work, research on error flourished. For example, the 1975 inaugural issue of the *Journal of Basic Writing* was entirely devoted to the issue of Error, suggesting that the problem was tied to the founding of the journal itself.

Yet, as alluded to earlier, while error studies flourished in the early modern period of Composition, the concept has been largely neglected by the field in the last 30 years. By the late 1980s, full-length studies of the problem of Error in Composition had all but vanished. Lunsford and Lunsford note in their 2008 study on error that there have only been three full-length studies conducted on error from 1986 to 2006, and two of these studies are almost twenty years old (785-786). Tracy Santa reiterates this view, when, in his 2009 review of this same text, he proclaims that “interest in the study of error seems to have abated,” adding that “error as focus of study in composition and rhetoric has seemingly fallen off the agenda” (Santa “Response” W19).

Logics of Error

If there is little interest in research on error today, it is a curious fact that the problem of error was a nodal point--perhaps even *the* nodal point--or theorizing in the 1970s and 80s error and productive of many of the theories on which we still rely. In fact, we can think of composition theory during this period as series of attempts to struggle with, understand, name, or otherwise explain the blank space of error. Once error became a signifier, most notably perhaps in the work of Shaughnessy, then discovering what it signifies became the foundational task for the theoretical enterprise that developed various *logics of error*, which

consisted largely of translating errors into intelligible schemes. For example, if error provides “a window to the mind of the writer,” then cognitive theories of the writing process approaches gain authority (Shaughnessy); if errors are predictable and rooted in the differences between a mother tongue and a target language, then these differences need to be analyzed and translated through forms of contrastive analysis into a systematic taxonomy of error (James), if errors are embedded in an interlanguage or idiosyncratic dialect comprised of a hybrid mixture of home and academic languages, then the logic of that singular dialect needs to be analyzed through techniques of literary criticism (Bartholomae, “Study”); if error is primarily a social phenomenon or a matter of “social difference,” then theories of discourse communities acquire force (Bizzell); however, if error is no longer understood as a linguistic phenomenon, but comes to be understood, as it is in later work of David Bartholomae, as an effect of institutions, then theories of institutional power gain ascendancy. In all of these cases, a decision on error interpellates a particular theoretico-pedagogical apparatus and this apparatus gains normative force.

This decision on what error is proved to be a foundational task of the discipline, which itself can be understood as a response to error. That is, any pedagogy or normative theory rested on a prior decision on error, which then

motivated a particular theoretico-pedagogical apparatus. Even the very existence and funding of basic writing programs, the sites where such theories and pedagogies were most rigorously constructed, were based on a decision about the nature of error. Having decided that error could be rehabilitated, such programs no longer sought to expel error but instead to bring it into their normative mechanisms. Thus, the task of deciding on and naming error made error visible inside of certain “logic of error.” This visibility, then, allowed institutions to establish regulative methods, place it into developmental sequences, manage it through various support mechanisms, and to care for it through individualized instruction and remedial writing programs.

However, at the heart of this process lies a series of questions that reveal an essential paradox, one that is all too easily missed with a simple historicist approach to topic of error in our discipline. What does it mean to “decide on error”? Where does this decision take place? If the decision on error founds a given normative apparatus, then then this decision and the space in which it is made cannot be part of any such apparatus. If so, then how is it made? What criteria is used to make it? What justifies it? Who or what authorizes it? Does the demarcating of error precede any normative system or the result of a normative

system? Can it be both? Is there two notions of error or one? These question drive much of what follows in the chapter.

While various logics of error have been studied and this is certainly important work. We also have to take into consideration just how little we know about this mysterious decision on error upon which these systems rest.

Moreover, when we fail to address the paradoxes around the notion of error and the apparently mystical foundations of normative systems, then we will be unable to understand how logics of error work and how to work on them. Chief among this paradoxes is that error seems to be both inside of normative systems (as the recognizable other of correctness) and outside of normative systems as their condition of possibility.

Visibility is a Trap?

A large part of the genius of Mina Shaughnessy was to recognize this paradox and the ethical and political conundrums it creates for Composition Instructors. Rather than thinking of error as a normative infraction, she saw error as a problem to be engaged. In this regard, one has only to reference her introduction to her magisterial *Errors and Expectations* where she draws attention to a potentially insidious paradox at the center of the problem of error: “Is [the composition instructor’s] concern with error already a malignancy? Ought we

not to dwell on the options that writers have rather than on the constraints that they must work under if they are to be read without prejudice?" (6). This question is clearly rhetorical in that no reasonable instructor would willingly choose to turn students over to prejudice, yet it points to a certain trap involved in theorizing error. For Shaughnessy an inherent "malignancy" haunts the concern with error as one seems forced into an ethical conundrum between offering writers possibilities and teaching traditional forms of correctness that allow them to gain a hearing publicly. On one hand, error could be a productive condition for producing new kinds of discourse. On the other hand, as a visible infraction of the norm, it carries severe punitive consequences.

Bruce Horner, writing in 1994, casts Shaughnessy's dilemma in terms of a choice between rival forms of violence:

Thus those of us teaching basic writing are caught between the horns of an ethical dilemma: if we "convert" students to "our" conventions, we are liable to charges of cultural genocide; on the other hand, ignoring differences between their conventions and those of Edited American English amounts to abandonment. ("Mapping" 125)

For Horner, if writing instructors assimilate students to standard notions of correctness, they are open to a charge of institutional violence or "cultural

genocide” against various groups of non-standard speakers. However, if instructors fail to teach the standard, they are open to a charge of abandoning students to social violence once they leave the institution.

Shaughnessy’s and Horner’s characterization of the problem of error sets the stage for various theoretical responses that try to negotiate this dilemma. In what follows I will briefly summarize some of these theoretical responses and their limits.

Invoking the Nature of Language.

One of the dominant ways of addressing the problem of error has been to appeal to knowledge of the nature of language. The most recognizable use of this framework—which we might think of as “the nature law response”—is perhaps the famous “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” statement where, in the context of the problem of error, the authors explain that “the English profession, then, faces a dilemma: until public attitudes can be changed [. . .] shall we place our emphasis on what the vocal elements of the public thinks it wants or on what the actual available linguistic evidence indicates we should emphasize?” (Committee 21). In similar manner Dennis E. Baron asks, “Can we reaffirm an elitist theory of English composition that is contrary to what we know about the nature of language?” (177).

Both Barron and the writers of SROL, largely under the influence of the Noam Chomsky's structural linguistics (Faigley 83), utilize a common strategy: opposing knowledge about *the nature of language* to a misinformed public's "prejudice" about language. Hence, their epistemic approach resolves the gap between the university and the public by siding with knowledge of the nature of language and, therefore, establishing the linguist as a source of authority. SRTOL's investment in this strategy and this form of authority is evidenced by the a simple search of the word "linguist" inside SRTOL's 65-page manifesto reveals that the word appears 205 times in stand-alone form or as a part of the larger phrase "linguistics."

In fact, SROL's entire argument relies on the crucial Chomskyian distinction between "deep structures" of language, which functions as a kind of natural law of symbolic production, and surface structures, which is completely conventional and, therefore, functions like the positive law of a particular culture. The attractiveness of this position is clear. It potentially solves the aporetic structure of normative systems discussed in the previous structure. If language is defined as deep structure, then there is little to debate—the norm of communicative competence is justified and all other norms can be reduced to

forms of cultural bias. Min-Zhan Lu notes such how linguistic knowledge provides SRTOL an air of neutrality to their enterprise:

The 'scientific' status of 'linguistics' is invoked by references to the 'actual available linguistic evidence' and 'insight from linguistic study.' The committee's interest in 'actual available linguistic evidence' seems to reside strictly in the binary of deep structure vs. surface details and the "new" rationale this binary offers for maintaining the neutrality of teaching and writing. ("Representing" 80)

Lu is describing how knowledge the nature of language as "deep structure" provides an immanent rationality for teaching and evaluating writing by grounding this activities in an undisputed, neutral set of norms. .

Yet the moment this norm is invoked in practice, significant questions emerge as to how it will be received by actual empirical audiences. Drawing on Shaughnessy's framework, advocating the new norm of linguistic competence in the deep structures of language helps instructors to focus on the options that writers actually have and, in a sense, mitigates the problem of institutional violence. However, by devaluing the existing cultural norms governing actual language use, it risks abandoning writers to potentially unlimited social violence once they leave the university.

Invoking the Cultural Norm

In addition to SROL's position that normativity should be located inside of knowledge of "the nature of language," a cultural view of normativity represents the other side of SROL's dialectical coin, arguing that, in practice, the source of normativity should be the dominant cultural norms in which most writing takes place. We might think of this position as the positive law response to the natural law version of normativity discussed above.

On one hand, SRTOL recognizes that dominant cultural norms are operative, but it makes the moral and theoretical argument that they ought not to be. On the other hand, the socio-cultural view also recognizes the same premise—the power of the dominant culture's linguistic norms; however, it responds quite differently, concluding that the task of writing instruction is to recognize and affirm the authority of these norms, and then to empower students inside of them.

We can see this attempt to define a norm based its cultural authority in Larry Beason's "Ethos and Error: How Business People React to Errors." In this text, Beason acknowledges approaches to error which are similar to SROL in the affirmation of something like communicative competence, but puts forward a different definition of written norms. In particular, he recognizes the view of

Isabella Halsted and shared by Wall and Hull wherein errors are only significant if they impede the communication of a meaning, noting that this Chomskyeian view “appeals to many researchers and teachers alike” (33). However, assuming a more consequentialist view of language, he shifts the field’s basis for establishing normativity from the successful exercise of a universal, ideal *langue* to the *parole* of the dominant linguistic code of the larger public. Hence, does this by asking the field to consider “non-academic responses to error” of members of the public and the power relations embedded in those responses, stressing the actual encounters, perceptions, and the lack of a credible *ethos* writers will face in their present and future public interactions.

The general argument for such culturally defined norms is as follows: If the culture behaves in certain ways and possesses certain attitudes and expectations of writers, then, according to the socio-cultural view of error, we can assume that a theoretical understanding of nature of language rooted in a process of idealization alters neither these expectation nor the punitive measures enacted for violating them. Therefore, we can effectively bracket the question of the nature of language and, in doing so, recast the normative question in terms of the authority of competing cultural codes.

Beason thus takes the opposite position from SRTOL. That is, while his view potentially saves writers from social violence once they leave the university, it opens the door for them to suffer institutional violence by focusing on the constraints they will face in society and ignoring the options they have as writers while in the university. And, as many theorists have argued, this strategy can prevent them from ever starting the process of learning how to write while they are there.

Invoking Dialogical Negotiation

Dissatisfied with the potentially zero-sum game of choosing between natural or cultural norms, a third position seeks to affirm *neither* nature *nor* culture but to negotiate dialogically normative principles. We can think of this position as advocating a procedural understanding of law.

This strategy is visible in works such as Bruce Horner's "Re-thinking the Sociality of Error: Teaching Editing as Negotiation." In this text, Horner draws on Raymond Williams' definition of a convention and claims that the word "carries from its roots the sense of meeting like an annual 'convention' and, by derivation, agreement" ("Re-thinking" 141). In this context, error is "a flawed social transaction," and "any failure in conventions thus represents a failure of the parties involved to reach agreement, the rejection by one party of the

relationship expressed and/or offered by the other” (141). Presumably this agreement is reached through some sort of dialogical process. Likewise, Deborah Mutnick affirms the dialogical negotiation of norms when she cautions that, “in the absence of a public dialogue on literacy and standards, the gap between popular and professional conceptions of writing will widen [. . .] as Compositionists revise writing curriculums in a vacuum” (xi-xii).

In short, both Horner’s and Mutnick’s comments indicate that the strategy is no longer to escape error by defining a static norm but instead to understand this gap as a site—a borderland or margin—of dialogical negotiation. These theorists seem acutely aware of the potential malignancies and even violence involved in raising the issue of error and seek to alleviate these issues through democratic and dialogical processes, processes that have often been understood as antidotes to violence. .

Like the appeal to the nature of language, the appeal to procedural norms ends up claiming a similar neutrality. However, in practice this appeal to dialogical negotiation proves difficult to maintain. On the one hand, dialogue seems natural and unforced, but because it always happens in a particular language and context we never get an unfettered notion of dialogue. However, little is said about which language is used or what context the dialogue takes

place in. Likewise, not only is dialogue a cultural practice in which some people are more versed than others, but dialogue also slides often into the demand for a particular result—i.e., content. For instance, if one questions patriarchy, then they are often seen as participating in a dialogue; however, if one questions those who question patriarchy, then they are quite likely to be seen as resisting dialogue (Rickert 152-54). In other words, in practice this method has trouble in distinguishing itself from the demand for a particular result: liberal pluralism (Rickert 152-54).

In this way dialogical negotiation faces much of the same criticism as was levied at a dominant cultural norm: it forces assimilation at the expense of others' culture, a consequence that dialogical negotiation was invoked to cure. On the other hand, insofar as it is not clear that a dialogically negotiated norm is valid beyond the classroom in which it is negotiated, this position also runs the risk of abandoning writers. In this sense, dialogical negotiation fails combat either one of Horner's twin dangers of cultural genocide or abandonment.

Invoking Non-dialogical Responsiveness

A fourth strategy for negotiating Error involves affirming the gap of Error and calling for non-prescriptive forms of "responsiveness." For example, Joseph Harris also describes the dilemma between the university and the larger public

and, like Horner, suspends the dilemma of nature or culture found in SROL and Beason, but rather than prescribe a dialogical negotiation of the gap between the two, as Horner does, he affirms this gap calls for a non-dialogical approach which emphasizes “responsiveness” without specifying the nature of the response.

[Composition instructors] have too often retreated behind the walls of our professional consensus, admonishing not only our students and university colleagues but the more general public as well when they fail to defer to our views on language learning---answering their concerns about correctness by telling them, in effect, that they should not want what they ask for. (86)

He adds that this is “an unfortunate stance for a field which defines itself through teaching and the practical workings of language” before arguing for a view of literacy which “recognizes and includes these public concerns” (86). However, this inclusion does not mean assimilating to those concerns or being assimilated by them. Instead, such a view would *neither* accept *nor* dismiss the public’s call for correctness and, therefore, avoid returning to a “Shaughnessy-like” focus on error, while also becoming “responsiveness to people outside of the field” (86) Harris, then, suggests that rather than overcome or resolve the gap

between the university and the public or simply side with one of party's normative views; we somehow become responsive to it.

Thus, this strategy asks us to experience this gap in a manner which exceeds simply being *for* or *against* a particular defined norm and, therefore, avoids camping on a position or reducing the problem to a matter of dialectal opposition. However, Harris does not take up the task of bringing about an experience which would cultivate this responsiveness, a task which this dissertation would like to undertake.

This strategy asks us to become responsive to the gap between the university and the public in a manner other than simply asserting a static norm or regulatory procedure. Although Harris does not fully develop what this might mean, a primary motivation of this dissertation involves doing just this. But first we need to get a better understanding of what it might mean to offer something other than a simple logic *of* error, to refuse to treat error as a signifier, and to cultivate a responsiveness to this gap of non-meaning. One place to begin is recent scholarship on error in other fields. What is significant in this research is that the gap of error that I have been discussing is not subject to a particular logic *of* error or symbolic mediation, but instead is seen as a non-transitory condition of response.

Affirming Error: Recent Interdisciplinary Work on Error

If interested in Error as a research topic has indeed declined in Composition, then it has flourished in other fields. In fact, in this fields we have witnessed a veritable explosion of interest in error. For many scholars in literary theory, Paul de Man's work on Error in the 1970s and '80s remains a significant contribution to hermeneutics, semiology, and theories of reading (Corngold). While de Man's work on error is certainly some of the most important work that has been done error studies, there has been a significant amount on the topic in more recent times. For instance, the historian David W. Bates' 2002 *Enlightenment Aberrations: Error and Revolution in France* argues for the "decisive influence" of Error in revolutionary debates about political identity and national history in France. Even more recently, in the field of Comparative Literature, Zachary Sgn's impressive *The Rhetoric of Error from Locke to Kleist* traces the crucial role of the concept of Error—in particular, the concept's instability and "double-meaning"—in shaping much of Western intellectual history. Even more recently, error has emerged in Seth Lerer's *Error and the Academic Self: The Scholarly Imagination, Medieval to Modern*, a 2012 work in philology which examines how academic writing, criticism, and, most importantly, the self-fashioning of the modern academic emerged "through encounters with the erroneous" (2).

In these recent studies from other disciplines, such “encounters with the erroneous” initiate, motivate, and sustain political revolution, the practices of academic scholarship, modern constructions of the scholar, and even the shape and direction of Western intellectual tradition itself. Interdisciplinary research of this kind understands error as neither a cognitive failure to be corrected nor as a social difference to be overcome but, instead, as a productive, ontological condition of articulating modern forms of identity, history, and subjectivity. This growing interest in the conceptual elaboration and dynamism of Error suggests a viable research topic, even though it currently receives little attention from Composition scholars.

Error Inside of the Discipline

However, as Composition professors, we do not have to look too far for such encounters with the erroneous. In fact, when we examine our classroom, we seem to be faced with virtual impossibility of ignoring the presence and problem of Error. As innumerable authors have suggested, anxiety over the issue of error often shapes the psychology of our students—particularly, our struggling students (Lu, “Professing” 167, Shaughnessy 11, 194, Troyka 13) Every instructor knows all too well, such anxiety all too often produces attitudes and behaviors that can have dire consequences for acquiring the ability to write: disliking

writing and courses requiring writing, decreasing confidence in the ability to write, avoiding public engagements with writing, and the all-too-frequent problem of plagiarizing written assignments. In short, encountering a struggling writer means encountering anxiety, and this anxiety often seems to transcend the individual's psychology and provides the affective mode in which the writing situation—both writer and what is written- comes to be.

Likewise, despite innumerable attempts by Composition theorists to reconfigure the teacher-student relationship in more democratic terms, Composition instructors differentiate themselves from tutors and writing center associates—as well as virtually any other party who would view the student's writing—by their power to assign grades and, in particular, their capacity to assign *failing* grades. As the limit of democratic relations between teacher and student, error often represents the point at which the power of the institution suspends dialogue, equality, respect for differences etc. and makes direct contact with the body of the students; this act or the threat of this act, for many students, potentially grounds the authority of our entire normative discourse, providing force to our notions of correctness and error.

With these latter comments, I am suggesting that the problem of Error may even extend beyond the empirical reality of paralyzed students and the role

of writing instructors: it may actually be inscribed within the structure of the discipline itself. That is, if Composition is, as David Bartholomae defines it, “the institutionally supported desire to organize and evaluate writing of unauthorized writers, to control writing in practice, and to define it as an object of professional scrutiny” (Bartholomae “What” 11), then the discipline seems especially implicated in acting on “unauthorized” or “erroneous” writing. Composition thus is unavoidably entangled with error.

As this entanglement suggests, a notion of error may not only be embedded in the discipline of Composition, but it might also be embedded in the very notion of a discipline. Indeed, this is the position put forward by Carl James in *Errors in Language Learning and Use: Exploring Error Analysis*, when he asserts that “the very idea of ‘discipline’ suggests recognition of the need to eliminate or minimize error” (2).

However, when discussing the foundations of literary studies as a discipline, Susan Miller reactivates the paradoxes of error when she notes the importance of establishing an infraction: “As in traditional Christianity, the metaphoric precedent for established literary studies, a *conviction* of sin is necessary for sanctifying redemption to have force” (58, my italics). If a “conviction of sin” is the equivalent of James’ “recognition of the need to

eliminate or minimize error,” then Miller’s idea suggests that inside of any disciplinary discourse there will *necessarily* be notions of truth (or correctness) and error, and, in order for the positive term to have meaning, we must first experience a negative term as missing the mark.

But as discussed earlier, a crucial ambiguity looms inside of Miller’s statement. In certain respects, her claim seems obvious, yet, here—at the origin of discourses—is where things get complicated. On one hand, Miller seems to be claiming that if positive, disciplinary statements are going to have the force of truth, then there must also be erroneous statements to contrast these statements. Thus, a discipline, insofar as it can provide truthful statements, necessarily implies an engagement with the erroneous, since, as Plato reminds us in the *Theaetetus*, any definition of knowledge necessarily relies on a notion of error, or as Kathryn Schulz, author of *Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margin of Error* puts it, “your theory of one [Knowledge] hinges entirely on your theory of the other [Error]” (11). Yet, this may not be the whole story with error.

However, Miller’s claim suggests a much more global, perhaps even mystical foundation for a discourse. In this reading, her statement does not seem to be invoking a conviction of a particular, recognizable sin since, for one thing, there would not yet be a discourse in place to recognize and describe it as an

error. Instead, it can be read as invoking a conviction of sin as such, i.e. as a kind experience of a generic existential gap, and this gap appears necessary in order for *discourse as such* to be possible. This sin or this “gap,” in turn, invokes a deeper, ontological sense of error, one necessary to motivate humans to construct discourses and seek answers in the first place. After all, if human beings already had truth, meaning or somehow “possessed language” and did not have some general sense of separation or anxiety or, if you will, “experience of Error,” then it is difficult to imagine why discourses would have ever come into being or why humans would find a need to participate in them.

Double Meaning

This problem—that Error seems to be a gap that is both the positive, ontological condition of any discourse and the negative of true statements inside of a discourse—will recur again and again, making it difficult to stabilize the notion. In fact, it may not be possible. If Error is understood in this fashion, then it appears to be shifting back and forth between these different locations. Consequently, as Jeffrey Sng explains, the term is opened to the possibility of almost perpetual equivocation:

The problem, however, is that the site to which the word error returns us contains just the sort of linguistic equivocation that frustrates clarification:

the Latin *errare* means both “to wander freely” and “to wander from the right path.” The former meaning is neutral, and could be used to describe, for example, the movement of a person or animal. The second meaning is the pejorative one that became prevalent in English usage after the seventeenth century (3).

Thus, there seems to be at least two distinct uses of the term *Error*: one neutral and generic (what I will call “Errancy”) the other pejorative and specific (what I am calling “error”). While we are more familiar perhaps with the pejorative term—error as the other of knowledge—we are perhaps less familiar with *Error* as the possibility of knowledge. In other words, we are familiar with the formulation e/c, where error is on the other side of correctness, but we are not familiar with the notion of Errancy as the / which makes discourse possible in the first place. This is not to say, however, that this ontological sense of *Error* has been lost on Composition theorists.

Patricia Laurence recovers something of this more, neutral ontological use of the term, noting its appearance during the 1970s when the ready-to-hand way of teaching Composition courses could no longer be taken for granted. In particular, Laurence describes how, during the period of Open Admission, *Error*

was the ground or meeting place for nascent ideas where questions about the *possibility* and the *limits* of normativity in the discipline flourished:

‘Error’...became the institutional ground for discussion of Open Admissions. The institution was reformulating competency. ‘Error’ and this may be difficult for a generation now intent on ignoring it to understand--was the public space where the latent theoretical and educational commitments of faculty members, departments, and divisions met and interacted. Do we believe in these students? Can they learn? Can we teach them? These were the questions that beleaguered faculty asked in the 1970s, placing the mission of the university in question (Laurence 23).

For Laurence, questions of Ernacy open up larger questions about what is and is not possible inside of the discipline’s current discourse. Her example shows how this more ontological sense of Error can be productive without being reduced to discourse. Sng provides a further example of this notion of what I am calling Error and how it is distinct from what I am calling error:

An instructive example of the coexistence of error’s two meanings is the ambiguity of the French errant that persisted into the eighteenth century: the *chevalier errant* (the knight-errant) was imagined in the medieval

period as one who sets out courageously looking for adventure, and was therefore a positive figure, while the *juif errant* (the Wandering Jew) was seen as a perpetual exile straying from redemption and truth. (3)

Thus, for Laurence, Error, at one time, had similar connotations to the *chevalier errant*—the knight who sets out courageously looking for adventure—and it is precisely this sense of the term that she argues has been forgotten.

Transition

Although error has almost disappeared from composition scholarship, I have been tracing an ontology of Errancy within the discipline. Toward this end, I began with the presence of error in the classroom, which led to the presence of Error in composition as a discipline, which led to the notion of Errancy embedded within any disciplinary discourse, which led to the concept of Errancy as the condition of the possibility of discourse. I then noted that these latter two meanings mark an inherent ambiguity or “double meaning” of the term. This double meaning speaks to the fact that error can appear as a non-linguistic, un-nameable ontological condition of the possibility of discourse or as a kind of wandering on an adventure or as a recognizable form of ontic deviancy or lack inside of an existing normative system. As such the notion of Errnacy seems unable to be pinned down, seems incapable of being reduced to a stable

signification and of being surpassed by a progressive historical narrative where an instructional focus on error is gradually overcome by a more sophisticated knowledge about writing.

The Discovery of Linguistic Anxiety and the Folding the Progressive Narrative

In Robert J. Connors' version of this narrative, the break from a reductive tradition of error is bluntly characterized as "a story of well-meaning teachers and administrators swept away by ignorance and short-sightedness through an eighty-year pedagogical bad dream" ("Rhetoric" 73). Writing in the mid-1980s and tying this break to the early 1960s, he explains, "it is only in the last twenty five years that composition instructors have seriously begun to question the priority given to simple correctness in college-level instruction," adding that this displacement of correctness separates the current state of the discipline from "the reductive traditions of the first half of the century," which he baldly characterizes as a "stultifying error hunt" (Connors 72). However, we have awoken from this dream, and, therefore, today's Composition instructors are invited to enjoy the fruits of this progress and to "rejoice in the gains that we have made, even if these achievements are only a beginning to a larger historical inevitably destined to play out in future generations" (Connors 95). However, this celebratory tone quickly morphs into a battle cry, a disciplinary call to arms, and a warning to

those who resist inevitability when Connors boldly proclaims “we have made strides, we will make more,” interpellating a subject whose existence is explicitly predicated on the overcoming of tradition of error

Connors rehearses this progressive narrative in multiple works on the tradition of mechanical correctness, the most notable being “Mechanical Correctness as a Focus of Composition Instruction,” a 1985 article for *College Communication and Composition*, and “The Rhetoric of Mechanical Correctness,” a 1986 essay included in an anthology of Connors’ writings. In the first piece he attempts to account for the emergence of the discourse of mechanical correctness in the 1870s. Toward this end he employs the term *linguistic anxiety*, asserting that “Linguistic anxiety, first felt in the 1840’s and 50’s, grew stronger in the 1860’s” (63). The term *anxiety*, which as I came to discover during my research abounds in modern composition scholarship, seems in Connors to serve an *ontological* function akin to Miller’s argument that some version of “original sin” motivated literary studies.

According to Stanley Rachman, while fear is a brief and intense, “an emotional reaction to a specific, perceived danger,” anxiety is “diffuse, objectless, unpleasant, and persistent, [. . .] grating along at a lower level of intensity” (2-3). Describing the experience of a basic writer, Mina Shaughnessy isolated a similar

kind of anxiety: “For him, error is more than a mishap, it is a barrier that keeps him not only from writing something in formal English but from having something to say” (11). In this description basic writers are not afraid of making particular *errors*; instead, they are barred from discourse by a much more diffuse negativity that prevents them from producing written communication. Likewise, while discussing the emergence of the tradition of mechanical correctness in the late nineteenth century, Connors refers to a similar negativity by noting “an attitude of suspicion toward *everything* written” (“Rhetoric” 75, my italics). This anxiety about discourse itself exceeds fear about bad writing, operating at a much more global level.

Connors struggles to pin down this concept of linguistic anxiety, *performing* it in the very act of explicating it. Hence, he switches back and forth in three different essays on mechanical correctness between the phrase “linguistic anxiety” and substitutes such as the more concrete “linguistic insecurity” and the neologism “linguistic-status-anxiety.” While *linguistic anxiety* seems either to precede or be co-extensive with the act of establishing Composition as an academic discipline and therefore resists signification inside of it, *linguistic insecurity* seems to fit the simultaneous class narrative he is recounting. Finally,

the elusive neologism *linguistic-status-anxiety* seems to express both the desire to synthesize the two phrases and the impossibility of deciding between them.

Unable to incorporate or pin down this notion of linguistic anxiety, Connors' progressive narrative appears to be troubled by a non-dialectical form of negation. In a startling turn of events, after polemicizing against the reductive tradition of mechanical correctness, Connors asserts that "the enforcement of standards of mechanical correctness is not, I think, a tradition that *can* or should die out of composition instruction" ("Rhetoric" 95, my italics). This claim that it is not possible for the tradition of error to die asserts an ontological necessity within our discipline of a gap that cannot be foreclosed, a necessity at which he gestured with his concept of linguistic anxiety and which folds his earlier invocation of a progressive narrative back on itself.

Errancy as a Constitutive Ontological Structure

Connors is not alone in struggling with a non-discursive, irreducible gap as a site of disciplinary articulation. Mike Rose wrestled with some of the same difficulties and eventually formalized his conclusions into a critique of the progressive foundations of composition as an academic discipline. Rose argues against what he calls the "myth of transience," the assumption behind perennial calls to eliminate the performance gap of incoming students. In the context of

composition courses he proclaims that “each generation of academicians facing the characteristic American shifts in demographics and accessibility sees the problem anew, laments it in terms of the era, and optimistically notes its impermanence” (355). For Rose this assumption is a myth. Like Connors, he suggests that we should instead understand Error as a kind of permanent ontological structure that lays the ground for the disciplinary operation of composition studies, a kind of productive gap that serves as a spur to invention. After noting how the “myth of transience” has nearly always been invoked to solve the problem of Error, Rose concludes by offering an alternative view of the problem, one in which the problem is no longer subject to social or institutional mediation, when he proclaims that “no one seems to say that this scenario has gone on for so long that it might not be temporary” (355). Rose’s “myth of transience” coincides with Connors’ claim that the tradition of mechanical correctness cannot die and his suggestion of the ontological significance of “linguistic anxiety.”

In both cases, this gap between the institution and incoming student population not only founds modern composition, but becomes the condition of the possibility of any institutionalized form of Composition from the discipline’s foundation to 1874 to the present day. If so, this is so, then the only question can

be how to produce better iteration of this division. Once framed in these terms, the discipline of Composition can take a different approach to the problem of Error, rather than bemoaning the gap between the institution and incoming students as a literacy crisis, it can “affirm” Errancy as productive condition of institutional work. In doing, so it can become more responsive to the problem of error rather than simply seeking to eliminate it or using this space as a political football.

In fact, responsivity is not a choice, it is itself a necessary condition of any articulation of institutional norms. Once this affirmative approach is taken to Error, then the history of discipline reveals this responsivity in multiple iterations of the relationship between the institutional norms and incoming student populations. The multiplicity of these iterations, then, reveal the inherent instability of each term. And as we will see, they reveal the internal instability of all terms and even all recognizable bodies.

It this latter claim that provides the basis for what follows: the affirmation of the creative potential of various terms which, due to their troubling history, we might be tempted to abandon as inherently unproductive, unethical, or politically undesirable. But none of what follows would be possible if the gap I have called Error was capable of being dialectically recuperated or somehow and

was not the positive condition that riddles any form of symbolic action and make them available to be used as rhetorical concepts.

CHAPTER THREE

AFFIRMING LINGUISTIC STRUCTURES: WORKING THROUGH DISTANCE AND SEPARATION

When the problem of error is taken outside the discipline, where a comfortable consensus as to the need to de-emphasize it exists, and is grafted onto a public context, we experience a de-familiarizing gap between our position and that of the public. Such a gap often brings about a silent moment of perplexity as we realize that, despite over fifty years of disciplinary effort, the general public—a term that includes incoming students—remains largely immune to views of writing that de-emphasize error (Downs and Wardle 55; Graff 852; Bloom 670). In other words, redefining error as “a zone for reconfiguring discursive practices” (Lu xix), a site of power relationships (Horner xviii), or a necessary and productive moment in a writer’s growth (Bartholomae 39) has done little to mitigate the public’s belief in correctness, or lack thereof, as the single most important feature of a writer’s writing.

This situation has not gone entirely unnoticed by scholars. Thus Joseph Harris, for example, notes a gap between those “inside” the CCCC and those “outside” this organization, challenging readers to “ask anyone outside the field (this includes many writing teachers which are not active at the CCCC) what they expect students to learn in a composition course” and insisting that anyone who should do so would “hear a good bit about proper form and correctness” (114). Even highly-respected humanities scholars agree with Harris. For instance, in an interview with Gary Olson, Richard Rorty has asserted that “the idea of freshman English, mostly, is just to get them to write complete sentences, get the comma in the right place, and stuff like that” (61-62).

For composition instructors who have received training based on a very different image of what a composition course should be, such comments are hard to make sense of; indeed, many of us would not know how to take part in such a conversation. Perceiving the existence of two largely incommensurable discourses centered on two very different ideas about what good writing is and how one learns to produce it, and making a quick calculation about the amount of time that would be required to close the gap between our and opposing ideas on the subject, we often decide to forego engagement. After all, the matter was already worked out years ago, so there is little at stake for us in rehashing it.

The problem may be more interesting than we realize, however. Jean-Luc Lyotard calls attention to importance of such conflicts and places an ethical premium on the way in which such situations are negotiated:

Conflicts can arise when people are engaged in discourses that are incommensurable. Because there are no rules that apply across the discourses, the conflicts become differends. To enforce a rule in a differend is to enforce the rule of one discourse or the other, resulting in a wrong suffered by the party whose rule of discourse is ignored.

Furthermore the wronged party cannot appeal against the wrong because the rules of its own discourse are not recognized and because to appeal in terms of the rules of the other discourse is already to have given up (Lyotard 175).

If the contemporary discourse of composition operates under implicit rules that cast error as a moment of growth, a cultural conflict, and a site for re-configuring discourse practices, while the general public views error as a moment of cognitive and possibly moral failure, then engaging those outside the field may indeed count as an instance of a differend.

Jacques Ranciere likewise places a premium on such moments for contemporary politics by calling our attention to moments of disagreement, which he defines as “a determined kind of speech situation: one in which one of

the interlocutors at once understand and do not understand what the other is saying" (Ranciere x). Certainly, non-compositionists, such as students, understand the words that we utter when we attempt to articulate our view of normativity; they are unlikely, however, to have any real appreciation for how one could actually ascribe to this view.

Lyotard's and Ranciere's work suggest that there may indeed be something significant at stake in engaging with this gap between ourselves and the public, not in spite of the *distance* and *separation* between us our positions and the public, but precisely because of it. These considerations raise questions concerning the nature of this gap, what sustains it, how it is to be interpreted, and how might we remedy it. The answers to these questions may tell us something about what we do as composition teachers, our relationship to the public, and how normative disagreements can be negotiated.

Reading Silence

In fact, scholars in the field have attempted to interpret and remedy this silent gap between ourselves and the public. By interpreting and understanding its cause, they argue, we can begin the process of correcting it. Since composition tends to reflect on its own conditions more than other disciplines, this approach has easily gained traction. In fact, much of what goes under the banner of composition theory can be read as attempts to put forward normative

conceptions of writing that are more ethical or more just than those that have come before, which means either allowing more people to participate or to do so on better terms. In either case, the goal is to mediate the gap in the best way possible, and this mediation involves interpreting what the gap is a “gap of,” or said differently, what exactly is it that is lacking that would bring the two bodies together and overcome their differences.

We can see this emphasis on interpreting the gap as a means of mediation in the 1990s when a series of high-profile scholars attempted to provide answers as to what was needed to overcome the normative separation and distance of the institution from the public. . Lester Faigley, for example, noted in 1996 the general “silence of the profession on public language issue” (60), in that “most academics remained silent during the mid-seventies furor over the literacy crisis . . . they have seldom challenged public attitudes toward literacy since then” (66). For Faigley, this silence signals the decreased agency of composition instructors in the face of various material forces within academia including the marginal status of composition instructors, the neutralization of subversive theories by journals, and the demand for mainstream scholarship within the confines of an unimaginative and mechanical tenure system (66-67). Much of what is often referred to as the discipline’s “labor problem,” and its lingering service status, would also fall under Faigley’s interpretation of the gap, which for him

represented the discipline's failure to articulate and inscribe its normative conceptions within the public imagination. Accordingly, improving these institutional conditions would empower the profession to fill the gap. Thus, for Faigley, the gap represents as a lack of institutional agency.

In 1996 Deborah Mutnick likewise references the problematic separation between the public and institutions of higher learning in her claim that "in the absence of a public dialogue on literacy and standards, the gap between popular and professional conceptions of writing will widen . . . as Compositionists revise writing curriculums in vacuum" (Mutnick xi-xii). For her, the lack of dialogue between the discipline and public has resulted in the failure to establish a shared, authoritative standard, leaving the university to attempt unsuccessfully to will a curriculum within a normative void. Within this void, there is little understanding on the part of students as to why they are being asked to learn in a particular way and little understanding of the part of instructors when students fail to understand the purpose of their coursework. Public dialogue could, then, lead to set of shared agreements to mediate these opposing viewpoints and combat the twin dangers of student resistance and institutional violence. This argument takes place within a larger context of institutional violence which has traumatized basic writers, decreased their agency, separated them from their voices, and prevented them from "entering into" institutional forms of writing.

Instead these writers are condemned to re-enact this trauma and to endlessly repeat this nullifying separation. In the larger context of American politics, this gap represent a lack of dialogue between the two parties, where dialogue amounts to a Freudian “working through” and narration of traumatic experience.

Joseph Harris similarly argues that composition instructors “have too often retreated behind the walls of our professional consensus, admonishing not only our students and university colleagues but the more general public as well when they fail to defer to our views on language learning”; this is “an unfortunate stance for a field which defines itself through teaching and the practical workings of language” (115). From this perspective, the gap between academia and the public is the result of the discipline’s being too comfortable with its own normative consensus. If traumatized writers cannot enter into institutional discourse because they have been separated from their voices, then in this picture, the institution cannot arrive a consensual norm with the public because it is blinded from the fact that there are, in fact, dissenting voices that need to be addressed. In other words, this comfortable internal consensus forecloses “the responsiveness” of the institution. I will return to this notion of responsiveness later; for now it is enough to observe that, while Harris does not define responsiveness, dialogue, consensus, and conceptual mediation qualify;

however, responsiveness would also include non-dialogical modes of engagement. Nonetheless, for Harris, the gap can be interpreted as a lack of responsiveness between the two parties.

While these theorists provide multiple interpretation of the gap, what they all seem to agree upon is the paradigm of interpretive mediation. For while scholars have interpreted the gap in various ways—as a sign of deficient material conditions, a breaking off of dialogue, or the effect of a too-cozy and too-confident professional correctness—no interpretative consensus has been reached regarding its meaning. Rather, our attempts to explain the gap as the failure or lack of something do not tell us about the gap itself or its potential effects. Conceived this way, the gap tells us about institutional conditions, public dialogue, and professional consensus while seeming to have little or no meaning in itself. Thus, after countless attempts to take a social approach writing, or a public turn in our discipline, to address institutional power, or to make “difference” the subject of Composition courses, we still do not really know what this gap is or what it can do.

The Sounds of Silence

One theorist who has shown how this gap might be engaged with, rather than interpreted, is Lynn Z. Bloom. Her pioneering 1996 essay “Composition as a Middle Class Enterprise” describes an immense gap between the public

perception of her work and her own sense of it, though she does not interpret or attempt to explain it, instead using it as an opportunity for rhetorical invention:

No one ever says, 'How wonderful that you are introducing my children to the discourse community to which they aspire.' No one ever says, 'I myself always looked forward to those sessions on critical thinking.' No one ever says, 'I was empowered by the opportunities for crossing boundaries.' Or, 'emerging from my gender stereotype.' Or, 'the chance to revise.' Or, 'finding my voice.' Or, 'inventing my persona of choice.' Instead they say 'I guess I better watch my grammar.' 'Why is she sick?' I have the urge to reply. A friend, also an English teacher, always tells strangers that she is a nurse. (654-655)

My aim in quoting Bloom here is not to indict the discipline, to raise questions about transfer, to call for a traditional back-to-basics movement, nor to start a conversation about the discipline's identity crisis. While such inquiries are often fruitful, even necessary, as approaches to the situation at hand they risk moving too fast for the kind of inquiry that I am conducting. In other words, assertions like Bloom's often appear to be knee-jerk responses intent on filling or mediating the silence as quickly as possible, a tactic which removes the potentially uncomfortable task of listening to it and considering its productive potential.

We can leverage this productivity in a series of actions that the gap enables. In particular, we can see the way in which this silence, which consists of what her students do not say, *acted* on Bloom and her fellow English instructors by provoking a series of movements, as for example when one of them suspended her existing identity to construct a temporary, alternative one as a nurse. Likewise, this gap enabled Bloom's own silent substitution of "grandma" for "grammar," which not only performs her own apparent lack of interest in correctness but also potentially suspends her interlocutor's image of her. More specifically, this substitution enacts an ironic reversal of the existing power dynamics by placing the interlocutor, who had been in the position of having her writing judged by institutional authorities, in the position of the one who must judge the authority's error in order to make sense of its own resistance to the interlocutor's understanding of existing power relations. These movements are enabled by a normative gap in the context of which *neither* the institutional *nor* the public discourse retains its efficacy, but where bodies become something else, substitute for each other, reverse their relations, and ironize and resist their own identities.

While listening to the silent gap reveals this non-discursive dimension of rhetorical action, doing so cannot reveal its *meaning*. In other words, it is impossible to decide whether Bloom's humor constitutes a form of mockery,

highlights her privilege as someone who can err without impunity, or somehow liberates both bodies and thus amounts to the adoption of a new normative orientation. In light of this semantic uncertainty, mapping these actions involves *neither* suggesting that Bloom's text is liberating *nor* suggesting that it is not but instead analyzing and sensitizing bodies to the set of actions provoked by a particular inscription of silence between the public and academia. In this sense, this kind of analysis has involved affirming the silence without either trying to get rid of or justify it through a normative consensus.

Affirming the Silence

The desirability of this move away from interpretation toward a *differend* or disagreement for understanding language use is apparent in the work of Mary Louise Pratt, who in her seminal "Linguistic Utopias" describes the methodology of a contemporary linguistics of "language, code and competence" as assuming that "the prototype of unmarked case of language is generally taken in linguistics to be the speech of the adult native speakers face-to-face (as in Saussure's diagram) in monolingual, even monodialectal situations—in short, the maximal homogeneous case linguistically and socially" (50). She insists, however, that "one could certainly imagine a linguistic theory that assumed different things—that argued, for instance, that the best speech situation for linguistic research was one involving a room full of people who spoke two languages and understood a

third, and held only one language in common" (50). Such a shift implies that a shared homogeneous language, whether as a presupposition of linguistic analysis or as means of mediating opposing views, may be limited or even undesirable. Moreover, it opens the door to question the paradigm of mediation which posits that there are two homogeneous bodies that are ontological distinct from each other.

Instead, for Pratt, situations in which norms are uncertain provide a window on the actual workings of language, as examples of which she cites a UN cocktail party and a trial in South Africa (50). We might think of the gap between Bloom and the public as just such a space, one that Pratt, drawing on Ramon Jakobson's concept of a contact language, comes to call a contact zone. Within these spaces, a particular normative framework cannot be assumed, since normativity at stake when competing discourses struggle to communicate in the absence of a shared discourse is to mediate between them. In the same way that Pratt argues that parody, resistance, and subversion flourish in contact zones, our reading of Bloom's text also highlights the dynamic potential of the gap that she experienced between academia and the public.

An Archaeology of the Gap

Taken together, these scholars' insights have opened the door to engaging the current *differend* with the public in a manner involving something other than

interpretation, mediation, consensus, and a shared language. While the interpretations discussed above have served as incredibly useful heuristics, this essay takes an alternative approach. Instead of interpreting the gap in terms of something else—the material conditions of the discipline, political conditions of the larger society, or professional certitude—I build on Pratt’s work by allowing the gap a role in linguistic production and by beginning to map certain approaches to inscribing it.

In other words, I seek to explore the set of actions that effectively interpellate or call into being the paradigm of interpretative mediation. We can think of such a move as beginning the process of providing what might be called an archaeology of the silent gap. This archaeology would be a larger-scale study of some of the major ways in which it has been inscribed, in order to grasp how these styles of inscription influence present-day thinking. The entirety of this project is of course beyond the scope of the present essay, but I do want to take the time here to unearth a particular style of inscription, one that separates the material and ideal and that continues to shape thinking in ways that often to escape conscious awareness.

This style of inscription has historically played a prominent role in the discipline; in fact, it may be considered both a default and a go-to position in everyday ways of thinking, and, at the same time, oddly anachronistic as an

explicit object of inquiry. That is, few if any scholars in the field today would consciously subscribe to the positions that I discuss as examples of this style of inscription; from an archaeological position, however, these positions may influence thinking in indirect, unconscious and subtle ways. From this the perspective, these positions can be thought of as primitive rocks embedded in present-day thinking.

A Primitive Rock

This metaphorical rock is the idea that the primary aims of teaching composition involves transmitting knowledge of what I will call a substantive language. Roughly speaking, this position maps onto what Pratt in the essay just cited calls a “linguistics of *langue*,” which she insisted was also simultaneously “a linguistic a community” (Pratt 55). Her shift away from this kind of linguistics, however, opens the possibility of understanding language use in the absence of *either* a homogeneous community *or* a homogeneous language. While Pratt is primarily interested in shifting the methodology for understanding language use, my initial focus is different. I seek to provide an archaeological account of how language becomes a substantial norm through the rhetorical production of *distance* and *separation* from empirical uses of language. While Pratt just makes this shift and performs a different type of analysis, my archaeological approach what to provide an account of how these norms are produced. In other words, I

am exploring how the idea of a homogeneous language or a homogeneous community, central to the paradigm of mediation that has often framed our interaction with the public, comes to exist in the first place. The point is not to do away with the kinds of analyses that have traditionally come out of this paradigm, but to submit them to a prior realm of rhetorical activity that displaces their centrality, changes our conception of how these analyses works, and locates them in a different paradigm of “internal difference.”

Langue: Separating Language from Culture

Perhaps the most high-profile instance of a visible gap between the institution and the public involves the debates surrounding the Students’ Right to Their Own Language (SROL) statement. The authors of this statement begin by inscribing the problem of error in the following manner: “The English profession, then, faces a dilemma . . . shall we place our emphasis on what the vocal elements of the public thinks it wants or on what the actual available linguistic evidence indicates we should emphasize?” (Perryman et al. 21). They thus invoke linguistic knowledge about the nature of language and oppose this knowledge to the misdirected desires of the larger, empirical culture. In doing so, their statement inscribes a space that is common to those who, in one way or another, locate the authority of composition in knowledge about language. Dennis Baron, for example, inscribes a similar style of gap when he asks, “Can

we reaffirm an elitist theory of English composition that is contrary to what we know about the nature of language?" (Baron 177). In this respect, both Barron and the SROL statement seek a substantive form of *langue*.

Both references contain an indirect appeal to the work of Noam Chomsky. Specifically, despite the tendency to think of the SROL statement as putting forward a new "social view of language," its authors repeatedly invoke such key Chomskyan concepts as deep and surface structure, competence, and performance. Taken together, these borrowings constitute an overarching normative appeal to Chomsky's notion of *linguistic competence*. While a version of this concept is available, such as Hymes' notion of "communicative competence," that attempts to bridge Chomsky's structures and the social world, the authors of the SROL statement appeal to Chomsky's radical notion of language as an assembly of abstract, context-free structures. By analyzing the inscription of the influential text of the SROL, I aim to demonstrate that it represents an extreme or "limit case" of appealing to a substantial view of language and to make clear how this view is produced.

It is in fact possible to read the entire argument of the SROL statement as hinging entirely on the inscription of a particular kind of gap, most notably in the distinction between deep and surface linguistic structures. Simply put, everything that follows in the statement hangs on this distinction. Thus Min-

Zhan Lu notes that the invocation of the deep structure/surface structure binary carves out a space for claims of normative neutrality and paves the way for the entire logic of the argument of the SROL statement; as she puts it, “The committee’s interest in ‘actual available linguistic evidence’ seems to reside strictly in the binary of deep structure vs. surface details and the ‘new’ rationale this binary offers for maintaining the neutrality of teaching and writing” (“Importing” 80). Lester Faigley has also hints that this division may have been there from the start, since “[Chomsky’s] goal for a theory was describing the human being’s innate capacity for language, *not* how language was actually used” (84, emphasis added). That is, logically speaking, before Chomsky could search for deep structures, a gap between the ideal and the material had already to be inscribed. Thus the inscription of this gap opens up the very possibility for a rationalist, linguistic theory and, as such, cannot be accounted for within it.

The SROL statement inscribes this Chomskyian gap in two critical assertions. First, the authors assert that “differences among dialects in a given language are always confined to a limited range of surface features that have *no* effect on what linguists call deep structure, a term that might be roughly translated as ‘meaning’ (Perryman et al. 26, emphasis added). In other words, linguistic knowledge resists alteration by sensible uses of language through an absolute ontological separation. Once again, rather than proceeding from

Chomsky's theoretical model, this statement actually provides the conditions of the possibility of constructing Chomsky's rationalist linguistics—something that must be true for knowledge of the nature of language to exist. In other words, no linguist has ever logically deduced or empirically observed the gap between deep and surface structures. Second, building on this initial gap, the authors can distinguish between *competence* in deep structures and the *performance* of surface structures and can declare that “the actual performance of any speaker in any dialect *always falls short* of the totality implied by competence” (26, emphasis added). This totality of competence in the use of the deep, abstract structures of language opposes itself to any material, empirical use of language.

The SROL statement thus does not begin with deep structures, but with the inscription of an epistemic gap that, in effect, retroactively posits these structures. In combination, the two assertions inscribe an ontological distance or a gap that has to be figured prior to the search for or the discovery of deep structures of language or to the conclusion that the authors of the statement urge.

Diagram

The authors of the SROL statement share this “epistemic” style of inscribing the text with Barron and Chomsky and any other theorist who grounds the discipline in a substantive understanding of language. Moreover, these theorists inscribe a certain type of gap, one that does not involve trauma,

material, and economic forces, or even competing discourses, but one between the empirical world of actual uses of language and an underlying *langue*.

However, theories that do opt for the latter options, often rely on the same set of enabling action that I have been describing.

In other words, inscribing the text in this manner produces a kind of normative diagram set of repeated actions that take place whenever this discourse is activated. First, one inscribes an epistemic gap between the material and the ideal; then one fills in the ideal with something that will take on the character of a stable, self-contained structure or, in the case of theorists, a *langue*. Once isolated ontologically or sufficiently “distanced” and “separated” from actual applications or instances of language use, this structure takes on an authoritative or normative function. That is, it acts on empirical instances of language by governing them while having immunized itself—through “distance and separation”—from being acted on by empirical circumstances.

Detachability

This diagram itself is detachable since it is not bound to any particular theory and it permits a nearly endless number of substitutions. For instance, Mutnick substitutes deep social and political structures for the SROL statement’s deep linguistic structures in order to explain the errors of a struggling writer named Inez:

For Inez to develop as a critical thinker capable of questioning and rewriting central events in her life, she will need to assume an authoritative voice stronger than those she hears, who insist it is her fault—for having been abused, female, *lacking*. Rather than being ‘surface errors,’ Inez’s mistakes are embedded in language, culture, politics and history. It is from this point of view, I believe, that Inez, and other students like her, will be able to understand the logic of their error and explore the deeper structures of language and life. (79, my italics)

Despite the apparent contrast between the social character of Mutnick’s thought and the anti-social character of Chomsky’s, a similar diagram operates in their texts; for, according to Mutnick, Inez’s actual writing is “blocked” and has “no effect” on the “real” structures governing her experience. Likewise, her actual performance “always falls short” of knowledge of the deep political structures that undergird her symbolic experience, knowledge of which would allow her to adopt an authoritative voice. While these hidden political structures decrease the agency of individuals by inducing feelings of guilt, knowledge of them undoes their grip and overcomes the traumatic separation of individuals from their linguistic agency. Writers, then, must “enter into” the real, political *langue* of their lives, so that they can “work through” the logic of their errors and write correctly and authoritatively.

Thus, while Mutnick is intensely aware of the ways in which social and political structures impact a writer's processes, she ends up in a place that is surprisingly similar to the Chomskyeian theory that underlies the SROL statement, emphasizing an underlying structure over and against material and empirical reality. As such, Mutnick's position partakes of a larger normative diagram that cuts across cognitive and social lines to function as a kind of primitive rock in the discourse of composition theory.

Separating Language from Dialect

Like the authors of the SROL statement and Mutnick, E. D. Hirsch inscribes a linguistic gap between an underlying structure and the actual material and empirical uses of language in his seminal work *A Philosophy of Composition*. For Hirsch, universal norms of a written language (*langue*), however abstract, are incarnated in history and ultimately realize sensible, particular, and oral dialects (*parole*). In particular, such cultural developments as the harnessing of steam power and increased ease of travel increased the pressures of standardization on language use and eventually catalyzed the development of a transcendent norm of communication. This evolution takes place in a standardized national language—which Hirsch terms a grapholect—that represents the completion of the historical dialectic between orality and literacy

by becoming “an intelligible oral medium” capable of governing all sensible and material dialects.

The first step in Hirsch’s argument, however, involves inscribing a gap of “empirical uncertainty.” Thus he notes a “lack of direction in our [i.e., teachers of composition] teaching and research,” adding that a major “source of conflict has been empirical uncertainty” and that “Ideology always holds greatest sway where knowledge is least. Emotion and dogma rush in to fill the gap left by uncertainty” (Hirsch 3). It is important to note that the phrase “empirical uncertainty” does not mean that the results of empirical research are incomplete or uncertain, but rather that the sense-certainty of empirical knowledge, because it is always particular, changing, and incomplete, never rises to the level of true knowledge in the Hegelian sense, that is, through a uniting of the universal and the particular. Such unification can only take place once the history of the dialectic between sensible, particular oral dialectics and written forms of language has come to an end. Thus the conditions of knowledge that provided the rationale for Hirsch’s entire argument reside in the difference between, on the one hand, an ahistorical language that has a “fixed,” sensible spoken form into an intelligible medium (i.e., one with written norms) and thereby makes knowledge possible and, on the other, the “unstable,” ever-changing, merely sensible, and historical dialects characterized by “empirical uncertainty.”

. Having inscribed these conditions of knowledge, Hirsch is then able to “look” for such a language. To this end, he appeals to the linguist Arthur Bradley, who has undertaken a similar search. “Under [the conditions of modern technological societies in the nineteenth century], if the grammar and phonetic conditions of the national written language had become fixed,” Bradley writes, then “the grammar and sounds of the national spoken language had become fixed as well” (36). At this point, knowledge—not simply “empirical uncertainty”—of the history of writing has been incarnated. Moreover, if the history of literacy is premised on the distinction between it and orality, then this achievement represents the end of that history and renders it comprehensible by providing its completed form.

Interestingly enough, for Hirsch, this end came in a composition classroom at the moment in which the first composition handbook was distributed, when “the elitism of the written form entirely disappears with advent of the little red schoolhouse. . . . The primer is not a manifestation of social-elitism but rather its opposite—a manifesto of egalitarianism” (39). That is, with the advent of the primer, historical dialects, which had divided people and subjected them to the tyrannies and hierarchies of class and region, were abolished, leaving humanity no longer subject to the vicissitudes of natural linguistic development.

Repetition

Once this intelligible oral medium has become a reality, the use of any oral dialectics will—like the use of surface structure in the SROL statement or Inez’s traumatic speech— certainly “always fall short of the totality” of a grapholect. Moreover, just as these surface structures or Inez’s “blocked” writing can have “no effect” on deep linguistic or political structures, historical dialects can have no effect on the grapholect. To emphasize the isolation of a grapholect from a dialect, Hirsch cites the work of the linguist M. M. Guxman:

Under all circumstances the written norm of the national language is always the result of a certain *isolation* from its dialect base. . . . Not only do *marked dialect element remain foreign to it . . .* but in the written language itself, vocabulary layers are created and syntactical peculiarities developed, which *never existed in the dialect base*. (43, emphasis added)

Likewise, Hirsch insists that those who treat a standard language as another dialectic fail to understand that “the normative character of the grapholect lies in its very *isolation from class and region*” (43, emphasis added). Again, the act of inscribing this separation and distance never appears in the history of literacy, but is instead the condition of the possibility of writing a history of literacy .

For Hirsch, then, an absolute epistemic gap is inscribed in a realized substantial *langue* in a grapholect as the endpoint of natural laws of history.

Having asserted this ontological distance and separation of the grapholect, he is then able to assert its absolute, normative authority, claiming that “a grapholect is historical-linguistic fact which no ideology can overcome or invade. Once a grapholect has been established, it is as fruitless to resist its conservative and normative power as it is to tilt and windmills or battle the sea” (45).

While Chomsky appeals to the nature of language and, therefore, claims that much of teaching standard English involves “a violation of natural law” (Olson 2), Hirsch by contrast argues that the failure to teach standard English is a violation of historical laws of development . In both cases, an absolute, unimpeachable law—one natural, the other historical and teleological —has been made possible by style of inscribing a gap between the ideal and the merely material.

A Substance Ontology

At this point, I will pause to consider in greater what I have been calling a “primitive rock” of the normative discourse of compositions, a discourse which often roots what we do in developing knowledge of substantive version of language. While our theoretical journals have questioned this supposition, our departmental meeting and dealings with other faculty members outside of our discipline and members of the general public often contain appeals to objective

knowledge of some sort of substantial notion of language, a notion based on what I have called an epistemic style of inscription.

In the previous section, I have focused on two main effects of the epistemic inscription: first, the fact that the non-normative always falls short of the normative, thereby *distancing* the norm ontologically from the life that it attempts to govern; and, second, the resulting fact that the non-normative has “no effect” on the norm, establishing it instead as ontologically *separate* from life.

While I have been referring to this style of inscription as productive of a substantive norm—one that exists as stable, knowable, and ahistorical and that is, therefore, separate and at a distance from the bodies that it governs—I will henceforth describe it as being tied to a “substance ontology.” Two fairly obvious questions emerge in light of the *separation* and the *distance*, the first concerning how this norm makes contact with the life that it actually governs and the second concerning, from the opposite perspective, how the non-normative “enters into” the norm.

Pedagogy

Insofar as pedagogy is the locus where norms make contact with life, it is possible to assess how pedagogies based on the substantial norm have functioned in the classroom. In this case, the norm of linguistic competency associated with the SROL statement and the immense difficulties involved with

transmitting this norm have been well-documented. First, Chomsky himself apparently “doubts that linguistics has anything to contribute to teaching reading and writing” (Olson 2) and has further complicated matters by insisting, as just noted, that much of the teaching that goes on represents “a violation of natural law.” This stance is not surprising given Chomsky’s libertarian distrust of institutions and his investment in Rousseau’s conception of the natural individual or in the context of the investment of the SROL statement’s investment in his understanding of language; thus Bruce Horner cautions that the statement has had “little or no effect on teaching” (“Student’s” 749). What seems largely un-thought is precisely what kinds of interaction would be characteristic of the actual pedagogical situation.

Moreover, in the introduction to a recent publication that revisits and commemorates the statement, note is made of the separation of the new norm of linguistic competence from actual classroom experience, though it is insisted at the same time that a

student’s right to their own language in classroom space and beyond has remained a complicated issue because the policy never answered the question of how to affirm student language rights, and to do so in ways that might lead to learning. Yet it seemed clear to the committee that

making sense of the complexities and diversities of language required a careful understanding of language itself. (Perryman et al. 2)

Likewise, the authors note that, even forty years after the statement was drafted and adopted, many find themselves asking “similar questions” (2). Hence, the statement remains haunted both by a style of inscribing a substantive norm and by the subsequent mystery regarding how this norm, once separated and distanced from actual life, should connect with it.

In *The Philosophy of Composition*, Hirsch likewise remains largely silent on pedagogy, reducing the problem to the personal attitude of instructors. Having acknowledged that academia has been, at times, “less tolerant than it should be,” he argues that “what is called for is personal tact and linguistic sophistication,” adding that “to be a teacher of literacy is already to be committed to linguistic social engineering, and while such interventions can be harmful, its potential good includes instruction in a classless, transdialectal instrument of communication between social and regional groups” (45). Hence, while Hirsch acknowledges the potential harm that can result from teaching the grapholect, he justifies it on utilitarian grounds and by separating the pedagogical application of the norm from its validity. As a result, he for the most part can only conceive of teaching in terms of personal tact. Even this trait of the instructor appears to be a largely superfluous concession to Hirsch’s critics, however, since, to the

extent that norms are transmitted by natural laws of history, the teacher herself or himself becomes a silent function of history.

Sacrifice: *Lacrimae Rerum*

Sensing the need to justify the pedagogical harm and apparent injustice committed during this historical process, Hirsch locates them within a larger narrative of progress. After exuberantly invoking images of the ability of a grapholect to swallow and digest almost any lexical resource (48), he considers the broader course of history and, contemplating the elimination of dialects, invokes the famous lines of Vergil about the effects of the Trojan war, “There are tears for things (*lacrimae rerum*) and mortal things touch the mind.”

The long persistence of genuine dialects in the modern world is highly to be doubted. Most of the evidence we have points to the gradual eradication of purely oral dialects. The process is a Vergillian one — *lacrimae rerum* — the grand imperium of the national language gradually absorbing and effacing all local color. . . . The existence of dialect is very much in doubt. (47)

Thus, ultimately, Hirsch justifies the pedagogical violence of the grapholect by inscribing it into the tragic order of the cosmos.

In the case of the SROL statement, this violence is perhaps more complex but every bit as real. Thus the statement urges university composition instructors

to suspend the operation of cultural norms in favor of the new norm of linguistic competence, a notion based on the minimum amount of structure necessary to communicate meaning. While the authors recognize that public norms will continue to exist, they remind the university that “English instructors were responsible for this in the first place,” suggesting that the university assume control over linguistic norms should society lag behind.

Thus, the authors of the statement seem to recognize that, until linguistic change takes place, futures will have to be sacrificed in the pursuit of a just end. In other words, while the statement enjoins instructors to cease perpetrating the kind of the cultural and institutional violence that Hirsch describes, they were willing to *abandon* life to unlimited violence outside of academia “until attitudes can be changed.” Hence, by attributing to dialects a lack of power to affect the norm of deep structures and positing only silence among them, the authors of the SROL statement install an unlimited institutional force to act on the body of culture until it comes to recognize the nature of language and creates norms that are in harmony with this truth. Said differently, since the long term project involves installing a natural norm over and against cultural norms, this approach risks installing an almost infinite negativity in pursuit of an impossible ideal. That is, while the work of Chomsky, like that of James Britton, uses the figure of the child as the locus for the most visible functioning of the deep structures, it is

far from clear that capturing the “inner speech” of this child is possible for a cultural institution any more than it is possible to deliver Hirsch’s ahistorical man at the end of history (Honeychurch 333-336). Both instructional ideals appear irrevocably “outside,” that is, separated and distanced from, the reach of an actual, existing empirical institution.

Either/Or

For both the language and the community camps, the radical separation of a norm from its application emerges upon the original distancing of the norm from life at the point of its constitution as a substantial entity. Such separation characterizes a norm that signifies but is not in force, i.e., that establishes its authority precisely because of its separation from the empirical lives around it and, therefore, lacks articulation in the real world. That is, on the other side of this separation of a pure norm—pedagogy—is a pure application or law that is in force but does not signify—it is the *lacrimae rerum*, the grand imperium, the reduction to nature, and the abandonment of life to social violence. These dynamics are implicit in the imposition of a substantive norm of language, for they exist in both positions once they inscribe a substantive norm ontologically separate from the life that it governs.

The way in which a norm makes contact with life is one of the oldest mysteries in pedagogy. Plato in the *Republic*, for example, contrasts the visible

world with an ideal world of forms, insisting on silence and sacrifice as the means for accessing the latter and transmitting its knowledge to the unenlightened. Thus, in the absence of any direct communication between the two realms, the unenlightened must be dragged into the world of forms in order to transcend a senseless existence, and doing so requires the enlightened to sacrifice their own happiness for the good of the *polis*. Composition theorists are keenly aware of the problems associated with this substantial, silent, and sacrificial tradition, understanding that, at its limit, it inevitably presents competing forms of pedagogical violence in the name of true or just ends. To quote Bruce Horner again, this time in describing the conditions that have emerged since Mina Shaughnessy first located the “unmapped frontier” of basic writing and thereby left theorists at a loss as to what do with this silent, non-linguistic frontier:

“Their” conventions for writing are not “ours.” Thus those of us teaching basic writing are caught between the horns of an ethical dilemma: if we “convert” students to “our” conventions, we are liable to charges of cultural genocide; on the other hand, ignoring differences between their conventions and those of Edited American English amounts to abandonment. (“Mapping” 125)

The question, then, is whether we map this frontier by installing the *grand imperium* and destroying the existing culture or instead *abandon* this frontier to its own natural life by insisting on the rights of this natural substance and, subsequently, turn it over to the violence of the *polis*. The unappetizing choice appears to be between Hirsch's institutional violence on the one hand, which, in the hope of protecting this frontier from social violence outside academia, allows students to "enter into" the larger community and, on the other hand, the SROL statement's call to protect students from institutional violence, which leaves them open to potentially unlimited social violence in the public sphere. These questions emerge every time a substantive norm is inscribed. That is, we can largely conceive of the pedagogical alternatives that result from the primary styles of inscribing the discourse of basic writing, to use Horner's terms, as *silence* or abandonment, or as *sacrificial violence* or cultural genocide. Either way, the outcome is the same : *lacrimae rerum*.

Conclusion

Having discussed in detail how the inscription of the substantial version of language or community leaves us with this either/or dilemma, I return to the work of Joseph Harris, which, I suggest, provides a means of thinking about the issue in a different way. I further suggest that, while this approach differs from a normative orientation to substance ontology, it is not (ontologically) distinct. In

other words, I seek to inscribe a gap between Harris's position and substance ontology, in that the latter *neither* re-installs substantial entities *nor* fails to do so. This position, moreover, builds on Pratt's affirmation of the gap, her search for a normative orientation—which is, in her words, “not based on separation or distance”().

Harris, recognizing the problem of inscribing distance and separation, accordingly argues for a view of literacy that “recognizes and includes these public concerns” (86). However, recognizing and including public concerns does not mean simply assimilating to them. Instead, such a view—again according to Harris—would *neither* accept *nor* dismiss the public's call for “correctness” and would therefore avoid returning to a “Shaughnessy-like” focus on error while at the same time promoting “responsiveness to people outside of the field” (86). By combating the *either/or* of substance ontology with the *neither/nor* of responsiveness, Harris provides an alternative normative orientation with which to think about, and thereby affirm, the silent gap. That is, rather than seeking to overcome the gap, Harris affirms it as the condition of responsiveness.

Yet this difference is not an external difference between two homogeneous groups speaking a homogeneous language. Joseph Harris expresses his frustration with this line of thinking which is premised on the

stable language within clearly demarcated and homogeneous languages which belong to clearly, demarcated and homogeneous communities.

There has been much debate in recent years over whether we need, above all, to respect our student 'right to their own language,' or to teach them the ways and forms of 'academic discourse.' Both sides of this argument, in the end, rest their case on the same suspect generalization: that we and our students belong to different and fairly distinct communities of discourse....The choice is between opposing fictions. What we see in the classroom, then, are not two coherent and competing discourses, but many overlapping and conflicting ones. Our students are no more wholly 'outside' of the discourse of the university than we are wholly 'within' it.

We are all at once both insiders and outsiders.

Hence, despite a funding structure which often looks at things differently, the point is may not be about getting more women's voices, black voices, or queer voices into the conversation, but about realizing that we really do not know what these terms are or what we are doing when we invokes them.

While appeals to difference continue to be heard in our discipline, they often invoke a particular, stable identity, which is said to be different from an equally stable norm. This kind difference can be thought of as external, relating as it often does to the play of power, participation, and influence between two

recognizable groups. External difference flourishes in the context of sociological positivism, in which the key question is always “Who” —that is, which social group— “is speaking?” The work of Bloom, Pratt, and Harris, however, signals a turn away from the focus on external difference and toward focusing on internal difference..

When one starts with an irreducible gap or *differend*, as Pratt recommended, then emergent identities always remain contingent articulations in need of (re)writing. As such, they are never pure, always becoming other than being themselves. In this way, difference moves *inside* of the term, body, or action, and these entities are always already responsive according to their own internal constitutions. In other words, no has to make them responsive

Orienting ourselves to this internal responsiveness means orienting ourselves to *neither* nature *nor* culture, to *neither* the material *nor* the symbolic, to *neither* academia *nor* the public. It also means affirming the internal difference or responsiveness of all bodies, even within the very entities that we think of as having a substantial existence, i.e., those that can be separated and distanced from what surrounds them. In the words of Jacques Derrida,

When Pratt describes what she calls a linguistics of contact, I agree with someone who in the name of linguistics—‘hard linguistics’—said, that a linguistics of contact would not contradict the search for invariants, that

is, the possibility, rather the necessity of finding invariants through the opening of new contexts, graftings etc. Science must never give up. (253)

Contact zones, then, do not contradict linguistic science, and we, as compositionists, must never give up the search for linguistic structures. Put another way, we must give up neither *acts* of separating and distancing nor the search for normative *structures*. The search for such structures and their construction does not contradict the movement of difference. In fact, this movement is constantly taking place *within* these normative structures in the language-based classroom.

And when this movement or internal difference is affirmed, the sacrificial orientation of pedagogies based on normative structures, working on a paradigm of external difference, is transmuted from an opposition to be mediated into an opportunity that takes place inside of these structures—one of them being language.

CHAPTER FOUR

(RE)FIGURING VOICE: A NEW MATERIALIST CRAFTSMEN

While chapter one examined the inscription of an epistemic gap as a means for producing theories of writing instruction, Composition theorists have often been skeptical of such approaches to teaching writing. Their skepticism necessarily emerges when writing is treated as a skill, practice, or art acquired primarily by *knowing* rather by *doing*. Thus, for many composition theorists the epistemic approach risks obscuring the question which writing teachers encounter on a daily basis: How can one learn how to *use* written symbols more effectively?

From this perspective on language use, the value of static knowledge immediately becomes suspect. Certainly a writer must develop an adequate vocabulary, obtain knowledge of a subject matter, and know a fair amount about language in order to write well; however, one can easily imagine a writer having this knowledge and being unable to use language effectively. Moreover, the discipline has long been in agreement that struggling writers often need to begin producing discourses by doing “intellectual work” and avoid becoming

obsessively concerned with mastering the formal conventions of Standard Written English. That is, emphasizing knowledge of static linguistic structures often stifles the intellectual resources writers actually have, intimidating them into a discouraged state of passivity and preventing them from beginning the kind of process necessary to develop writing skills. Finally, the discipline possesses considerable evidence that teaching grammar outside the context of actual writing opportunities fails to improve student writing and may even make it worse (Moffett 169-70).

Such claims have long been commonplaces in the discourse of composition studies. If epistemological approaches fail to address the demands of a writing classroom, then composition courses require a different approach, one based on what writers are actually doing when they produce texts. This “paradigm shift” represents a decisive turn in the discipline and has, in one way or another, opened the space for the modern composition course (Hairston 76).

Affirming Process

For composition theorists the “turn” from isolated knowledge of linguistic structures can largely be encapsulated in a single word: *process*. And while the term eventually takes on a relatively narrow meaning, denoting a pedagogy associated with moving away from linguistic products and toward cognitive processes related to the recursive tasks of pre-writing, drafting, revising, and

editing, it can be expanded and given a much broader sense, both historically and conceptually. In fact, some scholars have noted that when the term first emerged, the practice was already in place so that “for many writers and teachers the concept of a writing process was not new” (Clark 7). Moreover, theorists have found process pedagogy alive and well as early as Barriss Mills and Daniel Forgarty’s work in the 1950s, Barrett Wendall’s work in the nineteenth century, or even George Jardine’s work in eighteenth-century Scotland (Pullman 23). Also, while the term *process* tends to have cognitive connotations, the concept extends beyond this specific use of the term. For example, Bruce McComiskey in *Teaching Composition as a Social Process* argues that writing should be taught within the social processes of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption (2-3). Likewise, Patricia Bizzell maintains that learning to write involves a largely social process of initiation into a particular community (228). Thus, the appeal to some sort of dynamic learning process extends beyond its cognition-inflected associations and is nearly ubiquitous in theories of language use.

Even today when theorists search for a way beyond “process pedagogy,” their arguments often speak powerfully against a particular process that we have come to call process pedagogy, but they end up offering what appear to be only slightly different alternatives. For example, in his introduction to *Post-Process*

Theory: Beyond the Writing-Process Paradigm, Thomas Kent takes exception to existing conceptions of the writing process, recommending that we scrap the knowledge of discourse communities, scrap the idea that one needs to share beliefs with a community, and scrap the myth of the private writer (1, 4). In particular, he argues that writing involves an interminable process of contingent interpretation or “guesswork” in which writers publicly test their interpretations against the interpretations of others in a “hermeneutic dance” that resists codification (5). Thus, according to Kent, instructors should abandon the tasks of teaching the writing process and socializing writers into a community of shared beliefs, instead utilize an instructional approach in which writers are put into public situations, perform interpretive acts, get feedback from others, and treat situations as singular. However, by making these recommendations, Kent in effect urges an alternative process that is contingent, situated, and non-transferable.

Whether or not Kent offers a more effective process can and should be debated, but my point is that the debate itself does not seem to be about whether or not we should teach writing process. Instead it seems to be about deciding on *which process*—Kent’s or someone else’s version of process—provides a better heuristic for what writers do when they use language. Likewise, moving beyond Kent’s work, critiques of process often focus on historical processes of reification

(Olson 13), disciplinary processes of codification (Couture 42), or the contingent constructions of subjectivity within a particular notion of process (Blyer 72-73). The sheer persistence of the idea of process through countless critiques provides credence to the notion that some sort of process is necessarily involved in teaching composition courses. And, if this is true, then the idea of process returns in a powerful way, even if such a return separates the term from its somewhat narrow, contemporary signification and opens it up to new meanings.

Affirming Language Use

If affirmed as a necessary component of contemporary writing instruction, a notion of process produces a different orientation to theorizing writing. In short, the question becomes, “What is the drive that leads us to employ a process or, stated differently, what does a writing process want?” To address these questions, we need briefly to revisit the genesis of the notion of process.

Generally speaking, teaching or theorizing the writing process involves getting between the writer and his textual productions. “Cognitive” actions such as speaking aloud writing protocols, formal heuristics of invention, free writing, recursive writing, and “social” actions such as peer review, instructor conferences, dialogical forms of invention, blogging, and critical analyses of the social constructions of meaning and authority all attempt to act on what writers do when they produce texts. As diverse as these “micro-actions” are, they

attempt to intensify and elaborate macro-actions such as pre-writing, writing and revising, and editing, which constitute large-scale, recognizable processes representing an interpretation of cognitive and social forces that takes place at the moment when the writer is in the act of putting language to use. In short, process pedagogy ultimately wants to act on and develop this critical moment.

Indeed the pedagogical moment *par excellence* would involve catching the writer in the very act of writing—that is, in the very instant before her fingers tap the keyboard—freezing this gesture, interpreting various forces behind it, and unpacking them into a set of actions that constitute a recursive process in the act of using language. If power, as Michael Foucault argues, is “a mode of action upon the actions,” then we might think of process pedagogy as a form of power that acts on language use (Foucault 341).

The task of interpreting this critical moment, where radically heterogeneous forces are compressed into a single instant, directs much of the thinking in our discipline. If what good writers are doing at this moment is releasing their unconscious mind or invoking a set of cultural practices, our courses should develop a process that cultivates and enables the manifestation of unconscious forces or the mastery of social conventions. If what allows us to use language is a non-discursive, pre-originary rhetoricity or obligation to respond to the Other (Davis 2), then attuning writers to these dynamics will act on their

language use by affectively orienting writers to an impossible yet necessary ethical relation involved in responding to any “topic.” In actual practice this will require a syllabus that consists of a set of linked actions constituting a process aimed at cultivating responsivity to the Other. Beneath every process is an *interpretation of the forces* that constitute the act of language use.

This realm of discursivity seems to be where everything happens, where every instructor seeks to go to work, and what every theory competes to explain. This holds true whether or not this space is construed as logically or temporally prior to the subject and her products or whether the relationship is reversed. Once process pedagogy pries open written produces and rolls them out into a set of actions, Composition theory attempts to provide strategies, tactics, and orientations for intervening in this space where language use gets decided. And while theorists find or recommend a plurality of actions, habits, ethical orientations, social values, rituals, power relations, networks, the face of the “Other,” or an irreducible materiality in this space, what remains constant is that the discipline goes to work in this space and acts on the actions through which a writer *uses* language.

Thought and Language

While there are multiple interpretations of the forces that constitute language use, the problem has most often been posed in terms of trying to

establish the relationship between thought and language, a problem involving immediate difficulties in untangling subject, object, and agency. For example, George Orwell in his classic essay “Politics and the English Language” struggles to find a firm standpoint from which to explain the corruption of language when he claims that “[language use] becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts,” adding that “an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and producing the same effect in an intensified form, and so on indefinitely” (Orwell 157). By raising these concerns, Orwell suggests that accounts of language use must confront the potential lack of distinction between thought and language and the subsequent blurring of cause/effect, subject/object, agent/patient distinctions.

We can see these entanglements in composition theory’s long-standing debate between the cognitivists and the social constructionists. While both locate themselves in the space of language use, they disagree about whether a subject’s “internal” thinking or “external,” conventional language is the primary determinant of language use, positions that I will refer to as “internalists” and “externalists” respectively. This debate became contentious in the 1970’s and 80’s, as Bizzell summarizes:

One theoretical camp sees writing as primarily inner-directed, and so is more interested in the structure of language learning and thinking processes in their earliest state prior to social influence. The other main theoretical camp sees writing as primarily outer-directed, and so is more interested in the social processes whereby language learning capacities are shaped and used in particular communities. (76-77)

As Bizzell makes clear, the issue amounts to deciding whether thought or language is the primary source of agency that determines language use. In many ways we can view this debate as trying to address the causal problem with which Orwell wrestled: Does explicit or tacit knowledge of language, understood broadly as a set of social conventions, provide the prime source of agency which allows one to use language more effectively, or is the writer's thinking the main source of agency in the task?

Internalists

For inner-directed theorists such a reflection is motivated, in part, by problems inherited from Noam Chomsky's internalist approach to language. While Chomsky's influence looms large in relation to this position, it often goes unnoticed. However, in her seminal essay on process pedagogy, Maxine Hairston asserts that Chomsky's work was "one of the most important developments to affect writing theory" and notes that it "caused a new focus on

the process by which language comes into being" (81). However, what Chomsky's theory did not say about language proves just as important as what it did say.

During the late 1960's and 1970's many composition theorists, while on board with the so-called Chomskyan revolution, located their work as a supplement to his theory, which had virtually nothing to say about the connection between thought and language, and therefore, by his own admission, had virtually nothing to say about actual language use. As Joyce Honeychurch explains, "Although Chomsky's early linguistic work indicates the potential for an important link between thought and language, he fails to detail a precise relationship of language use, but insists that matter is not completely insoluble, he fails to detail a precise relationship between the two" (334). Chomsky himself recognizes the potential conundrum in understanding language use by insisting that "we face problems, but not mysteries." Although he asserts that much can be said on the issue and invites others to explore this issue, he cautions his fellow linguists that "there is little [. . .] we can say as scientists" (7).

The work of the expressionists can be located in this difficult and potentially paradoxical space of seeking a Chomskyan theory of language use. The accepted many of Chomsky's key tenets such as the ideas language as faculty that develops naturally, and this development is relatively "stimulus

free;" however, they found themselves engaged in a different project, one which tried to remedy a blind spot in Chomsky's work. As Honeychurch explains,

Britton and his associates were in debt to Chomsky for providing a general framework describing the nature and acquisition of language. Yet researchers still faced persistent questions about the relationship between thinking, language and learning. Perhaps the most significant question among those yet unanswered was how thought and language interconnect in the act of writing. (334)

Providing an account of language use from this internalist perspective means understanding *the link and relationship between thought and language*. If we can understand this, then we can understand what is happening when a writer uses language.

A crucial part of the internalist approach to this problem involves shifting our theoretical perspective from a third-person position to a first-person one. James Moffett explains the need to adopt a perspective that allows us to figure out what goes on before a sentence is formed:

Point of view is critical here. Seen as a *fait accompli*, as a specimen pinned to the board, a given sentence looks deceptively discrete and self-contained, but if teachers have learned anything from transformational theory, it is this: any such

sentence might have been embedded as a clause or a reduced clause in a more complex sentence, or *might have been* strung into a sequence of several sentences. It is only from the point of view of the finished utterance that we can even speak of a sentence. (187)

For Moffett the shift away from linguistic products entails a shift to the perspective of the writer. This shift, in turn, entails a similar shift away from the past tense of the finished utterance to the present tense of putting an utterance into action. From this perspective prior to actual discourse, the writer deals with linguistic possibilities and not fixed linguistic structures. As Moffett explains, “From the point of view of language production, there are only options about how to parcel out thought into syntax. No grammar can tell us how people can play these options” (187). Hence, at the limit of linguistic structures and before its backward glance lies the individual confronted with possible linguistic forms.

One of the key component of the expressivist position is that social learning can be subsumed under the natural “growth” or “maturation” of the individual. For example, grammar and correctness are thoroughly social conventions for Moffett, but the best way to teach them is to motivate writers’ general cognitive development by stimulating their intellect. As he understands it, such “growth” is inevitable and occurs naturally. The only question for

educators is “how to speed it up,” and the answer is to cultivate thinking processes (163).

This growth culminates in the crucial faculty of *judgment*. Moffett insists that examining linguistic possibilities “in the context of what the writer is trying to accomplish [. . .] will teach judgment” (177). The kind of judgment that Moffett seeks involves, to borrow Britton’s expression, “shaping at the point of utterance.” That is, once the writer’s intention is already in place, it can then be connected to language through the faculty of judgment, which examines possibilities and decides how to link the writer’s intention with language. From the perspective of linguistic production, subjective forces such as the writer’s intention and acts of judgment precede, determine, and allow a writer to engage in language use. Hence, instruction should focus on developing this inner dimension because thought processes are the dominant agency in language use.

Externalists

The internalists are not alone in trying to discern the relationship between thought and language. The externalist position itself is an attempt to discern this relationship in order to arrive at a theory of language use. Thus, en route to introducing her self-professed “externalist” approach, Patricia Bizzell explains that “the new demands on us as teachers can only be met, it seems, by reconsideration of the relationship between thought and language” (76).

Likewise, Kenneth Bruffee recommends social construction in part because of “the unbridgeable abyss inherent in our cognitive vocabulary between learner and learned,” adding that “there is a gap between them that cognitive theory offers no help in bridging” (778). Joseph Harris also notes how the social constructionist seeks a new relationship between thought and language, remarking that “perhaps the most important work of these theorists has centered on demystifying the concept of intention” (98). For these theorists some sort of “external” agency is decisive at the moment of language use. Thus, for discourse-community theorists, we write as members or would-be members of a community whose goals and purposes both enable and constrain what we say (Bruffee 784). For internalists, on the other hand, thought enables and constrains our linguistic production; however, for externalists something else fills this role and this something else includes semiotic codes, networks, discourse communities etc.

In a broader sense the externalist position develops largely by adopting the categories of sociology and bringing “group language use” to impinge on the thinking subject and eventually dissolve it into language. In other words, this position develops from the desire to “expand” internalist approaches by adding social elements to them. That is, initially it aims to extend Chomsky’s position by

maintaining his scientific or “objective” perspective on language and by adding a social grammar to his “internal” grammar.

We can see this desire for an expanded grammar in the early work of Mary Louise Pratt. In a book chapter titled “The Linguistics of Use,” she notes that there has been an increasing focus on “what we do with grammar” and that “the outlines of a theory of language use are beginning to emerge” (79). Toward this end her work explicitly references “the syntactic and phonological bias” of Chomsky’s work and seeks to “correct” this prejudice, not by abandoning the idea of grammar but by extending it to include the “appropriateness conditions” of speech acts. By the latter term Pratt means the set of “external,” contextual conditions that have to be in place for a speech act to function properly. Moreover, she understands these conditions as fulfilling Hymes’ call for “an expanded notion of competence,” which she describes as “rules for language of a more general kind” (84). Ultimately she argues that “from a linguist’s point of view, appropriateness conditions are a crucial component of the grammar of language, even though they represent aspects of an utterance which are not part of the explicit verbal structure” (83). In doing so she re-installs two components that expressionists set his position against: grammar and a third-person view on language use.

Likewise, when framing her externalist approach, Bizzell also affirms Chomsky's innate grammar. Unlike Pratt, though, she argues that Chomsky's focus on children is inappropriate for adult language users who have undergone a socialization process. Nonetheless, she insists that "composition specialists generally agree about some fundamental elements in the development of thought and language," adding that "we agree that normal individuals possess an innate capacity to learn a language and to assemble complex conceptual structures" (76). From a developmental point of view, this process proceeds in stages and eventually leads to "the mature exercise of these thought and language capacities which takes place in a society, in interaction with other individuals, and this interaction modifies the individual's reasoning, speaking, and writing within society" (76). This later stage of adult development, where the socialization process continues to modify internal capacities, is the stage that is most relevant for our students' development. Hence, for adult learners, socialization processes hold the key to cultivating language use. While Bizzell agrees with the internalists about how one initially learns a language, for her, eventually society starts to get the upper hand over the individual just as social-group *language* starts to get the upper hand over internal *thinking* capacities.

For Bruffee and other social constructionists, this upper hand eventually becomes a one-sided victory as social processes and social-group language

overtake individual thought. This position does not argue that social conventions are necessary supplements to internalist approaches or that socialization processes are primary; instead it argues that we should do away with internalist approaches. Social language and semiotic codes impinge on thought from the outside, collapse the difference between the two, and, eventually transform individual thought into an effect of language. This is the moment of the so-called “linguistic turn” in the humanities. According to this more radical position, we must learn to conceive of “internal, individual, and mental affairs” as “social in origin” and as linguistically constructed by a particular social group’s way of talking (Bruffee 775). Bruffee explains:

Anything we say about the way we think is a conversation about another conversation: talk about talk. Social construction regards terms such as “cognitive processes” [. . .] and “intellectual development” [. . .] and even “idea” and “objectivity” as social constructs. They are representative terms of a particular vernacular language, a language that constitutes a certain community of knowledgeable peers. (777)

Hence, for Bruffee, when a writer thinks that she is cultivating or even experiencing thought processes, she is actually cultivating membership in certain social groups. If language “constitutes” community of knowledge peers, then while we might attribute a well-written linguistic product to a writer prior’s

thinking, externalist reverse this scenario and argue that using a particular kind of language comes first. Once one has produced an actual linguistic product thinking is inferred on the basis of how language is used. That is, “thought processes” have been erroneously thought to precede act of language when, in fact, they are attributed after the fact and simply posited as pre-existing, and what internalists have thought was good thinking is actually a mastery of a certain social grammar or language. Hence, in this extreme externalist position, the relationship between thought and language is one where thought is an effect of language.

Much of the conclusion are tied to the externalist’s shift in perspective and the adoption of what Pratt called “the linguists” point of view. Unlike the internalists who think of the language user from a first-person perspective in the temporal present, the externalists think of the language user from a third-person perspective and in terms of past and future socialization. Moreover, internalists focus on the internal process of individuals throughout a complex writing *process* and side with thought and judgement over knowledge, grammar and imitation which are allegedly “behind” language use. For externalist, written products, finished utterances, mimetic behavior, and model essays come back into the fold, but they come back as the embodiment of a social grammar which is “behind” thinking processes.

The Mystery of Language Use

As promising as the turn toward linguistic use seems for composition instructors, once one enters this space of language use one is met with a series of *aporias*. While an epistemological approach promises the certainty of knowledge at the expense of practical use, orienting ourselves to practical language use runs the risk of losing any stable ground whatsoever. On the one hand, a gap between the thinking subject and language seems intuitively obvious since from a first-person present perspective we experience language as something we use for particular purposes, as something *through* which we accomplish our purposes and intentions. On the other hand, when we look back on our experience, it always take place *in* language so that we never apprehend a non-linguistic version of ourselves.

We can see how this takes place when we look closely at the different temporalities and modalities of these positions. If we start in the temporal present, the mode of thinking subject is adopted, but as soon as a person finishes an utterance and reflects back on it, this utterance has been objectified socially and historically. But if we start with this backward glance on a finished utterance, this does not do justice to the fact that the utterance is only finished because someone started it. Simply put, one position has a text without a writer; the other has a writer without a text. While both the internalists and the

externalists nearly always make concessions to each other in their theoretical positions, they harden into opposed stances on language use that become untenable.

In our time the social position has got the upper hand by pointing out that the internalist claim “all language use is mediated by thinking” fails to recognize the social and historical forces that shape utterances. On the other hand, the internalist can point out that the externalist claim “all thinking is mediated by language” does not repudiate the subject but instead installs one. In other words, the social constructionist says, “There is no subject of language; there is only language and subject positions within that language.” He can only make this claim, however, from a position where “there is no language, only a subject.” The first stance posits that language constructs a subject but installs a non-linguistic subject in the very act of making this statement. It attempts to expel the subject but can only do so from the position of the subject. The second stance attempts to expel language from the thinking subject but can only do this by using language. Said differently, one position gets outside language by being inside it; the other gets inside language by being outside it. Hence, whenever the subject attempts to give an account of how it uses language, it finds itself ensnared in *aporias* and seems forced to admit that, as Orwell worried, language use is ultimately a mystery.

Voice as the “Thing” of Composition Theory

Composition’s name for this mystery is voice. The mystery of language use is distilled in the concept of voice. What is it that allows one to use language? Voice. But what is voice? The voice embodies the mystery and *aporias* of language use. For instance, Mladen Dolar claims that “voices are the very texture of the social, as well as the intimate kernel of subjectivity.” Dolar adds that when “faced with the voice, words structurally fail.” Therefore, “the voice is precisely what cannot be said” (13-14). In the end Dolar describes the mystery of the human voice: “The voice presents a short circuit between nature and culture, between physiology and structure; its vulgar nature is mysteriously transubstantiated into meaning *tout court*” (26). His description of the aporetic structure of the voice bears a striking similarity to the debate between the internalists and externalists, who in their attempts to explain language use by focusing on one side of the nature/culture coin were inadvertently circling the problem of voice.

Despite being a centerpiece of the discipline, the concept of voice has appeared equally mysterious to composition scholars. Joseph Harris argues that for expressionists the idea of voice becomes “the most vital and mysterious part of writing,” but “its exact workings can never be pointed to or defined” (33). Kathleen Blake Yancey describes the voice’s resistance to inquiry, explaining that

when she first began studying voice she “encountered the first of several paradoxes: the more I seemed to know about it the less certain I became, and the less I actually knew.” Eventually, she admits, the term became “a floating signifier changing from one text to the next” (vii-viii). Peter Elbow, a long-time champion of voice, also struggles to define the term in a unitary fashion, opting instead to provide five different definitions (2).

Part of why we cannot grasp the meaning of the voice is because the materiality of voice must be removed in order for meaning to appear. Dolar notes that voice makes utterance possible but “disappears” and “goes up in smoke in the meaning being produced” (15). . In trying to grasp the voice, both Moffett and Britton turn to Vygotsky’s notion of inner speech, a kind of speech characteristic of children where thought and language interact in a learning process.

To explain the concept of voice, Britton quotes Vygotsky: “‘Inner speech is to a large extent thinking in pure meanings. It is dynamic, shifting, unstable, fluttering between word and thought, the two more or less stable, more or less firmly delineated components of verbal thought’” (149). This notion of inner speech, which arguably differs from Vygotsky’s more social use of the expression, is essentially what expressionists mean by voice and is far from a clear or stable concept. In light of this conceptual instability, it is hard to

understand how the expressionists can make voice the focal point of their project.

Part of why they value voice so highly is their belief in the natural development of linguistic faculties, a development that Chomsky characterizes as relatively stimulus-free. This notion of a stimulus-free development is not only Chomsky's way of providing a sledgehammer critique of Skinner's behaviorism, but also directs how expressionists understand the learning process and how they eventually pit mimetic activity against learning. If a writer really writes in her own voice and really exercises her own faculties, we can rest assured that growth is occurring; however, if she simply mimes others' writing or gives the teacher what she thinks the teacher wants, growth will not happen. Instructors can "speed up" the natural process of learning, but the key thing is that the student writer in her own voice and accesses inner speech, which seems to be the point where thought and language are most intimately connected. Language is an internal faculty and this is where everything occurs. Again, Britton's reaction against externally driven thinking becomes so intense that he describes inner speech as "thinking in pure meanings" (149).

The idea of "pure meanings," however, suggests a notion of meaning that exists in a private language free from all contextual and public intelligibility. Moreover, we simply cannot capture this "dynamic" thing "fluttering between

word and thought” or judge from any finished utterance whether or to what degree this action has taken place. Like Dolar’s notion of the voice that goes up into smoke in order to meaning to appear, the expressionists concept of voice, as inner speech, seems to describe the moment prior to language use and would also seem to vanish once this voice and its thinking in pure meanings actually wrote something in an intelligible, public context.

The elusive and even mystical character of voice, consequently, does not solve the mystery of language use but ends up reinforcing it. The voice, it seems, is a carrier for meaning but is itself resistant to meaning. There are consequences for this resistance. Dolar argues that “if voice is what does not contribute to meaning, a crucial antinomy follows, a dichotomy of the voice and the signifier” (16), which he also characterizes as a conflict between materiality and ideality (15). The conflict can be mapped onto the internalism versus externalism debate about language use, suggesting that what is ultimately at stake is the nature of voice.

If expressionists affirm the inner voice over and against signification, social constructionists try to solve the dichotomy by doing away with the materiality of voice and turning it into “an effect of signification.” For a logic of signification to be formalized, voice has to disappear. Voice, according to Ferdinand de Saussure, is “the impeding element that we have to be rid of in

order to initiate a new science of language” (qtd. in Dolar 17). Hence, the inaugural gesture of Saussure’s model of structural linguistics is to eliminate voice:

In any case, it is impossible that sound, as the material element, should in itself be part of the language. Sound is merely something ancillary, a material that language uses. . . . Linguistic signals [signifiers] are not in essence phonetic. They are not physical in any way. They are constituted solely by differences which distinguish one such sound pattern from another.. (qtd. in Dolar 18)

For many social theorists this system of immaterial difference constructs meaning, and the materiality of voice has no place. However, it does this not only by homogenizing groups and tying them to a monolithic language in order to extract their particular code but also by eliminating the material aspects of language—chief among them voice—so that language use can be translated into a grid of binary differences.

Joseph Harris argues that there are pedagogical consequences to these weaknesses in the externalist approach. First, he objects to the homogenizing of groups, insisting that “Our students are no more wholly ‘outside’ of the discourse of the university than we are wholly ‘within’ it” (105). Harris then argues that once we are divided into these groups there does not seem to be any

kind of agency whereby movement from one group to another could occur or even any motive for entering into a particular discourse community or socially constructed language. That is, there is a “mystical leap of mind” or “conversion” experience that the position relies on heavily but does not provide the means to accomplish. In the end a grammar of community, whether it takes the form of semiotic analysis or even a set of practices, implies an epistemological approach to structure and therefore encounters many of the same problems associated with that approach: a strict inside/outside bifurcation, an idealistic reduction of material contingencies, and a focus on knowledge (even if this knowledge is deemed “tacit”).

This debate about language use consequently comes down to a debate about voice. One position keeps the materiality of voice but loses the ideality of meaning. The other position keeps the ideality of meaning but loses the materiality of voice. While neither position is able to render a coherent concept of voice, they both reveal the centrality of the problem of voice for the discipline. As Yancey puts it, “Voice is paradigmatic of composition studies itself” (xviii). In effect, voice as the link between materiality and ideality is the “Thing” of composition theory.

Voice is the agency that allows one to use to language by putting the material and ideal together in some way. Once voice is construed as a kind of

agency, then reducing this agency to either the inner processes of the subject or the external code of language not only results in aporia, but is also bound to appear overly simplistic. Good writing is complex and cannot be reduced to either good thinking or tacit knowledge of a social grammar. Hence, contemporary theories have argued that multiple agencies or forces constitute of voice. These forces have included material forces, economic forces, natural forces, racial forces, class forces, gender forces, cultural practices, social forces, ritual, pulsations of the body, the scream of an animal, and a sincere subjectivity. In all cases these forces enter into the place of the voice, which remains the primary metaphor for the agency that allows one to move between the writer and her written products. In this sense composition theory continually describes, critiques, seeks, and invents voice.

Metaphor

One common way to respond to the mystery of voice and its resistance to objectification is to treat it as a metaphor. Yancey claims that voice “provides a convenient metaphor for both the writer and the act of composing” (viii), yet despite its metaphorical status she believes that the concept of voice names something real. She thus insists that “if there was not something named by the metaphor of voice, arguments concerning it would have fallen into silence and/or been silenced long ago” (xi).

As the previous section suggested, however, the question may not be “What is voice?” leaving the door open for us to consider a different question: Which voice? In other words, if we can only identify voice’s movements within particular discourses, then we can never know voice itself. If voice is an impulsive force that allows us to use language, there are only specific versions of voice prompted by specific impulses. The question, from this perspective, might be: What kind of force animates a discourse, and how can we figure this force? Or, from an instructional perspective, which figure of voice best orients the teaching of writing.

Figures of Voice

These figures of voice can be thought of as types. If voice is not reducible to knowledge and if a variety of forces cohere in the instant one uses language, then there must be some way to capture the way in which these force cohere. One way to do this is to employ a typological approach. Gilles Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche provides just such a heuristic. Deleuze explains:

In this sense a proposition always reflects a mode of existence, a “type.” What is the mode of existence of the person who utters any given proposition, what mode of existence is needed in order to be able to utter it? The mode of existence is the state of forces insofar as it forms a type which can be expressed by signs or symptoms. (x)

Hence, a proposition like “all thought is mediated by language” or “all language is mediated by thought” implies a mode of existence or a kind of life. Moreover, according to Deleuze, a constellation of forces appears in a type, since “the type is also a biological, sociological, historical and political reality” (115).

A type not only figures a multiplicity of forces that inhere in the act of using language but also appears as the primary goal of the philosopher-artist, a designation that resembles the role of an educator. Deleuze describes the three types of philosophers in Nietzsche’s work: “the philosopher-physician (the physician interprets symptoms), the philosopher-artist (the artist moulds types), the philosopher-legislator (the legislator determines rank, genealogy)” (75).

While the educator likely functions in all three capacities, her task most closely resembles that of the philosopher-artist in molding types, since educators are clearly charged with molding students in a certain ways. In this way we can think of the production of types as central to educational processes and, in particular, central to the task of developing a theory of language use and organizing a classroom around this theory.

I am suggesting that what has traditionally been a quest for voice is actually, in each case, a quest for a particular type of voice. That is, while the term *voice* remains in place as the metaphor for the movement involved in using language, we cannot teach voice as such because voice only happens within a

particular discourse. Moreover, invoking a type does not mean that the educator seizes the gap where voice resides and installs a type of her choosing, be it that, say, of the militant, the environmentalist, or the traditionalist. What I am proposing is that as writing instructors we are necessarily engaged in producing types—that we inhabit the multiplicity of unstable forces which constitute the point of the utterance and try to orient students to certain modes of response. This orientation can be figured through a typology, and the invocation of a type grounds our classroom practice—syllabi, assignments, readings, etc.

A type thus resembles the notion of *ethos*, understood as a way of thinking, feeling, and acting. Employing a type to describe the relationship between thought and language establishes a certain *ethos* that anchors instructional processes. Deleuze explains the centrality of a type to a particular discourse as follows:

Thus, when we ask: “what does the one who thinks this want?” we do not abandon the fundamental question “which one?” We merely give it a rule and a methodical development. We are demanding that the question be answered not by examples but by the determination of a type. And a type is in fact constituted by the quality of the will to power, the nuance of this quality and the corresponding relation of forces: everything else is symptom. What a will wants is not an object but a type, the type of the

one that speaks, of the one that thinks, that acts, that does not act, that reacts, etc. (Deleuze 78-79)

If we think of the will as the agency or force of voice, then a voice is not so much driven to accomplish a certain objective but to mold itself into a type or particular kind of life or mode of existence. And the writing instructors is primarily concerned to enact a similar type of molding. In fact, what the internalist and the externalist do is to produce a type, and once this type is produced, as Deleuze remarks, everything else is a symptom. However, the type does not mediate or govern discourse, but since it is internally different from itself, it changes form and appears in a variety of circumstances, and links with a variety forces and in these multiple and very different repetitions, it finds its consistency and endures.

The Child

In this typological approach the entire discourse of expressionism is ultimately grounded in the figure of the child. Said differently, the entire discourse can be read as a symptom of this type. This figure both precedes the radical turn to language acquisition and emerges from it. It is both the ground and the goal. All of the complexity involved in the moment one uses language-- the unstable border between inside and outside or nature and culture-- is encapsulated in and held together by the figure of the child, which serves as a

kind of nodal point for theorizing. The child is a limit figure that approaches a pure figure unsullied by social conventions and thinking in “pure meanings”. Hence the child can stand in for and motivate the transcendence of thought over language, the individual over society, the authentic voice over the signifier, natural development or mimetic activity, populism over bureaucracy, freedom over determination, and student-centered classrooms over authority-dominated classrooms. A theory of language use cannot describe what it is that allows us to use language, so it looks for figures, such as the child, where thought and language interact in the most intense way possible.

Once constructed, the child appears in many ways in the discourse of Composition theory. For example, the child is activated in the idea that power is necessarily repressive, that social conventions are necessarily opposed to creativity, and that the naïve or unvarnished voice is the true voice. In the end, the figure of child holds these diverse ideas together and allows one to produce or reproduce them. The seductiveness of the child lies in the fact that it is both inside and outside of institution. That is, the writer engaging in free writing offers the promise of doing some *outside* of the institution while he is sitting *inside* of the institution. In general, the endurance of this figures testifies to the way that this apparent non-institutional character seemingly affords writers a way to get purchase on institutional grammars by making sure that do not reduce to

personality to mechanistic behavior. However, it precisely because of the internal difference of this type---the fact that it differs from itself or is always becoming different—which has allowed it to connect to and condition so much of Composition theory.

The Resident Alien

The social position in our discipline is complex because it contains theories of discourse community, contact zones, social construction, etc. However, these positions rely on the figure of the resident alien, without which the theories would lack sense and value. The virtual explosion of titles which gesture toward this figures speaks volumes about its centrality for much of the more “socially-minded” Composition theory. The titles include Debra Mutnick’s *Writing in an Alien World: Basic Writing and the Struggle for Equality in Higher Education*, Mike Rose’s *Lives on the Boundary: A Moving Account of the Struggles and Achievements of America’s Educationally Underprepared*, and Paolo Freire’s *A Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, all of which reference some sort of life that is, if you will, in the institution but not of it.

In one way or another, this figure marked the appearance of a new type of body during the Open Admissions period where the major disciplinary questions were focused on this body and its activity. What is going on in the brain of the basic writer when he writes? What are the social and institutional

forces which are acting in this instant, or more specifically, what is the writer entering or exiting at this critical moment, and what are the costs and benefits of these “choices”? In all of these questions, the figure of the resident alien opens the possibility of the question and occupies the position of the object that is being addressed by the question.

Moreover, the massive power of the institution to re-socialize this individual and the simultaneous and the persistent fear that process would strip this individual of his culture both emerge with the appearance of the resident alien. Whether this body is being re-socialized into a new community or having its right to resist this socialization affirmed, one thing is constant: it interpellates the power of the certain type of democratic teacher. Moreover, as Bartholomae suggests in his groundbreaking “Tidy House” address, the very identity of this instructor could not exist without such a body and only “comes to being” on the basis of it. In the same text, he even goes one step further and argues that the identity of certain type of liberal instructors working inside of the grand narrative of sympathy and empowerment compels him to *produce* the body of the resident alien (Bartholomae 8).

However, this is not the only place where the existence of this figure plays a decisive role. For those inclined to critique, the limit-case of the resident alien exposes social character of institutional norms, and therefore, breaks up the

hegemony of institutional norms into the competing discourses of particular groups. Once this body appears, the classroom can become a contact zones, existing power and authority can be critiqued as “socially constructed,” and the classroom can become a collection of groups negotiating meaning and authority in the absence of commonality. All these developments are interpellated by the figure of the resident alien, whose very existence, in effect, punctures a whole in the institutional symbolic and throws it back on to itself.

The enticement of this figure often lies in the position it occupies and the promise this position holds. The resident alien is attractive, in part, because she is a limit-figure. That is, like the child, she is simultaneously inside and outside of the institution. She really is sitting in the institution, but at the same time, really is excluded from its language and its practices. Since it is situated at the limit of the institution, the mere existence of this figure offers the promise of revealing this institutions inner workings. If instructors could occupy this position and see the institution through the eyes of the alien, then they will have finally see the structures of institutional power, then they will finally see objectively. And as suggested above, this figure is also the means for certain instructors, who embrace this it and advocate on its behalf, to understand themselves as doing something “outside of institutional power” while maintaining their job and working in an institution.

In short, this figure allows instructors to do multiple things such as to fashion themselves as political activists, to conceive of sociological theories of writing, and to indict the establishment. In short, the longevity of this figure, like the figure of the child, lies in its “internal difference” or its capacity to connect to multiple forces, motives and drives and to do so through multiple, differential iterations.

However, as the prevalence of the figures of the child and resident alien demonstrate, the debate between internalist and the externalist is largely a debate between the individual and society, a classic political debate that emerged within higher education as the politicization of open admissions and its aftermath. No one embodies individuality more than the child and no one embodies social forces more than the resident alien. However, today our institutional politics has widened to include non-human actors, the environment, non-representational forms of politics, biological processes, and a multiplicity of other forces extending beyond the dialectic of the individual and society. Therefore, different figures of voice have emerged that extend beyond figuring the presence of voice in terms of the child or the absence of voice in the resident alien writing in another language. However, the question becomes: how we can figure voice in the milieu of higher education today.

The Craftsmen

In light of contemporary social and political concerns, the changing place of the human in various ontologies, and the growing interest in “New Materialist” theory, a focus on material engagement has come to the forefront. A growing interest in the materiality of things and in engaging this materiality has opened the door for affirmation of a different type: the craftsman.

In his illuminating text titled *The Craftsman*, sociologist Richard Sennett argues with his former teacher, Hannah Arendt, about her distinction between *Animal laborans* and *Homo faber* as two dimensions of labor. The former engages in material labor, and the latter judges this labor. For *Animal laborans* “in the act of making it work, nothing else matters” since this figure “takes the work as an end in itself.” *Homo faber*, however, “holds a superior position” and suggests “the image of men and women doing another kind of work, making a life in common” (6). Sennett, however, sees problems with this position:

Leaving the public to “sort out the problem” after the work is done means confronting people with irreversible facts on the ground. Engagement must start earlier, requires a fuller, better understanding of the process by which people go about producing things, a more materialist engagement than that found among thinkers of Arendt’s stripe. (7)

Sennett offers the craftsman as a type who “represents the special human condition of being engaged” (20). The craftsman aims to master his craft because “where technique is no longer a mechanical activity, people can feel fully and think deeply about what they are doing once they do it well” (20). In other words, the craftsman pays careful attention to the material forces at work in any engagement, the mastery of which *enhances* feeling and thinking. Caring about framing an argument, refining an exploratory essay, planning a persuasive turn in a speech, designing the structure of a building, or protecting the stability of an ecosystem—all are acts that are indicative of the craftsman, all are possible iterations of this type.

And in a culture of endless rivalries, intellectual debates, and theoretical dead-ends, the craftsman takes the entire order to task as he figures a new way of using language, one which focuses neither on the individual nor on society, neither on the internal nor the external, but on singular materials and the immersive care for his craft. The mere existence of this type of voice jams the twitter machine, but does so not by representing a self or speaking on behalf of society, but through his processes of care and immanent engagement with the world.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHO IS AFRAID OF NEUTRALITY? PERFORMATIVITY, RESIGNIFICATION, AND EXPERIMENTATION

Probably no idea inside of Composition studies signal political naivety more than the idea of neutrality. In fact, it is difficult to imagine anyone leaving a graduate program in the last thirty years without being convinced of the impossibility of claiming that a position could be neutral. There is no such thing as news from nowhere. Everything is from somewhere. Claims of neutrality mask the exercise of power by dominant groups. Today these ideas have become second nature for many of us and frame virtually any discussion of instructor authority that we might have.

In fact, this divide may be so immense that renouncing neutrality may be a pre-requisite for entering into a conversation on instructor authority. After all, how can someone discuss the rhetorical effects of a position if—as those who claim their position is neutral seem to suggest—there aren't any? Does not the person who invoke neutrality invoke a kind of get of rhetoric free card, leaving those of us working in rhetorical studies unable to engage this person in our

language games? And anyway, was not it not Plato's appeal to the neutrality of philosophical discourse that sent the art of rhetoric into disrepute for 2500 years? If so, then it would seem that the stakes of discussing neutrality have often been immense, and the results have often either negated the rhetorical enterprise or made our work illegible to the dominant way of thinking.

With these powerful questions and hesitations in mind, this paper risks the affirmation of a largely discredited concept. That is, it calls into question the very "for" or "against" logic of such critiques, arguing that this dependence on dialectical logic comes at the expense of a more practical performative and rhetorical logic. To accomplish this task, I begin by discussing the liberal humanist critique of the authority exercised in the current traditional classroom, then proceed to discuss the critique of this critique as put forward by cultural studies pedagogies. Despite the differences in these positions, I argue that both of these early attempts to re-think teacher authority did so on the basis of a logical opposition between classroom authority and democratic classroom that comes to provide the dominant paradigm for discussing teacher authority.

Throughout this essay, I discuss this paradigm in terms of what Gerald Graff has called "a classic double bind" of instructor authority. For Graff, this "classic double bind" shows itself when instructors want something more aggressive than liberal pluralism, but in order to avoid a new form of

authoritarianism, revert back to liberal pluralism (275). The primary assumption that motivates both actions---the aggression and the retreat from aggression--is that authority and democratic classroom relations are opposed to each other, and that instructors face a logical dilemma where they must opt for one side of this dilemma at the expense of the other.

. After noting the limitations of this early paradigm for thinking about instructor authority, I find alternatives to this way of thinking in the work of Stanley Fish, Richard Boyd, and Karen Kopelson, before arguing that Kopelson's work offers an alternative logic of performativity that provides a rhetorical orientation to language that is other than the dialectical logic of contradiction and that, therefore, reworks the double bind of instructor authority. Finally, attempt to extend Kopelson's work by suggesting that the performance of neutrality can do more than allow an instructor to win recognizable authority in a particular context, that it can, in fact, allow for the emergence of something beyond this context and that this emergence—more so than necessary act of convincing students of our authority--provides the ultimate stakes of performing neutrality in today's context.

The Democratic Classroom: Liberal Humanist Style

After the upheaval of the 1960's, the idea of a more democratic classroom emerged on the charge that dominant versions of pedagogy based in current-

traditional rhetoric produced undemocratic, authoritarian classrooms. Thus, Composition theorists, from an array of theoretical perspectives, including the critical pedagogy perspective of James Sledd, Richard Ohmann, Ira Shor, and Richard Boyd, and the expressivist pedagogy perspectives of Donald Murray and Peter Elbow, eagerly began working on developing a more democratic classroom based on a radical, re-working of classroom authority (Boyd 590). Composition instructors, they insisted, must give up a significant portion of their authority, share power with students, and cultivate the individual autonomy in students necessary to resist repressive institutions.

Despite the obvious utopian character of this project, the feeling emerged that “the democratic classroom” was not only possible, but destined to become a reality. Boyd explains that he and his fellow theorists “held tight to the notion that the Composition classroom would indeed be a site of resistance, but with the crucial change that now had teacher and student united in resistance, struggling against authoritarianism in all of its manifestations and mutually committed to the search for genuine empowerment” (590). Hence, the wager of these theorists involved abandoning a long-standing model of instructor authority and replacing it with a new liberal humanist, student-centered, democratic classroom where the teacher and students are united in their resistance to authoritarian power structures

Thus, from the standpoint of the pedagogical double bind introduced earlier, these theorists opted for one side of the dilemma at the expense of the other: democratic relations with students, they argued, should flourish while the transmission of institutional authority should be curtailed. Once this repressive power of the institution, embodied in the authority of the instructor, was lifted, the implicit assumption was that democratic classroom would spontaneously emerge (Shor 96; Elbow 18.).

However, despite the tremendous anticipation surrounding this project, the liberal-democratic classroom never actually happened (Boyd 590). In what could only seem like a cruel irony to those involved, rather than join professors in the struggle against authority, students resisted the very “authorities” that attempted to install the anti-authoritarian classroom. (590; Rosenthal 150). This unexpected development led many theorists to take seriously the idea that students wanted the very kinds of authorities that liberation pedagogy was fighting against. It was as if the one unquestionable assumption that provided the theoretical foundation of the entire projects—the democratic potential of their students---had been proven to be faulty. This unanticipated discovery sent theorists of the democratic classroom back to the drawing board.

Something Deeply Wrong With Our Students

Inside of this drawing board, any alternative had to provide an answer why students did not want to unite with instructors in the democratic classroom. For many, the most compelling answer involved the idea that students were somehow deeply flawed as a result of their immersion in popular culture, a culture which, while experienced as a realm of individuality and free choice, inculcated the attitudes and values of the dominant group. This critical diagnosis explained why the mere lifting authority in the classroom, in and of itself did not produce democratic subject. Only a democratic subject would participate in a democratic classroom. Authoritarian values had been shown to have penetrated students much more deeply than been thought.

Liberal theorists, according to the authors of this, new “cultural studies” approach, misunderstood power, locating it exclusively in institutions, laws, and rights and neglecting the realm of popular culture and its ability of this culture to shape student identities (George and Trimbur 71-81). Laws can be changed, institutions can be improved, and classrooms can be reconfigured; however, if individuals do not want to participate in such transformations, or even actively resist them, then the expected change will not take.

Therefore, something has to happen to rework student subjectivity before democratic ideas can take hold. To this end, instructors need to critique ideals and values of popular culture in order to create the space for a new democratic

sensibility in students while also inculcating an alternative set of values. Popular culture seizes on the political unconscious of students, reproducing in them the dominant values of the dominant culture and neutralizing the laissez-faire strategies of liberal humanism. Until students can shake free of the powerful influence of popular culture, they would not be in position to open to democratic ideas.

As a result of this conclusion, new the democratic classroom begins to take a noticeable different form, one that will complicate the very idea of democracy. After reviewing *Leftist Margins: Cultural Studies and Composition Pedagogy*, a 1995 collection of essays on emerging cultural studies pedagogies, Ohmann, marks the passage of liberal humanist style of democratic classroom, tying this passage to a diagnosis of the contemporary student as the primary obstacle to democracy:

What strikes me about the essays [in this volume] as a whole, when I compare them to similar efforts of the late sixties, is how peripheral now, how qualified, is the ideal of the democratic classroom. Then, many assumed that canceling the normal, dominative relations of pedagogy would release authentic motives for learning along with liberatory politics. Rarely do I see that assumption at work in the present volume. Rather, many of its contributors assume or argue that there is something

deeply wrong with our students that disables them as subjects of democracy (1995, 328).

Moreover, he notes that many of the authors express a certain disdain for “the liberal platitudes” such as “everyone has a right to their own opinion” and that “tolerance might be welcome in many classroom, but for some of the writers...it shores up liberal pluralism, hides real conflict, and prevents students from grasping their relation to the dominant ideology” (328). Hence, the “democratic classroom” finds itself in transition, a transition that involve a re-thinking of instructor authority.

The Call For A Benevolent *Herrschaft*: We Need More Muscle

As Ohmann noted, this new form of authority legitimate itself on the basis of a certain interpretation of students. Adam Katz explains the revised construction of students that arose in the aftermath of the liberal humanist approaches:

This [dominant culture’s power to construct student subjectivity] means... at least the following: students cannot be regard as possessing a ‘good’ democratic kernel which needs to be released from external restraints and permitted to flourish, nor as free rational subjects who can simply choose from a variety of options... rather they must be understood as contradictory sites constituted by the enormous investment of the

dominant culture in producing authoritarian individuals, that is by their resistance to democracy in the sense of any social and material force which would advance democracy in a consistent way (211).

Katz's diagnosis precludes the possibility that releasing students from institutional authorities in the name open exchange of ideas, i.e. the liberal humanist classroom, could produce anything other than a recycling of the values of the dominant culture. In this way, it lays the ground for—indeed requires-- an openly political approach aimed at an ontological reconstruction of student identities.

To this end, Colleen M. Tremonte recommends “aggressive work that leads [students] to unexpected and potentially taboo discoveries, much as the physical act of opening or excavating a burial plot,” work which she refers to as “grave digging” which aims to excavate “cultural myths” and, therefore, “gives the reader or writer permission to assault the text” (54). She emphasizes the violence of this struggle as “hostile” teachers “force” students to embark upon “provocative and troublesome search and seizures, those which bore into the very marrow of a first-year student's identity, into her personal values and concrete experiences, ... [and] assault the myths of family and gender” (59). Likewise, Ohmann lists one of the goals of cultural studies pedagogies as performing an “assault on the text of our daily lives,” adding that this new

approach wants to “dynamite the bedrock of ‘my opinion’” by tracing all student opinion back to the contradictions of an unjust society (328). In the same way, Richard Rorty explains to the hypothetical parents that instructors are “going to go right on trying to discredit you in the eyes of your children, trying to strip your fundamentalist religious community of dignity, trying to make your views seem silly rather than discussable” (22). At this point, we are a long way from an anti-authoritarian, liberal humanist ethos.

While liberal humanism deplored this kind of use of teacher authority, cultural studies advocated an oppositional pedagogy that affirmed the use of force as part of a “benevolent domination.” For example, Rorty proclaims that he does not “see anything *herrschaftsfrei* (domination free) about my handling of my fundamentalist students. Rather, I think those students are lucky to find themselves under the benevolent *Herrschaft* (domination) of people like me, and to have escaped the grip of their frightening, vicious, dangerous parents.” (22). Certainly, it would be difficult to imagine a stronger, more unapologetic endorsement of the unrestrained use of teacher authority.

For this kind of oppositional pedagogy, the primary task of the democratic teacher instructor is to reverse the values of the dominant culture. For instance, Katz explains, “Democratic politics in this case involves attempting to support the subordinate side in these various antagonisms, thereby undermining

domination: presumably, enough reversals of this kind will add to a democratic, or at least more democratic society” (209). However, it is far from clear that such reversals in and of themselves amount to a new kind of politics. In fact, as Katz, Rorty, and Tremonte describe this project, it does not appear to be interested in reversing domination, violence, or authoritarianism, but in reversing the existing power relations that mandate who exercises this kind of power against whom.

Despite the obvious differences between this approach to the classroom and the liberal humanist approach, a particular paradigm underwrites both positions. That is, both can be understood as operating under a particular understanding Graff’s double bind. We can think of the liberal humanist classroom affirming one side of this logical dilemma and siding with democratic relations and abandoning teacher authority. Likewise, we think of cultural studies approaches as siding with teacher authority and abandoning democratic relations.

Hence, both positions understand the use of teacher authority inside of a paradigm based a dialectical opposition between authority and democratic forms of relation. Consequently, both positions are left with no choice but to be “for” one and “against” the other.

The Return of the Double Bind

While many adherent of cultural studies and critical pedagogy were pushing for even more aggressive political stances in the classroom, Patricia Bizzell returns to the double-bind of instructor authority and notes how this problem has perplexed the field. Thus, she begins her essay, "Power, Authority and Critical Pedagogy," as follows: "Let me begin by assuming that many of us teaching today feel caught in a theoretical impasse. On the one hand, we wish to serve politically left-oriented or liberatory goals in our teaching, while on the other, we do not see how we can do so without committing the theoretically totalizing and pedagogically oppressive sins we have inveighed against in the systems we want to resist" (54). In what follows, I will consider positions rework the theoretical conundrum that both Graff and Bizzell as haunting our attempts to re-think instructor authority.

Impossible, so Impossible or Impossible, But Necessary

Joseph Harris once called Stanley Fish "the patron saint of composition studies during the 1980s." (117). If this true, then a large part of this influence has to do with his capacity to take well-accepted idea, often associated with liberalism, and showing that it *does not exist*. Hence, Fish's work seems to be characterized a radical version of this "for" or "against" logic, since the possibility of affirming tenants of liberalism are completely removed once it is

shown that the said tenants do not exist. As a simple look at titles such “Liberalism Does Not Exist,” or “Free Speech Does Not Exist and It is a Good Thing” makes clear, Fish has been adamant about asserting these kind of non-existences. Thus, when discussing free speech, Fish argues that the speech/action distinction does not hold and “the category of speech as a form of non-action unproductive of harm has no members” (140). Likewise, he asserts that the concept of the ahistorical liberal subject, or a subject stripped of all empirical predicates such as ethnicity, gender, or family background, is a legal “fiction” (136). In both cases, he seems to argue from the impossibility of a concept to the conclusion that what such a concept claims to denote does not exist.

However, this is only part of the story. For Fish, the “non-existence” of these concepts does not mean that they should be, or even could be, abandoned. Instead Fish asserts the opposite: that while conceptually impossible, they are necessary “fictions” that allow a particular discourse to function. Thus, he explains that “[the liberal subject] is a fiction...but it is a fiction required by the law’s resolution to be impartial; for to be impartial is to treat all equally, whether they are or not, and therefore to set aside— not take into consideration as a basis for judgment— whatever differences may actually exist.” (137). Likewise, when discussing free speech, he explains, “In the area of First Amendment law, the enabling fiction is the distinction between speech and action in the absence of

which there would be no First Amendment,” (137). He goes on to insist that “the fact of legal fictions, like the distinction between speech and action, is not an embarrassment to the law but a key to the way the law necessarily works” (142).

Fish’s point is that in order to work, any normative discourse must carve out an inside and an outside, even if an absolute conceptual distinction between the two cannot be maintained. In other words, “All legal arguments unfold against a background of some authorized institutional fiction that marks out the territory and serves both to constrain and enable lines of legitimate inquiry” (137). However, it is precisely this fictional character or the conceptual impossibility of an absolute distinction between certain binaries that makes rhetorical arguments possible.

For instance, it precisely because this distinction between speech and action is inherently unstable that one can argue that sleeping in the park sends an expressive message (hence, it ought to be protected as speech), that protesting with signs at a merchant’s house becomes an incitement to violence (hence, it ought not to be protected), that flag burning is speech (hence, it ought to be protected), or that it is an inaudible grunt (hence, it ought not to be protected) (140-142). Thus, the instability of the terms proves to very thing that opens the space of argument.

The fact that these judicial determinations go back and forth, and the transformation of speech into action and vice versa sometimes takes and sometimes doesn't is evidence of the malleability of the speech/ action distinction. Given a friendly court and sufficiently ingenious attorneys almost any form of speech could be characterized as action if it could be linked to the production of violence, and almost any form of action could be characterized as speech if it can be shown to have "expressive elements" (a term of art in the discussions) (140-141).

.Hence, from a practical perspective, the fictional character of the speech/action distinction does not mean that one term "does not exist", but that "almost any form of action to be characterized as speech." Indeed the fictional distinction between these terms is precisely what allows them to function as "floating signifiers" whose meaning must continually be renegotiated through what will inevitably be different performances in different contexts.

Hence, the idea that Fish argues that free speech—or any other concept for that matter-- does not exist, and should; therefore, be abandoned is incredibly misleading. The conceptual impossibility of a particular terms is important, but it is only important insofar as this impossibility makes these terms available for rhetorical and performative re-inscription. Thus, if anything, Fish urges us to adopt a different orientation towards language, one that moves us from

understanding these terms as strict philosophical concepts based on a dialectical logic to understanding of them as rhetoric terms inside of logic of performativity. In the end, he do not deliver bad news about notions like the liberal subject, neutrality, or free speech or ask us to abandon them. In effect, he tells us that we cannot live without them.

Fish's notion of an enabling fiction provides some evidence that it may be possible or even necessary to affirm a theoretically impossible or unprovable concept. As Composition instructors, we can understand how this "impossible, but necessary" affirmation works: absolutely neutral evaluation methods are impossible, but barring the occasional exception, they are necessary from a legal, moral and pedagogical standpoint. In a pragmatic context, neutrality often means, among other things, legally protected and able to withstand claims of discrimination suits. And if discriminatory claim are going to have any meaning, then there must something that is not discriminatory---even if this something is a floating signifier-- whose meaning must be continually negotiated in rhetorical and contextual arguments. The claim that everything is discriminatory make senses and certainly needs to be said in certain theoretical contexts, but in in terms of practical legal argument, it amounts to a refusal to participate in legal discussions that are premised on certain fictional distinctions. And certainly, we do not always have that luxury.

The Performance of “Privileged” Concepts

Another more direct attempt to negotiate the double bind of authority and classroom relation can be found Richard Boyd’s seminal essay, “Reading Student Resistance: The Case of the Missing Other.” Noting the “invariability” of the description of resistance in Wendell Berry’s description in his late-Victorian classroom and Rae Rosenthal’s description of resistance in the contemporary feminist classroom, Boyd concludes that student resistance is an “inescapable reality.” Much of this invariability is the result of the inevitability of unequal power relations between teachers and students, or as Boyd claims “composition instructors, by their very position within the particular institutional setting that is American higher education and by their very real institutional authority to bestow grades, continue to possess a power that inevitably must be resisted by some (perhaps even all?) students in one form or another” (Boyd 591). Hence, student resistance is not contingent matter that can be fixed, but is intrinsic to the very dynamic of institutions. In light of this situation, Boyd affirms his position as an institutional authority and decides to work *inside* of this structure. Consequently, he invokes a notion of instructor mastery, a concept seemingly at odds with his goal a democratic classroom aimed at liberation. .

At this point, Boyd’s response to student resistance resembles the response of oppositional pedagogy discussed earlier. Both positions advocate the

use of teacher authority to bring about democratic goals. Both also see a certain inevitability of student resistance. Likewise, both positions are interested in exercising a form of instructor authority. Boyd invokes a form of mastery; however, by understanding classroom authority as something other than the dialectical opposition of democracy, he makes a slight, but extremely significant swerve away from this position, one which amounts to an entirely different way of responding to the pedagogical double bind introduced at the beginning of this essay.

The concept of mastery that Boyd invokes is not a one-sided, non-relational, monologue of authority to defenseless students tasked with submitting to it.. When discussing a case of a resisting student, Boyd admits to his need “to convince [a resisting student] student of my authority and expertise so that she might play the role of disciple to my performance of mastery, and thus allow me to continue to construct my identity as teacher around student admiration and respect” (596). Hence, this performance of mastery is inherently relational, as it *requires* winning the other’s admiration and respect in order to function.

Michael Hardt’s describes the concept of sovereignty in a way that shed light on how Boyd’s relational notion of mastery works.

Sovereign power is not an autonomous substance and it is never absolute but rather consists of a relationship between rulers and ruled, between protection and obedience, between rights and obligations. Wherever tyrants have tried to make sovereignty into something unilateral, the ruled have always eventually revolted and restored the two-sided nature of the relationship. Those who obey are no less essential to the concept and the functioning of sovereignty than the one who commands.

Sovereignty is thus, necessarily, a dual system of power (331-332).

For Hardt, in order to function, sovereignty must “negotiate a relationship with the ruled and solicit its consent” (332). This negotiation, like Boyd’s negotiation of his mastery with his students, needs the other in order to function.

However, in Boyd’s understanding of mastery, there is a sense in which the instructor and the students remain opposed. As mentioned earlier, he maintains that problem of student resistance is built into the very dynamic of institutional authority. However, because the instructor’s mastery must be *recognized* by her students, the students become the masters who must bestow their consent to master for her to exist as a master, and the master becomes the servant who must win the approval of students or have her authority vanquished. The instructor and student remain opposed, but since the master has passed through this moment of servitude, her mastery has been become

more equitable in its activity, more respectful to her students and more self-conscious of the logic of her mastery as a social process.

However, this position does not escape the dialectic logic that underpins the pedagogical double bind. If anything this logic becomes universalized. Statements, roles, and position are constantly being reversed and turning into their opposite, but only to return to themselves. One can say “I have authority,” but in the moment of saying this and attempting to objectify one’s authority in public context, this authority turns into its opposite, as such an act asks for and requires the recognition of the other. Said differently, if one truly has authority, then there would be no need to say it. Likewise, one can say “this is democracy,” but in the moment this particular version of democracy is posited, it turns into its opposite since it must now exercise authority and fight to keep rival conceptions of democracy out. Even when one tries to put forward a recognizable concept of democracy, the instant one does this, this concept becomes its opposite. There is nothing that anyone can do to avoid this logic.

Thus, in terms of the pedagogical double bind, if we try to choose authority, as Boyd shows, then our choice turns into its dialectical opposite, democratic relations, and if we try to put forward a positive version of democracy in the classroom, like cultural studies pedagogies, then our choice turns into its dialectical opposite, authority. Hence, the double bind remains, but

this is not a double bind made up between two static ideas that contradict each other, this is double bind that places logical contradiction inside of each other.

Under this highly systematic and logical view of action, if one were to offer a version of neutrality, it would turn into its other (bias) in the same way that in the moment of positing the universal, this universal turns into a particular. Hence, it is impossible to posit a neutral authority, but it is necessary, since this authority will pass through a moment of bias, it will have learned something, have become more conscious of its how it works, have made progress toward a better, deeper version of itself. Hence, like Fish, conceptual impossible does not mean abandoning a concept, but conceptual impossibility does not only make contextual argument possible, but also becomes then engine of knowledge, self-consciousness, and self-development.

Performing Neutrality as a Means of Resignification

Like Boyd's important text, Karen Kopelson's 2003 article "Rhetoric on the Edge of Cunning; Or, The Performance of Neutrality (Re)Considered As a Composition Pedagogy for Student Resistance" also attempts to find an alternative way of responding to student resistance. However, in her case, the object of affirmation is not teacher mastery, but teacher neutrality. The exigence of the affirmation lies in what she sees as the shortcomings of what she calls "pedagogies of difference."

The pedagogy of difference, which Kopelson confesses to sharing similar goals with, has, in her opinion, become a decontextualized pedagogy that ignores the reality of today's hostile student audiences (120). This audience demands neutrality, objectivity, professional authority, and mastery from instructors, shunning those who break away from these expectations, seeing them as personalizing the course, pushing an agenda, and failing to teach their subject matter. Ignoring this context, pedagogies of difference insist that instructors adopt and perform alternative or oppositional subject positions, despite their pragmatic ineffectiveness. In Hardt's language, this amounts to saying that this pedagogical theory has become an "autonomous substance." The result has been damaging for minority instructors, as the demand to "make difference visible" has undermined their authority, since these instructors fail to perform authority in a way that would be recognized by students.

Citing Indira Karamcheti, Kopelson argues that instructors who signify difference are put in a difficult position and pedagogies of difference serve to further limit their classroom authority and their pedagogical effectiveness.

[Instructors who signify difference] are read/cast, in other words, as teaching the personal but usually unspoken story of ourselves in the world...In fact, I would argue that in today's suspicious and resistant classrooms, it is often this very conscientiousness, the concerted effort

with which we do “teach for diversity,” that itself delimits pedagogical effects and effectiveness, especially if we are marked or read as ‘different’ in such a way that students may ascribe political agendas to us the minute we walk into the classroom (Kopelson 2003, 120).

To counteract this situation, Kopelson suggests that we revisit the notion of teacher neutrality.

Kopelson is aware that *prima facie* her appeal to neutrality goes against many of the conventional canons of progressive and feminist pedagogy: everything is political, there is no position of neutrality, and Audre Lorde’s celebrated feminist credo that “you cannot dismantle the master house with the master’s tools.” Indeed Kopelson confesses sympathy with these positions and hesitates to affirm a concept that has historically been thought to occupy a position in the master’s house. Yet like Boyd, she approaches the concept of neutrality with a performative logic, however she goes beyond Boyd in her analysis of how the performative use of concepts can produce multiple effects

Performative Resignification

One of these effects of particular interest is what she calls resignification. In order to explicate this process, she cites the work of Indira Karamcheti, for whom the ability to seize an authoritative, impartial or neutral role is not an assimilatory move, but “a co-opting” one. One way this “co-opting” proceeds is

by what she calls “delegitimation,” which she defines as “the destabilization, of students’ identity-based presumptions” (123). When marginalized instructors perform traditional forms of authority they potentially reconfigure students perception of authority, often revealing marginality “is not an inborn, natural category” but something constructed and “something learned” (144).

She compares this performance to a “Brechtian performance,” which results in Brecht’s famous alienation effect on the audience. Such an experience of de-familiarization, according to Karamcheti, “alienates the viewer from the spectacle, discomforts rather than fulfills audience expectations” (145). Through this performance, Karamcheti claims, the minority teacher can “seize control of the machinery of representation” and use this machinery to play de-legitimizing “visual and epistemological games” (143). The result will be that while traditional authority is affirmed, it signifies something different and does not necessarily have to be the dialectical opposite of itself, or a new version of itself that has taken in its dialectical opposite. Rather than thinking of concepts in terms of dialectical opposition, the door is open to think of them as “performative names.”

To this end, Kopelson also cites the work of Judith Butler, who argues that by working inside of the system Antigone utilizes “a politics not of oppositional purity but of the scandalously impure” (5). In her resistance to the state, Butler

claims, Antigone uses “the very language of the state against which she rebels” and “the language of entitlement” from which she is purportedly excluded, so that she may “produce a new public sphere for a woman’s voice” (5, 82). The language of entitlement becomes useful once we think of this language as consisting an impure set of “performative names.” Deborah Youdell discusses how these impure performative names function in Butler’s work.

Understanding these performative names as bearing equivocal meanings offers both possibilities and limitations. As Butler has argued, it means that they are open to strategic reinscription, they can take on non-ordinary meanings and they can function in contexts where that have not belonged. This suggests that a given identity is not either wounded or privileged, inert or capable of resistance. Rather, the possibility of both injury and resistance is intrinsic to performative constitutions (485).

Hence, a given term, in and of itself, is neither privileged nor marginal and it becomes difficult to simply be “for” or “against” a term.

In our current situation, Kopelson suggests that the performative re-inscription of neutrality better accomplishes the pedagogical goals of a politics of difference. Kopelson, Boyd, Butler, and Karamechi show how the performance of such a “privileged term” can resignify a key term and produce differential effects.. The point here is not that pupil is *different from* the master or the

sovereign, but that the variability of the relation internal to the performance make the master and sovereign “different from themselves.”

A politics of difference, then, is indeed at work in Kopelson, but it is a politics of *internal* difference and not a politics of external difference (or dialectical difference) between two opposing self-identical concepts. The task of such a politics involves affirming a term by repeating or using it “differentially,” rather than “getting outside” of the term. In short, it allows us to work *inside* of bodies, discourses, institutions, and identities rather than transcending, replacing, or moving beyond them. Change becomes more of matter of how things are done, i.e. ethical engagements, and less of a matter of what is done.

While it is easy to associate difference with the external, visible differences of race, class and gender, it harder to realize that this not what deconstructive notion of difference is about. In fact, external difference is precisely what deconstruction responds to and tries to change. G. Douglas Atkins and Michael L. Johnson make just this point in their introduction to an anthology they edited entitled *Writing and Reading Differently: Deconstruction and the Teaching of Composition and Literature*. Contrasting Derrida’s difference with Saussure’s notion of difference, Atkins and Johnson claim that “Derrida has shown how meaning derives not so much from differences between terms as from differences within each term” (2). When describing how to interpret the effects first move of

deconstruction which shows how each term of a binary is implicated in the other term, they quote Barbara Johnson's introduction to Derrida's *Dissemination*: "A and B are no longer opposed, nor are they equivalent. Indeed they are no longer equivalent to themselves. They are their own difference from itself" (3). Thus, A and B are now performative names. And thinking of neutrality as a performative name means that it is not the dialectical opposite of that which is political, rhetorical, or biased, but is different from itself and capable of doing different things in different situations.

Conclusion

Thinking of neutrality as a performative name internally differentiated from itself does not get us out of the possibility that many of the problems that have been associated with the concept of neutrality will not re-emerge. In fact, it is precisely this internal difference or variability of a concept that makes them so dangerous. As Youdell stated earlier, "the possibility of both injury and resistance is intrinsic to performative constitutions" (458). Yet there are certain consequences that follow from this change in orientation. The first consequence of this claim that we cannot make decontextualized or a priori claims about how neutrality functions. The second consequence is that while performative logic can be just as violent and just as exclusionary as dialectical logic, it does not necessitate abandoning a concept on the basis of the claim that the said can never

be obtained in experience. Instead it offers different orientation for which disproving an idea is not the primary goal. The third consequence is logical dilemmas and binary thinking are not fixed and unchangeable contradictions based on the external difference between two things. Hence, concepts are not “autonomous substances” that are absolutely, separate and distinct from opposing concepts. A fourth consequence is that we can begin with the idea of internal difference or the idea that we do not really know what a concept to do because it is always in a process of becoming different from itself. Hence, our ideas about the consequences or rhetorical effects of a concept are always subject to an ongoing process experimentation.

In today’s context, it may be the case that there is a significant stake in experimenting with neutrality. As many of our students come to college pre-loaded with the ideology of one side of today’s cultural war, it becomes difficult to get students to explore intellectually, ask question, be curious, or restrain themselves from repeating talking points they have heard in the media. Certainly, asking them to suspend their judgment, bracket their pre-existing beliefs, or too explore multiple arguments from multiple perspectives could help facilitate invention and discovery. So don’t they have the same right to ask the same thing of us? And if part of job is to model “habits of mind” for them. Habits such as arguing on both sides, using multiple sources, validating sources,

avoiding *ad hominem* arguments, listening, understanding, analyzing, and allowing ourselves to be influenced something different from ourselves, all seems invoke a performance of neutrality as an imperfect, conceptually impossible regulative ideal that can guide practice and possibility produce new knowledge. In other words, all of these practices invoke neutrality as a necessary, pragmatic, educational fiction that allows educational discourse to function.

Moreover, might there be certain advantages in being able to point out that some news programming is more neutral than others? Do we not ask students to evaluate sources for bias, and does this practice not imply that there are some sources that are more neutral than others? If so, then what does it mean in today's context to promote the idea there is no such thing as neutrality or that all claims of neutrality are mask for the exercise of power by dominant groups? Might this claim close us off from hearing other voices? That is, might the performance of neutrality not only be the only thing that protects our enterprise in a legal context, but also be the very thing that enable us to hear other voices and maybe even to listening to them? Said differently, if Kopelson recommends that marginal instructors perform neutrality so that they can be heard by their students, then might this performance also allow us to hear them? Maybe. If so, then we have to take seriously the idea that it is the claim that "that nothing is neutral," not the performance of neutrality is, in fact, the idea that is allowing

dominant forms of power to continue to operate unchecked and that, in the process, is excluding other voices.

But if the argument of this paper asks us to move away from a dependence on these kind of dialectical reversals and the binary logic that underpins them, then installing a new binary between the neutral and the partisan does not seem to be the way to go. That is, maybe the real question today is whether or not an experimental performance of neutrality in pedagogical, scholarly, and public environments would allow us to hear a glimmer of something currently unknown, something that could undo the picture of a fixed us and a fixed them, something that holds the possibility of for a different kind of inquiry, for large scale invention, and for unpredictable discoveries?

CHAPTER SIX

THE ADVENTURES OF AFFECT: A GENEALOGY OF THE AFFECTIVE TURN

After having engaged the traditional concepts of error, language, voice, and teacher neutrality, this chapter engages another fundamental concept for composition classrooms: rationality. Indeed much of life as Composition instructors is spent pushing to students to work out their ideas, to develop them more fully, and to provide better evidence for the positions they take. However, in the theory world, we often hear that western notions of reason have been exposed as inherently ethnocentric, masculinist, exclusive, or violent. In order to address this gap between theoretical critique of western rationality and the kind of rationality we practice in the classroom, I discuss and analyze what might seem to be one of the concepts that would discredit rationality: affect. If our practical, classroom rationality can survive the affective turn, then we will be in a better position to embrace it

The wager of this final chapter, then, consists in the idea that a brief genealogy of the affective turn that shows the many different ways of configuring the relationship between affect and rationality shows that we do not

need to alter the traditional western belief in rationality, but instead reveals that the kind of practical reasoning that, for instance, takes place in writing classroom contains more possibilities than we may suspect. In order to arrive at this position, I begin by discussing the affective turn in the humanities, a largely interdisciplinary turn that will, therefore, require a discussion of a wide array of sources, and then continue with this interdisciplinary approach to explore the history of this turn by looking at some of the major interpretations of affect in the history of western rationality. Despite this extended interdisciplinary discussion, the goal is to re-invigorate the practice and exercise of rationality in the writing classroom.

The Affective Turn

One of the more significant development in the humanities over the last few decades has been an increasing interest in the notion of affect, so much so that some have spoken and written about “the affective turn” in the humanities, a turn which challenges traditional ways of thinking about rationality, bodies, and the forces that drive human behavior. While this turn consists of a loose set of largely heterogeneous theories from a variety of disciplines, it can be understood as challenging a long-standing assumption within the western tradition that explicit symbolic processes such as conscious thoughts, beliefs and feelings are the primary agencies that drive human behavior.

More particularly, the contemporary turn to affect is motivated by the perceived limits of a variety of theoretical movement in the 1980's and 1990's, which it reads as the most recent instance of this tendency to privilege the role of symbolic action. That is, much of the affective turn is motivated by the belief that the linguistic turn, social construction, semiotics, and various interpretations of postmodernism and poststructuralism, all privilege symbolic representations and, in doing so have little to say about the role of matter, bodies, and the material affects which circulate among them (Clough 1).

One critic of this belief in the primacy of the symbolic, Donovan O. Schaefer speaks of what he calls "the linguistic fallacy," which assumes that the only reason a bodies is "because a particular textual regime has told them to" (13). According to Schaefer, affect theory exposes this fallacy and intervenes in the name of the myriad of non-linguistic forces that make bodies act. Thus, he asserts that "affect theory—examining the mobile materiality of the body---thematizes the way that world prompts us to move before language" (9). Therefore, contrary to the tendency to focus on the symbolic, Schaefer and other theorists of the affective turn draw our attention to the "materiality" of affective and bodily experience, or the way that affect acts on, directs, orients or conditions thinking (cognition) and feeling (perception) before these processes begin. For instance, the moral psychologist, Johnathan Haidt, has argued that

contrary to the traditional understanding of moral reasoning were our reasoning processes determine our affective experience, affect is “the horse” that leads the way and the reason is the “rider” that follows (2).

While this central provocation--that conscious symbolic activity is not the only thing that motivates action—can be grasped fairly easily, the task of defining affect and understanding how it works has proven to be much more difficult. While reducing such a concept to a rigid definition may not be possible or desirable, a historical approach which locates the concept of affect within the Western intellectual tradition can provide a much needed sense of how the term has been used in the past and how the current use of the term both extends and differentiates itself from this history. After completing this genealogy I argue that affect has always played an important role in western rationality; therefore, the affective turn is less novel than it sometimes claims to be and does not represent a break from western rationality. In fact, by providing a more complete notion of rationality, the affective turn allows us to affirm this rationality as a way of modulating affective experience.

The Centrality of Symbolic Behavior in the Western Tradition

According to Aristotle, humans could be distinguished from other animals by their possession of *logos*, a term most often translated as rationality, but also bearing connotations of language and law. While other animals are

capable of sensation and appetite, Aristotle claims, only man possess *logos*. This possession, then, delineates humanity from the surrounding world, marking it as different in *kind* from other forms of existence, and drawing clear boundaries between *logos* and its non-rational other.

In the twentieth century, the defining feature of humankind often becomes “symbolic activity,” a broader term encompassing any use of communicative means to represent one’s experience. This behavior can include painting, music, and overtly linguistic behaviors such as writing and speaking. Thus, Ernst Cassirer in his 1944, *An Essay on Man*, argues that “instead of defining man as an *animal rationale*, we should define him as an animal *symbolicum*” (26). For Cassirer, this drive to produce symbols, whether these symbols are mathematical, mythical, linguistic, or artistic, was synonymous with the human spirit and its desire to transcend sensible experience by endowing it with form. Likewise, in 1963, Kenneth Burke’s “Definition of Man” famously categorizes man as “the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal, inventor of the negative (or moralized by the negative), separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making, goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (or moved by the sense of order), and rotten with perfection” (16). Thus, like Cassirer’s understanding of “Man,” Burke’s definition, while somewhat more ambivalent about the results of symbolic action, focuses on the

way that symbols allow man to separate from nature and seek a higher sense of morality, order and truth.

While Aristotle's definition intimately wed man's existence to *logos*, we can think of theorists such as Cassirer and Burke as working within and expanding an Aristotelian paradigm, which privileges humanity's capacity to transcend his natural experience by standing outside of its empirical experience and representing that experience for the purpose of understanding it. By attaching normative significance to this capacity, the non-symbolic, preconscious aspects of human life become nonessential, or when indulged at the expense of the "higher," "rational" symbolic aspects, even destructive. Unlike other forms of life, humans are not simply at the mercy of their affective experiences. They categorize, know, and transmit their experience through symbols and then make generalizes and predictions about the future.

Moreover, the capacity for symbolic action is what allows humanity to form civilized forms of collective existence. As Cicero explains, the ability to speak and, therefore, to persuade each other was "our greatest advantage over brute creation" and such an art was the only "power...strong enough...to gather scattered humanity into one place, or lead it out of its brutish existence in the wilderness up to our present condition of civilization of civilization as men and

as citizens, or, after the establishment of social communities, to give shape to laws, tribunals, and civic right" (24).

Thus, symbolic behavior, perhaps the most readily-recognized form of which is language, saves the collective life of humankind from regressing to savage forms of existence by subordinating violence and conflict into verbal or symbolic disputations and disagreements.

The Moral Interpretation of Affect

This wedding of the symbolic to man's proper nature and to the possibility of civilized existence lays the foundation for understanding what I will call the moral interpretation of affect. Because human nature is rational, one becomes more fully human to the degree that exercise this rationality and subjects one's affective experience to a symbolic order. In other words, this interpretation insists that our affective experience ought to be subservient to, reinforce, or be sublimated into a particular symbolic order, whether this order be cultural, natural, or divine. Hence, it posits a moral hierarchy whereby symbolic representations *ought* to be primary and affective experience *ought* to be supplementary, and in doing so, it likewise posits that reversing this order undermines, imprisons or perverts both human nature and human civilization.

Mapping this tradition, Teresa Brennan notes that "the earliest Western records of the transmission of affect... make them demons or deadly sins" (97).

She adds that the seven deadly sins—pride, sloth, envy, lust, anger, gluttony, and avarice—are “affects rather than actions” (98-99). She also maps these sins onto what she sees as the unofficial list of “psychological sins” of the 20th century: narcissism (pride), inertia (sloth), envy (envy), objectification (lust), aggression (anger), greed (gluttony) and obsessionality (avarice) (99). For Brennan, these “sins” or affects are states of affliction which undermine human agency by enacting physiological transformations in bodies which orient them towards certain self-destructive ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving (1, 5-6). As such, these affects are essentially *opposed* to the kind of existence which would be in line with one’s true nature.

In order to understand how this happens, one must understand the subjective passivity that is associated with affective experience. According to Brennan, “to be the object of affects is to be in passive relation to them” (101). Such passivity undermines the ideals of freedom, autonomy, and rationality, which have been valued by traditional form of Western morality, making affect, in Brennan’s words, “opposed to the integrity of the organism’s expression” and leading us to understand affects as “invaders that work against our true nature” (99). Moreover, affects so overwhelm the subject that they render her *inert*, forcing her to repetitively act out *fixed* patterns of thought and behavior. The envious, gluttonous, or narcissistic person repeats the same affective relations

again and again. Thus, subjective passivity makes humanity vulnerable to a persuasive force that overpowers the subject's conscious will. As Saint Paul says, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.... Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it." (*New International Version*. 7.15-20). In other words, the "sinful," affective self undermines the conscious, rational self. Being open to this sort of affective possession leaves sinners in a constant battle to subjugate or expel affectivity and to act in accordance with their true integrity of his being.

In order to draw out how this position on affect, it will be helpful to consider how Augustine describes the difference between sexuality in a postlapsarian and a prelapsarian humanity:

In Paradise, if culpable disobedience had not been punished with another disobedience, marriage would not have known this resistance, this opposition, this struggle between the libido and will. On the contrary, our private parts, like all the other parts of the body, would have been at the service of the will. That which was created for this end would have sown the field of generation, as the hand sows the earth.... Man would have sown his seed and woman would have received it in her genitals, only

when necessary and to the degree necessary, as a result of the will's command, and not due to the excitation of the libido (69).

In other words, in Paradise, humanity's will was ordered by God and, therefore, commanded his body according to divine law, using its organs for the right purpose, at the right time, and in the right fashion. However, after the Fall, the libido, as part of humanity's flesh becomes disconnected from this order, and, therefore, vulnerable to affective excitations from external sources which are not in alignment with the divine knowledge. Far from being somehow unique to Christian thought, this moral tension between affect and signification has extended into nearly every facet of life. Mladen Dolar explains that "the birth of opera was accompanied by the dilemma of *prima la musica, e poi le parole* ("first the music, then the words"), or the other way around, the dramatic tension between the word and the voice was put into its cradle," adding that "the entire history of opera from Montiverdi to Strauss can be written through the spyglass of this dilemma" (30).

Nonetheless, Augustian's statements offer a particularly intense version of the moral interpretation of affect. In fact, his rationalist moral theology suggests that it would be better for humans if affects did not exist at all. Giorgio Agamben describes what procreation would be like in Augustine's Paradise: "with the

signal of the will, the genitals would have been aroused, just as easily as we might raise a hand, and the husband would impregnate his wife without the burning stimulation of libido" (69). In this picture, man would not need affective excitations to accomplish this act and would simply deposit his seed without the whole play of bodies, subjection, and desire. As Augustine states, "It would have been possible for man to transmit his seed to his wife without harming her physical integrity." (qtd in Agamben 69). Thus, in an ideal world, affect would not exist and the fact that it does is an unfortunate part of man's fallen condition.

However, despite this disparaging view of affect, this line of rationalist Christian theology comes to insist that fallen man actually *needs* affect to supplement his imperfect nature and imperfect reason. After the Fall, the wholesale expulsion of affect is not an option, and the best humanity can do is to subject the affective excitations to a higher, divine order. Hence, the Church eventually comes to recognize that appeals to our intellect do not always persuade our natures, and some affective experiences, like sacred music and art, are a necessary evil, needed to reinforce Christian discourse.

We can see this failure of rationality to persuade in our everyday lives. For example, if we were purely rational beings, then once a cigarette smoker heard the following rational argument—"If you want to live, then you will stop smoking. You want to live. Therefore, you should stop smoking"—then this

person would once stop immediately. That is, once the argument was understood, then a purely logical nature would execute the argument in the same way that a computer does. However, it can hardly be disputed that many smokers hear this argument and continue to smoke, leading us to the inevitable conclusion that our nature is not purely rational and, thus, forcing us to confront the limits of rationality as a means of persuasion. The question, then, becomes how do we actually persuade this not-fully-rational-nature—which ideally would be as rational as possible, but which nonetheless remains bound to and often seems to require “non-rational” and affective forms of persuasion? How do we understand a nature in which the affective experiences of embarrassment, pride, the fear of losing love, or the desire to please a newfound mate who disproves of smoking, and not an argument in the form of *modus ponens*, often proves to be a more effective means of persuading someone of the need to stop smoking? Persuading someone to adopt rational conclusions, it seems, often requires affect even if affective experience is not necessarily rational.

Thus, this moral interpretation of affect ends up valuing affect, but doing so carefully and cautiously inside of a moral hierarchy which subordinates it to an order of symbolic meanings. Despite its calls to renounce affective experience, ultimately, it understands affect as a kind of *pharmakon*, both a poison and a cure. On the one hand, affective experiences render the subject passive and undermine

its agency and are, therefore, very likely to be expelled as a kind of poison; on the other hand, however, these experiences come back into the moral fold as a cure for a fallen nature which is seldom compelled to desire the right things by rational arguments. In the end, rationalist theology appears as a particular way of modulating affect, much more than it does a way of eliminating it. That is, despite the apparent desire of rationalist theology to purge itself of all affective experience, in practice, reason and affective experience must work together to urge the conclusions of the faith.

The Romantic Interpretation of Affect: Curing Affective Alienation through Art

One place we might expect to find a less ambiguous affirmation of affective experience would be art. Art would seem to openly affirm affective experience. For example, one can think of the Romantic glorification of the sublime experience of things like thunderstorms, or the sensation of beauty involved in experiencing the grandeur of nature. In fact, if Cicero celebrated the accomplishments of modern civilization as a means of sublimating a largely affective and potentially violent existence into language, then Romantic conceptions of art have often sought to recover something of this “lost” affective experience. According to this interpretation of affect, civilization represses affect

and thereby alienates human life from an important part of its nature or even severs its connection with nature itself.

This Romantic approach to affect is perhaps best encapsulated by the German notion of *Schein*, a term which was critical to the German aesthetic tradition. While the term is etymologically related to the English word “shine,” the term is often translated as “sensuous appearance” or “beautiful appearance.” Hegel famously defined the beautiful as “*das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee*” —the sensuous appearance or “shining” of the idea. Thus, *schein* suggests an intellectual intuition of objects that is affective in nature and which, therefore, overcomes the dichotomy of affect and cognition brought about by the fall into the alienation of modern, technological civilization.

For Romantics, this alienation of human nature caused by modern civilization is evident in forms of technical labor, which reflects this bifurcation and incompleteness. In the words of Schiller,

the enjoyment is separated from labor, the means from the end, exertion from recompense. Eternally fettered to a single little fragment of the whole, man fashions himself only as fragment; ever hearing only the monotonous whirl of the wheel which he turns, he never develops the harmony of his being, and instead of shaping the humanity that lies in his

nature, he becomes the mere imprint of his occupation, his science (qtd in Marcuse "Eros" 186).

As with the moral interpretation of affect, humans are still bi-furcated. But this time it is not affective experience cutting us off from rationality, instead it is rationality (science, technology) repressing or distorting our natural affective experience, as human nature finds itself "ever hearing only the monotonous whirl of a wheel" at the expense of the "harmony of his being." The Romantic interpretation of affect seeks to overcome the modern bifurcation of sensibility and reason by recovering the "lost" affective dimension of human life. The privileged site for doing this is art—and the discipline which has most rigorously theorized the nature of art is aesthetics, or the science of sensation.

We can see this Romantic approach to affect in the aesthetic theory of Herbert Marcuse, particularly in his work *Eros and Civilization*, where the aesthetic dimension possesses the potential to restore our erotic and sensuous drives and instincts which have been pushed underground by civilization. Marcuse, characterizes the aesthetic dimension as an affirmation of affective experience, where affective experience is understood as a special kind of cognition.

The basic experience of this dimension is sensuous rather than conceptual; the aesthetic perception is essentially intuition, not notion. The nature of sensuousness is 'receptivity,' cognition through being *affected* by given objects. It is by virtue of its intrinsic relation to sensuousness that the aesthetic function assumes its central position" (176).

Thus, for Marcuse's aesthetics, affective experience is not opposed to cognition, nor is it reluctantly brought in as an aid to understanding. Instead it offers the potential for a special kind of cognition which he calls aesthetic perception,

For Marcuse, aesthetic perception is possible because of the imagination's power to remember archetypal figures which precede the entry into the repressive order/regime of civilization and which are buried in the human psyche. One archetype Marcuse discusses is the figure of Orpheus, the poet whose song recalls an original harmony between humanity and nature. We can see this harmony in the description of Orpheus' song in Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus*:

Orpheus:

Almost a maid, she came forth shimmering
From the highest happiness of song and lyre,
And shining clearly through her veils of spring
She made herself a bed within my ear
And slept in me. All things were in her sleep:

The trees I marveled at, the enchanting spell
Of the farthest distances, the meadows deep,
Within her slept the world. You singing god, o how
How did you perfect her so she did not long
To be awake? She rose and slept.
Where is her death? (qtd in Marcuse 162).

By containing all things, Orpheus' song recalls an original harmony with nature, a harmony receptive to all things including death.

Orpheus' song, partly because of its receptivity and non-opposition to death, liberates objects from being perceived solely in terms of social utility or humanity's self-interest to preserve its own existence, allowing us to be affected by them, to experience their own intrinsic nature, and to think differently about their possibilities. Marcuse explains that art liberates objects from the order of utility and releases their repressed potentials that lie within their existence.

Trees and animals respond to Orpheus's language.... The Orphic Eros awakens and liberates potentials that are real in things animate and inanimate, in organic and inorganic nature—real but in the un-erotic reality suppressed. These potentialities circumscribe the *telos* inherent in them as: "just to be what they are," "being there," existing" (Marcuse 165).

This concept of “disinterested,” affective cogitation is difficult to grasp; therefore, an example might be helpful. While modern man, according to this Romantic interpretation of affect, may see a field of grass as a site for a future strip mall, aesthetic perception is the moment where we are affected by the grass, the trees, and the flowers themselves. This experience involves not only a sensual perception of these objects but also the cognitive grasping of grass as grass, the trees as trees, and the flowers as flowers. These two tasks (one affective, the other cognitive), for Marcuse, cannot be separated.

In a sense, art recalls a primordial experience of these objects which took place prior to man’s entry into civilization and the resulting bi-furcation of his senses and intellect. There was a time, we can assume, where humans did not look at trees as lumber to build cabins, or grass and flowers as something to be cleared so roads could be built. Art, for Marcuse captures something of the original perception of these objects. Hence, during moments of aesthetic perception, our capacity to be affected by objects is, at the same time, our capacity to cognize these objects in themselves and their intrinsic possibilities outside of their utility for human civilization. Thus, affect and cognition are combined in a unitary act of aesthetic perception where form and matter achieve beautiful appearance, or *Schein*.

For many aesthetic theorists working in the Romantic tradition, affective cogitation takes on a critical function. By affording a disinterested, non-utilitarian experience of objects, art undermines the “false” forms of rationality in which they are currently embedded: “Only in the ‘illusory world’ [of art] do things appear as what they are and what they can be. By virtue of this truth (which art alone can express in sensuous representation) the world is inverted—it is the given reality, the ordinary world which now appears as untrue, as false, as deceptive reality” (Marcuse “Aesthetic” 54). Thus, aesthetic perception, by bringing us into the truth of what things are and what they can be, dialectically negates the existing ways of thinking which have defined these objects. Moreover, failing to critique the existing rationality amounts to succumbing to it. As Theodore Adorno claims, “*Schein* is dialectical as a reflection of truth; to reject all *Schein* is to become its victim all the more fully” (qtd in Lutticken 6). And to the degree that aesthetic perception involves a utopian form of thinking, its function will perhaps forever remain critical and negative.

For Marcuse, art cannot become part of the existing order of society without losing its critical function and exists primarily as a critique of this society aimed at creating a new sensibility, or a new way of thinking and feeling. Thus, he insists that every authentic work of art would be “subversive of understanding and perception, an indictment of the established reality principle,

the appearance of the image of liberation” (Marcuse “Aesthetic” x-xi.). Art, then, in this romantic interpretation provides a lost affective cogitation of objects, which reworks our capacity of thinking and feeling and in doing so negates the existing social order and opens onto a more ontologically rich reality.

The Contemporary Affective Turn: Vitalist and Evolutionary Affect.

If we can think of the moral interpretation of affect as arguing for the primacy of representation and the supplementary status of affect and the romantic interpretation as striving to synthesize the two into a harmonious whole through art, then we can think of the contemporary interpretation of affect as arguing for the primacy of affect and the secondary or supplemental status of representation. Of course, this characterization may be an oversimplification since for many theorists who adopt this orientation the relationship between affect and symbolic activity is quite complex; nonetheless, it is a useful heuristic for situating the contemporary interpretation of affect, which argues that affect somehow conditions our ways of thinking, reasoning and judging the world. If affect potentially distorted reason inside of rationalist morality and if it needs to be recovered beneath the wreckage of civilization in its romantic interpretation, then affect, in its contemporary interpretation is always at work in any engagement. In this section, I will focus on two main theoretical approaches

which take this contemporary position: the vitalist and the evolutionary notions of affect.

One of the major figures of the vitalist interpretation is Brian Massumi. While Marcuse insisted that every authentic work of art would stimulate a form of affective cognition which would be subversive of understanding and perception, an indictment of the established reality principle, Massumi locates affect “between perception and language,” arguing that affective experience involves the ongoing production of different modalities of thought and perception (Massumi “Politics” 12) . In this picture, perception and cognition, understood as separate but parallel processes, never combine into a natural or theological symbol, capable of mediating or reconciling the opposition, but remain distinct as they are subject to different logics. Residing between perception and language, affect functions as an immediate, non-symbolic force which acts on both of these processes. Michael Hardt explains,

[Spinoza] grasps the power of the affects in terms of two sets of parallel developments. First, the mind’s power to think and its developments are, he proposes, parallel to the body’s power to act. This does not mean that the mind can determine a body to act or a body can determine a mind to think. Spinoza maintains that the mind and body are autonomous, but that they nonetheless proceed or develop in parallel.... The perspective of

affects, in short, forces us to constantly pose the problem of the relationship between mind and body with assumption that they correspond in some way.” (Hardt ix-x)

Perception and cognition, while residing in the same body remain distinct *modes* of a particular body’s potentiality. In sum, there are two different powers: the mind’s power to think and the body’s power to act, both of which are acted on by affect, which re-works them and re-configures them in different ways.

Since affect neither resides in perception nor in language, bodies experience affect as shock, or an interruption of the ways we represent or code the world through thinking, language, or feeling. In essence, to “experience affect” means to experience the disjunction between perception and representation mentioned earlier. While this shock is felt immediately, this felt immediacy is only one part of affect. According to Gregg and Seigworth, “Affect is an impingement of extrusion or sometimes more sustained state of relation *as well as* the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces and intensities” (1). Hence, affect is both an immediate experience of shock and the (non-dialectical) transformation that state into another one. Thus, while bodies experience affect as shock, this experience is also an experience of becoming, where life constantly transforms itself and becomes other than it is.

In order to clarify what can often appear as very abstract ideas, I will offer an example which might make this vitalist interpretation of affect more concrete. In particular, I want to briefly turn to the art critic, Robert Hughes' reading of the Eiffel Tower in his classic work *The Shock of the New* where he discusses the unveiling of the Eiffel Tower, one of the great works of modern art.. To somebody born in the 1840s and who grew up in the 1850s when Europe was overwhelmingly rural and whose population was dispersed in the country of small villages. Therefore, Hughes surmises that only a feeling of astonishment or, if you will, shock could accompany the unveiling of the tower. For these individuals, the experience of the tower would have exceeded their pre-existing forms of representations and their representational capacity. Hughes describes how these individuals must have felt as they marveled at this vast technological achievement that emergent from and announced the triumph of the machine:

The machine meant the conquest of process, and only very exceptional sites, like a rocket launch, can give us anything resembling the emotion with which our ancestors in the 1880's contemplated heavy machinery: for them 'the romance' of technology seemed far more diffuse and optimistic, acting on publicly on a wider range of objects, than it is today" (Hughes 11).

Not only can we not represent this feeling over a century later, but these individuals could not fully represent it themselves.

Thus, we can see that the experience of shock was not only an interruption of their pre-conceived ways of understanding the world, but also carried a “diffuse and optimistic” energy, which we can imagine as bringing a vague experience of passing into the future and, in the process, transforming a body’s pre-existing capacities and forms of representing the world. We can also imagine this experience containing both a shock and a sense of this shock spilling over into something more. This is precisely how Massumi describes the experience of affect: “It’s like a reserve of potential or newness or creativity that is experienced alongside every actual production of meaning in language or in any performance of a useful function—vaguely but directly experienced, as something more, a more to come, a life overflowing as it gathers itself up to move on (8). This experience of diffuse optimism provides an example of what Massumi might mean by a vague experience of more to come.

Yet beyond the subjective experience of affect, affect does something. It acts on and transforms and reconfigures the sensibilities and capacities of this subject. Hughes asserts that “the sight of Paris *vu d’en haut*, absorbed by millions of people in the first twenty years of the Tower’s Life, was as significant in 1889 as the famous NASA photograph of the moon” (8). The body, its organs, its

imagination, its perceptual apparatus, and its consciousness were involved in processes that transformed their functioning and tested their limits. In particular, seeing Paris from above allowed for a view of city as flat and patterned, a space similar to what most of us see when riding on an airplane, and a space which became “the most advanced European art done from 1907 to 1920” (14). Hughes explains that for those who went to the top of the tower, “Paris turned its once invisible roofs and now clear labyrinth of its alleys and streets toward the tourist’s eye... a new type of landscape began to seep into popular awareness. It was based on frontality and pattern, rather than perspective and depth” (14). He goes on to insist that “this way of seeing was one of the pivots for human consciousness,” underscoring the way that affective experience can reshape consciousness (14). Affect, for Massumi, seems to involve a similar pivoting of consciousness. While this pivoting of consciousness exceeds conscious experience and can only be known by its effects.

Yet one cannot predict how various affective experiences will alter bodily capacities in a particular engagement. Massumi argues that one “can’t even say that a body ever coincides with its affective dimension. It is selecting from it, extracting and actualizing certain potentials from it” (8). Hence, bodies are always appropriating and actualizing affect in unique ways in unique engagements, making the process resistant to prediction or control. However, the

potential of the Tower to shock and transform the sensibility of its viewers shows that, however, unpredictable the effects of affective experience may be, it is the affective dimension which leads the way by reworking the representative powers and capacities for thought and feeling or, in Massumi's terms, perception and language.

Thus, this vitalist interpretation of affect emphasizes the transformative force of affective experience as a non-representational and indeterminate potentiality. In this sense, it is less interested in existing affective configurations or "embodied histories" and more interested in their transformation into something else.

The Darwinian Notion of Affect

In the late 1970's and early 1980's researchers working in the field of neuroscience began gathering evidence which suggested our conscious, decision-making processes are subordinated to deeper affective processes. In one significant experiment, performed under the direction of Benjamin Libet, participants were asked to watch a dial moving around a clock and to flex their wrist whenever they felt the urge to, they discovered that when we perform an action like flexing our wrist, motor cortex activity must "build up" for approximately 500 milliseconds before sending a signal to the wrist to move (Libet et al.). Participants, however, only became aware that they were

making a decision about 200 milliseconds before the action occurred, so that conscious experience of a decision only happened *after* the part of the brain that controlled the movement reached certain activity levels. Thus, researchers, able to monitor this brain activity, could accurately predict the decision of participants before these participants consciously made their decision. This research suggested that contrary to what most people think, the conscious decision is not the decision and, even more importantly, that conscious decision is not what drives behavior.

Libet's work was continued by Alvaro Pascual-Leone, whose work even further displaced the centrality of conscious experience in human behavior (Vishton). By stimulating the particular part of the brain which made a certain body part move, Pascual-Leone figured out that you could, in fact, make that body part move. In order to find out where conscious experience figured in to this process, he developed a test. First, he had participants watch a screen and decide if they wanted to move their left hand or their right hand. The participants were only to make the decision; they were not to carry out the action, then after a few seconds, they were queued to actually perform the action they had decided on. In the interval between brain activity and conscious decision, where researchers could already see the decision that was going to take place, a jolt to a particular part of brain of the participants was applied. In some

cases, they jolted areas of the brain that coincided with the decision that the participant was going to make. In others, they jolted the area of the brain that coincided with the opposite decision. The former group did not notice anything odd; however, the latter group, who had essentially had their brain hijacked, also did not feel anything out of the ordinary. When asked what happened, this latter group simply responded that they had changed their mind. Neither group felt strange, Pascual-Leone's work suggests, because within this paradigm of affective primacy our consciousness is typically not in control of our decisions and is, therefore, used to, in the words of Johnathan Haidt, "going along for the ride."

This particular understanding of affective primacy has several consequences. First, the picture most of us have of the decision-making process—in which an action begins with a conscious decision, which produces a motor command, which finally results in an action—is wrong. Second, the "decision" appears to be made by unconscious affective processes, which we might think of as constituting a form of affective cogitation. Third, once this unconscious decision has been made, conscious experience steps in to tell a story after the fact. For instance, I may believe that I decided to quit exercising because that goal was not important, or—and crucially important for rhetoricians—I may believe that I voted for a candidate because I consciously decided she was the best candidate;

however, if affect is primary, then consciousness is not initiating action, but is essentially providing *post hoc* justifications for a “decision” which was already made through affective bodily processes. Fourth and finally, if affect is indeed primary, then persuasion involves influencing the systems operating beneath conscious awareness that are in control of decisions.

One framework which can explain how and why affective processes are primary in human decision-making and behavior is evolutionary psychology. Long before the work of Lipet and Pascual-Leone, William Wundt, working in the 1890’s, formulated his doctrine of affective primacy (64). Johnathan Haidt explains that for Wundt, “affective reactions are so tightly integrated with perception that we find ourselves liking or disliking something the instant we notice it, something even before we know what it is” (65). For both Wundt and Haidt, animal and human brains are constantly making split-second assessments about potential threats and benefits of certain situations and these assessments are manifested in affective responses urging them to engage or disengage particular aspects of these situations. “Affect,” Haidt writes, “refers small flashes of positive or negative feeling which that prepare us to approach or avoid something” (65). From this naturalistic, evolutionary perspective, these fleeting affective cogitations exercise an extremely powerful force, as they are deeply embedded in human beings, having guided their instinctual life long before the

more recent evolutionary developments, thinking and language. Indeed, as Zujunc argues, thinking is “an evolutionary newer ability, rooted in language, and not closely related to motivation,” and, therefore, a secondary process since affective experience is both temporally prior and more forceful (66).

In order to explain how this relationship between affective experience and conscious thinking works, Haidt utilizes a critical metaphor where affect is the elephant and consciousness is the rider in order to explain this relationship.

The rider is an attendant servant always trying to anticipate the elephant’s next move. If the elephant leans slightly to the left, as though preparing to take a step, the rider looks to the left and starts preparing to assist the elephant on its imminent leftward journey. The rider loses interest in everything off to the right (66).

Before we ever begin conscious thought processes, our evolutionary past and our human instincts, driven by survival, primes us to produce, fleeting, yet powerful affective responses to our environment which assess potential threats and benefits in order to steer us to either approach or avoid whatever we encounter.

Taking this “affective steering” into account, researchers have developed a technique called “affective priming.” This technique might involve showing participants word with a positive correlation like “sunshine.” If another word with a positive correlation, like “happy,” follows, then the participant, already

leaning that direction, will respond almost immediately; however, if a word with a negative association, like hate, appears it will take longer to respond because participants are already “leaning” in the direction of positive associations and will have to put forth extra effort to undo this influence (67). Building on this insight, social psychologists have used “social primes” such as pictures of various racial groups, immigrants, and people who are elderly or obese and ask to react to various associations which are paired with different groups. Once again, delayed reactions times can signal the presence of an affective leaning or a pre-judgment. Thus, many who do not experience themselves as consciously biased against any of these group, actually discover that they make a negative affective pre-judgment of particular groups, assessments which our conscious thinking remains in the dark about.

Yet it is important to note that, for Haidt, although these affective assessments exert a powerful pull on our thinking, consciousness is not totally beholden to them. It is not the case, for Haidt that reason is, as Hume suggested, a mere slave to the passions. Affording some power to reasoning, he explains of how we can think of this relationship: “The rider evolved to serve the elephant, but it’s a dignified partnership, more like a lawyer serving a client than a slave serving a master. Good lawyers do what they can do to help their clients, but they sometimes refuse to go along with their request” (58). In other words, the

Elephant,” Haidt writes, “is far more powerful than rider, but is not an absolute dictator” (79).

Therefore, theorists working in this tradition who attempt to describe how to consciousness thinking can play an active role in guiding behavior, often begin by describing a human nature that is riddled by what psychologists call the intention-behavior gap i.e. the fact conscious decision are often ineffective for the reasons listed above, and then reach for some cultural *techne* to address this condition. The main way the rider asserts power against the elephant, according to Haidt, is by interacting with others. Affective primacy makes us poor judges of evidence which contradicts our own beliefs, but this is where other people enter the picture. Just as we are much better at finding flaws in other’s reasoning, they are much better at finding flaws in ours. Hence, we need to participate in intersubjective forms of reasoning and discussion. Additionally, inside of these discussions, our affective leanings can be combatted by the *ethos* of particular compelling individuals. That is, hostility has been shown to trigger the recipient’s elephant to steer away from an opponent; however, sympathetic engagement and the *ethos* of an interlocutor can leads us to check our elephants and open our minds to ideas which challenge our own elephants. Haidt explains, “If there is affection, admiration, or a desire to please the other person, then elephant leans toward that person and the rider tries to find the truth in the other

person's arguments" (80). This kind of empathetic reasoning can also happen by ourselves if we are thinking of certain friends and feeling their influence, and, there are even rare instances, where we can also simply reason our way to a conclusion. These rare instances, according to work from Paxton and Greene, often involve slowing down people's reasoning processes down, making them less susceptible to the leaning of their elephants. When this happens it is more likely that "the elephant actually opens up to advice from the rider" (82).

Hence, from the perspective of this contemporary interpretation of affect, based on evolutionary psychology, our "untreated" affective nature is strongly inclined towards confirmation bias, and, therefore requires various cultural practices, many of which have long been employed by the traditional, humanist university. These practices can include intersubjective engagements (dialogue), the compelling, ethical force of a model, and the interruption of our immediate reactions through extended acts of reflections which "slow us down" and give conscious forms of thinking a voice (research and extended argumentation).

In order to understand Haidt's position, I will briefly provide an example from his work, which demonstrate the type of analysis a contemporary, Darwinian, approach can perform. In *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Disagree About Politics and Religion*, Haidt puts forward a compelling affective theory of rationality and persuasion. After extensive research, Haidt's initial

theory developed 6 moral foundations (Fairness, Loyalty, Authority, Sacredness, and Liberty, and Care), which provide the underlying rationality of moral arguments across cultures; however, he argues that inside of embodied evolutionary history, we should think of the foundations as “taste receptors.” (109-110).

In a dynamic chapter entitled, “The Conservative Advantage,” Haidt provides research showing that conservatives tend to value all five foundation, or in other words, they tend to tap all five taste receptors. However, liberals tend to value two of the foundations (or “tastes”) far more than the others: fairness and care. In fact, they tend to be against authority and loyalty, placing them at a tremendous affective disadvantage.

This view of rationality offers a different way to think about rationality and persuasion. For Haidt, rationality is not the disembodied, transcendent faculty that it has often been described, instead it basically a set of affective palettes. Moreover, progressive tend to view their arguments as more rational, and when the majority of American do not accept them, call them irrational, dupes. Such a practice, then, only succeeds in further alienating progressives from their opponents. However, on this view of rationality, progressives can begin to look at strictly fairness-based and care-based arguments from rhetorical perspective and argue that they are bad arguments and that risk putting a bad

taste in their audience's mouth. Also, if we think of rationality as a loose set of taste receptors, then it would seem that tapping these receptors is paramount and would, therefore, take precedence over the traditional academic emphasis on linear forms of argumentation, the injunction to absolutely avoid contradiction, and the need to be clear and explicit. Thus, Haidt's analysis raises questions about how much they do matter in actual practice, and therefore, how much they ought to matter in the academy.

Conclusion: What Happens in the Missing Half Second?

To conclude, I want to discuss debates inside of the contemporary interpretation of affect, and then attempt to bring my genealogy to bear on this debate before making specific recommendation of how we can think through the contemporary affective turn in the humanities. It seems clear that much of the debate within and around the contemporary affective turn have to do with how one interprets the interval relationship between automatic bodily processes and conscious linguistic activity and what one argues goes on in this space.

The vitalist interpretation of this interval places a plastic power of a potentially unlimited force in the interval between perception and language, emphasizing the way this force acts on transforms both activities. When commenting on Libet's missing half of second, Massumi explains, "The half second of thought-forming is forever lost in darkness. All awareness emerges

from a non-conscious thought-o-genic lapse indistinguishable from the movements of matter.” (Massumi “Parables” 195). Thus, this dynamic, indeterminate movement of matter provides the genesis for all thought and awareness, which are subject to these non-representational, corporeal processes.

However, the evolutionary interpretation of affect argues that this affective interval is not guided by the shock of interrupting, non-representational force or an unlimited potentially, but is instead directed by the forces of historical sedimentation stemming from an evolutionary history which take the form of “rapid, phylogenetically old, automatic responses of the organism that has evolved for survival purposes and lack the cognitive characteristics of higher-order mental processes” (Leys 437). Thus, we are affectively oriented to the world through a non-conscious set of instinctual reactions which have evolved through history and which direct our thought processes before we ever become conscious of them. Hence, the main line of debate within the contemporary interpretation of affect seems to center the degree to which affect is a force *outside* of our representational capacities or whether or not it exists *inside* of historically-evolved structures of representation.

This central issue plays out in a number of ways. Donovan O. Shaefer, arguing for an evolutionary interpretative of affect as emerging with in an embodied history which is expressed in a lineage of intransigent, semi-stable

forms, claims that the vitalist emphasis on plasticity, or the reconfigurability of bodies, places this position, oddly enough, in a similar position as the blank slate theories of liberalism. Liberalism, for Schaefer posits “an angelic subject” which “eludes the sticky, uneven, bestial textures of biology, animated by an abstract reasoning potential held in common by all human beings.” (45). He explains that although vitalism “is not interested in interested in the agency of individual subjects, like classical liberalism, it does see bodies as starting point from a uniform position of epistemic and experiential neutrality: the body is not an animal fused to a biological history, but a *liber*, a free man, a blank slate.” (Schaefer 44). Hence, for those working with an evolutionary interpretation of affect, in positing a power beyond all representation, vitalism seems to rely on the power of an ahistorical or neutral body which escapes or exceeds the historical marking and innate bodily responses transmitted through evolution. In other words, while evolutionary theorists find “semi-stable” structure in our biology the vitalist theorists, according to Ruth Leys, “recast biology in dynamic, energistic, nondeterministic terms that emphasize its unpredictable and potentially emancipatory qualities.” (Leys “Turn” 461). For Schaefer’s controversial interpretation, this gesture ends up re-inscribing the ahistorical body of liberalism. Even if this interpretation involves a misreading of vitalism, it

nonetheless provides into a particular way of thinking about affect and raises questions about the degree to which affect is beholden to historical experience.

On the other hand, the evolutionary interpretation appears reductive in its focus on survival and conservative in its inability to account for change. In an extended discussion of William Connolly's analysis of the missing half second, Ruth Leys shows both Connolly and Damasio rely on an experiment where an 16 years old would laugh after a particular part of brain was stimulated and then provide a post hoc justification for her laughter by pointing to whatever happened to be in front of her at the moment. For both Connolly and Damasio, the experiment demonstrates the autonomy or independence of the affective experience of laughter from any specific environmental cause (462). Leys suggests that Connolly,

“...is implicitly arguing that far from being a complex, social cognitive phenomenon, laughter as an expression of amusement can be conceptualized as an automatic response to stimuli without regard to the meaning those stimuli might have for us, since they are intrinsically capable of triggering a laugh reflex” (462).

Laughter on this paradigm is reduced to a matter brain stimulus seems to operate according the instincts of the organism's past and with little or no connection to what is going on around it. Hence, we appear to be largely

enclosed in a brain operating according to its instinctual past which seems to have largely shielded itself off from existing material and cultural determinants of our behavior. As Leys explains, in this evolutionary paradigm, we laugh “because laughing at such a stimulus has evolutionary value: it would so startle a crocodile that he would not want to eat you” (463). Subjecting affective experience to evolutionary structures, then, seems to many to have important limitations.

How are we to negotiate this differing interpretation? In other words, which position should we choose? My position is that this question is poorly posed since one thing that I hope emerges from my historical genealogy is that our affective lives can be configured in different ways at different times for different effects. In fact, this is what we do. Often times, when we attempt a diet, we utilize the moral interpretation that wants to either expel the affective experience of our appetite or to, somewhat reluctantly, employ it in the service of a different dietary regime. Other times, when experiencing a work of art imaginatively enter into them and employ the romantic interpretation of affect. During these times, ideas takes on sensible character and this experience allows us to engage different lives outside of our own, everyday life of interests and need. Other times, we implicitly adopt the vitalist interpretation of affect and attune ourselves to the affective interruptions and transformation in our lives for

the purpose of re-inventing ourselves or expanding our capacity for experience. Other times, our instinctual and embodied affective histories drives our thinking, leading us to into confirmation bias and perhaps leading us to search for ways where our rider can talk to our elephant.

Indeed the purpose of this genealogy of affect has been to show various modalities of affective experience employed for different purposes at different times. In all of these cases, there is complex relationship between rational, symbolic processes and affective experience. In the gap between the two activities the relationship affect and thought, as my short history of affect shows, is always been figured and refigured. Thus, from this perspective, if rationality is a way of modulating affective experience, then we have always been rational and always will be rational.

The purpose of this genealogy has been show the many different faces of rationality and the many different things that rationality can do. As writing instructors, we ask our students to make rational arguments and in doing so, asking them to modulate their affective experience in different ways. In theory, affect may be primary and may seem to displace reasoning, but in practice, we end up in much of the same place doing much of the same things. In this regard, Haidt's claim that intersubjectivity (dialogue, exchange of ideas, exposure to different ideas etc), models for imitation, and a slowed down our decision

making processes can help our riders (rationality) talk to our elephants (affective experience). These kinds of things are what the majority of us are doing in our classroom practice and much of what classical rhetoric and the traditional humanist university has promoted for centuries. Therefore, pushing our students to make extended arguments, use multiple sources, and to find model effective models for emulation has never been more (or less) important. In one way or another, it is what we do in a writing classroom.

CONCLUSION

I began this project by wondering whether or not it was possible re-think a set of key terms from traditional writing pedagogy that I considered indispensable from a practical perspective, despite being theoretically out of favor. In doing so, I wondered if the demand for theoretical innovation that has existed ever since the 1963 revolution could be harnessed inside of these terms. To accomplish, this I treated these terms as contextual performances, a technique I hoped would bring theory and practice closer together. My strategy, then, was not to arrive at new concepts or new concepts of either theory or practice, but to provide a series of deconstructions that would make key practical terms more viable and more dynamic. Ultimately, I hoped these performances could intervene in and reconfigure the economy of discursive and non-discursive forces that work to divide theoretical work from our practice.

In the course of this work, however, it became apparent that I was addressing a debate that was central to the discipline in the late 1980's and early 1990's, a debate that crystallized almost exclusively around a single figure and a single term: Stephen North and the concept of *lore*. In what follows and by way

of concluding remarks, I want to contextualize the work that I have done by revisiting the highly contentious debates around North's notion of lore and by locating my work in these debates. If these conversations around lore were the site where the theory/practice divide has been most rigorously thought in the last thirty years, then returning to these discussions provides a way of assessing any potential contribution my work might have to the field.

In particular, I want to briefly explicate the notion of lore and five key points that emerge in the debate around the concept that intersect with my work and that frame the theory/practice divide: the invocation of the un-coded (Practice Outside of Theory), the assertion of intelligent action (Action as Practice and Theory), the production of theoretical possibility inside of practice (Theory As Possibility) and the role of embodied knowledge (Bodily Lore). After mapping the key pressure points of the theory/practice debate, I was to briefly summarize my work in terms of them and expand on the way this dissertation responds to the debate.

The House of Lore

From the moment Stephen North's seminal 1987 work, *The Making of Knowledge in Composition* was released the field immediately took notice. The following year Roger Cherry reviewed the book for *The Quarterly*. Karen Spear followed suit for *JAC* in the 1989, however, by this time, she was able to claim

that the “book has already been widely reviewed” and already “recommended to ever graduate student in the field” (206). Also in 1989, a single issue of *College Composition and Communication* featured “an unprecedented clustering” (North 14) of reviews of *MKC*, publishing reviews by James Raymond, Richard Larson, and Richard Lloyd-Jones. Still in 1989, David Bartholomae published a highly contentious review in *The Rhetoric Review*, prompting both an essay by North and reply by Bartholomae in a 1990 issue of *Pre/Text*. And again in 1989, Elizabeth Rankin reviews the North’s text for *Rhetoric Review*. In nearly all of these cases, North’s valorization of largely discredited notion of practitioner inquiry that relied on and constructed a special kind of knowledge that he called lore grabbed the attention of the field and prompted extended treatment.

For instance, Raymond applauds North's discussion of practitioner knowledge "because he does not demean it" (93); Lloyd-Jones seconds this opinion, noting that "often such knowledge is merely dismissed by scholars" (99); Larson takes interest in North’s “loving” and “gentle” treatment of practitioner inquiry (97); Spears asserts that North’s “prognostications strike a responsive chord with practitioners” (207); Rankin titles her review “Taking Practitioner Knowledge Seriously: An Argument with Stephen North” and provides an extended discussion of lore. Finally, Bartholomae focuses on the notion lore in his well-known critical review. In one or one another, the notion of lore attracts

the attention of these scholars and sets off a debate the relationship between theory and practice in Composition.

Writing Lore

While North's discussion of lore is highly nuanced and textured, he defines lore as "the accumulated body of traditions, practices, and beliefs in terms of which Practitioners understand how writing is done, learned, and taught" (22). While this definition appears to straightforward, bearing strong similarities to standard descriptions of culture, tradition, myth, or discourse, North adds three important properties of lore and notes that these properties will seem "curious to outsiders" (24).

First, anything can potentially become part of lore. It is does not matter if a statement is "ludicrous" (24). All it takes become part of lore is for one person to say "something worked or something might work" (24). Second, once a statement enters lore, there is no mechanism by which it could ever be rejected. Indeed North acknowledges that lore contains many contradictory statements. For instance, the statements know where you are going before you start writing and write in order to discover what you want to say are both part of Composition lore (24). Hence, lore is not scientific or philosophical bodies of knowledge and disproving an idea by experimentation or dialectical reasoning will not remove an item from lore. Third, because lore is a knowledge by and for

practitioners, “contributions have to be framed in practical terms, as knowledge about what to do; if they aren’t, they will be changed” (25).

No doubt, part of why this body of knowledge appears curious to outsiders is that it is not the kind of methodologically regulated and systematic body of knowledge that we often associate with disciplinary knowledge. Indeed that is a large part of North’s point. That is, for him, teachers of writing do not operate in a systematic fashion. Instead they rely on lore, which is the kind of that is appropriate for an experiential and pragmatic art.

This place is messier; cause and effect are the object of intuition, and shadowy at best. And in this messier world; experience regularly affirms contradictory truths: what worked yesterday does not work today; what works in one class flops in another. That’s how it is with the arts and there is never any accounting for exactly why. So it makes sense to keep everything around that might work, just in case. Indeed, for a pragmatic body of knowledge organized in terms of experience, the surprise would be that it did not embody such seeming contraries, not that it does (24-25).

Hence, part of North’s argument emerges from the phenomenological observation that if we really get close to actual of experience of the composition instructor in everyday life and the kind of knowledge that this instructor relies on, we will discover that this instructor relies and helps produce a kind of body

of knowledge that resists formal consistency, scientific verification, or logical demonstration.

That is, rather than being guided by a stable set of truths, this instructor operates on hunches as to what will work. These hunches are constantly in flux, constantly being altered by new situations and new experiences, and often times contradict each other. This instructor holds on to anything that seems to work and often returns to things that previously failed, without ever fully knowing why something worked or why something did not. At any rate, what this phenomenology would not find would be an instructor relying on a body of formal theoretical or empirical knowledge that could ground his activity and tell him what to do in an authoritative, decontextualized fashion.

Locating Lore in the Midst of Method Battles

If we know that this kind of knowledge is operative in our everyday teaching lives and we know that it is somehow collectively constituted, then the question becomes where and how is this knowledge constituted. For North this means finding *a shared experiential structure* among members of the community of writing instructors. Such a community would not be characterized by its methodological commitment vis-à-vis other communities—a problem which North thinking is tearing the discipline apart—but would emerge in a “relatively self-contained” social space of everyday interactions among writing teachers.

Such a space would be both epistemologically and methodologically radically egalitarian. North finds this space in ordinary, everyday informal talk among Composition instructors. Indeed this form of non-hierarchical, non-epistemic talk takes on special authority of North because it seems to open and reveal a shared experiential structure or we might say the *world* of the Composition Instructor.

Driven by a desire to find a shared experiential structure where knowledge is informally authenticated, North wrests the idea of publishing away from written academic journal articles and into ordinary, reciprocal oral communication among teachers. Thus, he argues, "...[practioner inquiry] can develop without recourse to community sanction. To become part of the community's lore, though, inquirers must 'publish' their findings in some way. Most such publishing, as with most practitioner discourse, will be a matter of talk" (51). Moreover, in its most pure form lore takes place in conversations "in the hall or staffroom, over coffee in the cafeteria, and so on" (51) and such informal "water cooler ways of knowing" (Jackson 161) represents "Practitioner knowledge at its most authentic," providing "the most lor-ish form of Practitioner publication." (51).

For North, this informal form of communication is contrasted with formal ritualized, largely monologues of presentations at academic conferences. While such presentations are still part of lore, they distort its experiential structure

because their abstract, idealized and non-dialogical form works against the messy contradictory nature of experience of teaching and the kinds of reciprocal sharing of information necessary to open and make possible a shared world of experience.

[Academic presentations] will be the least lor-ish. That is, their experiential structure will likely have been arranged, so that events have an abstract linearity, problems and solutions neatly framed; their pragmatic logic will probably have been distorted, so that solutions, successful or not will be unambiguous. The resulting monologue is also least reciprocal. Without the give and take of conversation, the investigator and his audience will have more difficulty creating or sustaining a shared experiential structure (51).

Hence, two major characteristic of lore are its emphasis on oral, dialogue and egalitarian communication at the expense of written, theoretical communication, and the idea that this emphasis takes place in the name of a shared experiential structure among Composition instructor. In other words, while it would be easy to find a kind of metaphysics of presence at work in North's understanding of lore, the matter is not a simple one. North prizes informal talk, but only insofar as it reveals a shared world of teaching composition.

Practice Outside of Theory

While in the introduction and in chapter one I discuss the specific dynamics of the 1963 revolution and suggest that it emerges on a cancellation of existing practice, North's valorization of lore emerges, in response, upon a similar diagnosis. In fact, the whole thrust of the academic reform movement," according to North, "was to remove authority over knowledge from the hands of those whose main source of such authority was their practice" (21). Thus, he describes the field as experiencing "a methodological land rush" carried out "by group after group of investigators, each equipped with some different mode of inquiry battling to stake their claim in what they perceive as virgin territory and ignoring or dismissing 'indigenous populations' of practitioners" (3-4).

One of the questions, for both North's work, for my own and for discussions of the theory/practice divide itself, has to do with the status attributed to this divide in our discussions of it. Do you accept the divide and attempt to work within in it? Do you invoke the divide in order to intervene in the economy that produces it? Or do you avoid invoking the divide because it ever really existed, but was only symptom of something else?

For David Bartholome, North invokes the divide, but does question the nature of this divide and, therefore, ends up working within it. Hence, he argues that by accepting the practitioner under the terms of an imperialist theory and

research ends up discrediting practice and undercutting North's attempt to re-invigorate practice.

They (the teachers/ the others) belong to an oral culture, they can talk but not write or think, they deal in a "mythic kind of truth," they can barely rise above the specifics of daily life ('the muddled details of workaday experience'), they go to conferences the way we go to the movies, for escape and to be entertained. This is the imperialist's representation of the native, and it is odious and, as always, untrue (225).

Thus, for Bartholomae, North's recuperation of practice comes at the expense of a disparaging and "false" picture of them. However, this does not diminish the critical power of this figure of a practitioner without theoretical or institutional coding, existing in the pure experience of her craft. In fact, this figure of pure practitioner "authorizes a critique of almost everyone in the field in the last 25 years of *Making Knowledge in Composition* in its appeal to natural knowledge, a common sense, a position outside sphere of influence and special interest, a position you can have if you just cut the crap" (126 "Pre/Text"). On this reading of North, the purely experiential knowledge of lore is sufficient for a Composition teacher and formal theories can be comfortably dismissed as superfluous.

Action as Theory and Practice

Like Bartholomae, Louise Wetherbee Phelps also finds a stark divide between theory and practice in North's work; however, she argues that "the current tensions between theory and practice, and their inarticulateness to one another, are not accidental, occasional, or temporary obstacles to progress. Rather, they provide essential clues to the nature of the field" (864). In this context, North's work is significant because it treats tension the theory and practice as a "philosophical dilemma" and "not simply as a transitional phenomenon in young discipline." Furthermore, she assents to much of North's critique of formal knowledge, insisting that "it can never tell people what to do" (863). She also agrees with his insistence on a strong role for practitioners and with his refusal to regard practitioner as merely technicians, casting both ideas as challenging "the tacit understandings that govern most composition studies" (863). These understandings include "the assumption that activity and experience are uncritical, non-epistemic," and the prizing of knowing over acting, research over teaching and learning, and formal knowledge over practical wisdom.

Like North, she regards the "field's attempt to reform teaching by grounding it in theoretical knowledge" as unsuccessful (865). Hence, in her attempt to redress the situation, she finds North's discussion of lore as "one of

the first attempts to treat practical knowledge as a theoretical problem” and as “a productive starting point” to approach reworking the existing theory practice divide (865). Ultimately, for Phelps, this means turning to the work of Gadamer, Dewey, Friere, and Aristotle as part of a philosophical tradition that “defined activity as a form of intelligence, or practical wisdom” (864). In particular, this means employing *phronesis*, which she describes as “the exercise of practical intelligence to take the right action in particular cases” (864).

Following Gadamer's lead, I treated *phronesis* in teaching as hermeneutical, arguing that the wise practitioner interprets or "applies" oral and written theory texts (ranging from histories of rhetoric to curriculum proposals) in exactly the sense that a reader interprets and thus gives meaning to any cultural text. In so doing, the practitioner places composition theory and the activity of teaching into a reciprocally critical relationship similar to that of law and its application, each "disciplining" the other.

This invocation of *phronesis* leads Phelps to an empirical and phenomenological treatment of the composition teaching as a *phronetic* process consisting of attunement to relevant theory, critical examination of these theories and practical experimentation in the classroom. For Phelps, teaching Composition is an action involving the exercise of practical wisdom where theory and practice are brought

into an interpretative dialogue with each other. Hence, while she departs from North in her characterization of practical knowledge, she understand his turn to practical knowledge as the result of the discipline's unsuccessful attempt to subject the practice of teaching to formal theory. Hence, the dualistic view of theory and practice is a result of disciplinary forces and North's valorization of lore is attempt to respond to these forces by locating a kind of intelligence in practical activity. On other words, North was really trying to think through a concept of phronesis, he just did not know it.

Theory as Possibility

It is not surprising that reader's familiar with the phenomenological tradition will find similarities between what North's concept of lore as trying to approach and the project of a phenomenological ontology. When I suggested that what North was really looking for was the structure of the everyday shared experience of the composition instructor and when Phelps takes him as her starting point for a phenomenological understanding of practical teaching, steps were being put in place to look at lore in more phenomenological terms. This connection between lore and phenomenology was made in Matthew Jackson's "Pedagogy, Lore, and the Making of Being," where he notes, "In harmony with North's view of lore, phenomenology...holds as one its tenets that many of our most important ways of knowing are in found in the most mundane of our

interactions” (161). Moreover, he finds seeds for phenomenological treatment of lore in North’s own writing. In particular, he focuses on North’s claim that “lore is embodied in the more usual ways that humans embody what they know” (29).

In fact, the phenomenological tradition does seem to connect to North’s work. For instance, inside of Heidegger’s phenomenological ontology, our primary way of engaging and experiencing the world is through un-theorized, non-methodical, and practical forms of knowing. Moreover, like North suggests, for Heidegger, this knowledge is embodied. Our everyday lived experience as a concerned involvement with a meaningful world is precisely what scientific and theoretical ways of knowing pass over and violate. Likewise, this experience takes place through a kind of practical know-how, or we might say a “practical lore.”

Because he shares North’s concern that abstract thinking violates our actual lived experience, Heidegger opts for philosophy over theory. However, while he insists that philosophy grow out of the kind of embodied lore I described above, he also insists that it erupt into “the interconnection of natural conscious of life” in the shape of “a transforming intervention” (Gasche 74). However, this irruption, which takes place as a de-familiarizing questioning, can only happen *inside of* the everyday experience of embodied lore. Heidegger argues this irruption only happens when “we ourselves live in [the everyday life-

word of meaning objects]—something that no conceptual system, however complex can achieve, except phenomenological life, in its intensification” (qtd in Gasche 80).

Rudolph Gasche tries to explain what it means to can philosophy and intensification of the everyday life-world and how philosophy is connected to our everyday practical lives.

Such intensification of phenomenological life occurs when philosophy becomes a life-form. Indeed, understood as lived experience...

phenomenological philosophy is not merely an expression of life but one of its highest form in that it is in tune, in sympathetic relation with...lived life. For philosophy life is not an object by a way of being that consists in living what gives itself, and living it in a way in which what gives itself is permitted to be event-like, and to affect me in what is most proper to me (80)

Hence, philosophy takes place inside of the shared, everyday experiential structure of lore, and it makes the objects experienced through lore into events — or things that appear unique and endowed with possibility beyond our use of them. This, in turn, allows us to be affected by them where as in everyday life with hardly notice them outside of a functioning context of use. Thus, the goal of

philosophic thinking is to invigorate the ordinary world of lore by bringing a sense of wonder, singularity and above all, ontological possibility to it.

These view of theory seems to offer something to practice. Indeed North, himself, wrestled with this idea with the idea that theory could inspire possibilities for practice in his discussion of “stylized accounts of practice” that appear in formal presentations. While he seems to admit that these account could invigorate practice, he dismisses them in the name of a hard-headed pragmatism and realism that is required in the classroom.

...The stylized accounts of practice—like, say, the stylized versions of life we see on stage or in the movies—can be entertaining, even inspiring. And if they manage to transcend the muddled details of everyday workaday experience—well, they embody a more fundamental, again essentially mythic kind of truth. There is some danger, as there is for such forms in any sphere, that the visions they invoke maybe mistaken for reality. For new practitioners, especially, the Monday morning confrontations between visionary inspiration and who-shows-up-can hurt. But those who survive, who learn the lessons of pragmatism, manage to enjoy the vision with minimal pain: nothing they hear will sweep their world completely away, but the like a good story (51-52).

In these comments, North seems to admit that something like theory could produce the kind ecstatic of experience of a de-familiarizing moment of possibility that we find in Heidegger's understanding of philosophy. However, he worries about that contrast between these moments and the everyday world of lived experience of the Composition instructor, insisting the when we return to work our bubble will quickly be busted. Nonetheless, he concedes that this kind of theorizing can be enjoyable and provide a good story

I briefly mentioned Heidegger's work for a number of reasons. First, to point the similarity between Heidegger's understanding of our ordinary every day being-in-the-world and North's description of lore's experiential and practical structure. Second, to attempt to draw on what North meant when he described lore as embodied knowledge. Third, to suggest that while both North and Heidegger find abstract theorizing and scientific research inadequate to describe the lived experience that takes place when we do are doing things like teaching students, However, while North is skeptical about anything that would remove of from the house of lore, Heidegger offers philosophy as de-familiarizing question way of life that takes place inside of our everyday lore-based dealings and restores ontological possibility to our everyday lore-based engagements with the world.

Thus, Heidegger provides a certain way to re-think the theory/practice divide. Moreover, Heidegger's project of a phenomenological ontology suggest that despite the epistemological paradoxes that many has noted around North's notion of lore (Fulkerson), the notion may have a viable *ontological* function. Shifting Lore's notion into an ontological register may be a way to re-think North's strategy of trying to locate lore in special, moment of informal dialogical conversation. On this ontological understanding of lore, we are always already in lore; it does not need to be *made* at the water cooler.

Embodying Lore

By arguing that when we are doing things like teaching or writing in our ordinary lives we are not primarily engaged in cognitive activity of thinking about a world of objects but find ourselves involved with the world as *concerned* actors embodying practical knowledge, Heidegger made an important step in reframing theory and practice. Emphasizing the concerned, embodied aspect of this intervention more than the pragmatic orientation of our everyday way of being-in-the-world, James K.A. Smith explains, "Heidegger made a critical move: he shifted the center of gravity of the human person from the head to something like the heart, from the cerebral regions of the mind to more affective regions of the body. For Heidegger, we might say that I do not think my way around the world, I *feel* my way around it" (50). On this view, North's crucial claim that lore

is an embodied knowledge would necessarily bring in bodily and affective experience.

That is, while North raised the issue of lore as an embodied knowledge and focused more on epistemic question about the way informal kinds of knowledge are made, he did not explicitly discuss the role of the body, feeling, or affect. In her article, "Feeling Lore: The 'problem of emotion in the practice of teaching," Christy I. Wenger argues that, despite growing scholarship around the notion of affect, the "contrast between reason and emotion continues to resonate in our teaching practices" (48). For Wenger, this is a major pedagogical concern since "if lore reflects a physical enactment of our theories, our teaching literally embodies the dismissal of emotion from our classrooms" (48). Finally, she cautions that "if our rituals and practices of teaching writing do not account for the emotional experience of writing, learning and meaning-making, we do ourselves and our students a great disservice and justify the suppression of the body in composition studies" (48). If knowledge is something that is embodied, then the theory/practice divide makes little sense. The body practical performances would be theoretical and theory would be a bodily, affective phenomenon.

Reading This Dissertation into the Lore Debate

Throughout this dissertation, I have attempted to address the theory/practice divide in ways similar to those listed above. In the end, there is certainly not single theory that would “solve” the theory/practice divide. Instead there are only interventions in the economy of forces that make this divide. In other words, there is not a natural, neat ontological divide between theory and practice, if theory and practice are divided, then this divide is an effect of particular labor within an economy of discursive and not discursive forces.

That being said, my attempt to begin with a set of key terms that I found indispensable for the practice of teaching composition represents an attempt to bring theory inside of the life-world of the practitioner. Part of this attempt involved harnessing Bartholomae’s critique of theory/practice divide that installs an un-coded activity or an un-coded practitioner and then opposing the everyday life world of institutional norms.

Through this work I have recognized the powerful, yet problematic figures of the uncoded, in Composition. While the idealization of linguistic structures discussed in Chapter Three hinged on keeping out and “sacrificing them,” I argued that modern institution have often brought such figures inside of the their clutches and, like Bartholomae asserts, these figures often provide an incredible critical force. Error as a moment of non-meaning reveals the value-

laden enterprise of written norms, but also it also spells it potential redemption; the unconstrained voice of the child shows the repressive power of institutions and provides the way out of them, the resident alien reveals the forces of cultural genocide but also holds the potential for cultural redemption, the traumatized speechless body of marginalized reveals the workings of institutional violence while the liberation of its unconscious redeems them, the free-floating energy of affective reveal the constraints of rationality and symbolic codes while, at the same time, providing the redemptive force to break their strongholds. In each case, these figure provide a way to critique and to transcend existing practice. In this dissertation, I argued that much of theory can be understood as a struggle over these uncoded spaces and the attempt to mobilize them in various ways. Part of my motivation for focusing on terms that I felt were central to academic practice was to avoid this temptation by work inside of ordinary everyday institutional practice.

Likewise, I have tried to combat the theory practice divide in a manner similar to Phelps' invocation of *phronesis* as "activity as a form of intelligence." That is, I have tried think of concepts, as actions or performances that can be skillfully and artfully performed. In this way, my work has a great deal in common with Phelps. However, my strategy of performatively re-inscribing terms into a general economy of forces differs from her notion of an action

engaged in dialogical interpretations of theory and practice. Re-thinking voice as of the stylistic figuration of forces differs from a concept of voice rooted in the dialogical interpretation of theory and practice. Moreover, my affirmation of neutrality is not rooted in a mutual exchange or interpretation between theory and practice, it is rooted in what practical performances of this notion can do.

Finally, there are certain Heideggerian resonances in what I have tried to do. If Heidegger's conception of philosophy involves working within practical ways of knowing, but doing so in manner that interrupts the ontological economy in which they exist and if such a de-familiarizing interruption provides new ontological possibilities for these practices, then there is undeniably resonance between Heidegger idea of philosophy and how I have tried to perform theory. In the end, I have not tried to provide any new ideas, but have tried to make "a leap in place" by providing new possibilities for existing practical concepts that are performed in the classroom every day. As I understand it, such theorizing interrupts the very economy that divides theory from practice.

Also, my final chapter that describes reasoning as a mode of affective experience resonates with Heidegger's understanding of embodiment. Moreover, if reasoning is an embodied performance, then the forces that divide theory and practice are likewise weakened. If reasoning is not something that is applied to

bodies, but is itself something bodily, then we do not need a separate realm of theory and a set realm of practice where our bodies try to apply theory.

To conclude, I have tried to neutralize the forces that would divide theory from practice by reducing idealism to a performance of sacrificial violence, by reconfiguring theoretical ideas as classroom performances, by showing that this could be done with a conceptual impossibility and discredited concept like neutrality, by recasting voice in terms of different types or different ways of configuring forces, and by arguing the reason an affective, embodied practice. However, my hope is that I have not simply neutralized the forces that perform this operation, but I have somehow reconfigured them.

Assuming that in some small way I have, then this does not mean this work done. In fact, this work---and everything else-- is an event and events never change, they are always new. Hence, the leap in place.

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